

Third Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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(Hansard)

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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
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
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 7, 2018

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. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, 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.

Winnipeg Police Service Half Marathon

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, members of the Winnipeg Police Service go above and beyond the call of duty every day. They act as role models for our youth; they establish lasting relationships in the communities they serve, and they volunteer their time for worthy causes that improve the health and safety of individuals in our city.

The Winnipeg Police Service Half Marathon, held this weekend at Assiniboine Park in my Tuxedo constituency, is an incredible example of this leadership and community engagement. Established in 2005 by two dedicated Winnipeg Police Service officers, Nick Paulet and Jean Roch, this event has exceeded expectations from the very beginning.

The inaugural race was planned for 200 people but actually brought together 1,000 registered runners and raised \$37,000 for the Manitoba division of the Canadian Cancer Society. The next year, it increased to 1,500 runners and raised a whopping

\$70,000 for cancer research. Since then, the Winnipeg Police Service Half Marathon has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for cancer research in our province, including an incredible \$90,000 this year.

Madam Speaker, we all know how important cancer research and treatment is for Manitobans. Each one of us here today has had our lives touched in some way by this terrible disease. We also know that brain cancer, which has a survival rate of just 22 per cent, is one of the most deadly forms of cancer in existence.

That is why I'm pleased to report that this year's marathon raised a significant amount of money to help improve understanding and treatment of brain cancer for Manitobans and their families. In partnership with the Manitoba division of the Canadian Cancer Society, the more than \$90,000 raised this year will be matched dollar for dollar by Brain Canada through the Canada Brain Research Fund. This public-private partnership has already made significant investments to help save the lives of those suffering with brain cancer.

It will help people like Catherine Wreford Ledlow, a truly inspiring Manitoban with brain cancer who participated in a 5K run yesterday. She is one of the top three fundraisers for this year's race and has raised more than \$10,000 for brain research this year alone.

Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure for me to meet Catherine yesterday and to participate in the marathon event this weekend with so many Manitobans, including my colleagues the Minister for Sustainable Development, the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith), the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan). It was great to see our community come together on such a beautiful day to help in the fight against brain cancer.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank all of the organizers, the runners, the title sponsor, Food Fare, for everything they did this weekend and for everything they continue to do every year to support the Winnipeg Police Service Half Marathon.

And I'd also like to especially thank race organizer Inspector Nick Paulet of the Winnipeg Police Service, who joins us in the gallery today with his wife, Leslie, as well as John Douglas, the executive director of the Canadian Cancer Society, and several others also involved in this year's half marathon.

I ask all members, Madam Speaker, to rise and thank them for everything they do for our community.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I rise on slightly tired legs today to congratulate all participants in the 14th annual Food Fare Winnipeg Police Service Half Marathon.

This year's race—yesterday, May 6th—continued the tradition of the WPS half marathon being a premier running race, but also one of the most popular and meaningful funding—fundraising events you can participate in or donate to, as all proceeds raised are donated towards brain cancer research done by the Canadian Cancer Society.

The race has sold out for over a decade, and this year was another fantastic opportunity to be involved with an amazing cause. Pledges and donations by runners and their supporters are matched dollar for dollar by Brain Canada. Whether Manitobans were taking part in the half marathon, the 5K or the two-person relay, the day was filled with great connections as our community came together to fight against cancer in a tangible way.

I want to recognize my colleagues in the Legislature who toed the line in various events, and I actually do want to give special mention to the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) who, like myself, have run all 14 half marathons, which is equivalent to running from here to just this side of Virden, Manitoba.

Nearly every family has dealt with the loss of a loved one or been affected by cancer. While progress continues to be made, there is much more work to do in the fight against it, and the WPS half marathon is a wonderful community event that allows people to learn more about the fight against cancer, raise funds to help research that will save lives and also meet some of the police officers who serve our community.

Here in Manitoba, when families have to start the cancer journey, they're helped by CancerCare Manitoba and the incredible front-line health-care

professionals who continue to do their utmost for patients. It is essential that this continues.

I want to give special recognition to Winnipeg Police Inspector Nick Paulet. In addition, of course, to his responsibilities with the marathon, Inspector Paulet has been involved with organizing the response to a little downtown event called the Winnipeg Jets Whiteout party, so there is truly no rest for the wicked for Inspector Paulet.

I want to thank all the co-ordinators, volunteer staff, donors and runners for what was a truly incredible day. This year's Food Fare WPS half marathon was definitely another successful event. I encourage all members of the Legislature to come out next year for the 15th annual event.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Yesterday, thousands of Winnipeggers laced up their running shoes and hit the pavement running for the 14th annual Winnipeg Police Service marathon at Assiniboine Park. All funds raised at the marathon went to the Canadian Cancer Society in support of brain cancer research. Madam Speaker, what a great cause.

This makes me think about LIVESTRONG's mission statement. LIVESTRONG fights for more than 32.6 million people around the world affected by cancer. They provide direct services, they connect people and communities with the services they need, and they call for world leaders to help fight this disease.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, this is what our Winnipeg police are doing. Yesterday's marathon was just one of several events that will be taking place across our province over the next couple of months. It's a time for communities to come together, raise funds and develop further knowledge on brain cancer.

I encourage all Manitobans to participate and support, and I'd like to thank those who have joined us up in the gallery today.

Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Yes, Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak to the ministerial statement.

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

Mr. Fletcher: The Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and the member from Burrows have said all that needs to be said, and I simply want to state that, as the MLA for Assiniboia, I completely agree with each of the statements.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The Minister of Infrastructure.

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 his statement.

National Emergency Preparedness Week

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I was joined on the south lawn today by joy-Joe Masi, executive director of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and Natalie Hasell, Environment and Climate Change Canada, to announce the national emergency 'preparedness' week.

Be Emergency Ready is the theme of this year's national Emergency Preparedness Week.

We are fortunate that spring flooding is limited this year, but we know flooding is one of the most frequent and costly natural hazards in Manitoba and in Canada.

This is a call to action for all Manitobans to prepare for emergencies, to stay informed and to do what we can to lessen the impact of potential emergencies.

We encourage all Manitobans to prepare and be ready for an emergency at all times. Preparedness starts with the individual, and each of us should be aware of our needs in an emergency. Being prepared means that you know what to do before, during and after an emergency. For individuals and families, that means being prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 72 hours. If an emergency happens in your community, it may take emergency workers some time to reach you. Seventy-two-hour preparedness has three steps:

(1) know the risks, (2) make a plan, and (3) get an emergency kit.

The most likely hazards in Manitoba include floods, severe storms, including tornadoes. Also, wildfires, blizzards, utility outages and chemical spills.

Information about risks and preparedness in Manitoba is available at manitobaemo.ca.

Municipal, provincial, territorial, federal and indigenous governments prepare for large-scale emergencies. But individuals, families and individuals looking out for the needs for vulnerable neighbours and families have an important role in being ready to react in an emergency. Emergency management is a shared responsibility.

We thank first responders, volunteers, community leaders and authorities at all levels who work together to build a strong and resilient province and country. The Province, through Manitoba EMO, prepares and helps municipalities, communities and individuals to be prepared.

We recognize the efforts of communities to be prepared throughout Manitoba, and we do so with the Manitoba Community Emergency Preparedness Awards. This year's recipients are the rural municipalities of Cartier and Hanover, the municipality of Louise and the Southern Emergency Response Committee consisting of the RM of Stanley and the cities of Morden and Winkler.

The award recognizes communities with programs meeting or exceeding recognized national and international standards for emergency preparedness. The Province also supports the Manitoba disaster management conference, held every 18 months to increase awareness of emergency-preparedness requirements.

Delegates and speakers share experiences, display technology and create network opportunities. The conference will be held this year, October 10th to 12th.

And finally, Madam Speaker, a very important reminder: this Wednesday, May the 9th, at 1:55 p.m., the Alert Ready system will issue a test, which will, for the first time, include delivery to compatible wireless devices. This is an expansion of the warning system for emergencies and disasters via TV broadcasts, radio, cable and satellite distribution and web feeds.

In Manitoba, Manitoba EMO, Environment and Climate Change Canada are the only agencies authorized to issue Alert Ready messages.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Manitobans are no strangers to severe weather events—floods and forest fires to tornados and snowstorms. We've got a little bit of everything. That's why Emergency Preparedness Week is such an important time to acknowledge the hard work of front-line emergency workers who keep us safe.

Manitobans will experience a test of the new national public alert system called Alert Ready. It's important to not only know about an emergency but to be prepared for one when one occurs. In honour of Emergency Preparedness Week, people across the country are encouraged to learn how to prepare for an emergency. While a majority of Canadians agree that having an emergency plan is important, only 40 per cent actually have a planned response to any emergency.

Our NDP team wants Manitobans to feel prepared to face any kind of emergency, but we also want our government to make sure that emergency services they rely on are accessible. This government is attempting to privatize crucial government air services like Lifeflight and water bombers. We know that privatization means less quality service. In an emergency, Manitobans want reliability of knowing that help is on the way.

Instead of making cuts to infrastructure, health care or flood protections, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) should be investing in the public services that we need to stay safe. Instead of cutting front-line workers that keep us safe during emergencies, the government should be investing in making sure they can continue doing their jobs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, emergency alarm tests are a step forward, as is being able to deliver emergency call information through cellphones. Though I believe on this week, Emergency Preparedness Week, that we could do even more, for example, training all MLAs in the Legislature to use automated external defibrillators and having practise

emergencies when MLA preparedness is actually evaluated.

Other areas also needing improvements are in forest fires. Last summer a small fire near Wasagamack, Garden Hill and St. Theresa Point was not addressed early and put out quickly. It became a big fire and many residents had to be evacuated. A new approach to forest fires in Manitoba is needed to better address these small fires, but we've seen no sign of a change.

Liberals have called for better planning and protection of northern communities since this government was elected, but from what we know, Manitoba's co-ordinated response to wildfires hasn't been updated since before the Fort McMurray fire in 2016.

As well, there are concerns the government may move to privatize wildfire suppression and air ambulance services and real concerns about northerners' safety if this were to happen.

Despite having nine wildfires raging across the province while we sit in these chambers, many are concerned this government may be cutting services rather than ensuring community safety.

Another concern is preparation for a drought emergency. I have raised this with the government, but there's been no response. I raised this recently with the Keystone agriculture producers and people laughed because, as far as anyone knows, there's no such plan.

Planning for a drought emergency needs the government to prepare for months and years ahead. It is time this government presented a drought plan and had it debated in the Legislature to get the full input from Manitobans.

We would like to have a province which is better prepared for a drought than the Premier was prepared going for a hike.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister for Sustainable Development, and 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.

* (13:50)

International Compost Awareness Week

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I would like to recognize that this week is International Compost Awareness Week.

International Compost Awareness Week started in Canada in 1995 and increases awareness about the benefits of composting. The theme for this year is: Compost! Building a Better Future.

Approximately 40 per cent of residential waste that ends up in landfills is organic material, mainly food scraps and yard waste which can easily be composted. Clearly, we can do better. So we are working with our partners on a number of fronts to address the organic material before it ends up in the landfill. As part of our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, to increase diversion rates we are looking at a number of options which we believe will help to address organics in the short and the long term. Options we are considering is a landfill ban on organics and a comprehensive food-waste reduction plan and pursuing methane emissions at landfills and enhancing gas-capture measures that are already in place.

These are some of the measures we are considering, and I want to stress we don't plan to do this alone because we cannot. We plan to work with our municipal partners and others to come up with a plan that works for us all. It is important to point out that when we increase diversion rates and keep organic materials out of the landfills by composting them, we also reduce the amount of harmful greenhouse gases entering into our atmosphere. This is truly a win-win scenario and encourages us to keep working on this front.

From backyard composting to large-scale operations, composting will assist municipalities in extending the life of their landfills. Many schools and daycares are shaping the future generations, as educators teach the benefits of composting to their students. By classroom composting, these students ensure that they are doing their part to keep organic materials out of the landfills.

Compost is an excellent soil amendment, and mixing compost into your gardens and flower beds or using it as top dressing in your yard will yield amazing results. We are proud to have partnered with the Green Action Centre to launch Compost Winnipeg, a company that collects, compacts and tracks organic waste from residences, businesses and events right here in Winnipeg.

I would also like to point out that one of our successful programs that is already making a big difference, The Manitoba Composts Program, has a goal to divert 100,000 tons of organic material annually from landfills. I applaud the numerous municipalities who participate in this program and who are doing their part on-by composting on a municipal scale.

As we celebrate international composting awareness week, I would like to thank all of those who work in composting and organics, and I encourage all of us to participate in any way we can to help make a difference in diverting waste in our province. I know that when we pull together as Manitobans, we can achieve great things.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to thank the minister for her statement celebrating compost awareness day and add a few more additional reasons why composting should be much higher on all of our agendas. The kudos have to go out to all the stakeholders who are already involved.

And the potential of composting is just enormous, and building on what the minister mentioned, when we manage to divert organics out of a landfill, we actually get benefits for the climate twice. First, the material does not form methane in landfill and then escape, and, secondly, when you use some of that finished compost on agricultural lands to replace some of the industrial fertilizers that might be needed, you avoid creating nitrous oxide, which is hundreds of times more potent than even carbon dioxide as a greenhouse-gas emitter.

So all of those reasons are there. We certainly would encourage and hope that this government begins to more aggressively take action on these types of issues. There's enormous potential to create new green jobs here in Manitoba by diverting organics, not just from Winnipeg but from waste streams clear across the province.

I brought forward this idea way back in the fall of 2016 and had the temerity to suggest that any revenue a government might raise on carbon taxes could actually be used to fight climate change. That's apparently not happening, but we would encourage this government to look for other ways to, indeed, work with their partners and work with the public to make sure that composting is available and accessible and affordable and effective for everyone. Our children's future depends on it; so does our own.

And, indeed, I would note, with the very dry conditions that I'm sure many within the city and outside of the city are facing, when you have healthier soils, healthier soils can store more water. And whether you are in a drought cycle or a flood cycle, that is a very, very valuable feature to have.

So all of the evidence is there. Our government very proudly partnered with the City of Brandon back in 2010 to launch a curbside composting collection service that includes food waste. Mayor Katz at the time in Winnipeg wasn't so keen. We actually had to pass legislation forcing him to capture the gas escaping from the Brady Landfill, but we did that because that was what was necessary for a green future. We encourage the minister to continue moving in this good direction.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the ministerial statement?

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for emphasizing the importance of Compost Awareness Week.

The first International Compost Awareness Week was celebrated in Canada in 1995. This year the theme is Compost! Building a Better Future, because compost is one of the ways we can reduce our carbon footprint and truly build a better and greener future for our planet.

Emissions from Canadian landfills account for 20 per cent of national methane emissions and the best way to curb this trend is by composting. In 2015, approximately 30 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalents were generated at Canadian landfills.

While the government would prefer to use carbon tax funds to balance their budget, they should perhaps consider using a portion to reduce emissions and encouraging municipal compost programs to start to bring these numbers down.

In British Columbia, after their carbon tax was implemented, they used a portion of their funds to implement composting programs across municipalities and they've been very successful. If Manitoba were to reduce their organic waste in landfills by 50 per cent, we could prevent 720,000 tons of CO₂ from entering our atmosphere—quite a benefit.

It's unfortunate that this government has no plan to reduce these emissions, but certainly composting is one of the many actions that could be taken. There

is value in what some called waste and each of us can do something to help.

Composting is good for the environment and for our future no matter where you live. Through composting we can keep organic matter out of landfills, we could improve our soils and our gardens and we can feed and improve more people. I say let us all pay attention to composting this week and do the best we can for the years ahead.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Winnipeg K-9 Unit Welcomes New Puppies

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, there are few topics that can take the attention away from the Winnipeg Jets and their Whiteout celebrations, but I believe that I have news that will be a wonderful distraction: a birth announcement.

Madam Speaker, early on Thursday, April 5th, 2018, Winnipeg Police Service dog Veyda went into labour and delivered five healthy puppies. Proud K-9 father, Hector, will be busy helping to teach his offspring the ropes in hopes of adding these new recruits to the police service in the near future.

I enjoyed following K-9 Hector's handler, Constable Carnegie, on social media as his family proudly wondered if this made him a grandpa.

The Winnipeg K-9 breeding unit was established in 1999. It is one of the only in-house breeding programs run by a municipal service in all of Canada. This Quarry Program has 54 members who are tasked with caring for breeding females and their puppies, as well as assisting the handlers in training, as well as on the streets.

On average, 90 per cent of pups born into the Winnipeg K-9 unit will pass the required courses necessary to work within the police service. Belgian Malinois and German shepherds are the choice breeds for this program due to their unique tracking abilities and faster rate of maturing.

The puppies can be trained and begin work by the age of 13 months and will typically have a nine-to-10 year career with the police service. Winnipeg Police K-9 dogs are in high demand by police forces across North America and internationally.

Congratulations on your five newest recruits and well done on a successful program.

Today in the gallery we have Sergeant Wally Antoniuk, Sergeant Shawn Lowry, Constable Andy Aitken and retired police service dog Griffin.

* (14:00)

African Community Awards

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I had the great privilege of attending the third annual African Community Awards alongside Blandine Tona, our incredible St. Boniface candidate.

ACA brings together Manitoba's vibrant, diverse, proud and influential black community, celebrating black excellence and outstanding achievements in music, business, sport, education and the arts, to name just a few. There are far too many extraordinary award nominees and recipients, both past and present, for me to name.

Each year, ACA also incorporates a philanthropic element, with all the proceeds donated to a charity. This year's funds were donated to Hands of Hope, a non-profit, community-based organization that donates furniture and household items to people in need.

I was honoured to spend an evening in such extraordinary beauty and strength, alongside some pretty amazing music performances and deejaying, which, on more than one occasion, got Blandine and myself dancing in our seats.

The significance of ACA is its ability to connect Manitobans together in celebration by facilitating a space wherein the black community is uplifted, seen, appreciated and represented.

It's critical that we move towards equitable black representation, not only within the mainstream collective, but, I strongly submit, in this Chamber. This House has yet to elect a black MLA. I look forward to Blandine making history by being the first black person to sit in this Legislature.

Miigwech to all of ACA's sponsors, organizers for your transformative and critical work in commanding black space and highlighting black excellence in Manitoba. I am proud to call you my relatives. And I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating such amazing work.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I ask leave to have our guests' names recorded in Hansard.

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

African Community Awards attendees: Daniel Dimude, Chigozie Ezeogbulavor, David Fahnbulleh, Fabian Gbem, Ayobami Ige, Aika Mbatia, Mutale Musonda, Ori Ochoga, Stanley Orlu, Blandine Tona

Grant and Award Recipients

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): It is with great pleasure that I rise to honour a number of accomplished residents from Rossmere with us today, all of whom are recent grant and/or award recipients.

Nour Ali is a Syrian who has been active in Winnipeg since his arrival five years ago. As well as maintaining a business and acting as a translator for newcomers, Nour recently received a provincial grant to assist with integration for Kurdish, Arab and Yazidi immigrants into Winnipeg.

Kwame Bonsu is one of just nine people to receive the Premier's Volunteer Service Award for his unwavering dedication as a volunteer at community and church youth programs, university leadership, Folklorama and more.

Simran Saggi and Marianna Pozdirca were acknowledged as scholarship recipients on International Women's Day as part of the Manitoba government's commitment to partner with the Nellie McClung Foundation in order to inspire and educate present and future champions to continue the journey to equality.

Simran's scholarship essay outlined a variety of leadership experiences as well as her goal to pursue STEM academics at university in order to assist others. Marianna, who works as a student assistant for a city councillor while also studying science, drew on her experience as an immigrant and shared about her passion for a better future for everyone.

Support for community groups is also important, and an 11 per cent funding increase for the Community Places Program means that, all in all, community development programs now have more than \$20 million of funding available for groups led by strong leaders like those present with us in the gallery from Rossmere.

Please join me in welcoming Nour Ali, Kwame Bonsu, Simran Saggi and Marianna Pozdirca.

National Nurses Week

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Today our caucus is celebrating National Nurses Week, and I am happy to welcome nurses in the gallery here today.

The proud husband of a nurse, I know first-hand how passionate they are about their job. I've seen the emotional and physical toll it takes to work three 12-hour night shifts in a row, then come home to be a full-time parent. Their commitment and dedication is quite simply awe-inspiring.

This is made even more clear to me as I watch Manitoba nurses protest widespread government cuts to health care. Nurses are stepping up to advocate for patients in the face of political austerity and ruthless privatization. While they work overtime to cover off the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) job cuts, off the clock they are organizing and protesting a government that has abandoned its promise to protect front-line workers and the services they provide.

Last week we saw hundreds of nurses gather on the steps of the Legislature to protest reckless health-care cuts. At the rally one nurse said it loud and clear, and I quote: The minister's changes are dangerous, they are reckless and nurses will not stand for them. End quote.

Our caucus was proud to stand in solidarity with these nurses and we were disappointed to see that no government members did the same.

We in the NDP would like to thank nurses not only for their role as health-care providers, but also for their advocacy. They are a strong voice for Manitobans who are watching this government attack our health-care system. Nurses are speaking up. They're speaking up for their patients, for their families and for their colleagues in the system.

I ask all members of this House to stand up and applaud them for their hard work and commitment for helping all Manitobans.

Winnipeg Jets

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Now, normally I'm not a real hockey playoff fan, especially when it's 30 degrees outside. But with the Jets in the second round of the playoffs, my family and I have—very much into each and every game. Now with the sixth game tonight in Winnipeg, it's an exciting time for both Winnipeg and for Manitoba and, in fact, for all of Canada.

Now, there's no need to throw a tiny catfish out when you've got a—when you've got the Winnipeg Whiteout with thousands of fans inside and outside the Bell MTS centre cheering the Jets on. So we wish them success tonight—or Thursday night if necessary. *[interjection]* I only said if necessary. We look forward to the Jets taking on the Vegas Golden Knights in the next round.

What else can I say but: Go Jets go. Go Jets go.

Introduction of Guests

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

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today honourable Mr. Iwao Horii, Japan's parliamentary vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Shingenobu Kobayashi, consul general of Japan in Calgary, and accompanying Japanese delegates.

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

And seated in the public gallery from Greenland School we have 21 grade 6 and 7 students under the direction of Brian Penner, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to Health Care Use of Consultants

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are concerned about the future of health care under this government. In Winnipeg alone, the Premier has closed or plans to close three emergency rooms, an urgent-care clinic—or urgent-care centre and closed clinics in every corner of Winnipeg. He's privatized physiotherapy services and he has cut coverage for life-saving drugs—and he's just getting warmed up.

The Premier tries to justify this through reports from accountants at KPMG and other consultants, but not front-line workers and the people they care for.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Pallister) listening to high-priced consultants instead of patients, families and those working to provide care?

*(14:10)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, for the 17 years that the NDP were in government we heard from patients, patients who said they were waiting too long in emergency rooms. Some of the longest wait times in all of Canada, Madam Speaker, and they continued to get worse.

Now, we're on a trend as those wait times get better. There's more work to do, but we are proud to listen to those Manitobans. And we continue to invest in the health-care system, including last week where we announced that the new pediatric cardiology unit would be established at the Health Sciences Centre; more investments to come, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, back in March the Province issued an RFP for the development of a provincial clinical and preventative services plan, but the government has already received that very plan. So the issuing of this new RFP shows the Province never planned to follow that advice. This government has cherry-picked closures and the downloading of services for its own cost-cutting purposes.

The WRHA has already implemented phase 1 of its cuts and we're told phase 2 is coming soon, and communities outside of Winnipeg are holding their breath awaiting cuts to their services.

Why is the Province just spending more money on high-priced consultants?

Mr. Goertzen: My friend from Minto almost got it right at the end when he said, of course, we are investing more money, \$500 million more this year than was ever invested under the NDP.

Now, maybe he considers paramedics to be consultants, but over the last week I was pleased to be able to join my colleagues across Manitoba to announce 60 new paramedics right across the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker—and it's no wonder that the member for Minto considers them consultants, maybe that's why he voted against those investments.

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

Mr. Swan: This government needs to start listening to the front-line workers and patients and families who are saying no to cuts and closures. They're saying no to the chaos, the confusion, this Premier and this minister are spreading throughout our health-care system. They're saying no to this government ordering yet another plan.

The RFP tells us the government should have made its choice by now.

So can the minister rise and tell this House how much more money they're spending on this plan and which high-priced consultant is going to be getting the work this time?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the member for Minto started off that question by talking about listening, because not only did the member opposite vote against those 60 new paramedics and vote against the new pediatric cardiology centre at Health Sciences Centre, he also voted against a program that I was pleased to be at this morning where we talked about the youngest person in Manitoba, little Ireland, who received a cochlear implant so that she could hear—the youngest person in Manitoba ever to get that input—plant. And we saw the video of when she first—and other children first got to hear their first sounds. It's quite remarkable.

So she's listening because now she can hear because of that cochlear implant. I hope the member opposite will listen and support those investments, because he hasn't in the past.

Death of Manitoba Hydro Worker Workplace Safety Measures

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, worker safety is of the utmost priority. When there's an accident or death at a worksite, investigations must be prompt and thorough.

We're joined today by the family of Todd Maytwayashing, who was killed at a Manitoba Hydro site earlier this year. They are here to make sure they receive the answers they deserve from this government.

Will the minister ensure that Todd's family receives all updates, as soon as they are available, regarding their family member's death?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, our

condolences to the family on a loss that none of us could ever comprehend unless we're actually in something like that.

Last Friday—a week ago, Friday, when we had the workers' memorial across the—across Broadway on—in Memorial Park, the family was there, and Mr. Maytwayashing was able to speak to the group, and it was very heart-wrenching.

But I would say that the serious-incident support workers within the department has met with the family. The investigation by workplace health and safety continues, so I cannot speak to what workplace health and safety is investigating.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, Todd's family deserves information. Some reports indicate that the worksite had been altered after his death and prior to the arrival of workplace health and safety officers.

I ask the minister: How long did it take for workplace health and safety to arrive on site and start their investigation, and did workplace health and safety release the site prior to their investigation starting? Did they release it to the contractor?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I cannot and I will not in any way compromise the investigation of workplace health and safety. The investigation continues and in due course they will have the answers that the family is seeking, but we just don't want to interfere with that process and certainly don't want to politicize this issue.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, Todd's family deserves accurate information, to be kept in the loop.

We're also hearing reports of worker harassment and bullying at northern remote worksites such as this one, including the site where Todd was killed. Swift action must be taken to protect workers at remote sites.

Has Workplace Safety and Health investigated these reports, prior to or since Todd's death, at any of these northern remote worksites?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, Madam Speaker, I just cannot and will not comment anything on an ongoing investigation. However, if the member has information that workplace health and safety should

be investigating in other sites, I certainly encourage him to do that.

We want a safe and respectful workplace all across Manitoba. This week is national occupational safety and health week; NAOSH is the acronym for it. I was at their opening this morning, and safety is on the top of everyone's mind.

Skills Training for Offenders Dissolution of ManCor Program

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Justice Minister cut the ManCor program which provided training programs for youth incarcerated to learn the skills that they need to get a job once they're released. The minister claimed that the program was underutilized because average length of the stay for youth is too short, Madam Speaker.

But the minister is misleading Manitobans. Programs like ManCor are some of the most effective ways to stop recidivism, giving youth the skills that they need to get a job once they are out of that particular facility.

Why has the minister cut a valuable program for Manitoba youth?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In fact, the only person who is misleading Manitobans is the member opposite, with the preamble to her question. We—as part of our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy, one of our key pillars is responsible reintegration of offenders back into society.

That's why I was—I had the privilege of joining the Minister of Education at a very important announcement at the Momentum Centre, where we invested, as a government, \$900,000 to help those individuals get retrained and responsibly reintegrated back into society.

We believe that this is the appropriate approach to this, and that's why we are continuing to invest in programs that yield real results for Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: John Hutton of the John Howard Society says the minister is taking the wrong approach. He says, and I quote, it doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing, end quote, and that people can benefit from obtaining skills while they are incarcerated and also while they're living in the community.

We understand that, for a young person, incarceration often does the reverse of what it's supposed to do. Staying in the community with supports is very critical and important, but without the opportunity to learn job skills, people often think that they have no other option but to return and get into conflict with the law, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister admit that without the training piece, Manitoba will not have a long-term solution to jail overcrowding?

*(14:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: In fact, when it comes to the John Howard Society, John Hutton from the John Howard Society has spoken in favour of a responsible reintegration initiative, which is one of our key pillars of our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy.

But I will say, Madam Speaker, again, we are investing in programs that are working to yield real results to keep our communities safer for all Manitobans, and that is why we are continuing to invest in programs like the Momentum Centre that is offering those resources to those people that need it.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The minister has cut a program that helped young people get the skills that they need to stay out of the criminal justice system. She's claimed that it's ineffective, and we just heard that right now, but she may have juked the stats to prove it. Her responsible reintegration program does not help people learn skills and it certainly won't help them find jobs once they're released. The minister's cuts will save her a few thousand dollars, but it won't solve the biggest problems in Manitoba's justice system and it certainly won't do anything for our youth who are in conflict with the law and who need training and who need supports right now.

Will she bring back the program and actually support and stand for marginalized at-risk youth here in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the NDP's response, when they were in power, to some of the challenges that our province faces was to, in fact, double the incarceration rates of adults in our correctional facilities.

We take a very different approach. We understand that these offenders need to be responsibly reintegrated back into society. That's,

again, why we're investing in programs like the Momentum Centre which we know will and has already proven to yield real results for Manitobans when it comes to recidivism rates.

So I hope members opposite—while we take a different approach, we take a proactive approach, we take a responsible approach to this. We do not take the approach of the members opposite, which is simply to just throw people in jails.

Pineland Forest Nursery Sale of Company

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Manitobans were shocked just this past Friday to learn that the Pallister government is now putting the Pineland tree nursery on the auction block. They are going to sell it off for whatever they can get for it, and the ironic piece to this, Madam Speaker, is that this move was announced by the Minister for Growth in this government.

And yet the Minister for Sustainable Development would have us believe in their so-called Climate and Green Plan, on page 44, no less, that they actually want to do more work planting trees in Manitoba, leading all Manitobans to the obvious question: Who's in charge over there?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I trust that members opposite had a very productive weekend discussing a \$300 price on carbon, higher taxes for all Manitobans and among other salacious idea—notions of NDP misogyny.

But while our government was elected on a promise to fix the finances of Manitoba, that's exactly what we're doing. Pineland nursery was run into the ground by members opposite in their mismanagement and, in fact, Pineland nursery was losing—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —up to \$500,000 a year.

We plan to get on a more sustainable track and that's exactly what we're doing.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: It seems we've hit a nerve with the minister, and understandably so.

On page 44 of her own document she claimed that her government was seriously looking at improving opportunities for shelterbelts, improved

opportunities for afforestation in rural Manitoba and they are actually going to use the number of trees planted in Manitoba as an indicator of how healthy forests are. And now they're selling off the Pineland tree nursery, laying off jobs and walking away from their climate commitments.

How on earth can this be an enhancement under the definition of even the Pallister government's hack-and-slash approach to this province?

Ms. Squires: Well, Madam Speaker, our government has a plan that is better for the environment and better for the economy. We're going to ensure that seedlings are produced and available in Manitoba and that climate research with these young forests will continue, unlike members opposite who had absolutely no plan to protect the environment, had absolutely no plan to achieve any meaningful reduction in carbon emissions. And we also learned over the past weekend that they had absolutely no plan to protect the women who worked for their government during the 17 years of NDP misogyny.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Madam Speaker, at least it's clear to everyone that the Minister for Growth and the Minister for Sustainable Development are on completely different paths.

We're talking about fewer jobs in Manitoba and, on top of that, the scientific research that is happening at the Pineland tree nursery, there was no mention of it in the Growth Minister's public statement. There was no mention in the Growth Minister's public statement about the fact that Pineland is where the genetic heritage for every single indigenous tree species in our province exists.

How on earth are they going to protect these valuable public assets, which need to stay under the control of the public going forward, if they're just going to sell everything off? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): So let's look at the factual record, Madam Speaker.

The NDP ripped off Pineland nursery to the tune of hundreds of millions of trees, of seedlings, gave them to a profitable, multinational corporation named Tolko over at The Pas in the form of a subsidy and just about lost us all the jobs at The Pas at the same time.

They had no environmental plan at all. The previous Auditor General noted in their report that they had a plan which could only be achieved by taking every gas- and diesel-using vehicle off the highways. That's not a plan at all.

Madam Speaker, the only green the NDP ever has cared about is the green in the pockets of Manitobans. We're going to leave the green there.

Social Impact Bonds for CFS Request to Release Contract Details

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We know this Premier is intent on privatizing our social services. His proposal for social impact bonds made that clear. But we also know private delivery of social service means caring for children—caring for our children, actually—here in Manitoba becomes more complex with less opportunity for oversight. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Will this minister commit to the House to releasing the details of any social impact bond contracts his government signs?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, we've had the concept of social impact bonds in the planning stages for a while and we plan to act on it, as supported by Kevin Chief and other thoughtful members—former members, I should say—of the NDP caucus.

And I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that leading the country in social problems, we should lead the country in finding solutions to those problems. And so we'll continue to pursue those kinds of solutions, Madam Speaker.

You know, in terms of supporting the private sector, the NDP's idea was to put needy children in motel rooms and support motel owners. But that's not the approach we're taking with Child and Family Services, and that's not the approach we'll taking in the future either.

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

Mrs. Smith: We still have the highest number of kids in care in this province. Until they bring those numbers down, I wouldn't be talking about that.

The deadline for submission for Manitoba's SIB was nearly four months ago. The RFP—the province release said it would develop a business plan and contract within 120 days. Manitobans should know

how much they are giving to private corporations for the care of our children here in Manitoba.

Will this government release the details of any SIB contract that they sign?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): We know what the NDP's track record of the last 17 years was in terms of social causes. We became the child-poverty capital of Canada, which we think is shameful.

We think that the most amount of kids in care are something that the NDP really needs to focus in on and realize from the past what they did in terms—as a 'provinch.' That's why we engaged in our—in a child-welfare reform. That's why we've taken on initiatives like social impact bonds that we think will provide innovation, solutions to some of the social problems that we have here in the province of Manitoba.

* (14:30)

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

Mrs. Smith: Kids are still living in poverty. In fact, kids are still having to eat from Winnipeg Harvest in schools because this province hasn't—doesn't even have a poverty plan yet. Two years they've had and they've done nothing.

This Premier intends to sign a complicated financial contract with a private provider to care for our children. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Transparency in this process is essential. Manitobans should know how much money the Premier is giving to private corporations and they should have access to these contracts the government will sign.

Will the minister commit to releasing the true cost of the SIBs and release any SIB contracts the government will sign?

Mr. Fielding: The member talks about poverty in the NDP's track record.

Well, the Canadian index survey on low-income individuals came out recently, and you know what they found? They found that Manitoba is no longer the child-poverty capital of Canada anymore. They also said, in terms of the percentage of children living in low income—Manitoba has gone from being the 10th ranked, or the worst, to the fifth best—fifth

worst in Canada. That's a dramatic improvement. That's a lot to do with some of the progress that this government has taken in addressing poverty issues, in terms of addressing social issues in Manitoba, and social impact bonds is a part of that solution, Madam Speaker.

Death of Manitoba Hydro Worker Workplace Safety Measures

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Todd Maytwayashing is a 22-year-old who worked at a Manitoba Hydro site near Gillam. He was involved in driving trucks to haul the steel pieces needed to build the transmission line to Keeyask. He was known as an amazing worker, a great worker, and a young man of great promise. He apparently went to help a fellow worker on January 17th this year, and a poorly loaded metal bundle came down on top of him and killed him.

I ask the minister responsible for workplace safety what measures he has already taken so that no more of our sons and daughters will die like Todd Maytwayashing.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The minister's previously responded as best he can to this horrible event, this horrible situation, that has impacted on this family in the most profound of ways.

I will endeavour and undertake on behalf of the family to get answers for them that they desire, and we will work very diligently to do so.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I thank this Premier.

I know this: Todd Maytwayashing did not have to die. His death was preventable. Procedures could have been taken to prevent his death. Barry Swan, Todd's father, who has worked in the same type of work his son was doing, is in the gallery today along with family members.

Todd's death is the third death at a Forbes Bros. worksite in the last year. Two others died due a deviation from a standard procedure.

Has the minister increased inspections at Forbes Bros. and Manitoba Hydro worksites, and what other steps has he taken to ensure no other Manitoba fathers or mothers will have to bury their son or daughter from a workplace accident?

Mr. Pallister: I've taken this issue on personally and seriously, Madam Speaker. I am not pleased with the

absence of compassionate response and timely response in some areas for this family, and I will undertake and our government will undertake to get information for them.

But we will not use this situation for any political purposes, Madam Speaker. I encourage the member to accept our minister at his word in respect of his desires to see change and to investigate. He has undertaken to do so and I would hope the member would allow him to fulfill his responsibilities in that manner.

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the Premier again.

Manitoba Hydro had the responsibility for building the transmission line that Todd was working on and for making sure there was a safe environment for workers, and yet Manitoba Hydro has denied responsibility, even though the accident occurred at a Manitoba Hydro marshalling site and may have involved loading done by Manitoba Hydro workers.

Manitoba Hydro, in the four months since, has not even made a call to the family to say they were sorry.

What is the minister doing to make sure that Manitoba Hydro is held responsible for workplace safety on its projects and in its marshalling yards?

Mr. Pallister: The member has just, in a couple of preambles, cast aspersions at the private contractor, at Manitoba Hydro, at Manitoba Hydro workers, and he himself has admitted in other parts of his preamble he's not in possession of the facts.

Madam Speaker, these are premature assertions at best. They are political opportunism at worst. There should not be these types of questions asked of this type of situation in this place. There is a desire on the part of this government to get answers for the family. That is what we will pursue. And I would encourage the member to confine his questions to those shared and desired outcomes rather than cast aspersions on others without possession of facts.

Changes for Manitoba Student Aid Streamlining of Application Process

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, students have told us over the years about the mess that student aid system has become under the NDP. Last week, there was an important

announcement to streamline the process for bursaries and student aid in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Education please inform the Chamber what these changes will mean for Manitoba students and how our PC government continues to fulfill our election commitments and work hard to repair the services that were left a mess after the NDP's decade of decay?

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

Our PC government will be distributing additional \$8.6 million worth of loans in the 2018-2019 program. And, further, we'll be simplifying and making the progress—the process user-friendly so it's more predictable for students and they can use it more easily.

We expect more students to enrol in post-secondary programs and we want to make sure that there—the doors are open to success. Plus, students can continue to work while they're at school, something that was not allowed under the previous lending program.

Students that apply for Manitoba Student Aid will also be automatically considered for bursaries of up to \$2,000 and will be also eligible for federal Canada student grants of up to \$3,000. PC government is increasing Manitoba bursaries by 2.7—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Manitoba Cattle Producers Elimination of Point System

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): We heard in Westman from producers who are concerned that the Minister of Agriculture has ripped up the points system for awarding Crown land for cattle producers.

Why is the minister making life harder for our young producers?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Actually—thank you, Madam Speaker—I thank you for the question.

The points system has been outdated for a number of years. We've been in consultation with the farm producers, the beef producers, and we're hearing over and over again that this is the right program for our young farmers.

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

Mr. Marcelino: The minister made these changes last year and passed the regulations. Only then did he say he would be consulting. But his consultations have been by invitation only.

The minister is hiding from the truth. His system—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —will cost producers much more.

Why is the minister making life harder for young producers?

* (14:40)

Mr. Eichler: I'd love to take the member opposite for a little road trip, and maybe he'd learn a little more about what agriculture really means. In fact, if he'd make a trip up by The Narrows, you'll see a lot of Crown land that actually is in young producers' hands.

So part—back to the consultation process, we hope to have this rolled out by November, not like December like the previous member talked about.

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

Mr. Marcelino: I'd love a road trip with the Minister of Agriculture—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —if only—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —to prove that he is not hiding from the truth.

But the minister is only focused on his bottom line. Manitoba producers will be badly hit and it's not funny.

He doesn't have to do this. Saskatchewan has maintained its point system.

Will he reverse his decision for young producers?

Mr. Eichler: Madam Speaker, 17 years of repression under this NDP government—never paid attention to details at all. In fact, modernizing The Crown Lands Act is something to be very proud of. We ask the members, get on side with us. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

Boards and Committees Request to Stop Bill 10

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): The government's Bill 10 will go to committee tonight where we will hear from Manitobans how this bill would put the health and safety of Manitoba families at risk.

This bill cuts the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health. This council worked hard to identify the risks and dangers that Manitobans face every day on the job. They provided a forum to workers to have their concerns heard and safety regulations put in place.

The minister doesn't see the value in this council because he doesn't see the value in listening to workers.

Will the minister stop Bill 10 now, before it's too late?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): The advisory council will still meet every five years to do a review of the act and make recommendations.

It's typical of the NDP to be so far behind. We now have SAFE Work Manitoba. We have safety associations within private industry. Safety is a focus, as I've said earlier. The North American safety conference is on right now at the Fort Garry Hotel. The safety is utmost in everyone's mind.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Bill 10 will cut the advanced education advisory committee, which ensured the voices of students and teachers were heard by the government. This committee made Manitoba's post-secondary education accessible and affordable, but the minister doesn't see the value in the committee because he doesn't value students or their families.

This government ignored hundreds of students and committees protesting their bill to hike tuition. Now students are paying 6.6 per cent more this year.

Will the minister ignore them again tonight?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. We're certainly always listening to students. In fact, I met with students this morning.

But as for the committee, it rarely met and never made any recommendations to the government.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Bill 10 will reduce the number of people recommended by parent-child coalitions to sit on the Healthy Child Manitoba board. The bill would see that number from six to just one. These board members are often parents advocating for more family supports; sometimes they are front-line workers like early childhood educators and doctors, who deliver services to families every day.

The minister doesn't see the value of listening to parents or supporting families through policy. His government hasn't even met with the Healthy Child board since they took office.

Will the minister stop Bill 10 now while he has the chance?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, one of the things that Bill 10 does is reduce the size of the boards down to a more manageable size. Some of these boards that the member opposite was referencing had never met and never produced any reports.

What we're doing is eliminating those ones. And other ones, we're reducing the size of the board to make them more manageable, which we know will help the board be more effective because as board members are able to attend and be more actively involved in the operation of the boards that they—and committees that they sit on. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Winnipeg Police Service Use-of-Force Simulator

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): Last week, the Minister of Justice announced a sustainable investment in police training in the Westman region.

Can the minister inform the House about this exciting announcement?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank my honourable friend for that excellent question.

Last week, I was proud to join the members for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) and Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), along with the Brandon Police Service chief of police, Wayne Balcaen, to announce a \$90,000 investment in the new use-of-force simulator at Assiniboine Community College.

Madam Speaker, by giving police students and the Brandon police officers practical training to

de-escalate dangerous situations, this state-of-the-art technology will help make our communities safer. Our government will continue to stand by our front-line police officers and ensure they are properly equipped to help reduce crime for all Manitobans.

Thank you.

Manitoba Economy Government Plan

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): One major concern that Manitobans have is the lack of a plan for Manitoba's economy. We continue to wait and we try remaining optimistic that there will be a plan for our economy. However, all this government is doing is making cuts.

Madam Speaker, this does not leave us with a lot of hope. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux: Manitobans continue to struggle.

What is this Premier's plan for our economy?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, our plan for the economy is best reflected in Manitoba's economic performance indicators in our first full year of government.

International exports to the United States are up 12 per cent for the first two months in '18, and I think that's best among the provinces. Capital spending—private sector capital spending growth is expected to be the highest in Canada in 2018, up 6.5 per cent. In terms of retail vehicle sales, motor vehicle sales increased by 56 per cent in January of 2018. Passenger motor vehicle sales increased by 31 per cent year over year. These are numbers which are the best in Canada.

I could go on, Madam Speaker, but I do want to say, given the short time available to me, I want to offer sincere condolences to the family of my friend, Gord Brown, who was a long-serving Member of Parliament in Ottawa, a friend to people, regardless of their political parties, who served his constituency of Leeds-Grenville very well and who I know will be very much missed by his family, by his many, many friends and, of course, by his colleagues in Ottawa on either side of the aisle in the House of Commons. He died at his desk in the House of Commons, working for his constituents, and we wish his family all the best in this difficult time.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, about a month ago, a number of reports were released that gave a thoroughly bleak look at the state of the province. This government paid Deloitte to essentially tell us what we already knew, and that is that this government has no economic plan.

* (14:50)

My question for the minister is: How much money did Manitobans have to pay for this report?

Mr. Pallister: Well, actually, the member only has it part right, Madam Speaker.

Deloitte was commissioned to investigate best practices in economic development globally. They did come back as part of their report and comment that the previous administration had no economic strategy, but rather threw funding in almost 100 different directions; that there wasn't a co-operative strategy for economic development and growth; that there were not priorities identified to take advantage of innate Manitoba competitive opportunities.

Madam Speaker, a study that leads to action can be useful. The NDP commissioned studies, but didn't act on them.

We've commissioned a study which will be acted upon and which will allow us to move from bottom of the barrel on an economic advance to top of the pile.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17th, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was failed—further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Signed by Erica Johnson, Susie Zaray, Merrill Yozanis [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as the St. Boniface industrial park, the 200—the 20,000 acres at

CentrePort, or existing properties such as the Shriner's hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

(3) The provincial government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence, and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the Department of Health has no role to play in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for the use of a drug addiction facility.

(5) The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the provincial government changes the fundamental nature of the community, including parks and recreational uses. Concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obviously other locations in wealthier neighbourhoods such as Tuxedo and River Heights have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project, even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of the Manitoba Housing renewal corporation.

(8) The province—the provincial government does not have a co-ordinated plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba as it is—currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

(9) The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing, as the land is being transferred for a 50-bed facility even though the project clearly falls outside of Manitoba Housing responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purposes of parkland and recreational activities for public use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for parks and 'recreation,' active neighbourhoods and community.

This has been signed by John Hanlan, Eric Hanlan and Keith [phonetic] Kunz. I submit this to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The petition was not read as printed. Is there leave to accept the petition as printed? [Agreed]

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the the Provincial Government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

2. The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and neither the Provincial Government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as: the St. Boniface industrial park, the 20,000 acres at Centre Port or existing properties such as the Shriner's Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

3. The Provincial Government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.

4. There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the department of Health had no role to play in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.

5. The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the Provincial Government changes the fundamental

nature of the community. Including park and recreation uses, concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

6. The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier other neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

7. The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation.

8. The Provincial Government does not have a coordinated plan for addictions treatment in Manitoba, as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

9. The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing, as land is being transferred for a 50 bed facility even though the project is clearly outside of Manitoba Housing's responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

1. To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

2. To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purposes of park land and recreational activities for public use (including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem) under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton Avenue location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for Parks and Recreation Active Neighbourhood/Community.

Medical Laboratory Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

* (15:00)

The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive activities where it has changed the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all STAT's patients, patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health in the interest of higher profits. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the health-care system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to

provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

(3) To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by Myrna Assiniboine, Chantel Holmes, Melanie De Guzman and many others.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition.

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed to them.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The petition was not read as printed. Is there leave to accept the petition as printed? [*Agreed*]

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

These are the reasons for this petition.

1. Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

2. Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinaabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

3. Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

4. Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

5. Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

6. Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of Indigenous Peoples and children including the: Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People; and the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

1. To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a Public Inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

2. To urge that the terms of reference of a Public Inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Twinning Leila Avenue

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of The Maples community have diverse needs, such as the issue of twinning Leila Avenue, which was raised with the previous minister responsible for Municipal Relations.

(2) The residents of The Maples appreciate that Leila Avenue is a City of Winnipeg, city responsibility, but the new Minister of Municipal Relations has not complied with requests to ask the City to make twinning this road a priority, even though the provincial government provides the City with its share for funding such projects.

(3) Leila Avenue is the main road to approach the Seven Oaks hospital, and one extra lane would ease the traffic that has been created by a corresponding increase in population in the area.

(4) The Maples residents are frustrated because both the City and the provincial government do not treat infrastructure developments in the north Winnipeg equally with those in the south.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request that the City twin Leila Avenue to reduce traffic and commute time for the residents of The Maples and surrounding areas, enabling the accessing of timely health services, which will contribute to both the economy and society.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):

On House business, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, May 16th, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: The Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations, dated May 2016—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems; Auditor General's Report: Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations, dated September 2016; Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations, dated March 2017—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems; and the Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations dated March 2018—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems and the Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations. Witnesses to be called include the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen) and the CEO of Manitoba Hydro.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, May 16th, 2018, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations, dated May 2016—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems; Auditor General's Report: Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations, dated September 2016; Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations, dated March 2017—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems; Auditor General's Report: Follow-Up of Recommendations, dated March 2018—Managing Cyber Security Risk Related to Industrial Control Systems; Keeyask Process Costs and Adverse Effects Agreements with First Nations. Witnesses to be called: Minister of Crown Services and CEO of Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Cullen: On further House business, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, May 14th, 2018, and on Tuesday, May 15th, 2018, at 6 p.m., to continue consideration of Bill 19, The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Cullen) as House business that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, May 14th, 2018, and on Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 6 p.m. to continue consideration of Bill 19, The Planning Amendment Act (Improving Efficiency in Planning).

* * *

Mr. Cullen: In terms of today, for House business, I'm seeking leave of the House to allow, for today only, Families to fill the section of Executive Council in room 255 for the Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave, for today only, to have Executive Council replaced by Families in Committee of Supply?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, would you call Committee of Supply?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon. The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FINANCE

* (15:30)

Madam Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance, including Crown Services.

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

I will now ask the minister to introduce the staff.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): Sure. Deputy Minister Grant Doak; Director of Corporate and Crown Services Robert Marrese; David Safruk, special assistant to the minister; and Inga Rannard, who is the senior financial officer, Finance and Administration 'serds'—Shared Services, Comptroller Division.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Can the minister tell us if he has any undertakings he would like to provide with us at this point in time?

Mr. Cullen: No, to my knowledge, there was no undertakings that we were committed to bring forward.

Mr. Lindsey: Okay, I suspected as much, but—so we were talking about Manitoba Hydro when we were last here and trying to get a handle on some of the things that had gone wrong with the board resigning and the negotiation wheels coming off between the Manitoba Metis Federation—and now we see in the paper that the Metis Federation is, again, waiting for something from the government.

Can the minister update us on any progress that has been made in that regard?

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the question and chance to review history and, hopefully, explain how we got to the present situation we're in today.

In terms of the Manitoba Metis Federation and discussions with Manitoba Hydro and discussions with the government of Manitoba, clearly, Manitoba Hydro are—have undertaken and are continuing to undertake transmission projects across the province, and they've also undertaken, obviously, the Keeyask dam—hydroelectric dam and the bipole transmission project as well.

Clearly, there's been ongoing discussions around those projects with the Manitoba Metis Federation. We certainly, as a government, recognize that we have an obligation under section 35 to consult with the Metis, and we certainly take that—we do not take that obligation lightly. At the same time, clearly, Manitoba Hydro are negotiating agreements with Metis community, as they would do with First Nations communities as well.

And, I guess, in terms of Manitoba Hydro trying to secure the relationship and understanding between, I guess, all three parties, really—Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Metis Federation and the government of Manitoba—there was discussion with the previous government in terms of what a framework for that discussion would look like. And I think it probably precipitated out of the Keeyask and the bipole projects, how that undertaking came to be.

So, after considerable discussion, I would assume, with the previous government, they came to a document, a Turning the Page document. So that document talks about relationships and how to move forward in terms of any disputes that might come out of discussions with Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba government and the Manitoba Metis Federation. So that's really the—I use the term framework, that we're working under right now.

And getting back to the point of the arrangement, moving forward with the Manitoba-Minnesota line, the potential of lines going into Saskatchewan and also any potential future developments, there was discussion with Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation in terms of what a long-term agreement would look like in terms of those capital projects.

So the document proposal was put together between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation in terms of a path forward over the next up to 50 years. And at that point in time, when the government became aware of that proposal, the government of Manitoba had concerns about that proposal and about what it means for future rights of Metis people in Manitoba. So the government undertook a thorough review of that proposal—the proposed document to see what the implications were—or would be for the government of Manitoba and for the rights of Metis people around the province.

And, obviously, the government had concerns about that particular proposal. And, as a result, the Cabinet decided to issue a directive to Manitoba Hydro to—not to proceed with that proposal—or it's often termed a term sheet—to finalize into a formal agreement. And, you know, that's certainly the government's position that that proposal was not a formal document. And the Manitoba Metis Federation have a different opinion saying that that particular proposal was an agreement, and that's where we have a dispute over that particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: And I guess the minister, several times, has suggested that the agreement that apparently Manitoba Hydro board thought that they had and apparently the Manitoba Metis Federation thought they had—because both parties, I believe, has called it an agreement—that the minister is now saying that there's no agreement; it's only a proposal. The only time, I guess, there can be an agreement is when the government says yes or no, and that's the

only time one of these negotiated processed with one of the Crown corporations becomes an agreement is when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or the Crown's minister signs off and says it's an agreement. Is that the correct takeaway from this conversation?

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I—you know, it's my understanding Manitoba Hydro never referred to the proposal as an agreement. I think it's my understanding all along, and there was—obviously discussions have been going on for quite some time between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation.

And, to my knowledge, Manitoba Hydro never declared that particular proposal an agreement. These were terms that could be potentially written into an agreement, and I think if you review the documents, it's pretty clear in the wording that this is, in fact, a term sheet.

And I believe—you know, I don't want to quote for sure, but I think the comments on the document were it was for discussion purposes only.

So, you know, clearly Manitoba Hydro recognized that this was a step in the process to ultimately reach a formal agreement. And I think we'll have to go back to our discussion when we previously met, you know, in terms of this particular proposal being unique to Manitoba Hydro in terms of the structure around this agreement, because previous agreements that had been signed by Manitoba Hydro, whether it be with Metis people, the Metis Federation, or whether it be with individual indigenous communities, they were always around the basis of one project and one proposal going forward. And it was in regard—they would be in regard to a specific project, a specific proposal, in a specific area, whereas this particular proposal is unique in that it reflects a number of projects which are on the table. And it also talks about a number of projects that are not on the table—in fact, over a 50-year period of time.

*(15:40)

So, a very unique proposal that had been discussed and negotiated between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation, so that's why it was incumbent upon government to have a sober second look at this one and to see what those repercussions would be.

So I know, certainly, Manitoba Metis Federation believe this was an agreement. Our view, and I think pretty sure Manitoba Hydro would concur, that this was a discussion document laying out specific terms

that could be put into an agreement. And, quite 'franky,' I feel that's where we have a disagreement, and we're probably going to agree to disagree on those conditions of this proposal.

So the mechanism within the Turning the Page Agreement actually talks about a dispute, and I won't say a reconciliation; I would say more of a way to actually make sure we clearly define what the dispute is about. And that's really the mechanism in the Turning the Page Agreement. So, when I met with President Chartrand a couple of weeks ago, we decided that we would allow process, proper process, to take place under that Turning the Page Agreement.

So what transpired was the tripartite steering committee actually met. So tripartite—so there's members of Manitoba Hydro, government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Metis Federation get together to outline what the dispute is. And they're currently going through that process. So I will tell the member that there's been a number of meetings of that tripartite steering committee. I know there's been some documentation drafted around that component of the Turning the Page Agreement. Obviously, it now requires some more consideration, so I think there is additional meetings of that tripartite steering committee scheduled.

So what we as a government are doing is allowing the process to naturally unfold under that Turning the Page Agreement which was signed back in 2014. So we believe that's the proper process to allow that dispute mechanism to take place.

Mr. Lindsey: Okay, so we need to—you—the government needs to determine what the dispute is, seems odd. Publicly, it at least seems to be pretty clear what the dispute is, but—so you became the minister responsible in August of 2017. Is that correct?

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I think it's pretty clear what the dispute is about, and I don't know if there is an easy way to resolve that particular dispute, but I guess time will tell how we—how things move forward.

So, to confirm, yes, I became minister in August of 2017 and certainly look forward to dealing with Crown Services, an interesting portfolio with a lot of different areas and Crowns' involvement, so challenges and opportunities out on the Crown side of it for sure.

Mr. Lindsey: We'll get to some of the other Crowns soon enough.

So you became the minister in August of 2017. How many meetings did you have with the previous minister to lay out things that he would've been aware of about agreements like this particular one with the Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Hydro? Did he make any mention of the status of that particular negotiation?

Mr. Cullen: I've had a number of meetings with the previous minister, obviously, even prior to knowing that I was going to be involved in Crown Services, a number of meetings subsequent to the appointment and during the transition. Obviously, we talked about a lot of different issues. I certainly can't remember the specifics around, you know, the number of meetings exactly or specifically when we would have talked about, you know, this particular project, but certainly it's an ongoing dialogue with the previous minister on a number of different files.

Mr. Lindsey: So you were obviously in Cabinet prior to becoming the minister. You were the minister of something else. So, do you recall discussions about a potential agreement between, or negotiation, even, for that matter, between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation?

Mr. Cullen: Well, I can't speak for the previous minister, but I'm sure he had ongoing discussions with Manitoba Hydro probably about, you know, their discussions and how the discussions were going with the Aboriginal community and Metis communities in regard to these transmission projects because, well, quite frankly, these transmission projects, the Manitoba-Minnesota lines into the—into Saskatchewan to sell power are very important for Manitoba Hydro, very important for Manitoba Hydro, very important for the government of Manitoba and certainly for ratepayers within Manitoba Hydro as well, and, quite frankly, critically important for our partners at the other end who are consuming our green energy. They obviously like our clean, green energy and they're certainly willing to pay a price for it. And we need all those opportunities we can, given the difficult financial situation that Manitoba Hydro finds itself in. We need all the export revenue that we can generate.

* (15:50)

Now, clearly, and as the Public Utilities Board report pointed out just a week and a half ago—last week—seems like a month ago—last week that, clearly, Manitoba Hydro is in a difficult financial situation. And some of the decisions that were taken by the previous NDP government did put Manitoba

Hydro in extra financial difficulty vis-à-vis the decision around Bipole III. Be-placing it on the west side of the province had a bearing of at least an extra \$900 million on the expenses of the corporation—of Manitoba Hydro. And, again, that's money that has to be borrowed, and that will be accumulated as part of a \$25-billion debt and—which will—which we will see fully on the books of Manitoba Hydro in and around 2021. And that \$25 billion worth of debt will incur interest payments of \$1.3 billion annually at today's interest rates. And we're really not sure what will happen in terms of interest rates going into the future, and especially we look at 2021 down the road—three, four years from now—will potentially have a significant impact on operations at Manitoba Hydro and, indeed, interest payments to constituents outside of the province of Manitoba.

So, clearly, these projects are important to us. It's ongoing discussions with me as a minister, with Manitoba Hydro. We did—as a government did not become aware of this unique proposal until last summer or last fall, and we didn't know the details of it at that—'til that point in time. And because it is a very unique proposal, we as government decided it would take, you know, proper due diligence and scrutiny to fully understand what the implications would be for the government of Manitoba, for Manitoba Hydro and for the Metis people of the province of Manitoba, as well. And not just today, but what the implication would be for their rights for years to come.

And the proposal talks about projects up to 50 years into the future. So, clearly, this particular proposal will have significant implications for many Manitobans for many years to come.

Mr. Lindsey: So the government, you're suggesting, only became aware of this agreement—and I will continue to call it an agreement because, according to my information, that is in fact what Manitoba Hydro called it—was a Manitoba Metis Federation relationship agreement—you just became aware of that last fall—so, August—and yet you have—a member of your caucus sits on the board of Manitoba Hydro?

So these types of things would never have been discussed at a board meeting?

Mr. Cullen: You know, I can't speak to that. I would assume there would be some discussions at the board level. I don't know when the board would—been made aware of the discussions—or I'm sure they would have been briefed along as the discussions went along. But

having said that, I don't know when the board became aware of this particular proposal.

I know that we as government didn't become aware of the details of this particular proposal until August or September of this past year, and that's when we as government felt it was an obligation on our part to make sure that we fully understood what the ramifications of this agreement—potential agreement would be. Clearly, the terms in the term sheet spelled out a lot of information that would have a bearing on individual Metis rights for up to 50 years to come. We obviously did not take that lightly, and that's why we engaged our own internal legal people to review the document to see what the implications would be for government, for Manitoba Hydro and for Metis people in Manitoba.

And as, again, I talk really about the unique component of this particular proposal, is that it is—considers projects that haven't even been before the board of Manitoba Hydro for consideration. So it is a very unique proposal to anything that the board has entertained before or clearly anything that has been before the government of Manitoba as well. And I think that's why it is so important to make sure that we as government do the proper scrutiny to fully understand what the ramifications and potential repercussions would be.

You know, if we did sign an agreement as a result of this particular proposal, what would that mean for future proposals, potential future agreements for First Nations communities, if there's going to be other additional developments in the future, whether they be hydroelectric dams or whether they be transmission lines? So this particular unique agreement has really far-reaching consequences, not just for the Manitoba Metis Federation, but certainly for the Aboriginal community as well.

So if Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba Hydro were to entertain these far-reaching agreements, which could encompass up to 50 years, there clearly is repercussions for many individual Manitobans, and that's why the government wanted to make sure that we had our research done properly and to fully understand what this potential agreement would mean to Manitobans.

So that's why we certainly took the time to do our diligence, and then a directive was issued to Manitoba Hydro in March of this year to not move to the next stage with this proposal, to not move it into the agreement stage. So that was the directive that

Cabinet issued to Manitoba Hydro in March, and I guess that's certainly part of the dispute that we're currently seeing with the Manitoba Metis Federation, Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba, certainly a difference of opinion in terms of what that proposal was actually trying to accomplish.

Mr. Lindsey: So does the member, I believe, from Emerson, who sits on the board of directors on behalf of Cabinet, does he report back to Cabinet discussions with the board or things that the government should be aware of that are being discussed, even if it's in the broadest of terms, just to make the government aware?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question.

I don't know whether this is a process that is unique to Manitoba or not, but for some Crown corporations, we do have MLAs sitting on Crown corporations. And I suppose that's a mechanism for the government to sort of keep a handle in terms of what's going on at the board level, but there's no legislation that provides the—a mandate or a framework that talks about what the role or the reporting mechanism back to Cabinet would be.

*(16:00)

So it's—I guess it's more of an informal framework or discussion, if you will, around that.

And I—I'm not, obviously, going to speak about Cabinet confidence in terms of what discussions may or may not have taken place at the Cabinet table around, you know, this particular agreement. But it is a unique opportunity for government to be represented on some of these Crown agencies.

And we certainly appreciate the expertise that someone like the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) could bring to the table and—in a very important Crown corporation like Manitoba Hydro. And we certainly appreciate the good work that the member for Emerson has done at the board of Manitoba Hydro. You know, we certainly respect his opinion at the table, and I'm sure he will make sure his voice is heard at the table as well. And that's why the Premier (Mr. Pallister) appointed him to that role, so that he brings the level of expertise to that. I know he will bring a high degree of common sense and a business-minded approach to the board of Manitoba Hydro.

And I think I could share with members of the committee that I'm sure the member for Emerson was quite vocal at the—has been quite vocal at the board of Manitoba Hydro and certainly would

pass on his wishes and certainly the wishes of his constituents. We certainly know that his constituents will be impacted by decisions made at Manitoba Hydro. And, importantly, certainly the Manitoba-Minnesota line is in his area. So certainly, his residents and his constituents will be impacted by those decisions as well. And I certainly know he will stand up for all Manitobans when he lets his voice be heard at the board at Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Lindsey: So you have a member, an MLA from your caucus, sits on the board of directors of Manitoba Hydro, but you're suggesting that there's nothing anywhere that spells out specifically that he's supposed to report back to government on anything that's discussed at that board or that corporation? There's nothing that spells out that he's supposed to take anything from government to that board to discuss with them?

So you're not suggesting, I would hope, that he's just sitting there without communicating back and forth between the board and the government the wishes of the government or the desires of the board. You're not suggesting that—or the minister's not suggesting that.

Mr. Cullen: Well, a few things to that. We operated—the previous government operated the same way by appointing members to respective Crown corporations. There's no legal framework in any legislation that requires a reporting mechanism back. And I'm not going to get into Cabinet—confidential discussions about what may have transpired at Cabinet in terms of the relationships between the board members and Cabinet.

But I will speak to the legislation that we have brought forward just over the—in the course of the last two years. And that's The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act. So the intent there was to make sure that everyone clearly understood their roles and responsibilities. And when I say everyone, that includes the Government of Manitoba, the Crown corporations—whether it be the chair of the board, the board of directors or senior management in terms of the CEO and senior management—everyone would understand what the roles and responsibilities are. And it sets out mechanisms for communication between the various agencies, if you will.

So the whole legislative framework is a governance model based on defined accountability systems and those clear accountability relationships, something that we never really had in the past. So we

thought it was important that everyone clearly had the roles and responsibilities and the accountability mechanisms in place.

I will say, you know, this legislation is relatively new, so it's still a work in progress for us as government to fully get onside in terms of laying out those roles and responsibilities and role-laying out those mandate letters to the Crown corporations. And I think it's also new for the Crown corporations themselves in terms of helping define those relationships and that accountability between the Crowns and government.

So we're going through this hand in hand, learning through the process as we go. It's not something that can be addressed overnight, but we are working together with the Crowns to work through the process. And we think it's a good process for, you know, a positive framework that provides structure, provides accountability, and quite frankly, provides oversight as well.

So it's a work in progress for us to lay out those roles and responsibilities. Certainly have agreement from the board of directors at the respective corporations, what those roles and responsibilities are. We clearly sign those off. Cabinet ultimately approves the roles and responsibilities, and that—which frames those relationships.

And, certainly, the minister can offer mandate letters to the Crown corporations. Those mandate letters are also signed off by Cabinet, so that's certainly an important piece of oversight and provides that structure to the Crown corporations—so a very important piece of the legislation.

And part of that legislation—too—makes a change in terms of structure within government too. So we did away with the Crown Corporations Council. We've moved to a secretariat model within government as opposed to the old Crown Corporations Council which was exterior to government. We now have a model that actually works within government. So we think it improves the relationships and then the oversight, and provides better structure in terms of us dealing—as government, dealing with the Crown corporations.

And you know the other component, too, is obviously the policy directives that can be issued by government. And again, those policy directives are approved by Cabinet.

Mr. Lindsey: So, it would appear that—from your answer—that you've got a member that sits on the

board. One of your MLAs sits on the board of a Crown corporation, but you don't know exactly—excuse me. The minister doesn't know exactly what that role is for that MLA sitting on the board.

Do you—could the minister tell us what he thinks that particular MLA is doing attending board meetings of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the question from the member.

You know—clearly, each and every member that is appointed to a board has a fiduciary responsibility to that respective board. And they are asked to operate in a manner that is in the best interest of that particular board. And that's really their fiduciary responsibility.

* (16:10)

Clearly, we want Crown corporations to be run as efficiently and appropriately, with the proper oversight, as possible. And certainly part of our mandate as Crown Services is to provide some education and—to newly appointed board members. And we provide that training to board members so that, you know, they have the relevant background and knowledge that they need to help carry out their respective responsibilities.

Clearly, you know, we as a government have a set of policies. We have a set of priorities that we have established as government. And we expect our Crown corporations to act within that same scope of policies and priorities. And that's why we have formulated the new legislation in terms of the government—governance and accountability to establish that framework so that it provides that direction to boards to work in that framework and with that accountability piece in mind, which we think is so important.

You know, I think we can point at situations where there has been government intervention previously. Political staff would phone and provide direction to Crown corporations. That's not what's transpired now. We actually have a framework, a legislative framework, in place to fully brief each and every one of the senior team, whether it be the minister, the deputy minister, the chair of the board, the board themselves or the chief executive officer of the—of a respective corporation, in terms of what those relationships should look like. So, clearly, we've laid out that framework that we think provides proper oversight to boards, and it also makes sure that, you know, we as a government are working

within that scope of that legislative framework. So we think that's very important.

So, when we see a corporation that is maybe acting outside of what we would view a priority or a policy of the government of Manitoba, we as a government have an opportunity to provide mandates and directives to that particular corporation to make sure that we keep the corporation operating within the same priorities and the same policies that the government of Manitoba has. And that's why, in this particular case, Cabinet saw fit to offer a directive to Manitoba Hydro to not continue into an agreement with this particular proposal that the Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Hydro had negotiated in terms of the terms sheet.

So that's really the legislative mechanism that we have to make sure that Crown corporations are acting within the same policies and the priorities that the government of Manitoba has set. So this legislative framework really, really deals with that, and I think it's obviously a work in progress as we work through it. But we're certainly getting there and I think it enforces and creates the opportunity to have a positive dialogue with the respective boards and the government of Manitoba. And it really creates a positive framework to allow that to happen. And it also, at the same time, makes sure that we have that accountability piece installed as well, which is certainly very important as we move forward.

Mr. Lindsey: So, then, you appoint one of your—the minister appoints one of the government MLAs to sit on the board to provide some kind of oversight to provide direction on the government's policies and priorities to make sure that the corporation hasn't run amok, if you will, and coming to different priorities than what the government has decided they should pursue. So this individual that sits, whether it's on the board of Manitoba Hydro or the board of any of the other Crown corporations, that's really, I guess, what their role is, is to be the conduit, if you will, for providing direction from the government to the Crown and taking information from the Crown back to the government so that both parties are, at least in the broad strokes of where—of what the other one is doing or wants done, so would that be what the role is of that individual that sits on the board of directors of a Crown corporation from the government?

Mr. Cullen: In terms of our MLA that sits on the Manitoba Hydro board, I know he certainly will take his fiduciary responsibility very seriously. He is a former boiler maker who has certainly experience on

that side of things and he understands the major projects that are being undertaken at Manitoba Hydro, whether it be the hydro-electric dam that's being built or the transmission lines that are being undertaken as well, so we certainly respect his opinion there.

A government member sitting on the board would have the same vote as any other member sitting on the board. I would say it's not necessarily the intent of the—an MLA on a board to provide government direction. He would have the same responsibility as any other board of directors and I think that's fairly clear. And I think a government member sitting on a board would have the advantage of understanding what the priorities and the policies of the government of Manitoba are, so, certainly, they could be more than free to express the position of the government. I wouldn't say it's incumbent upon them to provide direction to a Crown corporation on behalf of government. The intent of our legislation, our corporate governance and accountability act is to set up the framework that actually provides direction and how government can provide direction to Crown corporations.

And that's something that we've talked about, and I think it's important that we—we've put together this legislative framework to have that discussion so it allows for a proper discussion between government of Manitoba, other Crown corporation, as well as the respective members.

So the roles and responsibilities actually talk about a relationship between the minister and the relationship between the minister and the board of directors. The roles and responsibilities also talk about relationships and communication with the deputy minister, the CEO of the respective corporations, and it also gets into the mandate that government will provide to the respective Crown corporation; that particular mandate that is a written mandate provided to Crown corporations is approved by Cabinet, so it's very important that it's an open, a very transparent process. So those particular mandates are available to the public and it's an important piece of the accountability piece in terms of this legislative framework.

* (16:20)

So the other thing to remember, too, when I talk about directives and government directives to the respective Crown corporation, those directives are also passed by Cabinet; so, clearly, an open and transparent process when directives are provided to a

Crown corporation. Those directives are also available to the public; so, clearly, another very transparent part of the process. I think that legislative structure really provides positive oversight and it's very clear, then, the relationship and the direction that a Manitoba government is providing to those Crown corporations.

And that's really about the framework of this governance and accountability legislation, is to provide that structure, that transparency, the oversight and the accountability mechanism. I think it does—it covers all those bases, which is very important. And, quite frankly, I think that's what Manitoba—Manitobans hired this government to do, was make sure that we were operating in an open and transparent manner and that Manitobans know exactly what the directives from the government were and are to the respective Crown corporations.

Mr. Lindsey: So there's nothing official that right now says what that MLA who sits on a Crown corporation board of directors, there's nothing official that says what his role is. Unofficially, the minister's suggesting that he's there to provide oversight and to alert the government if the Crown corporation board is acting outside of the policy and priorities, to provide direction—directives from the government to the Crown corporation.

So can the minister tell us if he knows whether that particular MLA who sits on the board of directors of Manitoba Hydro, did he participate in a meeting in July—July 7th, 2017?

Mr. Cullen: I'm not sure what meeting the member is referring to. Clearly, I don't have that particular member's calendar.

But, clearly, we're operating in terms of board members and government appointments to boards the same way the previous government has. There's been no change in a legislative framework in that regard, so the appointed government members have the same fiduciary responsibility to the board as any other member would be. And, clearly, the advantage of a government member would be that they would probably understand the priorities and policies of the government better than maybe another board member may, so they would certainly be able to offer that advice to the respective board.

But clearly, any board member has to make sure they're acting in good faith and acting on what is the best interests of that particular board that they sit on. And, you know, quite excited, quite frankly, about

the number of Manitobans who have stepped forward to put their name on our boards. And I think we—and certainly, at times, we have a lot more people stepping up at times—certain times in the process, but that's all good. We have a lot of qualified people in Manitoba that enjoy the opportunity to participate in government and governance, and it's certainly a really important part of our system, especially with our major Crown corporations. They're very important business agencies.

I don't know exactly the number of agencies, boards and commissions we have in Manitoba, but it's well over 200. So there are certainly a lot of qualified people that get appointed to those agencies, boards and commissions, and we certainly tip our hats to the good work that they do.

And clearly, I think they're all acting on behalf of the best interests of the corporation or the agency that they serve, and they would be acting in the best interests of Manitobans as well. And that's really what it's about at the end of the day, is making the right decisions for the right reasons for the best interests of the people of Manitoba.

So we do have a lot of people with a lot of different backgrounds, a lot of different skill sets that they bring to those particular boards. I know when we look at appointing people to respective boards, we want to make sure that people have the skill set that is required for those respective boards as well.

And various boards and agencies and commissions will require different skill sets, so it's certainly important for us as government when we look at appointing people to these respective agencies, boards or commissions that they have the right skill sets and they have the background, they have the knowledge that's required to make the proper decisions on behalf of all Manitobans. And that's obviously pretty critical for us as government.

And I will say that not every board member always agrees with the same policy and priorities as the government of Manitoba may have, and we respect that, and we respect people's varying—various views. And certainly, when it comes to financial situations and various agencies and boards and corporations, there may be different views that are taken in terms of how to handle the financial situations over a given period of time. And some board members may want to move forward in a more aggressive situation or manner than other board members may. That's certainly their right and their

obligation, and they have every right to have that opinion. And we certainly respect that.

But there is a lot of great Manitobans serving on a number of agencies, boards and commissions that are doing the right thing for Manitobans, and we appreciate them serving the government of Manitoba in that role.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, there's a lot of words on the record that didn't really answer the question, but, yes. I've kind of forgotten too. Oh, no, I remember now. The MLA that sits on the board of directors of Manitoba Hydro—I'll answer the question for the minister, seeing as he seems to have trouble getting that information—did, in fact, attend a board meeting on July 7th, 2017, where—guess what one of the topics of conversation might have been—in fact, it was—the topic of conversation was the MMF-Manitoba Hydro agreement.

*(16:30)

So, would the minister expect that this probably wasn't the first time this was discussed at a Manitoba Hydro board? So, at any point in time, would the minister have expected the MLA who sits on the board to come back to the government, Cabinet, somebody and suggest we're—the board is close to an agreement, or has an agreement that perhaps the government should be aware of?

Mr. Cullen: Well, it's certainly nice that the member opposite has all the answers to his own questions. That's kind of why we're going through the process of asking the questions.

Nevertheless—so it sounds like there was a board meeting on July 7th. That was certainly before my time as minister. I don't know what discussions the board member may have had or may not have had with the previous minister. Clearly, in my view, the board had done its work. Obviously, management probably had put the proposal together and then subsequently had taken it the board. I don't know if that's the first time it was discussed at the board level or not.

Clearly, it appears to me that the board recognized that this was a very unique proposal, something that Manitoba Hydro haven't entered into before. And I say unique in the fact that it talks about a proposal—the Manitoba-Minnesota line, which is currently on the books with Manitoba Hydro—but it also talks about projects that have yet to be contemplated by Manitoba Hydro over a 50-year time frame. So, clearly, a very unique proposal

before the board of directors, nothing that—to my knowledge—that they had previously undertaken. All other proposals, which eventually would be agreements, were on one-off projects so that the scope of that particular project could be fully understood, could be evaluated, and then the respective compensation could be made to whatever community would be involved in that particular project.

So this particular proposal was certainly different in scope and in nature than anything before Manitoba Hydro board, to my knowledge. So I think that is why the board at Manitoba Hydro decided that it would be an opportune time to show that proposal to the government of Manitoba. Then the government of Manitoba could fully evaluate what that particular proposal would mean to not just Manitoba Hydro, but the government of Manitoba, and also in this case, Metis people in Manitoba.

And, being a very unique proposal, it does have implications for Metis people and in fact all Manitobans for a 50-year period. So it was certainly a significant proposal in terms of the nature of the scope, and different in nature and scope than any project—or, sorry, proposal that the board had looked at before.

So I would say that the board probably did the right thing in terms of saying to the government, you know, here's a proposal that we've negotiated and why don't you have a look at this proposal and see what it means and see if it's—it falls within your priorities and your current policies. And I think that's important. Clearly—I think the board indicated it was important that the government be involved in that particular process and that discussion, and I think it was the right thing to do.

So I certainly appreciate the work that was undertaken by the board members to review the proposal that was negotiated by—between management and Manitoba Metis Federation, again, a—very unique in scope in purpose.

So I—in my view, the board did the right thing by having that particular proposal, and I think—probably best to call it a term sheet, because it did lay out terms of what an agreement could potentially look like, so the use of the term term sheet, I think, is probably appropriate. I would certainly have my legal colleagues weigh in on that interpretation, but it certainly looks like it to me.

So, you know, having said that, I think the board did the right thing in asking the government of Manitoba to review that—really, an all-encompassing proposal before, which would have long-term implications for Manitobans, and especially Metis people, for 50 years to come.

Mr. Lindsey: I would just like to take this opportunity to clarify that my note-writing dates down got a little confused. It was seven-five, not July 7th, but actually the 5th of July that that board meeting took place that the MLA from Emerson participated in.

So now that we've cleared up the date, the minister can comment whether, at any point in time after July 5th, did the MLA that sits on the board of directors of Manitoba Hydro say anything to anybody that the minister's aware of—at Cabinet, in government—that Manitoba Hydro board of directors had reached what they called, in the minutes of their meeting, an agreement on this Manitoba Metis Federation deal?

*(16:40)

Mr. Cullen: Appreciate the question from the member.

So I think that the minister—the member is digging around on a timing issue here, and clearly, that was before my time as the minister. So, obviously, there was—sounds like there was a discussion at the board in July around this particular proposal, and I will correct the member. Manitoba Hydro has always said this was a proposal. It was subject to an agreement coming out of it. So, you know, I think the term, term sheet, has been floated around significantly, and I think that's really what this proposal did; it laid out potential terms for an agreement that may or may not come to fruition.

So, once the board had a look at this particular proposal, I'm sure, with the quality of people around the table at the time, they recognized this was a very unique opportunity and unique proposal, and they wanted to make sure that the government was onside in terms of this very unique proposal. So that's why subsequent—appears, certainly subsequent to that particular meeting, the government was officially notified of this particular proposal. And upon government recognizing this very unique proposal, they decided it was important to do their diligence in regard to this rather unique proposal, unique to Manitoba Hydro, for sure, because it was an all-encompassing proposal, which has considerations

for 50 years down the road. So, obviously, there was legal implications to the government of Manitoba and to the Manitoba Hydro board and to Manitoba Hydro and, obviously, in this case, to the Manitoba Metis Federation and, additionally, to the Metis people of Manitoba, all across Manitoba, for the next 50 years.

So, clearly, as I'd indicated before, government and Cabinet wanted to make sure that our Crown corporations are working within the policies and priorities that our government has identified. And obviously, the Cabinet had concern. Obviously, the legal people had reviewed the particular proposal coming forward and identified some concerns for future implications of this particular proposal to Manitobans. And following that internal review, government and Cabinet had an opportunity to discuss the approach they would take as a result of this particular proposal that had been negotiated between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation. And at that time, at the March meeting, a directive was issued by Cabinet that indicated that Manitoba Hydro should not proceed with a formal agreement as a result of this particular term sheet that had been discussed with Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation.

So that was clearly the directive that was put on the table by Cabinet. That particular directive became public and certainly the board was made aware of it at that particular time.

So, clearly, this was a unique proposal that had been brought to the board at Manitoba Hydro, and I appreciate them turning it over to the government of Manitoba for the government's consideration because, as I say, it does and will have significant implications for many Manitobans for many years to come, up to 50 years in nature. So the scope of this particular proposal is quite encompassing, and I think it was a wise decision for the board to ask the government to get involved and have a second look at this particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So the government appoints an MLA to sit on the board, to act as a conduit to keep the board informed if they're getting too far afield from Cabinet—or, from government policies, priorities. And one, I guess, is left to assume that that MLA reports back to the minister at the very least that here's the tone of discussions that are taking place. But this minister now says, well, he didn't become the minister until August, so even if they had a member sitting on the board that was reporting back—

if he was—this minister wouldn't have any knowledge of that, even though he was a minister of a different ministry that would have been sitting at the Cabinet table, certainly would have heard any discussions about a Crown corporation that's making agreements and running amuck and out of control. And apparently, this minister doesn't claim to have any knowledge of that, even though it's all the same department staff and it's all the same government.

So, okay, if we buy the minister's statements at face value that he first became aware of it in August, when he became the minister, at what point in time—what date did he—did the minister communicate back to Manitoba Hydro to stop, that this agreement that Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation thought they had was not to proceed?

Mr. Cullen: I'm certainly not privy to any discussions that the member that sits on the Manitoba Hydro board may have had with the previous minister, and I do appreciate that and I appreciate the good work that that particular board member has provided and the direction he's provided and insight he's provided to Manitoba Hydro—to the board of Manitoba Hydro.

* (16:50)

You know, clearly, we as a government, once we were made aware of the details of this particular proposal, we made the undertaking to make sure we investigated what this particular and unique proposal would mean to Manitobans, and that's the good work that was done.

Clearly, I've had a number of discussions with the chair of the board in terms of what this proposal would look like and the ramifications for Manitobans, for Manitoba Hydro, and for the Metis people as well, so we certainly have had discussions back and forth, you know, subsequent to the government of Manitoba recognizing what this particular term sheet looked like, what an agreement could potentially look like, so we certainly have had those discussions.

The member will know that Cabinet made the decision basically effective March 21st of this year to order a directive to Manitoba—to the board of Manitoba Hydro to not to proceed with this particular proposal to the stage of an agreement and that's when the, you know, official word was given to the board of directors at Manitoba Hydro.

Now, clearly, the Manitoba Metis Federation and, I would say, Manitoba Hydro and the

government of Manitoba Hydro don't necessarily agree in terms of what that proposal—whether or not that actually is—that proposal's actually an agreement, and I think, as we talked about earlier, that is probably the point of dispute, but we recognize the Turning the Page Agreement that was signed by all three parties back in 2014 and we certainly respect that particular document, the document that sets out the framework for discussions with the three parties, and because we respect that particular document and we respect the authority that document has, during my conversation with President Chartrand just a couple of weeks ago, we agreed that was the proper mechanism to have a discussion around what the dispute is. There is, under that particular Turning the Page Agreement, a dispute clause which references the tripartite steering committee which is made up of all three parties, and I know that particular tripartite steering committee has met on a few occasions here just recently to try to outline exactly what the dispute is and clearly, that is the—I think the proper mechanism to put that particular dispute on the table.

So, once the committee has completed their work and outlined exactly what the dispute is, then I think there's a further opportunity for the three parties to sit down and, hopefully, move forward in terms of an arrangement going forward.

So, clearly, that's the framework that we have before us, the Turning the Page Agreement. We certainly honour the premise behind the Turning the Page Agreement and the process, quite frankly, that's laid out in that Turning the Page Agreement. We think it's an opportunity for the three parties to sit down and try to at least ascertain what the dispute is all about and we look forward to that particular committee, that's the tripartite steering committee, spelling out exactly what the dispute is. I know there's been—certainly some paper back and forth in terms of trying to finalize that particular dispute, so we look forward to having that committee meet again in the very near future to put everything on the table, and we look forward to the three parties getting together in the near future to really talk about the good things that we have to do here in Manitoba.

Mr. Lindsey: So, when this minister became the minister responsible for Crowns, did you—did the minister meet with the government appointee, the MLA, on the Manitoba Hydro Board? Did you have any meetings to discuss what was going on with Manitoba Hydro, where the file was at? MMF—was it a part of any of those discussions?

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the question.

I will indicate for the member that certainly as minister, I did have a lot of meetings with both the chair and the vice-chair since becoming minister, and certainly respect those gentlemen immensely for the good work that they were doing on behalf of Manitobans.

And I have met with our member that sits on the Manitoba Hydro board, and I meet with him on a very regular basis. And we talk about a lot of—range of ideas and issues. And quite frankly, I like to have a positive relationship with all my colleagues on this side of the House, and we try to get together as often as possible and make sure that we're all cognizant of the issues out there.

And, obviously, you know, Manitoba Hydro being our crown jewel and our biggest Crown—one of our most important Crowns—we obviously want to make sure that we're having a proper dialogue with the board and certainly with our government member on the board as well. And that's obviously important for us, and we view that communication as being positive. You know, we can make decisions together when we have positive communication. I'm certainly happy to report that on the government side, I think all members get along quite well, and we hope that they continue those positive relationships. And as I said, the members on the government side continue to have positive relationships, and we look forward to working on our—on communication.

And clearly, you know, we talked earlier about the governance and accountability model that we've laid out here. You know, I think that model lends itself to dialogue; it lends itself to communication. Certainly, as minister, I'm working to work with the boards and certainly the chairs of the boards to make sure that we're doing the right things on behalf of all Manitobans. And I will certainly—as minister—endeavour to continue to build those positive relationships and positive communications.

And I—my colleague from Emerson and I are good friends, and we have the opportunity to discuss a lot of issues from time to time, and I certainly share his passion for Manitoba Hydro and for the good work that he does at the board at Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Lindsey: So the minister says that he's—

Madam Chairperson: Hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:10)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I ask for leave to recess this Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairperson: There's a question on the floor requesting leave. All in favour? *[Agreed]*

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (15:10)

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

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

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

I'll get the minister to introduce his staff while they're taking their seats.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Joining me in the Chamber are Deputy Minister Jamie Wilson, ADM Colleen Kowalchak *[phonetic]*, and ADM Rob Santos and ADM Carlos Matias.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. As previously agreed, questions for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is open for questions.

The honourable member for Concordia—or the honourable minister.

Mr. Wishart: I have some statements in response to questions that were tabled the other day, follow-up, additional information. This was in response to questions from previous sitting committee, and I had committed to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) to follow up on questions regarding funding under the new labour market transfer agreement and how this would be reflected in the records.

These agreements are an important part of how we help Manitobans develop the necessary skills for industry and our growing economy. Mr. Chair, these agreements assist more than 30,000 Manitobans each year to prepare to find for and to obtain employment. This includes working with unemployed workers who are looking to return to work, including indigenous Manitobans. It also includes apprentices who have been completing their journey person certification, youth who are preparing for or transitioning into the labour force, newcomers who are integrating into the Canadian labour market, social assistance participants who are preparing to enter or re-enter the workforce and, of course, employers seeking to hire new employees, expand their workforce and improve their conditions.

In '16-17, over 5,000 Manitobans supported—for to develop skills for high-demand jobs. In fact, three quarters, or 76 per cent, more accurately, found employment within three months of completing their training.

There is a growing body of leading Ed. research that demonstrates these agreements are having a positive return on both the quality of life for Manitobans and to our economy. Individuals work more, earn more, use less in government income support than if they had not participated in Manitoba's programs. This demonstrates these investments are achieving more than if individuals were to go it alone. Our work is having a positive impact.

The revenue that is provided under these agreements is accounted for and reflected on page 141 of the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31st, 2019, on the line for Education and Training. Additional detail will be made available at the time when the 2018-2019 revenue supplement is tabled, and I'd be more than pleased to follow up with the member at that time.

And also—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In response to the honourable member from River Heights, follow up the question regarding overall enrolment as well as enrolment in French within our education system, total enrolment or head count as of September 2017 for the education system is 187,036 children. Well, this is an increase of 0.9 per cent over the same period last year. And

as of September 30th, 2016, enrolment, full-time equivalent, in French, was 5,693 and in French immersion was 22,260. I thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thanks, Minister.

And now the floor is open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Just to follow up when the—where the minister left off or started, I guess, this afternoon, of those two last numbers that he provided: 5,693, I believe, and 22,260 were—that—can—maybe can he give us—is that an increase or a decrease as compared to last year and what the—*[interjection]* Yes.

* (15:20)

Mr. Wishart: I know that those are both increases. We don't have the exact numbers now, if you wanted that, but we know that they're both increases.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we get—continue with the questions, I'll get the member from Concordia to introduce his staff and—in attendance today.

Mr. Wiebe: This is Christopher Sanderson, and he is our—a researcher—caucus researcher with the opposition caucus.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Okay, now—if—continue with the questions.

Mr. Wiebe: If I could just ask the minister to endeavour to get those percentage increases to me, that would be helpful.

I also wanted to pick up on where the minister began, as well, with regards to apprenticeships. And he had mentioned that they're in the upcoming supplementary—or, supplement report, that that's where we would get the additional information. And he had said in the future. And I'm just not sure when that is.

So if he could tell us when we can expect that additional information to be coming.

Mr. Wishart: The deadline for tabling that additional information will be the end of this session, so sometime for before that. We're not quite sure where it is in the—it's being developed as we speak.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister tell us how many apprenticeship registrations is he anticipating in the 2018-2019 year?

Mr. Wishart: For '16-17, the number is 2,217. We're—don't have a compiled number for '17-18, but we can return to you with that as it's available.

Mr. Wiebe: So maybe we're on different pages here. I'm just—so what I have here is 2016-17, the Estimates book said that they—that the department intended to purchase 5,250 technical training seats to support apprenticeships. And this year, in '18-19, that number has dropped to 4,522.

Are we on the—on different pages, maybe?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. That's actually a very good point because one of the problems in the past has been very low turnout for some of these purchased seats, and we've changed the methodology that we work with, with companies on that to make sure that the attendance is much better. So we've been able to reduce the number of seats we purchase and still actually get more students in those seats.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, I'm still maybe just—I feel like we—I'm not getting the—I'm not quite clear on what the—where the minister was on the first—the answer to the first question. So he had mentioned 2,217. Maybe could he just point me to where that—where he's getting that number from, if it's in the Estimates book or just give me some context for it.

Mr. Wishart: So that the number that I gave the member is the number of new registrants that are available that year. One of the problems with the apprenticeship system, and I think the member is aware of that from the Auditor General's report, that there are a large number of inactive apprentices out there, and we are attempting to contact them and make sure whether they're interested in continuing forward in the apprenticeship program that they're registered for or—it isn't always a bad sign, but it isn't always a positive sign either, in that many people that don't pursue further in their apprenticeship program have found a permanent job that is to their liking, and they have chosen not to pursue, but we need to know that so that we can keep track of them accordingly. But also there was a fairly significant number that we had lost track of, and we needed to make sure that they weren't not moving forward because of something that we could help them with. And also there are situations where people take a period of time off in the apprenticeship process. So they might go to school for one year and then be two years before they come back in the system. That tends to leave our numbers a little bit variable in terms of the number of people active in any one year and in any one area. So we need to do follow-up, often, with them to make sure that we're well aware of what their intentions are.

We are working with a number of other provinces to put in place a new, much more computerized record-keeping system. We're hoping that that's going to help as we move into that. That'll help clean up some of these people that we were uncertain of or unclear as to whether or not they were engaged in the apprenticeship system and wished to continue on with the apprenticeship system or whether they were satisfied where they were.

So that's some—one of the reasons that we get very variable numbers as to active apprenticeship in the system.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Do you want to repeat that, Minister, on record?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, and if member wishes to look a little bit more as to what's going on in terms of some details, in the apprenticeship system, that is contained on page 112 where they talk about the activity levels that—and which is—covers a lot of what we're talking about here and also some of the expected results in terms of people that are new registrations, the purchase of the seats, as you had pointed out, and the delivery of those skills. And we do have some work to do as well with the high school apprenticeship system to make sure that it is meeting the HSAP standards.

* (15:30)

Mr. Wiebe: And I thank the minister for that. I'll have some time to read this through and take a further look, but maybe he could just tell us a little bit more about exactly who in the department is doing this work of contacting these apprentices, and maybe just talk a little bit more about the computer program that is being used. And I guess, maybe just—if he could talk a little more about how that tracking system was developed, and sort of, some of the things that it seeks to find out from potential applicants.

Mr. Wishart: As the staff puts some of the other numbers together for you, I would bring you up to date on the computer program. The official announcement was actually—and launch for this project occurred in October 12th of 2017—sorry, in St. John's and it—St. John's, Newfoundland. This joint event between the—all of the Atlantic provinces, Manitoba and the federal government, and we also issued a news release at the same time. We know that Saskatchewan is also looking at the program, but is not actively a participant at this time.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I mean, the reason I ask, Mr. Chair, is, you know, I mean, we're at a time here in Manitoba where the economy is slowing down, and we can have a discussion about why that is, and certainly have a—I'm sure, a different—have a different viewpoint on that from both sides of the Chamber here, but the reality is that there are less Manitobans who are working in full-time jobs than there were just a year ago.

So the concern, then, is that, of course, when our unemployment rate is falling below the national average, that people are going to be looking to train and upgrade their skills and get back into the workforce in places that they can find employment. And so, of course, the concern is that, you know, 700 seats is the reduction from last year to this year in the number of seats purchased for apprenticeship, and that's concerning.

So I want to get to the bottom of that, and you know, the more information the minister can give to shed light on that, I think, would be helpful.

Mr. Wishart: Well—and thank the member for the question. We're certainly concerned as well. When it comes to those that are inactive, it has to amount to personal contact or contact by our staff before we get a significant response. We usually start with a letter and work—and kind of ramp up from there until we get some form of response from them as to—an indication as to whether they're—they continue to be interested in it.

One of the areas that was clearly a problem was the attendance issue. Now, sometimes, that occurs because a particular company who has an apprentice that should come is very busy, and they don't attend when they should, but we have had issues where whole classes were set up for particular companies or sectors, and then suddenly, there was—they just didn't participate. We're on the hook for those because, of course, the cost of delivering those has already been achieved by—to a fair degree, often by organizations like Red River or ACC, so we end up having to pay for those. And we certainly want to make sure that we're using what we pay—we're paying for.

We can ramp up the numbers that exist now if the demand continues to build, and as we maintain or get contact with those apprentices that have been in the system—and I'm told that some of them, it's been eight and 10 years before we've heard from some of them. So once we get that up to date and more engaged with them, I think we'll have much better data and a much higher level of participation.

As I said before, it isn't always bad news; sometimes they found a position that is suitable to them, meets their needs, and that's as far as they want to progress in the system. But we don't want it to be because there was no follow-up and no opportunity for them that they do not choose to progress further through the apprenticeship system.

And, frankly, as we move forward with the retirement of the baby boom population, we're really going to need an awful lot of people that get through the process to journeyman. And so we're looking to enhance that area and actually have more people as—be active participants in that process.

Mr. Wiebe: So I'm hearing the minister acknowledge that this is—that there is an issue with regards to unemployment and that there is certainly a need for additional apprenticeship spots. And that's, you know, I think, a structural issue, I think, as he is alluding to in the second part of his answer there. But it's also an issue with a slowing economy or an—a changing economy, maybe, if I wanted to put it as nicely as I could.

But what I wanted to dig down into—and I'm hoping that the minister's staff is working on this—is, he's now identified two, sort of, categories where these seats might fall into: the large participants in the apprenticeship program coming from the employer side, and then these individuals that we're trying to contact.

So I wanted to know, I guess, about both of those. So, first of all, with the individuals, is—the personal contact, is this a phone call? Is this an email? Is this some sort of algorithm that this new computer system will try to decipher who is an active participant and who is not? And then on the other side, for the employer on the employer side, are there large employers that are coming to the minister saying, no thank you. We don't need apprenticeship spots. We're slowing down. You know, we're laying off; we're downsizing; we're moving to other jurisdictions. Is that—is—or maybe he can give me examples of those if there are, or can give me just a broad sense of what that looks like.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question, but he did not hear me say that one of the problems was increased unemployment. And we certainly are not seeing decreasing demand in this sector, as I shared with the member earlier, because of—partly because of the retirement and partly because of growth in some of these sectors, we're actually seeing greater demand for many of these.

But what we want to be sure is that we are providing the programs, the apprenticeship programs, in a timely manner and that those seats are filled because we pay for them either way, and it is very important us—to us to make sure that we have people that are in there, and that—also important to the individuals.

So, when it comes to contacting these many apprentices that we have not been able to keep track of, we initially start by sending out letters and then follow up from them. Sometimes, the problem, frankly, is the contacts, that they have moved or changed employers or something like that, and we have lost track of that. But we have been hearing back very positively from a large percentage of these. We also work very collaboratively with the institutions that provide the service in terms of apprenticeship training to make sure that we fill these seats, because that's—they want them filled, the institutions want them filled, the students want them filled, and we want them filled. So we all want to work together on this.

*(15:40)

We certainly are concerned about any large-scale cancellations, and we've had some discussion with sectors that have done that to us on the past—have a history in that area, to make clear to them that we don't want to be seeing this in the future and that they need to work more co-operatively with us. And the response has been very positive. Some of the rail sector in particular, which does have a tendency to be a little boom and bust, who have—currently experiencing quite a significant boom in terms of hiring and apprenticeship needs, we're making it very clear to them that we want to make sure that they fill the spaces that they are indicating that they want.

So we can gear these up in a fairly short timeframe if it becomes apparent that there's a need to do that. But we need to be working in a very constructive manner, not only with the employers but also the apprentices themselves. And if we can't keep track of them, if we don't have a good record-keeping system, that's just not happening. And that was what had been experienced to a high degree.

I—you know, I keep circling back to this: It isn't always a bad sign when we don't hear from them again. They have found a place of employment or a level of employment that they're comfortable with.

But there are also a lot of changes in the industry and we're actually struggling a little bit with the idea

that we may have to bring back some people that have completed courses and update them because of changes in technology. And I think the member in—certainly would understand that because most sectors of—construction industry in particular, or electronic tech—digital technology industry had changed dramatically even last few years.

Mr. Wiebe: So I'll have to go back and check Hansard to figure out exactly what the minister—and I feel like maybe this is just a bit of a language issue around the concept of apprenticeships—because I think I heard him say that there is no demand—or increase to demand, but that there is an increase to demand.

So, again, I might have just misheard and I'd have to go back and check Hansard, but I think what we can agree on, is that the number of apprenticeships in Manitoba, it's an important—as he said, an important area to be on track with, to fill the seats that are there and to make sure that those who are seeking apprenticeships can access them.

So, again, I just want to drill down. And now, they're still—we're still talking about these two tracks. But I want to talk specifically, maybe.

When he talks about individuals, he mentioned a letter would go out to the participants. And you know, in this day and age a letter is maybe not the best way to reach people. Is that the end of it? Is it a letter and if it bounces back, then do we consider that apprentice to be kind of lost in the system or is there follow up?

How much—I'm trying to get to the bottom of how much, you know, staff time is being used to have this personal contact.

And he also mentioned about percentages of—you know, he said a high percentage of these apprentices are maybe finding other jobs or falling off the apprenticeship system for a very good reason. Can he give me some of those—that data that he has, some of—percentages about the number of apprentices that they're reaching? How many have found other jobs, or how many are still, you know, anxious to get back in the system but can't for other reasons?

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

In terms of the process that we go through with each one, it is fairly detailed. I mean, we start with the letter because that's what we have on file. We're

still using the old system, which is a paper-based system, so it, frankly, probably reflects the 200-year-old history of the apprenticeship system in North America and, in some ways, probably echoes the several-thousand-year-old system that exists in Europe when it comes to apprenticeship system. So we're trying to update from that.

We will have the new system in place within about a year or so. So what we're trying to do is go through all of the ones that we haven't been able to track. First, they get a letter, then an email if we have that, and then, of course, the employer is also part of that, so we may have the employer's email and we can work backwards from that point in time. And then if we still haven't heard from them, we follow up with phone calls. So it is fairly intensive in terms of tracking people down, and we make, actually, the best effort, because, one way or the other, we want to know what their future includes.

Some of this was touched on a little bit in the colleges review, frankly. Because a lot of the colleges, of course, provide the training, and one of the areas that came out was poor completion rates in the colleges. And so this is kind of a little bit tied to that because we certainly need to make sure that we have the people in the seats that we tell the colleges that should be there. It shows up in their records as well. And so they're not really very happy to see in their records that they have a poor completion rate. So we need to make sure that we're getting to these people and getting them back and making sure that they move forward as much as possible.

We don't have good data on this whole area. So I can't really share any numbers with you. That is, frankly, one of the things we're really looking forward to in terms of a computerized system. It'll kind of take us out of the pencil and—I don't know whether any of you've ever seen an apprenticeship work record book, but it is a little pocketbook that reminds me of what my grandfather used to keep records in on the farm. It is very, very much a historical piece of significance, and I know that the system has a long history, and I certainly respect the long history that the apprenticeship system has in Manitoba, but we need to move much more quickly than that, and we also need to be able to get access to that data so that we know whether we—we're able to fill the needs in some particular sector.

We do get, occasionally, companies coming to town that need large numbers of certain types of trained individuals, and so we need to make sure that

we can supply those. Without them—and I can share with the member that one of the more interesting discussions I've had is actually with Roquette and Simplot and McCain's all at the same table wondering who was going to steal whose employees first. Because we needed to train for that whole sector in terms of food development. And that's what we need to do as a government to make sure that we have met the labour market needs going forward. Number of what they needed, of course, fit in the range of the apprenticeship trades, and so we're certainly working very constructively with them, and we've had a couple of good meetings talking about meeting the needs of them all.

*(15:50)

Mr. Wiebe: So the minister has talked about some successes with regards to employers. He's also, though, in a previous answer, referenced issues with employers or with sectors and sort of large cancellations and unfilled seats.

So I wanted to dig down into that, and just—if the minister could give us more information, maybe give us some examples, as he just did with the food development sector, but talk about those sectors where there's been issues, unfilled seats, large cancellations. Recent examples, if he could, would be helpful to paint a picture of how they're trying to rejig the system right now.

Mr. Wishart: Well—and thank the member for the question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, certainly, there has been some issues in the past with that. As we noted, that was one of the things that turned up a bit in the college's review, and it had also been identified, actually, by some of the staff in the area of apprenticeship prior to that as an area we need to work from.

And one of the sectors that often gives us difficulty in that is the whole contracting area, because it's—tends to be that they're really busy or they're not busy. And when they're really busy, they don't really want to see their apprentices go off for three months to meet their requirements, because it's hard to backfill in some cases, to find people with the same set of qualifications. So that is one sector that has always been a challenge and will probably continue to be a challenge.

One of the other ones that I mentioned earlier was the railways, because they do tend to be a little bit of boom-and-bust as well. Right at the moment, they seem to be in a very sustained building process,

and so their numbers have been rising fairly rapidly, and we certainly need to work with them to make sure that we can fill the positions that they want.

Those are really good-paying jobs, as I'm sure the member knows. He's probably met a few people that worked in the rail yards over there in Transcona, and those are good jobs. And we want to certainly make sure that we meet the needs for those positions. They have been good employers, and they continue to be good employers, but it's all about working the timing and making sure that the employer understands that they have an obligation in this process as well. It is not just the employee that has an obligation to complete their levels; it's the employer that has some obligations as well.

So this is a bit of a work with the industry approach. Part of the problem has always been keeping track of everyone. As I said, the system is very old school, and we're really looking forward to having a much more modern system to work with, and actually providing us with a little bit more data as to where the growth is and where the gaps are, because I think that that would let us, as a government and as a province, meet those in-demand jobs now and in the future, more accurately and in a more timely manner. So I think that everyone will be better off for a system that provides that level of service.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I—you know, I mean, I think the—I'm still trying to pin down the minister on this idea of demand, and I think he's rightfully identified that this isn't an area where you can, sort of, start and stop on a dime, and it does require some foresight and some ability to implement the training, almost before it's needed as in terms of the jobs on the other end.

So, you know, I return to my main question, which is that, you know, in a time when our economy's slowing down—there's 7,500 less full-time jobs in Manitoba than there were just a year ago. You know, the minister's identified a number of areas where, potentially, there could be reallocation or retraining of individuals, and some potential there, you know, but at the same time, the number of seats has come down. And the minister's not talking about a reallocation here or a rejigging of the system; he's talking about an overall cut of 700 seats for apprenticeships.

And, you know, so it just begs the question that if we need to look—you know, instead of playing the game looking at the next move, we're—we should be looking at the move beyond that and the move

beyond that, in terms of getting people ready for the new economy and for jobs where they're needed. You know, it seems like we're, instead, cutting positions and we're scaling back. And we're sort of doing what this government shows it wants to do in every area of the economy, and that is to slow down and to cut and to reduce, rather than seeing the potential and seeing the increases that are appropriate and investing in those.

So it comes back to that 700 seats. And the minister has told me now that he has—he doesn't have the data, he doesn't have the statistics to back it up, that there's a number of people—he can't tell me how many people—but there's a number of people that maybe don't need these seats, but that's a concern. That's a concern for our caucus and for Manitobans. I would say that they—they're concerned that they won't be able to access those apprenticeships.

So can he square that circle for me? Can he talk how—tell me how, without that data and without that information in front of him and without that ability to really track where the need is, how can he be confident that those 700 seats, you know, when eliminated, aren't just a cost-cutting measure, another cost-cutting measure by this government without seeing the bigger picture, and that this is based on what's best for Manitobans?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question, but I don't agree with some of his premises that this is a sector where we're seeing a reduction in terms of demand. In fact, I would argue that we're seeing an increase in demand; one that, unfortunately, because no one was keeping track of a lot of these apprentices in the system in the last 10 years, we are not able to respond quickly to and they're not able to track the individuals. We're doing our best to clean up that, and I think if the member wants to talk more about that he can have a quick look at the Auditor General's report on the apprenticeship system and find that, in fact, what I'm saying is what the Auditor General said as well.

We're seeing a lot of growth in these sectors, but we are not in a position as a government, nor would anyone want to end up paying for seats that are not being filled, because the individuals are not being tracked and working their way through the system.

So we're working—our solution to this is to work with the sector and to work with industry and to work with the sector councils where appropriate, because sometimes there is one and sometimes there isn't, to make sure that we are meeting the needs

of the sector in terms of the number of trained apprentices and—but we also need to work with those companies in the sector to make sure that they give the apprentices the time off to fill these. We do not want to be in a position where we set up a course and then not have individuals in those seats. We touched a little bit on that in terms of the colleges' review. We want those positions to have people in the seats and that the training occurs and that people progress through the apprenticeship system.

Some sectors, especially the electrical–electrician sectors, have a lot of association with other industries. MCI–Motor Coach Industries hires an awful lot of people in those sectors, and they're at various levels of the apprenticeship's process. When they are busy, they don't want to send people out for apprenticeships as well, and we need them to understand that we need to work with them to make sure that we train those folks so that they have the well-trained individuals that they need on a long-term basis.

So we're certainly trying to work with industry on that. As I said before, I certainly look forward to a system in the future that will help us track all of this, which is why we entered into that agreement with the Maritime provinces and the federal government to try and develop a better system. It does exist in some other parts of the world. There are some other organizations that have good systems to track that and it'll help us balance our labour market needs with the needs of the industry at any given time.

We've certainly seen a lot of growth in some sectors and that will create for us some challenges in terms of matching it up.

* (16:00)

The member's certainly correct about the issue of we need to look down the road because when you start down this, you've traded in the trades, you start someone at apprentice level 1, and you know that it's going to take a period of years to get them to where you need them if you need a journeyman.

And I know we had that very same discussion with Roquette in particular because they have some fairly unique needs in terms of journeymen in their system. So we need to make sure that we can find individuals that are going to make those needs without having to steal them from their competitor or someone else in the sector. So we need to make sure that we're training people to do that. We're trying very hard to work with industry to make that happen.

You know, it—there's always been a demand in this sector. We are certainly seeing an increase because of the age factor. We're seeing a lot of baby boomers that are probably coming to the end of their careers in this sector, and so we need to make sure not only do we have those that are in place for new industry to come forward—and we need them for those industries to succeed—but we also need to make sure that we can replace a lot of the people that have been in industry for a long time. And some of those are, frankly, the employers. They get into the business themselves.

Mr. Wiebe: I wanted to just ask maybe a few what will probably end up being one-off questions just for my own knowledge and clarification.

So, on page 14 of the Estimates book, the note at the bottom states that this overall number of FTEs includes 99.75 FTEs for STEP students. Now, I did notice that in last year's Estimates, that was included. However, it was not included in the year before.

So I just wanted to clarify: Have the STEP students always been included in that count and maybe it was just the note that was missing, or are—is the addition or the inclusion of STEP students something that is different from previous years?

Mr. Wishart: I think if the member goes back and has a look at the FTEs for Children and Youth Opportunities, they have been moved into our department.

As the member knows, we contain parts of several departments as they existed before. That happened, of course, in the previous year. So that's why they're included with us now but weren't prior to that.

They were in Children and Youth Opportunities, is what I'm told.

Mr. Wiebe: Also wondering, adult literacy—sorry, adult learning and literacy, I'm trying to find out where that is located. I noted that last year, it had its own line under post-secondary education and workforce development, but—just having trouble finding it this year. It's a good test for the staff here in the room there. I know they know these books inside out.

Mr. Wishart: That would be contained in the budget shown on page 113—[interjection]—117, sorry, my mistake. Adult learners is specifically referenced on page 114, second item down. And this is an area where we've been showing some increase in

enrolment in recent years and one that we're in discussion with as part of the whole colleges review.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm looking at page 117. I don't see it as a specific line item. I'm assuming it's in—contained in another line. Maybe could the minister just break that out for me and give me what that number would be if it was a separate line by itself, as it was in previous years?

Mr. Wishart: It's contained within the line that's referenced grants and transfer payments, about halfway down.

Mr. Wiebe: So I note that that line has a reduction from previous years. So, again, can the minister break out this amount or maybe just give more of an explanation of why that the amount here has decreased?

Mr. Wishart: The member is correct that there is a change in the numbers there. Part of that is because we've been able to—with the new labour market agreement, we've actually been able to find some administrative recovery in regards to that and better targeting and working with the labour market agreement. The new federal agreement really suits what we've been doing. In many ways it is very well aligned with the initiatives that we have been putting forward, and we're finding a number of places where we can work with the federal program much more constructively. Sometimes there is some efficiencies to be gained in that. Sometimes there's also additional services that can be provided to Manitobans, whether they be students or whether they be labour market related.

I know one of the most interesting discussions I have had at fed-prov. meetings with fellow provinces was in the area of labour market when I discovered what some other provinces have been doing in terms of labour market training that we had no history of doing here in Manitoba. And so there were—it was clear there were additional opportunities there for us to follow up on that we had not historically been taking advantage of, and we're certainly happy to do that.

* (16:10)

And the federal government has been very co-operative in this area. We've been working constructively with them. The new labour market agreements are providing us with access to additional funds. And we do see opportunities to train a significant number of more individuals as we have demand increases, some of the—some of which

were announced not too long ago: the Ubisoft announcement; of course, the Roquette construction announcement. The labour announcement around that—or labour market announcement really hasn't followed yet, but there certainly will be at some point.

Mr. Wiebe: So I want to—I'm still asking for that number, the adult learning and literacy. If the officials that are here could break that out and maybe explain exactly how much is dedicated to that program. And then just on the minister's administrative efficiencies that he's talking about, is this a reduction in FTEs? Maybe he could just explain that a little bit more and give us some more context exactly how these efficiencies were found and what were the impacts on that number. How did that \$400,000 come out of that line?

Mr. Wishart: I think the best way to handle this one is to come back with a additional breakdown, if you would—if the member would like that in terms of things that relate specifically to adult learning and literacy in regards to that. As the member probably will notice, there has been some efficiencies gained on that page. There's four FTEs less than—and then there's a footnote to that effect. Some of that is related to labour market and some of it to workforce development agreement, which are related, but they're two separate agreements. And part of that is some of the agreements that were in place—and the example given, of course, is Skip the Dishes coming towards the end of their period of time that we had agreements with them on.

Mr. Wiebe: Also on page 117, in my list of what I said were going to be one-off questions but, of course, then I didn't—then I asked more than one question on that last one, so don't hold me to that, but the—with regards to the line that's listed as fees and/or services on behalf of citizens, and I don't see that line appearing in the last and previous years' Estimates, so maybe could the minister just tell me what this is and where that's been maybe moved from?

Mr. Wishart: Okay, this is reasonably complex, but there were four agreements in place, labour market agreements. We collapsed that into two. All of that is shown as part of fees and services on behalf of citizens. All of this is delivered through our labour market services that we provide to individuals. And, accordingly, it has been called fees and services. Most of it is, in fact, services related to that, and I guess that's probably why—I mean, we've collapsed a bunch of them in together. We've also

brought in Manitoba Families, Department of Families. Department of Families—sorry—also had a program around labour market access for those with disabilities that they delivered on their own, and now we are positioned to do that for them as well and that is some of the increase. I think the member may appreciate the fact that we're probably in a much better position to deliver that than they were. So we're hopeful that we can get good results in that whole area.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, and maybe this follows from that answer, then. The amount has gone up on that line. So I just wanted to know why that is.

Mr. Wishart: Sorry, that would be, yes. It'd be additional funding that has come over from Families, would be reflected in that for one, and an increase, yes, and an increase in the agreement as well.

Mr. Wiebe: Just with regard to—wanted to ask about the Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks, I know that there's currently an RFP out for this. Wondering if the minister intends to keep this ongoing for the upcoming year.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. The request for proposals has been issued by Finance, and that's an attempt by this government to try and co-ordinate some of the IT requirements a little better. As member probably knows, MERLIN has been in place for a number of years, very valued program. We certainly need the capability, but there are lots of other choices out there now. So we do need to keep up to date in terms of programs that are available and services that we can. We'll see what the request for proposals that has gone out not too long ago, if I remember correctly, yields us in terms of options. But, certainly, there's an intent to continue with the service.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I agree with the minister. I do know very well that the MERLIN system is valued and valuable, and it's certainly been expressed to me by users of that system that they appreciate having it and the efficiencies that they find in keeping that as a—as something that's available to them. So, you know, I guess we'll wait and see and watch this RFP very carefully, and, you know, this is another one of these entities that—special operating agencies that KPMG has said, well, take a look at it. I think one of the other ones that they said take a look at was the Pineland tree nursery.

* (16:20)

So I hope that the minister sees the value in this. And I mean, I appreciate that he says that this is coming from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), but I would ask that this is something that he sees the value in and stands up for his—for the schools in this province, and you know, stands up for those who are saying this is an important service that they come to count on. They want to have some accountability. They want to have some input in and they see the value in the system as it is, and always looking for more efficiencies, and always looking for better ways to deliver those services, but in a way that's accountable and sustainable to schools across the province.

Mr. Wishart: Well I appreciate the member's question. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I certainly appreciate his comments on, you know, hearing—and I have, too—have heard from a number of people in the system that it's a valuable system.

We're working very closely with the Department of Finance to make sure that whatever is put forward in terms of proposals meets our needs, and you know, that we can co-ordinate it as much as possible with the Department of Finance to make sure that we're efficient about it. And I think the member probably appreciates the fact that—especially with IT systems, they need to be reviewed often to make sure that they're not only meeting the needs, but that they're—you're getting the best system that is out there, especially as technology changes very frequently these days.

Mr. Wiebe: Sticking on the theme of K-to-12 education, how many new schools are currently under construction, and can the minister name them?

Mr. Wishart: I can certainly share that with the member.

Under construction at the moment are the K-to-8 school in Winkler, which is in Garden Valley School Division, and it'll have student capacity of 675 when we open with the potential to expand to 875 and has a child care attached to it which has a capacity of 74.

Also under construction are a 9-to-12 in Niverville, which is part of the Hanover School Division and will have a door-opening capacity of 450 with the current student—with the expansion capacity—sorry—to 550 and a child-care facility with that of 74.

And under design—and fairly well along on that process, I might say, because I got an update not too long ago—is a K-to-5 at Seven Oaks precinct D that'll

have a door-opening capacity of 450 with an expansion capacity to 600, and child-care capacity, again, of 74 attached to that. That's our—pretty much our standard size now, but there is one exception to that.

And K-to-8 at Waterford Green in Winnipeg School Division with a door-opening capacity of 600 and a student capacity for expansion of 825, and it has a child care attached to it of 74. Also under design is, in Brandon—southeast, it's called in Brandon. Right at the moment, they haven't come up with a name yet. K-to-8, current—or door-opening capacity 450, student capacity on expansion 675, and again, child care of 74.

In preliminary design is the 9-to-12 at Pembina Trails, Waverley west, and it'll have a—it's planned to have a door-opening capacity of 1,000 with expansion to 1,200, and it will have a child-care facility attached to it of 104. And K-to-8, also in Waverley West, will have a door-opening capacity of 800, and that's built to its full design capacity at that point in time, and it'll have a child-care capacity of 74.

As the member probably knows, those two schools are also designed to be in a campus style, so that we're in some discussions with the City of Winnipeg to make sure that we can co-ordinate some recreational facilities with that as well. I certainly look forward to the day that that is open because I know that the community is really looking for that, and I think it may well turn out to be one of the changes that we look at in the future in terms of design capacity, depending on how development occurs around the city, because this is very much driven by a total new development.

On top of that, though, we were able to work with the municipality in the Niverville case, and that one, too, though it's going to be phased, will have a connection to a recreational facility that is proposed for that community as well. That one'll be over a couple of years before we get that one sorted out.

So, where we can, we are certainly trying to accommodate that style of development in the future.

Mr. Wiebe: So I just wanted to clarify the—I think the minister said that the two that are under construction are Winkler and Niverville, and the rest, just giving us information.

Could the minister give, sort of, the same comprehensive rundown of each of the projects of when they anticipate the construction to begin for

those that hasn't begun, and when do they expect the schools to open?

Mr. Wishart: If the member will be patient, we'll bring someone in from Public Schools Finance Board that can bring him up to date on the very developments, but I know that these things are moving forward in a very aggressive timeline, as we want—not only want these schools, but we need them pretty bad.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, I'm just sort of scanning through my questions here, because the rest of them—most of my questions here were on capital, and so if the minister's bringing those forward, maybe I can—maybe I could skip to other questions.

So we heard just recently from a number of educators in the Winnipeg School Division and a number of folks there concerned with teaching positions, positions that help with resources and adapted learning, and there was concern that there were some cuts to some positions there.

Can the minister just explain what's going on in Winnipeg School Division?

* (16:30)

Mr. Wishart: Okay, well, thank the member for the question. And I'm afraid that one will be one you'll have to direct to Winnipeg School Division themselves. We certainly have heard that they are wanting to focus more on literacy and numeracy issues, and so they're changing their focus with some of their people that were resource consultants on staff. So they're calling—there has been some positions posted, I understand, looking for people—looking for—to fill different positions. Whether those will be the same people or not remains to be seen. I guess that's their choice. Any instructions we have given to Winnipeg 1 school division have always been around their administrative costs this year, and they have met those requirements much earlier on in their budgeting process. This is a bit of a focus change for them, and I guess it will remain to be seen whether that gives the type of results we want. They are the ones that are initiating this one.

Mr. Wiebe: On page 89 in the Estimates book under Support to Schools, subappropriation 16.5.(b), Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, there is a reduction in the line item under grants and transfer payments as well as a reduction in transportation.

Can the minister explain those changes?

Mr. Wishart: In an attempt to be efficient, we will answer the questions about capital that you had brought about construction dates. And in terms of the schools under design and under way—the three schools that are Seven Oaks, Precinct E and Winnipeg Waterford Green and Brandon southwest—we hope to be constructing in January of 2019; that's our start date for that. And the Waverley schools, 9 to 12 and K to 12, both Waverley West in the fall of 2019 for them, and I think, as the member appreciated, we're trying to co-ordinate with the City of Winnipeg on that construction and that is taking a little bit longer, but I think the outcome will be well worth it.

Mr. Wiebe: So I was just wondering about the completion dates for—the expected completion dates. You know, understanding that there are, you know, there are hiccups in terms of construction that are outside of the—maybe outside of the minister's control, but certainly there would be some sort of expectation of when those schools would be open.

I'm wondering if the minister could shed some light on that.

Mr. Wishart: For those that are currently under construction, we hope to be completed, subject to—as the member pointed out—things that are beyond anyone's control. The one for Winkler, for August of 2019; and the same for Niverville, August of 2019. And for the three schools—the precinct D—Seven Oaks, Winnipeg, and Brandon, August of 2020 to be completed. And the Waverley school August 2021.

Mr. Wiebe: Last year, the minister mentioned that he was developing a 10-year capital plan.

Has that plan been completed and can he share some more details about it?

Mr. Wishart: Thank the member for the question.

Going back to—and I know this is getting confusing, but going back to his question about Aboriginal—indigenous, yes, sorry—most of that decrease in the budget is reflected with the Manitoba education 'resurse'—resource research network discontinuation of the grant assistance related to that, and some of the remainder is transportation efficiencies that were discovered.

I think you'll find that at the foot of the page.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, so we'll try to get back to the capital. I'm trying to be respectful of the officials that have joined us here today.

So could the—can the minister talk about that 10-year capital plan? Is it complete?

Mr. Wishart: Yes, I can to some degree.

I mean, you're seeing a portion of it, of course, as to what we've planned in the next few years, here. We have certainly worked as a department in conjunction with school divisions across the province to put something together. We're not, you know, out in the public in terms of talking specifically about projects at this point in time. We have a somewhat different approach when it comes to capital projects. By the time you hear about them, with us, they're through the system and through the Treasury Board process.

So, you know, this remains to be done yet,. So we're reluctant, of course, to talk about specifics. But we are—on an ongoing basis—talking with the school divisions about their needs. I know that there are a number of others that have—a number of school divisions in the province that have presented extremely good cases as to what their needs are. We also have an ongoing budget when it comes to repairs and expansions. I know that there's a number of those in the works as well, but those tend to be a more annual part of the budget announcements.

So I can't share a great deal, I'm afraid, other than we have announced the seven—total of seven schools, which is a fairly major announcement. There will be more to follow. Certainly, there will be—some of them coming out in process before all of these schools are to the completion stage, if that's what you're wondering. You know, we'll have more on the table by the time these are completed, but at the moment, that's all we really got to share.

* (16:40)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I guess what I'm concerned about is that the minister was quite, you know, quite excited about having a 10-year capital plan, and you know, willing to share that this was something that they were developing, and yet, you know—and I'm not asking for specifics, I can understand that there are some of the finer details, but in terms of broad strokes, you know, targets that this minister thinks that they can meet in terms of new schools that could be built or the amount of money that's going to be put towards capital.

You know, again, we're not asking for state secrets here. We're asking for, you know, kind of, what does this mean to have a 10-year capital plan? How is this any different from any other ongoing

capital process that a government would have? If the minister was so excited about having a 10-year, specifically—not 11-year, not a nine-year plan; this was 10-year capital plan—what does that look like and what does that mean, you know, in a practical sense, to those people in our province who are looking for capital expenditure in the educational system?

Mr. Wishart: I was remiss in not introducing the gentleman that came into the room, Konrad Christianson [*phonetic*], who is Public Schools Finance Board, with us, and certainly thank—[*interjection*]-Erickson, sorry. Konrad Christianson-Erickson. Sorry, my mistake.

And, certainly, when it comes to the issue of what's being built and, you know, a 10-year timeline, some of that is internal, absolutely, helps us manage our resources and it also helps as a government to have a more predictable long-term plan in terms of capital expenditures. So, certainly, there's advantages to that. Frankly, I'm sure the member is familiar enough with what goes on with Treasury Board, and they like predictability. They do not like surprises. And so we certainly want to be sharing that with them as we go forward so that they're more than aware of what our needs are.

It is a very involved process that I know that Public Schools Finance Board goes through in determining where schools need to be located. The last thing we want to do is build one and have it underutilized. That would be a certainly not good use of our time or our resources and it would not serve Manitobans well. So we have to work very closely with the developers to find out what they're doing. It has been, I know, an increasing challenge because it used to be developments were much more smaller—were much smaller in scale. Now they tend to be hundreds of homes as compared to perhaps less than 100, as was often the case. So we're working very closely to do that. I know that there's been a few cases in the past where schools were not fully utilized for a number of years until the sort of stage 2, stage 3 of the development actually came to fruition. Developers have a tendency to be very optimistic as to how much interest there will be in their project, so we need to be very sure that these are realistic expectations before we make a commitment and begin the whole process to build additional schools.

And I know for sure when it comes to child-care facilities that there have been a number of cases in

the past where, frankly, the child-care facility was way undersized as to what the community's needs were in that particular area, and the chances of them getting another opportunity to add to that are—it's just doesn't happen. And so we have to find alternative places for them to do that, and we want to, as much as possible, continue doing that. As we're seeing an increased demand in early years and child care, the size of the child-care facilities we're building now make us wonder if we shouldn't be looking at larger ones already. And as was noted, there is one that is larger.

And we're certainly—you get some discussion around this whole issue because there are certainly some that feel that there's a maximum size for a child-care facility, and where that might be is a point of discussion.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The minister has indicated that he wants to improve learning in this province, and we know that graduation rates for indigenous learners are lower than others in the province. Of course, some of the indigenous learners will be in First Nations communities, and the federal government has been doing some work to increase funding. But many of the indigenous learners are in non-reserve communities, and—whether they be Metis or whether they be in Winnipeg or Brandon or many other places.

What is the minister's specific plan to improve learning among indigenous students?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for River Heights from—for his question.

Certainly, we are very interested in improving literacy and numeracy and graduation rates, and we certainly see—and I think the member has heard us reference already in the House a time or two the literacy-numeracy strategy we have been actively consulting on, putting together, which included a summit that—this last January, and we expect very shortly to have a document to release around that. And it has been a long time in the process, but it would—certainly, if you want to do proper consultation, you can't rush these things too fast through the system.

But, in the meantime, of course, we're looking for many opportunities to improve graduation rates. We've been working with the First Nations school system, the council that has been in place for many years. But, as the member knows, there was a federal announcement with the council and—to change some

of the funding numbers. It was originally supposed to be 16 schools; in the end, I think they reached agreement with 12 of the 16, and those are in place, and they have received additional funding.

But in the—also, related to that, we have expanded what we offer in terms of services and materials and resource materials. I know the antibullying program was expanded to those First Nation schools as well. We're trying very hard to work with them in a constructive manner to try and get better results.

One of the areas where we offer services and that First Nations schools are often interested in is—federal government doesn't do vocational as part of their school system. We do. We think that that's an area that there's a surprising amount—or, a lot of interest in, and we certainly want to see more done in that, so we have been working constructively to have agreements with school divisions now and get them access to vocational shop space within the school divisions that exist out there now.

And we've also had some discussions about some post-secondary institutions that have shop space in The Pas and getting some of the school system access to that, whether they be First Nations or whether they be public school system, because shops are expensive to build, as the member probably appreciates, and hard to keep up to date. And we want to keep them as busy as possible. We want to have as many people have access to those. We can't—we won't likely be duplicating a lot of them, so we're trying to provide opportunities to use that.

So that's one of the areas in particular where we see good opportunities. And we've seen great response to access to vocational from some of the First Nations communities as a great incentive to keep people in the school system that may well have not graduated, or fallen out of the system.

* (16:50)

But the long-term focus has to be getting everyone started right, whether they're in a public school, whether they're in a First Nation school, whether in private school, getting that early years literacy and numeracy in place. We know from research here and other places, that there is good results from that, and then those good results show all the way through the education process, all the way through to grade 12. And so we're certainly looking to do more of that as much as possible.

So, to make a long answer short, I mean, we're looking to work with them in a number of various—pretty much somebody came with—to us now with a good proposal around First Nations schools and working together, we'd be on board.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister has said he wants to improve learning. There are various measures of how well the post-secondary education institutions are doing, from Maclean's ranking to a variety of others. What is the minister's perspective on this, and is he going to try and improve rankings that are—is he taking another approach to improving learning?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. And that's—those are long-term questions, long-term answers in terms of where the member is going. Certainly, in terms of improving the overall rating of our post-secondary institutions on a national basis or an international basis, actually, that's going to take a long time, and we're certainly very happy to work with post-secondary institutions. One of the things that—one of the messages we got very clearly out of the colleges review is some areas that needed improvement. You know, in terms of numbers of participants in the colleges system, we're a little behind some of the other provinces. That said, we got pretty good ratings out of some of the colleges in terms of their capability when you compare to other jurisdictions. But one of the points what was brought forward, and we talked about a little bit earlier—I don't know when the member was in the room—oh, can't do that—we talked about a little bit earlier about completion rates at colleges and make sure that we're getting a fair measure of those completion rates, because apprenticeship system—when someone doesn't turn up for an apprenticeship space, that reflects negatively on the college's completion rate, and that's something that isn't entirely their responsibility. So we want to make sure that that's done as well.

But we want to get more students, a higher percentage of our population, through colleges and universities. Our percentage of our population that is taking advantage of the university is sort of in line with other jurisdictions. We're a little low on the colleges side of side of things, so we see great opportunities in that area. And, frankly, as education moves forward, and I know the member is very familiar with the university system, we're also seeing some overlaps, some transitions, if you want to put it that way. There's people out there now talking about, well, the best type of education you could get in the STEM area would be two years of university and two

years of college, because you would get that hands-on thing, and that—we've had some of those discussions between institutions, and I think that that may be somewhere we'd go in the future. We're certainly looking at that as an option. We want to provide Manitoba students and Manitoba as a province with a really well-trained workforce with great opportunities. We've had some success attracting new higher tech industries. We've had some success in the past with the aerospace industry, and I know that there'll be more things coming down in that area.

So we need to align what we train in the workforce and the post-secondary institutions with the opportunities. And know I looked at other jurisdictions to see how they have done with this, and I know that there's been some universities that have used co-ops for an example, as one mechanism to certainly—to make those connections with industry and tie the labour market outcomes from their particular institution more strongly to a particular company, and that has worked in some jurisdictions, and that's something that I think we will have to have a look at as well. We haven't moved very far in that direction yet, relative to other jurisdictions. The number of co-ops that we have is relatively modest, so we do see potential in that area.

It all falls back to this whole cradled careers thing that—approach to education that we have talked about, to make sure that we have all of the pieces in the puzzle, and that we don't lose people in the transitions. Whether it's the early-years transition, whether it's the high school to post-secondary transition, we don't want to lose them as part of the process. They always need to see a path forward, and so we need to work very closely with—not only with the K-to-12 system, but post-secondaries to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Gerrard: I'm interested in what the minister's approach is and thoughts are with regard to innovation and research, particularly post-secondary education level; what his view is, you know, where we should be going, how should we be funding it and what, you know, his approach overall is to this fairly important area.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, he—I appreciate, you know, that he has an

interest in research and that research is important in the long term for Manitoba. We don't administer all aspects of research. Growth, Enterprise and Trade, in particular, funds a lot of the research that is done, much of it at our post-secondary institutions, much of it at the University of Manitoba, the member appreciates.

However, we also are very engaged with research that is done within some of the college situations, and we've been involved with Red River and some of their testing facilities that they had put in place there. And that is a bit of a different approach, in that they work much more closely with industry in terms of making sure that that is well co-ordinated.

And we certainly have, actually, a very high rating nationally and internationally, in terms of our colleges, on the research side of things, mostly driven by some of their research facilities that have been—were put in in conjunction.

And, you know, some of this working with industry and getting them to put resources into the schools and the post-secondary institutions is a very good long-term solution. We talked a little bit about co-ops. That's not quite going as far, but it still gives us some of the same benefit when we have a jet engine in the Tec-Voc shop. The kids that come out of there can go into the aerospace industry with hands-on knowledge of how to do the rebuilds that are necessary, and that has worked extremely well. I can tell you the aerospace industry speak very highly of that.

And we've also had, with Stevenson Aviation, out of Red River, new donations toward training their people. And that's a, you know, a level above the high school. It's already in the post—

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 7, 2018

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