

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

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 4, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The 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.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 78(4), this is the list of ministers to be called for questioning in the debate on concurrence motion in the Committee of Supply for November 5, 2024, and November 6, 2024, and I table that.

The Speaker: The honourable official government—honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Johnson: Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to 'expediate' consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, and Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, on November 5, 2024, as follows:

At the top of orders of the day, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with the following limited debate provisions to apply:

First, the Minister of Justice may speak for up to five minutes;

Then a question period may be held in accordance with subrule 137(5);

Next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;

Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

The Speaker shall then put the question.

Once Bill 41 passes second reading, bills 41 and 221 shall be immediately referred to the Committee of the Whole. Once the Committee of the Whole rises, and the Chairperson reports, the House will consider concurrence and third reading of bills 41 and 221. The following limited debate provisions will apply to Bill 41:

First, the bill sponsor may speak for up to five minutes;

Next, a member of the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;

Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

The Speaker shall then put the question.

The following limited debate provisions will apply to Bill 221:

First, the bill sponsor may speak for up to five minutes;

Next, a member of government may speak for up to five minutes;

Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

The Speaker shall then put the question.

The House will not see the clock until all the House business outlined in this request has been completed.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to consider Bill 41 and Bill 221 as described by the member?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House to see if there's

leave to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as follows:

1. At the top of the orders of the day today, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41 with the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254 considering departmental Estimates to sit concurrently in the House. The following limited debate provisions will apply to the Bill 41 debate:
 - (a) First, the Minister of Justice may speak up to five minutes;
 - (b) Then a question period may be held in accordance with subrule one seven–137(5);
 - (c) Next, a member of the official opposition may speak up to five minutes;
 - (d) Lastly, each independent member may speak up to five minutes; and
 - (e) The Speaker shall then put the question.
2. Once Bill 41 passes second reading, it shall then be referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, which will meet in room 255. The House shall then resolve into the Chamber's section of the Committee of Supply to consider departmental Estimates. On November 7, 2024, the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 41 during orders of the day, government business, with the following limited debate provisions to apply:
 - (a) First, the Minister of Justice may speak up to five minutes;
 - (b) Next, a member of the official opposition may speak up to five minutes;
 - (c) Lastly, each independent member may speak up to five minutes; and
 - (d) The Speaker shall then put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to consider Bill 41 as described by the official Government House Leader?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Routine proceedings–

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we get into that, I have a couple of guests I want to introduce.

First, I'd like to draw attention to all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. John Hollman, who is the chief clerk of the Illinois House of Representatives. John is the guest of our Clerk, Rick Yarish, and while in Winnipeg on a personal visit, he was eager to see how the Manitoba Legislature operates. With another clerk in the Chamber today, I'm hoping that members will put their best foot forward this afternoon, as I'm sure we'd all like to make a good impression on our American guest.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today. And the guest is sitting in the Speaker's Gallery.

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Atun [*phonetic*] Patel, Kiran Parmar, Yash Desai, Raj Pandit, Nisarg Patel, Naitri Patel, Apexa Parmar and Megha Bhatt who are the guests of the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 42–The Planning Amendment Act

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 42, The Planning Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

* (13:40)

Mr. Bushie: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 42, The Planning Amendment Act, to reaffirm our government's commitment to listen to local leadership and respect the autonomy of local governments.

This bill gives the existing member municipalities of the Capital Planning Region the choice to participate in the next capital region plan.

Amendments proposed in the bill will recognize the importance of local voices, those of elected municipal officials, to chart the path and planning for the capital region.

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

Thank you.

The Speaker: Further introduction of bills?

The honourable member for–oh.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

Further introduction of bills?

**Bill 223—The Indigenous Veterans Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): I move, seconded by the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin), that Bill 223, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur la Journée des anciens combattants autochtones (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Pankratz: Bill 223, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act, seeks to officially recognize Indigenous veterans day on November 8, building on the 1994 resolution, enshrining it in law.

It honours the remarkable contributions and sacrifices of Indigenous veterans and active service members who embody the principles of freedom, unity and service before self. By making this day a statutory commemoration, we create space for reflection, respect and education around the unique challenges faced by Indigenous military members.

I look forward to its unanimous support and passage, ensuring these heroes are honoured and remembered for generations to come.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): In accordance with rule 78(9), I am tabling a revised sequence for the consideration of departmental Estimates for today only.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Honourable Murray Sinclair

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Murray Sinclair was a great Canadian, a great Manitoban and a great Anishinaabe.

His career stands as a legacy of public service and a deep commitment to truth, fairness and to justice for all people who live on these lands.

He was the first Indigenous person named to the Provincial Court and the Court of Queen's Bench here in Manitoba. He was the first. He will also be remembered as one of the best.

He was appointed co-commissioner of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which laid bare systemic racism in the institutions of justice and is considered a foundational perspective on the system's relationship with Indigenous people.

He also led the Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Inquest, an important study which helped to improve heart care as it is delivered to the most vulnerable young Manitobans in our province.

The penultimate moment of his career, however, came as he led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Here we see Mr. Sinclair's brilliance embodied in the fact that he took a process which could have been very divisive and could've split Canadians apart, and instead he used it as a tool to forge Calls to Action to bring all of us together for the future of this great country and to ask us to live up to that phrase that we have been taught by residential school survivors, that Every Child Matters.

It will be a long time before our nation produces another person the calibre of Murray Sinclair. He showed us that there is no reconciliation without truth.

We should hold dear in our hearts his words that our nation is on the cusp of a great new era and that we must all, quote: Dare to live greatly together. End quote.

Murray Sinclair was the living embodiment of reconciliation in this country. And today, now that he has begun his journey to the spirit world, each of us as Canadians is forced to contemplate how we will continue on this important work now that he has left us.

Once a forest loses once—one of its giant cedars, it's important for the rest of the trees to ensure that the next generation can grow strong.

I send all my love to his kids and to his grandkids, as Murray is now reuniting with his late wife Katherine. On a personal level, Mr. Sinclair has been there my entire life.

I also want to remind Manitobans of what we witnessed just over a year ago. Mr. Sinclair presided over our government's swearing in ceremony;

he administered our oaths of office. And on that day, he told us something that is remarkable in its wisdom but also its simplicity. He said, and I quote verbatim: You have to learn to love the people, even when they do not love you. End quote. You have to learn to love the people, even when they do not love you. Murray's heart is present in these words.

To love one another unconditionally, whether we are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, survivor or supporter, family or merely family we haven't yet met, he asked us to love one another, no matter what.

This is the legacy that Murray Sinclair is leaving to us as Canadians.

And in return, on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, I say, we love you, Murray, always.

Gizhawnimin aapiji [*I love you lots*], Mizhana Gheezhik.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to honour the life of a Manitoban judge and senator, the Honourable Murray Sinclair.

From humble beginnings, being born in 1951 in the Selkirk area, on the former St. Peter's Reserve, he demonstrated that with hard work and dedication, any person can go on to make an impact on their community and in their country.

By many accounts, he was the type of student that excited teachers; he distinguished himself academically and his peers named him valedictorian of Selkirk Collegiate in 1968.

Less than a decade later, he would have experience serving the Attorney General of Manitoba, a fresh law degree from the University of Manitoba and even a prize recognizing his academic achievement in introduction to advocacy.

Honourable Speaker, there is a story in his biography about him that details how, early in his career, a judge mistook him for a defendant and asked him to state the charges brought against him. He felt it demonstrated why he was called to practice law, a practice he defended vigorously.

On two separate occasions, he declined offers to serve as a judge, choosing instead to defend the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, amongst others.

In 1988, he would eventually accept an offer to serve as a judge, becoming Manitoba's first and

Canada's second Indigenous judge. But that milestone is not his achievement. His work continued.

In the same year, he was appointed co-commissioner of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which produced almost 300 recommendations that continue to impact our justice system today.

Justice Sinclair later held a significant role, of course, as chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from July 2009 to June 2015, creating a space for more than 6,000 residential schools survivors across Canada to tell their stories.

Today, as remember his life—as we remember his life, achievements will stand out: he exposed injustices and educated Canadians; his work left a lasting impression on Canada and Canadian law; and his life outside of those professional contexts, I have no doubt, left a lasting impression on those closest to him.

* (13:50)

Every Manitoban can draw inspiration from his hard work, his story, his commitment to his culture and to justice for all Canadians.

To his family: thank you for supporting him and his work, and all of you are in our thoughts and prayers, on behalf of our PC team.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): May I ask for a moment of silence.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Columbus Courts Tenants Association

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I rise to recognize the remarkable dedication and community spirit of the Columbus Courts tenants association in the Tuxedo constituency. This committed group of residents have tirelessly advocated for the needs and well-being of their neighbours, demonstrating what a united community can achieve.

Recently, they took on a project to enhance a special place within their building—their chapel. For many of the residents, this chapel serves as a place of worship, a peaceful refuge and a cornerstone of their community. However, a recent change in building management created uncertainty about the future of

the chapel. Undeterred, the tenants association rallied together and found their pews as well as volunteers to help move them into the new—into their chapel.

Through collaboration, resourcefulness and volunteer hours, the Columbus Courts tenants association has transformed their chapel into a welcoming, comfortable space for all residents to gather, worship and find solace. They were able to gather for their first church service this past week and provided snacks and coffee for everyone who attended, and I heard that it's actually been the biggest service they've had in recent memory.

So the Columbus Courts tenants association is an example of positive change that can occur when the community unites for a shared purpose, and I'd like to ask that the names of the members be submitted to Hansard.

Thank you.

Columbus Courts Tenants Association: Leslie Hargreaves, director; Sylvia Lieblich, director; Terry Haussler, V-P; Gloria Taylor, secretary; members: Russel Harkness, Russel Novadale, Greg Sheedy.

Hindu Heritage Month

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, I would like to welcome my guests in the gallery and take this opportunity to recognize Hindu Heritage Month, and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and significant contributions of the Hindu community.

This month-long celebration allows us to appreciate the diverse traditions, philosophies and values that Hinduism brings to our multicultural society. It is time to honour the significant impacts that the Hindu community has had on the social, cultural and economic fabric of Brandon, as well as recognize their commitment to volunteering with community events, such as food and blood drives.

By participating in various events and activities, residents can gain a deeper understanding of Hindu customs and practices, fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual respect. This year, the celebration is particularly special as, over the summer, we witnessed the grand opening of the BAPS Mandir, the first Hindu temple in Brandon. This newly inaugurated temple serves as a spiritual and cultural hub of the Hindu community, offering a place of worship, community gatherings and cultural education. It reflects the growing diversity and spirit of inclusion within the city of Brandon.

Throughout the month, there will be many celebrations with colourful displays, highlighting the community's rich heritage and promoting values of harmony, service and cultural exchange. These events underscore the importance of diversity and the strength it brings to our community.

I have had many wonderful opportunities to attend Hindu events, with the most recent last Friday and Saturday where I joined the Diwali and Hindu New Year celebrations.

I am always deeply moved by the warmth and hospitality extended by their community. These experiences have deepened my appreciation for the rich cultural traditions and the spirit of inclusivity that the Hindu community embodies. I am looking forward to many more celebrations.

Honourable Speaker, in the spirit that we celebrate during Hindu Heritage Month, recognizing invaluable contributions that enhance the cultural mosaic of Brandon.

Art Bloomfield

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): It is my honour to rise today and pay tribute to both a powerful tradition of remembrance and the remarkable individual who ensures that it endures.

In 2008, a long-time resident of our Seine River community, Art Bloomfield, made a discovery that would alter how our community in St. Norbert would remember its history and its heroes. While walking his grandson to preschool, Art came across a neglected cenotaph, forgotten and overgrown, dedicated to 13 soldiers who had given their lives in service of our country during World War I.

Rather than letting this piece of history fade into obscurity, Art took it upon himself to revive it. He understood that commemorating Remembrance Day is an act that requires action, dedication and effort. Year after year, Art, his wife Wendy and committee have tirelessly worked to ensure that the cenotaph remains in our collective memory via the St. Norbert Remembrance Day ceremony. Because of their hard work, the cenotaph remains a symbol of those who sacrificed their lives for our freedoms.

Those soldiers who fought and died for our country had connections to the community of St. Norbert. Many were Red River Métis citizens. And as a Red River Métis woman, it is my privilege to attend this ceremony and lay the wreath honouring those Métis soldiers.

What started as one man's mission to preserve the legacy of 13 brave soldiers has grown into an annual ceremony of reflection and gratitude. Thanks to his efforts, our community takes a special pause to remember those who gave everything for our country.

Art's determination reminds us that one person, one community, can indeed make a profound difference. He not only ensures that the memory of these soldiers will live on, but has inspired future generations to understand the weight of this remembrance.

Today, I would like to ask the names of both Art, his wife Wendy, his committee and the 13 soldiers be added to Hansard. And I ask my colleagues to rise and recognize Art, Wendy and his committee for their hard work.

Organizers: Art Bloomfield, Wendy Bloomfield, Ian Cummins, Deb Degryse-Clark, Bill Younger

Veterans on Cenotaph: Francois Cardinal, Arthur Carriere, Roger Chartrand, Richard Fenton, Joseph Frobisher, Alfred Laliberte, Charles Leaumorte, Alfred Lord, James Normand, Albert Ryan, Ernest Ryan, Alfred Taylor, Jules Seewald

Portage District General Hospital Foundation

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I'd like to recognize the Portage and-District General Hospital Foundation today. The foundation is a long-standing local charity that is highly regarded by donors, health-care staff and the citizens of Portage la Prairie region.

The foundation's mission since 1986 has been to strive to enhance, enrich and maintain a high-level quality of health care, and they have done just that.

Over the years, this organization has funded invaluable projects, including a heliport, gamma knife, renovations to the labour and delivery room and cafeteria, new stretchers, vital sign monitors, bassinets and the list goes on and on.

The foundation also operates two bursaries which promote and support professional development for medical staff in our community. Between the Roberta's Dream Bursary, which started in 2004, and the Dr. Michelle Bailes bursary, which started in 2019, over 50 bursaries have been given away and over \$100,000 awarded to local medical staff.

* (14:00)

The foundation was especially pleased to make a capital contribution of \$3 million this year to the new Portage regional health-care facility currently under

construction. It has also made a historical commitment of \$5 million towards an MRI scanner in the new facility, thanks to the ongoing and generous contributions of local donors who strongly believe in the importance of accessing health care close to home.

I'd like to recognize the Portage District General Hospital's executive director, Tara Pettinger, for her outstanding efforts, including organizing another sold-out event. Attending today along with Tara is long-time board member Jill Verwey and Roy Tufford.

Please join me in thanking the Portage district foundation for their almost-four decades of enhancing and enriching health care in our community and beyond. Thank you.

Remembrance Day

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Today, I rise to speak of Remembrance Day and what it means to us as Manitobans.

Every day that we live in this great province, a province in which we have the privilege of freedom and peace, is thanks to the brave men and women who serve in our country's military. And it's thanks to their dedication, bravery and sacrifice that every single one of us is free to live a life where we can provide for our families and pursue opportunities that for many the world over are denied.

Service members past and present deserve to be recognized for risking life and limb in some of the most dangerous places in the world so that we can live in a free and democratic society. The courage, selflessness and valour of all Canadian veterans and service members from past and present conflicts should be commemorated and remembered.

In this past June, it was an absolute honour to be in the presence of veterans who stormed Juno Beach. Having the opportunity to thank them personally for their service was truly inspiring and put real faces and first-hand stories to the allied effort of preserving peace and freedom. And being present for the 80th anniversary of D-Day was a humbling experience.

The privilege that every single one of us in this Chamber has, that every Manitoban has, is thanks to those brave soldiers and their sacrifice. So, to every veteran, every active service member, every soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace, freedom and democracy, thank you. You are and always will be remembered.

I would also like the members of this Chamber to rise and warmly acknowledge the many active and retired military service members we are graced with having join us here today.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Government Intention

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, NDP leaders in Manitoba struggle with the facts when it comes to taxes. Gary Doer said repeatedly, and I quote: I'm not elected to raise taxes. End quote. Of course, he said that over 20 years ago before he raised taxes by \$90 million.

This current NDP Premier has already raised taxes by more than \$150 million, and he's not stopping there. And now, he is listening to calls for new taxes in Winnipeg.

Honourable Speaker, can the Premier please share more with the House about how open he is to increasing taxes on Winnipeggers and fellow Manitobans?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): What I'd like to share with the people of Manitoba is that the days of having a Premier who picks fights with mayors is over.

We're working hard with you. We're working hard with the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, with the mayors of Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, to deliver for you, the people of Manitoba.

Of course, the member opposite and the ragtag group of leadership contestants apparently want to keep picking fights with other levels of government. They can go ahead and do that, and we'll see how the paltry turnout for their leadership events continues over the course of this run.

But before he invokes the name of the great Gary Doer, I would remind him that we had an event to honour Gary Doer's 25th anniversary of his election, and it was attended by dozens and dozens and dozens of times more people than ever come out for PC events these days.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, as usual, no answers from you know who, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

We've established the Premier is not Gary Doer. He seems different to outdo him by raising taxes

nevertheless, Honourable Speaker. His mentor, Greg Selinger, also said he wouldn't raise taxes. He said a PST increase was, and I quote, a ridiculous idea and utter nonsense.

He misled Manitobans and got elected and raised the PST anyways. It took a Progressive Conservative government to come in and lower it again and then lower the cost of living for all Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, can the Premier please be upfront with Manitobans about their taxes: When is he raising them and by how much?

Mr. Kinew: On January 1 of this year, our team cut the provincial gas tax to save you money. This is something that nobody on the other side ever did during their two failed terms in government. None of the leadership candidates trying to lead the PC ship into the next iceberg saw fit to try and save you money in this way.

It was only a Manitoba NDP government that stepped up to save you money each and every time you go to the pump.

And guess what? It didn't just help you as you're trying to put food on the table for your loved ones, for your kids; it also helped the whole economy. Inflation came down in this province because of that cut to the provincial gas tax.

Now, of course, when it comes to lowering taxes, when it comes to helping the economy, everyone in Manitoba knows where this team stands. We're on your side, we're on the side of affordability, we're on the side of growing the economy.

The only question that Manitobans are still wondering about is why did the PCs—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are seeing time and time again that the only thing that concerns this Premier is photo ops instead of actually taking action for you, Manitobans.

The availability of information, we know, is greater than ever before, Honourable Speaker. Everyone knows it can—they—and can easily confirm that the NDP record is clear. They get elected with false promises—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—then they under-deliver and break those promises, then they overspend and raise taxes. We're watching it unfold again. History is repeating itself.

Honourable Speaker, does the Premier have the courage to rise in his place and be transparent with Manitobans: What taxes is this Kinew government going to be increasing or allowing to be increased shortly?

Mr. Kinew: We cut the provincial gas tax. We saved you money throughout this year. The PCs on the opposite side? They voted against that. They wanted to keep the 14 cents a litre they were charging every single day during their time in office. They charged you every single time you gassed up at the pump during their time in office.

Now, of course, what else did they do? Well, they had not just one, but two premiers, Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson, who wanted to pick fights with mayors. Of course, we're taking a different approach. We want to work with other levels of government because we know it's not about us; it's about you, the people of Manitoba. It's about returning decision-making power, it's about returning choice to you, the people of Manitoba.

Now, of course, this difference is not only the reason that you invested in us the ability to serve you, the people of Manitoba. It's also why the Winnipeg Sun says, and I quote, the size of the gathering was modest, end quote, when they're talking about the PC leadership event last week. So we know that we're on the right track—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: It seems that, once again, the Premier just constantly just dodges questions, and I just wish he would stand up one time and actually answer one of them.

The CFIB has a business barometer which measures expectations for business performance. Across Canada, most provinces experienced only minor shifts, but in Manitoba, business optimism is tanking and it's at its all-time low under this Kinew government. Far below other provinces, far below historical averages, and, Honourable Speaker, I table the data.

* (14:10)

Businesses in Manitoba are not seeing the sort of revenues that they would expect to see around this time of the year, says CFIB director provincially, Brianna Solberg. Inflation is still squeezing everybody's budgets, she adds.

Honourable Speaker, can the Premier just tell Manitobans: Is a slumping economy the reason why he has to raise taxes?

Mr. Kinew: We cut the gas tax on January 1 of this year. Again, it was 14 cents a litre under the PCs. Under us, it's zero. You're not paying a provincial gas tax.

Again, every single question he asks, I will respond exactly right on the money, right on the mark, talking about the very subject he seeks to raise, because you know what? We're delivering for you. We're helping you and your family. We lowered a tax that was extraordinarily expensive under them.

And do you know what else? We're helping to grow the economy. We are delivering on lower inflation, which is something that we ran on. And, of course, those who are watching have said, and I'm quoting here, quote, the Kinew government has made it clear it is prepared to do what it takes to encourage economic growth in Manitoba, end quote.

So you don't have to take it from us. The economic observers are weighing in and saying that our plan works—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, short on time and short on answers.

Starbucks in Fort Rouge; grocery stores affecting St. Vital and Riel; 7-Elevens across Winnipeg constituencies; Giant Tiger in St. Johns; and a \$1.6-billion electric vehicle battery plant to Ontario. What do all these things have in common, Honourable Speaker? They are fleeing Manitoba. They're closing their doors and they're giving up on this NDP economy.

Honourable Speaker, so I'll ask again: Can the Premier please just stop the games, answer the question, and what taxes are the Kinew government going to be increasing or allowing to increase to all Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: Another question on the gas tax. Guess what the answer is? We cut the gas tax on January 1 to zero to save you money.

Again, we know that this contributed to inflation coming down in our province, but we can go to the experts. Again, when we listen to TD Economics—again, that's TD, a leading finance firm—they said, bottom line, tax measures are, on balance, expected to generate savings for Manitobans this fiscal year, largely through the extension of the fuel tax.

Now, again, the member opposite might not like to hear it, but the experts are weighing in. The CFIB has added their voice to the chorus, and you, the average Manitoban, are all speaking in unison. Our move to cut the provincial fuel tax is saving you money. It's helping the economy. The only people who are offside are the PC party.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, dead last in Canada. This is the legacy of this Premier, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

Unemployment has shot up to 5.7. The cost of fresh meat and veggies are up by 8 per cent, and the economic horse is galloping off to Ontario, Honourable Speaker. Employers and their families across the province can't keep up with the rising costs, and they're losing hope in this government's economic plan, if they even had a plan.

So Manitobans are asking this Premier again, and I'm asking please answer one question, Honourable Speaker.

Will the Premier just please stand up and answer: Which taxes is he increasing or allowing to be increased on Manitobans? Answer the question.

Mr. Kinew: Well, if the member from Lac du Bonnet wants to know which tax I want to talk about, obviously it's the provincial gas tax, because we cut that to zero on January 1 of this year.

And I take it sincerely when he stands in his place and he says, please, please, please tell us more about the cut to the provincial fuel tax. So I'll tell him more about the cut to the provincial fuel tax.

Not only does it help you, not only does it mean that the average person can take their kids to grab, you know, a fun meal at McDonald's or something after saving money at the pump, it also means that our economy saw inflation decline from record highs under the failed days of Heather Stefanson to a new normal.

Which again, we recognize that there is more work to do, but there is a very important phenomenon now going on where Manitobans perhaps feel as though they're able to catch up a little bit.

But here's the main thing that I want to share with you, Honourable Speaker. We are going to continue to work hard for you. We've delivered on many of our election commitments to date—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Removal of Carbon Tax on Natural Gas Request to Join Alberta's Legal Challenge

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) likes to talk a big game about his fuel tax holiday, when in reality, on January 1, Manitobans are about to experience the largest fuel tax that they have ever seen in Manitoba history.

And while that's happening, this Premier is remaining silent on the carbon tax. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation and 55 per cent of Manitobans want to see this Premier challenge Trudeau's unfair treatment of western Canadians. Trudeau's carbon tax on home heating fuels in Manitoba, but not in Atlantic Canada, is simply unfair and discriminatory.

Last week, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith applied for a judicial review to exempt from Ottawa's federal carbon tax.

Will this Premier join Alberta's legal challenge and fight for the carbon tax to be removed from natural gas?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): One of the things that we're proudest of is that we cut the gas tax in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, seven and a half years, every single day, they charged 14 cents a litre on Manitobans. They come into this House, they talk about, you know, what life could have been like, perhaps, under a continued PC government.

Manitobans know it would have been continued charging 14 cents a litre every single day.

They did not take action. We took action.

And that gas tax cut was only one of a long list of 21 measures that we brought in with our budget, something our government is incredibly proud of. We're doing the work. We're making life more affordable while we make the investments in things Manitobans sent us here to do: fix health care—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: This Premier continues to remain silent on Trudeau's carbon tax.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith is standing up for western Canadians. She said, and I quote: Less than 1 per cent of people in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba use home heating oil. The outcome is blatantly unfair for people in Alberta and other parts of Canada

who use natural gas and other fuels to stay warm in the winter. I table that today.

Alberta's premier is standing up for Manitoba, but our own Premier (Mr. Kinew) is remaining silent. We're heading into the winter months and this Premier needs to stop sitting on the fence and propping up Trudeau's carbon tax.

Will he immediately join Alberta's legal challenge against the federal carbon tax and will he move to stop collecting carbon tax from home heating today?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, what did Manitobans get under their leadership for seven and a half years? Nothing. They got years and years of inaction. That's fact.

They come here and they talk about, you know, what they expect to see from us, when the reality is we took action. We took action almost immediately after coming into this building, and we're incredibly proud of that. We're proud that in very short order we brought in real savings that benefit Manitobans every single time they go to the pump.

And as our Premier has outlined today, it's not only benefitting us when we go to the pump, those changes have impacted inflation in this province—reduced inflation by 0.4 per cent in this last report alone. That's helping Manitobans across this province in every respect.

We are doing the work of making life more affordable—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Removing the carbon tax would save the average Manitoban \$318 this year. Fifty-five per cent of Manitobans want the carbon tax removed from all heating fuels. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is calling on the Premier to join the challenge. I table that today.

Will this Premier stand up, take action to defend Manitoba and challenge Trudeau from his unfair carbon tax?

* (14:20)

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, our measure—our fuel tax measure—over the course of the year that will have been put in place by the end of December will have saved Manitobans an average of \$500 per family.

That is real action, Honourable Speaker. That's real action in addition to the long list of other actions the—we brought forward, whether it's the \$1,500

homeowner affordability credit or the broad middle-class tax cuts we brought in.

That's the work of our government, focused on the real, everyday challenges that Manitobans are facing, something Manitobans didn't benefit from for seven and a half years when they had a government that wasn't attuned to their reality. Finally, as of last October 3, Manitobans had a government they can count on.

We're going to keep doing that work of making life more affordable.

Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force Request for Supply Arrangements

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The Minister of Health has repeatedly claimed that no one at the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force knew what they were working on, a statement that's an insult to the top doctors and medical professionals that completed 85,000 procedures for Manitobans.

So today I'll table a leaked Shared Health status update, dated September 13, 2023, showing that the DSRTF had 106 projects in operation and 62 planned projects in progress. These projects had clear tracking and timelines, with updates like this one regularly sent to health-care and government leadership.

How many of these projects did the NDP cut when they fired the task force?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government was graciously awarded the opportunity by Manitobans to do something they didn't see happen for seven and a half years, and that is invest in making health care in our own province the best that it can possibly be for the citizens we serve.

On this side of the House, we came into office and found the previous government had not only worked very hard to decimate the health-care system, but to decimate relationships with the experts who guide us in our health-care journey in this province.

We started from day one repairing those relationships, and we've made some great progress as a result, but there's more work to do; we're going to keep doing that for Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Cook: According to the same leaked data that I just tabled, 77 RFSA contracts were signed with public

and private providers to expand surgical and diagnostic capacity in Manitoba.

Now, despite repeated requests from me and from the media, the Minister of Health has thus far refused to provide any clarity about the status of these contracts. But we do know that only half as many cataract surgeries have occurred at Western Surgery Centre this year compared to last year, and that was one of the key RFSAs signed by the DSRTF.

So can the minister specify how many of these 77 contracts are currently operational, how many have been cancelled under their watch, and what has the impact been to Manitoba patients?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the impact has been that we are doing more surgeries and more diagnostics in our own province than we've ever done before.

We're doing more cataract surgeries than we've ever done before.

All of this, Honourable Speaker, after seven and a half years of cuts, chaos and disrespecting health-care workers by the previous failed Heather Stefanson government and members on that side of the House.

Mrs. Cook: According to CIHI data, Manitoba now has the second largest surgical and diagnostic backlog in the country, a backlog that has only gotten worse since the NDP fired the people responsible for reducing it.

The data I table today shows that 62 projects were actively in progress as of September last year. Meanwhile, wait time for CTs, MRIs, hip and knee surgeries and cataracts have all surged, and the NDP has offered no plan and no explanation.

I can only imagine the impact that those 62 projects would've had on those wait-lists had they proceeded, but then the NDP came in and cut them.

How many contracts have been cancelled? How many projects were cancelled when the NDP fired the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite, as she might not be aware, it's actually the former head of the diagnostic task force that made very clear during the pandemic that the backlog for surgeries and diagnostics pre-dated COVID-19 ever reaching Manitoba's borders.

Honourable Speaker, we are cleaning up the surgical mess and diagnostic mess that was made by the

previous failed PC government. They had seven and a half years to clear backlog; they didn't do it.

Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we are doing that work each day for Manitobans. We are doing more surgeries, more diagnostics than we ever have before.

There's more work to do. We're going to keep doing that on behalf of Manitobans, something they didn't do for seven and a half years.

Carjacking Incidents Offenders Out on Bail

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, W-T-F: Why that fast? This is the public messaging from the Winnipeg Police Service aimed at reminding motorists to drive according to the speed limit, which I table.

Under this minister, however, one Winnipegger found out how simply sharing this message incurring motorists to slow down has become an invitation for violence. This man's sole crime was asking the driver of a stolen vehicle speeding through his neighbourhood to slow down, and as a result, he was stabbed. Imagine that. Manitobans can no longer encourage people to obey the laws without being stabbed and left with life-altering injuries.

So I ask this minister: W-T-F: Where's the fairness?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As it's my first opportunity to rise in the House, I wanted to offer my deepest condolences to the family, to the friends, to the colleagues of a great Manitoban, Justice Murray Sinclair.

As Minister of Justice and Attorney General for the Province of Manitoba, his work continues to echo through the work that we do every single day. And on a personal level, I—his words and his approach to the important work that we have in front of us has been a guiding light.

I think it was an important question on public safety. I look forward to answering that in my second answer.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, under the watchful eye of this Minister of Justice, Manitoba is reporting a violent carjacking every few days. Manitobans are not safe shopping, at church or even dining out

without being violently assaulted, dragged from one's vehicle and even run over.

Of the almost 60 violent carjackings so far this year, can this minister share how many victims had to be hospitalized, either because of the initial carjacking assault or being run over by their own stolen vehicle?

Mr. Wiebe: This is what's frustrating, Honourable Speaker, is the members opposite were part of a government that for seven and a half years did absolutely nothing when it comes to public safety. They picked fights with other levels of government. They refused to take any kind of accountability or responsibility for the worsening state of public safety throughout our communities and across the province. And now—and now—they come to this House and say, as if they have some kind of moral authority on this, that we should be doing more.

Well we are doing lots, Honourable Speaker. We're working across this province, seeking input from community, working together with law enforcement and building that future of one Manitoba that Manitobans elected us to do. We're going to continue to unite people while the members opposite—

The Speaker: Time is expired.

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: I'll answer that question: What's this government doing wrong? Lots.

The Kinew government seems obvious to the violence spreading throughout our communities. The Minister of Justice is hopping from one crisis to the next, offering buzzwords and band-aids, but no tangible actions.

A key component to the NDP's safer communities promise was bail reform.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Of the 60 violent carjackings that have occurred so far—so far—in 2024, how many arrests have been made, and how many of those carjackings involved an offender that was out on bail?

Mr. Wiebe: Members opposite want to know what lots is. Well, lots is \$4 million for bail reform right here in the province of Manitoba, real dollars to solve issues created by them; \$2.9 million for ankle bracelets, a program cut under Heather Stefanson that we brought back and we're getting under way. The members opposite want to know what lots is. Lots is 12 new officers hitting the ground in the streets of Winnipeg.

* (14:30)

After their time in office, 55 officers lost, gone, from the city of Winnipeg. That's their record. Our record is doing lots for the people of Manitoba.

Christmas Cheer Board Funding Concerns

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, last year under this Premier (Mr. Kinew) we saw the Christmas Cheer Board had to shut off their phones for the first time ever.

Every time we have asked about affordability for people that may not be able to afford to drive a car we hear about a 14-cents gas tax holiday.

Why are aid organizations being forced to turn away needy Manitobans?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I do want to just take a moment to, on behalf of our government, really honour and lift up the incredible work that folks like the Christmas Cheer Board and all of those folks that are on the front lines of supporting families who are struggling right now at Christmas.

We—I know that when I was a little girl my mom often would apply for those Christmas hampers, and I remember waiting for those Christmas hampers because sometimes those were the—actually the only gifts that I ever got.

So on this side of the House we honour and we appreciate and understand how important those organizations are for Manitobans struggling right now.

Food Security Fund Request to Restore

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, we know the last three—we know the—last year three calls were coming into the Cheer Board every second. Manitobans want to help, but like the oxygen mask on an airplane, you can only help others when you're able to.

That's why demands are up and donations are down. When Manitoba growers announced they had excess potatoes, Manitobans from all over organized to get the food banks and into hands of those that need them most.

So I ask the Premier: Why does he not restore the \$4.75-million food security fund?

Thank you.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): One of the things that our government did, our first thing that our government did, is we instituted a universal school nutrition program, something that members opposite were so against and thought that it was such a bad idea.

We are on the front lines of supporting families and supporting children to ensure that children have food when they're at school. No child should be hungry when they're at school.

Again, I want to remind folks that every single member across thought it was a bad idea to want to support and feed children. Feed children was a bad idea to members opposite.

So we'll take no lessons from any single one of them opposite.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

Christmas Cheer Board Funding Concerns

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I want to take a moment to speak to all Manitobans today. If you have the ability, please help out the Cheer Board or any organizations like that. And to those folks that are having times struggling, please reach out to the Cheer Board. There's people out there that want to help out.

Last year this government shut down the \$4.75-million food security fund, and the Cheer Board had to turn to—folks in need away.

Will this minister guarantee this government will return funds to the Cheer Board, yes or no?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I'd like to share with the House and with the member opposite, actually, Families, and members may not know this, we actually support, through our Families Department, casual staff that go every year to help out the Christmas Cheer Board. We know how important the Christmas Cheer Board is to families, and we will continue to do that in the Department of Families.

You know, the other thing that we did, Honourable Speaker, is when we assumed government, when we were so lucky to be able to do that, was we also doubled the prenatal benefit. We know that providing that support to expectant parents has long-term effects that can only help our province in the long run and, again, help support those children and those families—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Health-Care System New Beds Added

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Our government was elected to fix the health-care mess created by Heather Stefanson's PC government. They damaged health care and created chaos while also disrespecting health-care workers across the system.

We are committed to fixing the chaos and know the first step is adding staff beds to the health-care system.

Can the Minister of Health update the House about the progress of our—that our government has made in adding staffed beds so Manitobans can get the care when they need it?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank my colleague, the MLA for Tuxedo, for that wonderful question—that important question.

Honourable Speaker, we know the previous government closed over 500 beds from across the province between hospitals, ERs and personal-care homes, and they fired nurses.

Our government is taking a different approach. We've opened over 112 acute-care beds with a plan to open 70 more, 43 transitional-care beds with a plan to open 27 more, and we funded 26 new ICU and PICU beds with four step-down beds, as well. We've also added 16 new beds at the Grace Hospital in last fiscal year.

Manitobans elected us to fix health care, Honourable Speaker. We're cleaning up the mess left by the previous government. We're getting the work done—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Labour Bills in BITSA Legislation Government Amendments

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): It was very clear that the addition of significant labour legislation to the BITSA bill was made in haste.

During committee last week, the government brought forward multiple amendments to their own bill. The Chamber of Commerce says the changes trample on workers' ability to choose whether they should go back to work based on their personal circumstances and that union rights trample individual rights.

What does this minister have to say in response to these concerns?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you—to member opposite, for your question.

On this side of the House, we're proud to stand with workers every single day of the week. On this side of the House, we're proud to put through legislation that's historic to make sure that workers' rights are going to be protected like never before in this province.

Members opposite don't know a thing when it comes to respecting the rights of workers. It's a good thing that Manitoba has elected a government that cares about workers all across this province, and it's our pleasure to be able to put through this historic legislation, that will hopefully pass by this year.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

LMRC Recommendations

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, these changes will put the burden on workers and create unnecessary complexity. Manitobans did not have the opportunity to participate in the legislative process and speak at public committee to voice their concerns.

We've heard from the minister that the changes were made in response to recommendations from the Labour Management Review Committee.

Can the minister share the list of all recommendations made by the LMRC?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, members opposite remind me of my mother-in-law. No matter how great this legislation was that we put forward, never it's going to be enough. Okay?

Honourable Speaker, we list—we put through this historic legislation. It was wonderful legislation. And then Manitobans said to us, you know what, it could still be better.

We listened to Manitobans, so we improved it using this new amendment—three great, new amendments to improve this legislation. But nope. Not good enough.

On this side of the House, we know it's good enough. It's going to be respecting Manitobans and all workers across this province. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, they are not listening. They are not listening to all Manitobans. This did not

go to public committee. We know that this legislation was rushed and done without proper consultation. We have heard stories of interference from the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office and saw that this legislation was incomplete when multiple amendments were brought forward last week at committee. We know that not all recommendations from the LMRC were taken when bringing forward this legislation.

* (14:40)

Can the minister share why all recommendations were not included and why this legislation was rushed?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, you know, it's a new day in Manitoba. We have a government—we have a Premier that has a vision for this province for the next 100 years; a vision for our province to take it from this have-not status to a have status.

And we're going to be doing that with workers who build Manitoba, with businesses who have the innovation and the strength to build Manitoba. We are doing this working together as a partnership for the betterment of Manitoba, and we will take no lessons from members opposite.

Driver Education Program Need for Classes in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, rural parents are setting up multiple computers and phone lines to try and increase their chances of securing a spot in MPI's Driver Z program. But these spots are getting more and more difficult to access with entire courses being filled within minutes.

Road safety starts here in Manitoba with our 15-and-a-half-year-old educated drivers, Honourable Speaker.

Why is this NDP government putting up road-blocks for young rural drivers?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): I just want to correct the—maybe not the Hansard, but certainly the audio and video recordings of today. It is—driver zed is the program, Driver Z, and that is an important program. And it's an important program throughout the province but very, very important, of course, in rural Manitoba and especially in Westman.

That's why it's an important program to enhance by partnerships. Partnerships with instructors throughout the province and with instruction institutions. This has been a focus of MPI. It's certainly been a focus of our government. We're working to fix the mess of the

previous government and we're hard at work in doing so.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, parents have called me sharing that in order to secure a place in a Driver Z program, they have taken to registering their child hundreds of kilometres away.

Amy Soroby [*phonetic*] has to drive her son almost 500 kilometres round trip every week to attend his course at another town. That's time away from her farm, her family and her community.

Is this minister prepared to pay mileage to parents, or will they be stuck with the bill for this poor planning?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, this is an incredibly important program, and it's worth investing in and ensuring that it works.

Unfortunately, the previous government did neither of those things. In fact, what they did with MPI is, first of all, they failed to anticipate the pent-up demand from the pandemic and the impact that that was going to have on the program.

But then, of course, what did they do? They meddled with MPI, numerous CEOs, a string of CEOs making bad decisions. And then they perpetrated a strike, which impacted MPI, that we're still cleaning up.

Now the member opposite could spend some time talking to the front bench, getting some answers from former ministers about why they messed things up so poorly. We're getting to work. We're working with Assiniboine Community College. We're working with—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

And the time for question period has expired.

Petitions?

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I stand today to bring forward a grievance against the Kinew government on the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home.

You see, many members across the way, of all political stripes as well, should understand that the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home does not only service those that are residents of the area. The Lac du Bonnet personal-care home will be servicing those individuals that have lived within Manitoba, that call cottage country, the Lac du Bonnet area, home.

And that's what we want to see, Honourable Speaker: people come out, possibly live in their cottages as well, as time goes on, and then have those services closer to home for those individuals.

Let me recap some history for the members opposite, especially the NDP members in the Kinew government. You see, Honourable Speaker, Gary Doer and the now-Premier's (Mr. Kinew) mentor, Greg Selinger, had promised the residents of the Lac du Bonnet constituency a personal-care home many, many years ago.

But you see, Honourable Speaker, no money, no plans and no documentation supported those claims.

In 2012, Greg Selinger showed up with a skeletal crew, of course, a few photographers, but no Health minister to promise the Lac du Bonnet area and residence a personal-care home that was going to start construction in 2014. Nothing happened in 2013, nothing happened in 2014. I'm on a roll.

The Speaker: If I could get members to take their conversations to the loge or somewhere else, I'm having a hard time hearing what the member is saying.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, can we reset the clock there a little bit? I lost a few seconds, but I appreciate your guidance.

So 2014, construction was supposed to start. The only thing that actually went up in the area was a sign which was purchased and placed by the community. And since then, the NDP government, back in the day under Greg Selinger, the now-Premier's mentor, didn't even provide a weed whacker to build—with the trim around the sign, Honourable Speaker.

So then fast-forward to 2016, when the Progressive Conservative government got into—our party got into government. There was no money to be seen for the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home, no plans from the former NDP government and no documentation supporting those claims, Honourable Speaker.

So we again fast-forward. What did the NDP leave? The NDP left a large deficit, a large debt which they more than tripled in just eight years. So then, fast-forward to 2023, with documents in tow and the money in place, there was a groundbreaking for the new Lac du Bonnet personal-care home, a 90-bed personal-care home.

So we're simply asking on behalf of the Lac du Bonnet constituents and Manitobans who reside in cottage country and who want to age where they are enjoying their time, Honourable Speaker, to the NDP

government, the Kinew government, to continue with the Progressive Conservative Lac du Bonnet personal-care home plan.

Now, Honourable Speaker, I know the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) going to get up in the next few days, and he's going to write a little column over to some of our local papers, maybe even the Winnipeg Free Press or the Winnipeg Sun, and say how the member for Lac du Bonnet, which is myself, is not voting for this year's budget.

But, Honourable Speaker, the fact is that the documents proving that the personal-care home for Lac du Bonnet under our government was going to be put in place, plus the money was put in place, so we're asking and urging this Premier to do good by his word and continue on with the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home.

I did want to put on the record, Honourable Speaker, some reasons for not voting for the 2024 budget, voting against the NDP, the Kinew government's budget.

So the budget allows the NDP to raise fuel taxes overnight at the Cabinet table, which we will see come the beginning of 2025. The budget rakes in hundreds of millions in new and increased property taxes on Manitobans with cottages and second homes, Honourable Speaker.

The budget eliminates basic personal amounts and increases income taxes on doctors and skilled professionals and tradespeople like engineers. The budget waters down financial accountability for Manitoba Hydro by eliminating the legislated requirement for Hydro to pay down its debt to keep electricity rates low.

The budget strips businesses of their rights by banning the use of replacement workers during labour disputes. The budget strips workers of their democratic rights by eliminating the use of secret ballots and while lowering thresholds for automatic union certification.

The budget doubles taxpayer-funded rebates for political parties, which the NDP never campaigned on and which they intend to use to fund their election war chest. The budget does not include funding for nine new schools with daycares planned in Winnipeg, Brandon, West St. Paul, Neepawa and Ste. Anne.

* (14:50)

The budget does not include funding for two care homes planned in Winnipeg and Arborg, which have already gone through Treasury Board. The budget cut tens of millions of dollars from community development and summer jobs programs such as Green Team, ACSC and Building Sustainable Communities amid a concerning rise in youth unemployment in Manitoba.

Now, Honourable Speaker, simply just asking the NDP to stop playing games and move ahead with the Progressive Conservative plan to build the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home.

I know that during Estimates, I had asked the question about the 70-to-80-million-dollar plan for the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home, and the Premier himself stood up and said it's not going to cost that much; it's going to cost \$66.4 million.

So then I might as well ask it this time, Honourable Speaker: So, if, in fact, that we had the money set aside for the 70, 80-million-dollar, 90-bed personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet, and this Premier's so sure of himself that by delaying it for over a year is actually going to reduce the cost, some kind of NDP math, but he is saying \$66.4 million.

So then I'll strongly encourage him to take that additional 3.6 to 13.6 million dollars and start again moving forward with the construction that has been paused by his Infrastructure Minister. So take those funds and start making sure that the turning lanes on 313, 433 and, of course, the 520 gets upgraded as well.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I know that the Premier has already invited me to the ribbon-cutting of the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home. In order for the two of us, plus others, to attend the ribbon-cutting of the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home, I strongly encourage him to let the project continue and get to work.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):
Can you please dissolve into Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: Now resolve into Committee of Supply.

The Deputy Speaker can take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

ROOM 254

AGRICULTURE

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): 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 Agriculture.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 3.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 3.1.

The floor is open for questions.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I move that line item 3.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Agriculture's (Mr. Kostyshyn) salary be reduced to \$16.

Motion presented.

The Chairperson: The motion is apparently in order.

Are there any questions or comments on that motion?

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the—oh. All the opposed to the motion, please say Nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* * *

The Chairperson: All there any—are there any further questions?

If not, we'll move on to the last resolution.

Resolution 3.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,937,000 for Agriculture, Financial and Administrative Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Estimates of Municipal and Northern Relations.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? *[Agreed]*

The committee shall now recess briefly—very briefly.

The committee recessed at 3:05 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:18 p.m.

MUNICIPAL AND NORTHERN RELATIONS

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I do have some extended introductions, actually.

I'm pleased to make a few comments on the 2024-2025 Estimates and discuss some of the important activities of the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations, also perhaps some questions on Indigenous Economic Development as well.

Before I begin, I'd also like to recognize the hard work of my department staff and the professional work that they do in collaboration with Manitoba municipalities, the City of Winnipeg, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, northern affairs community councils, planning districts, fire services, mutual aid districts, non-profit and community development organizations, also chief administrative officers, fire chiefs and our many other clients.

On the Indigenous Economic Development side, I'd also like to recognize the hard work of the department

staff in supporting the establishment of this new department. With me today is my deputy minister, both Municipal and Northern Relations as well as Indigenous Economic Development, Bruce Gray, who will join me shortly. Also with me is Don Hallett, the assistant deputy minister of Indigenous economic partnerships. On the MNR side, Nick Kulyk, assistant deputy minister. I also have with me Mike Sosiak, assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer. Finally, from my office, the director of ministerial affairs, Marty Gautron, is also joining us here today.

I know that this good work is also being recognized by the communities and municipalities that we serve. Our government is committed to investing in communities across the province. Even before the 2024 budget, we started with our gas tax cut, providing millions in relief for municipalities.

Municipalities keep community infrastructure and services running. Our cut to the gas taxes led to significant additional savings for municipalities, with an estimated \$3.75 million in lower costs for the duration of the freeze.

* (15:20)

Now I'm proud to say that, after years of freezes and cuts, we're also permanently ending the previous government's funding freeze and investing in all municipalities across Manitoba. Each municipality will receive more funding than in previous years, and we are committed to growing predictable multi-year funding in the years ahead.

Budget 2024 permanently adds a \$47-million increase to the municipal operating grant, an amount that was only provided by the previous government as an end-year adjustment in 2023. This provides local governments with greater financial certainty and security in planning for their community's needs.

Our government also recognized the increased financial pressures that all municipalities are facing and will provide a 2 per cent or \$4.4-million escalator in funding to municipalities. These increases will yield a total of \$221.1 million in unconditional municipal operating funding in 2024-2025; \$140.6 million for the City of Winnipeg and \$80.5 million for all the other municipalities across Manitoba.

Northern Affairs communities will also receive an increase in operating grant funding for a total \$11.1 million in 2024. This will bring total operating funding for municipalities in Northern Affairs communities to more than \$232 million.

Budget 2024 has also committed \$7.3 million in new capital funding through the strategic infrastructure basket, including \$3.2 million or 2 per cent increase in capital grants to municipalities to address cost pressures on infrastructure projects and allow municipalities to continue to advance core capital needs; \$4 million or 20 per cent increase to the Manitoba Water Services Board for a historic \$24-million base budget to support the development of critical water and sewer projects in rural municipalities and address Manitoba's water and waste water infrastructure deficit.

These increases will yield a total of \$167.7 million in strategic infrastructure funding in 2024-2025; \$93.9 million of that is for the City of Winnipeg and \$73.8 million for all municipalities across Manitoba.

This is in addition to the recent commitment of \$10 million in one-time support to the City of Winnipeg for critical sewer pipe crossing repairs near the Fort Garry Bridge advanced in 2023-2024, and over \$56 million in infrastructure projects for critical infrastructure like airports, roads, fire trucks and equipment.

Beyond this, our government is committing to reliable, flexible and stable funding to meet the needs of our growing population. Our government will be a true partner of the municipalities over the coming year and years to come. We will work with the municipal stakeholders, including the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and the City of Winnipeg to establish a reliable and flexible multi-year funding model for programs, infrastructure and maintenance that works for all local governments.

Our government has committed \$25.7 million for community development programs, which provides core operating and program-specific funding to its strategic partners and neighbourhood renewal corporations.

Funding is also provided for application-based grant programs for non-profit organizations and local governments for programs and initiatives that enhance communities across the entire province.

Our government believes in revitalizing, supporting and building healthier communities from the ground up to create healthier and safer neighbourhoods in Manitoba. From the ground up, Budget 2024 is investing \$12.5 million to support new community development program called From the Ground Up. On April 29, 2024, our government launched the From the Ground Up: Safe Healthy Communities and-For All Program, which will focus on the revitalization of high-needs neighbourhoods throughout Manitoba and community infrastructure and initiatives to support

poverty and crime reduction efforts. The new program will repurpose funding from the former Building Sustainable Communities program, which was never sustainable in the first place.

Grants under the new program will support initiatives in the areas of community capacity building; community economic development, well-being and recreation; and housing and safety co-ordination supports.

Under the new program, applicants can apply for funding under the following three streams: (1) community renewal initiatives, (2) community spaces and (3) healthy care, connected children and youth.

In addition, the program will also invest in expanding and extending service for children and youth programs. The Province has allocated \$800,000 for non-application-based strategic partnerships to support after-school and weekend programs in high-needs areas in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson.

On the Green Team side of things, Budget 2024 also includes funding to support the Urban Hometown Green Team program to continue to support youth employment projects across Manitoba. The Green Team program, which creates summer employment opportunities for Manitoba's youth, will see an increase of \$730,000 in 2024 to address the recent increase in the minimum wage.

Funding is provided for a variety of community development projects that improve neighbourhoods, promote community involvement and help develop young leaders.

The 2024-2025 Estimates marks a reset in funding for our application-based grant programs. In the past these programs were temporarily increased over the short term to mitigate the impact and support economic recovery from the pandemic. However, given the need for prudent fiscal management to reduce the deficit, funding for these programs has been returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Neighbourhood renewal corporations in Budget 2024 will also provide \$200,000 increase to annual core operating funding to support 12 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba, seven located in rural and northern communities and five in higher needs areas in—of Winnipeg. This \$200,000 increase for the 12 neighbourhood renewal corporations bring the annual support for core operating funding from \$1.7 million in 2023 to \$1.9 million in 2024 and is the first increase in core operating funding for these organizations since 2016-2017.

Effective and efficient land use and planning regulations help boost economic competitiveness and promote sustainable municipalities when it comes to community planning. Manitoba is undertaking a comprehensive review of recent amendments made to planning legislation that includes public representations. We have engaged an independent consulting team to provide comprehensive review with stakeholder involvement to ensure that the review of the legislation is impartial and nonbiased on our—as our stakeholders expect. The statutory review aligns with the government's mandate to review Bill 37, speed up approval timelines and ensure local voices are respected.

With French language translation, our government recognizes the founding role of the Francophone community in our province and is committed to protecting their rights and improving access to French language education, health care and other services so that we are truly a bilingual province.

As part of the new Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French Language Services with our federal government partners, Municipal and Northern Relations will increase its funding to the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities for translation services for Manitoba's designated bilingual communities by another \$100,000, this—the largest increase in funding for these services in more than 20 years. This builds on our government's continuing support for bilingual municipalities and adopting necessary bylaw amendments—bylaw changes to implement the AMBM's 3M Maturity Model for enhancing support for the delivery of municipal services in both official languages.

On Indigenous Economic Development, for the first time in Manitoba's history, we have a department that is truly dedicated to making meaningful strides in Indigenous economic development. This is our Premier's (Mr. Kinew) words and actions: the economic horse will pull the social cart in Manitoba, which is really about a vision where all Manitobans benefit from the contributions of Indigenous Manitobans, business and others towards the goal of economic reconciliation.

Manitoba has the largest Indigenous population per capita of any province at 18 per cent, and this population is younger and growing at a faster rate than any other demographic in Manitoba. Removing barriers to the full inclusion of the Indigenous peoples in Manitoba's economy represents one of the most significant economic opportunities for the province.

Working closely with other departments, Indigenous Economic Development is adopting a whole-of-government approach to grow our economy by increasing

economic participation and creating opportunities for Indigenous Manitobans and communities.

Manitoba is a province with a significant undeveloped potential in our resources and our people. In this respect, it's a real have-province. This is also true with respect to Indigenous communities and businesses. The potential impact of removing barriers to the full inclusion of Indigenous peoples to Manitoba's economy is one of the most significant economic opportunities facing the province.

This new department has a mandate to work collaboratively with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and partner organizations to improve economic participation and opportunities for Indigenous Manitobans and communities with a special focus on education and jobs.

The department is comprised of two main program areas: the Consultation and Agreements Branch and Indigenous Business Development branch, supported by Financial and Administrative Services Branch.

In conclusion, I will leave it there for now. Our government is dedicated to supporting municipalities and communities across Manitoba as demonstrated by our commitments made in the 2024 budget.

Municipal and Northern Relations will continue to help build stronger communities through ongoing education and support for local elected officials by providing funding to build and strengthen municipalities and by investing in programs that enrich the lives of Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I thank the minister and his department officials for being here today. Hope we can get some good information on the workings of the department and the Estimate numbers.

I'm sure some of you know I've had some experience in the municipal world for 12 years—eight years as council in my municipality, as well as four years as the reeve. And then, of course, I spent eight years on the Association of Manitoba Municipalities board of directors as well. So I got a good—got a bit of passion and that in the municipal world for sure. And you know that, Minister, that I've had some experience there and built some relationships over the years and listened to the—still listening to the people and know a

lot of the people that are still involved in municipal government.

So I know there's a lot of things in this year's Estimates across the department there are extensions from many years of work and planning by the department. There's also many new directions that this minister and the new government are taking that I want to explore here today.

So I want to have a thorough Estimates discussion with the minister, and I'd like to take a global approach to the discussion. Same time, I'll try and indicate to the minister and the department which areas I'll focus on today so that department can ensure that they'll get the right officials at the table and be ready to—that we can get the best possible answers for the public at this meeting today.

* (15:30)

Of course, the more quickly we get the good answers on the various topics, the more quickly we'll be able to move through all this information and get some details on the department's plans for their expenditures this coming year before the Legislative Assembly's members.

I do want to express some concerns with some of the approaches of the new government, including some of the significant additional expenditures in the Estimates and the budget: the significant borrowing that's being undertaken by this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and minister, planning to add over \$5 billion to the net debt since the release of last fall's Public Accounts—billions more in debt in just the first year while interest rates have skyrocketed since last summer, something perhaps attributable to the Liberal Prime Minister's spendthrift ways.

Doesn't seem to be much concern from this government about adding this much debt in such a short time frame, while interest rates have been higher than they have been in decades and the inflation of Manitoba has slowed to below the Bank of Canada's target level, which suggests the economy is no longer keeping up with the government's spending plans. Seems to be a lack of urgency to grow the economy in these Estimates.

So we'll have a lot of questions about the priorities of this government, about what is in these budgetary Estimates and about what is not in these budgetary Estimates.

For the minister, hopefully he can do some explaining of his positions and rationale for the decisions he's

made. For example, within the Estimates as a whole and within the minister's departmental Estimates, there seems to be a complete lack of funding and priority for roads, bridges and municipal infrastructure projects. There's a lack of investment in water and waste water infrastructure, and the Building Sustainable Communities program and funding seems to be nowhere to be found within these Estimates—not in the Municipal Relations Estimate, nor anywhere else in the budget.

I know in his opening statements, the minister mentioned that the Building Sustainable Communities fund was not sustainable, but like him maybe to explain today how the 12 and a half million that's in their budget versus the \$25 million that the previous government had, how it couldn't've been sustainable. Same goes for Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund—doesn't seem to be anywhere in the parts—department's Estimates or anywhere else in the budget or Estimates package.

He recently announced a new program focused on revitalizing neighbourhoods, but only for Winnipeg, Thompson and Brandon. So I'd like to know why the minister is leaving all the other large and small communities out of that funding envelope. Why are The Pas, Dauphin and Portage la Prairie and many other northern communities and First Nations being excluded from that funding? It is stated very clearly in the release that some of the funding is only for those three communities.

As I pass this over to the minister after my first questions, I'll just let him know I'd like explain why—him to explain why he does not seem concerned about the high interest rates and the growing debt load. This minister's government is increasing spending in many areas while cutting others, like capitals for roads, bridges and municipal waste water projects and, of course, drinking water projects.

And hopefully by the end of today, we can get the minister to explain why, in a budget where spending is going up exponentially, why his department and municipal priorities do not seem to be getting the same level of attention.

So that, honourable Chair, would be my opening remarks.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

I'd like to inform everyone at a table for clarity that we're currently considering only the Estimates for Municipal and Northern Relations, and then afterwards,

we'll—we've, after we've concluded this section of the department, we will move then to Indigenous Economic Development section.

Great. Thank you.

So, under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 13.1(a) contained in resolution 13.1.

At this time, we would invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce any staff in attendance that he hasn't already included in his opening remarks.

Thank you.

Please join us.

Mr. Bushie: Just to introduce the additions, I introduced the—some of the staff that was joining me in opening comments.

We are also joined here by Kevin McPike, David Neufeld and Nadalene Khan Cooper.

The Chairperson: According to our rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. King: Again, thanks for the opportunity to come today and pose some questions to the ministers in his department of municipal relations here. Greatly enjoying the role as critic here, being something that I got a little bit of experience in.

So, going to start with just some general staffing questions for the minister and—what political staff work out of the minister's office or within their purview? I don't know if you could name them. And just a breakdown of their salaries, as well as what pay scale they're on. How many, if any, are on the executive salary schedules? And does the minister have any staff who are on secondment? And what are their salaries and who is paying for it?

Mr. Bushie: Just as an opportunity before I respond to the last question that were posed, when he talked about—in his opening comments about not investing in municipalities, investing in Manitobans, and I think that was significant for us as a new government to be able to do that.

We heard, for the entirety of our time in opposition, the strain that the freeze to municipal funding had and the effect that it had on municipalities. So that was significant for us to be able to address, and that was something that AMM had called for as well as a lot of other communities as well—community members as well, to be able to do that in a real meaningful way. It's something that meant and would have real impact for municipalities.

So when we committed to end—not only ending the freeze, but the predictability of funding going forward as well, was significant for us to be able to do that. And that is something that we campaigned on, we heard, we listened and we acted.

So we heard from municipalities about the real strain that the funding freeze was having for them, so we addressed that in a meaningful way with a 2 per cent increase. And we'll continue to have those discussions on what it looks like going forward for a funding model and predictability going forward.

But also, the other thing that we heard quite a bit was what the funding freeze—it wasn't just one year, it was over multiple years, and what that meant for the municipalities to have to play not only catch-up to be able to do what they wanted to do in their communities, but just to kind of be made whole.

* (15:40)

And how do they grow?

And so we're in it with them as well. And when you talk about a government kind of having the backs of the front line of Manitoba, in this case municipalities, it was significant for us to do that and come to the table for them, but not do it in a top-down approach. It was also important for us to do that with them as well.

So we are part of discussions to the development of what an escalator is going to look like going forward and what the percentage increases look like going forward for funding.

And that was something that was very well received by municipalities and committees and just everyday Manitobans, is the predictability of what they could look forward to. Because previously, they could look forward to zero, and that's really not a prediction that anybody really wants to see.

So when the member talked about kind of the investments that Manitoba is making, it was significant for us to do. And some of the questions that I would have, and we did have in opposition, is, well, if

you're freezing funding for your municipalities and your deficit is growing, as the previous government was, then what were you really doing with being able to support Manitobans? And we really didn't see that.

So it was a very welcome opportunity, and we were privileged enough to be able to form government and then bring those ideas forward in conjunction with the municipalities on a predictability of funding model going forward.

And it was well received and we see those—and you're going to start seeing those effects right from year one as well, is what that means for municipalities going forward, what that means for communities all over this province. So it was significant for us to say we have your back, we're here for you, and we'll continue to have those discussions with them at the table as well, not a top-down approach where government is just going to dictate exactly what the funding model looks like, but what the extent of funding is.

If there's challenges—and not to say that government and municipalities and communities are going to agree on everything all the time, but we're going to be part of the conversation. So that was significant for us to be able to do, and it was welcomed.

And before—and I do have the answer for the member opposite about the kind of, the political side of the—of our staffing, but I do also want to take this opportunity to thank Kam Blight as well, to thank Kam for his years of service, not only to AMM but to his community as well.

And I think I share that sentiment with members on all sides of the Chamber. Kam, we—I first met him when I was in opposition. We had some excellent conversations. He'll hold your feet to the fire, which is something that good government should do. So that was very good to be able to do. And I thank him for his service.

And it was this kind of—I think the conversation that the—one of the last conversations I had with Kam before he stepped down was just about family. So I think it was important for him to be able to do that. So I wish him well, and I thank him for all his years of service, and I look forward to the fall convention of having new administration for AMM—leading AMM. So it was a good conversation to be had.

To answer the member's question, I do have one political staff, the director of ministerial affairs. And he is on the SF7 pay scale.

Mr. King: I thank the minister for that partial answer, and I can certainly appreciate his comments for Kam Blight there. He's certainly going to be—he certainly will be missed at the AMM. He was passionate about what he advocated there for.

So my question again, honourable Chair, for the minister: So are the political staff roles broken down by subject matter? Is municipal relations separate from Indigenous Economic Development? Can you give me that breakdown?

Mr. Bushie: Thank you for the question.

And I apologize, the clock was running short of me there to be able to give the fulsome answer, and I wasn't sure if this was the place to actually say that. Because when I was informed that we were in—dealing with Municipal and Northern Relations specifically and Indigenous Economic Development separately, but I could share that with the member opposite as well.

So I do have a director of ministerial affairs that oversees kind of both departments with me. So when it comes time to political staff, there is only the one political staff that works in both departments, the Municipal and Northern Relations side as well as the Indigenous Economic Development side.

One of the other questions that the member asked, too, was about secondments for the department. And I can say that we have no secondments coming into our department.

But one of the things that I've realized—and I mean, I say the term, one of these things, many, many times because it just keeps reminding me that there's so many different things that we come up with day in, day out—is there was a real refresh, I would say, from the civil service when we formed government, and there was a real desire and real, kind of, renewed energy to be able to move the work of government forward. So it's something that I encouraged and something that was very, very helpful.

And our department staff in Municipal and Northern Relations and the newly formed Indigenous Economic Development, which also has some folks that were parts of—different parts of government in previous years or previous work histories as well. That renewed energy and that expertise is something that, as a new government, was welcomed as well.

And I will share this. Something that really kind of bothered me in opposition, when previous government would come to the table and we would table—or

they would table reports in the House and they would table sometimes multiple copies of multiple reports and sometimes a stack of maybe 12 documents or 16 documents or what have you, and they would go through the motion—the procedural motions to have those, kind of, those reports introduced. There would be comments from the PC government at the time to say, oh, that's the hardest working minister in government.

And to me, I really took kind of offence to that, because the work of a lot of those reports is done by the civil service, is done by people in the departments, and it's something that I remind them every day and I say every day and I talk about the great work that our department does because as politicians come and go, a lot of the civil servants remain in place. And they may move on to different departments, but they really have a desire to work for the betterment of Manitobans. And that's something that's very important for all of us to remember, that as civil servants, as politicians, that have the great honour of serving the people of Manitoba is that, in fact, we are here for them, and the work should be appreciated.

And there's a lot of expertise around this table. And I will say as well, there's a lot of expertise around all members of the Chamber as well. As the member mentioned earlier, I mean, he has a significant background in municipal governments as well. So you were selected by your constituents to be able to bring those voices forward, and I'm not going to say they made a right or wrong decision, but the fact of the matter is, you're here because of what you bring to the table. And I think that's important to remember across all of government. There's people that are in our world, in our board room tables, in our offices, in our government that are there because of the expertise and the kind of professionalism they bring and the knowledge they bring to the table.

So that's important for me to be able to acknowledge and I will say again, that was a pretty big beef for me to be able to hear those kind of connotations from the previous government to say this is hardest working minister in government when, you know, they're tabling X number of reports, when really it was the work of departments.

So I do want to be able to shout out the department. I'll—maybe I'll do that a few times throughout the afternoon here as well. But it—to answer the question about secondments, we have no secondments in either department, whether it be MNR or whether it be Indigenous Economic Development, and we do have

one political staff member, my director of ministerial affairs, that oversees us in both departments.

The Chairperson: Before recognizing the honourable member for Lakeside, I just want to remind all folks here questions and answers must come through the Chair.

Mr. King: So my question here now to the minister is, with reorganization of several departments into the current department of Municipal Northern Relations and Indigenous Economic Development, can the minister explain if this is being operated as a single department or two separate departments and one—with one minister?

Another part to that question would be, do all the political staff work out of the minister's office, or are some working in satellite offices? And are there any vacancies at this time as—in the deputy minister's or assistant deputy minister roles?

* (15:50)

Mr. Bushie: So on the organizational structure side of things, when we formed government, there was different departments and department titles and department responsibilities previously.

Municipal and Northern Relations, Indigenous economic—well, Indigenous Economic Development did not even exist. But on the reconciliation side of things, when we formed government, we kind of separated three different parts. Separated them on—in terms of the duties and responsibilities but at the same time kept an over—kind of—sight of what we wanted to do.

So the MNR and Indigenous reconciliation side now became Municipal and Northern Relations and Indigenous Economic Development, which I'm the minister of both.

The Indigenous reconciliation side is something that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is the minister of, because it was important for us to—and for the Premier to articulate a government-to-government, nation-to-nation relationship when it came time to dealing with Indigenous communities. So we did that on the reconciliation side.

Further to the question about vacancies, as I'm sure the public documents that we have here as well, it speaks to—on the Indigenous Economic Development side of things, there is an assistant deputy minister, which in the older documents says vacant, but that has been filled now. So there is no vacancies on the Indigenous Economic Development side of things in regards to the ADM.

On the organizational structure chart for the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations, it previously had Municipal and Northern Support Services and the Northern Affairs, which had two separate ADMs, which is now compiled into being one ADM under Municipal and Northern Support Services. So that was kind of combined.

And further, to answer the member's question about, I guess—I'm sorry, I'm probably paraphrasing here a little bit, as to where they're housed, is—it's one office. So I'm the Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations, as well as the Minister for Indigenous Economic Development. Bruce Gray is the Deputy Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations as well as Indigenous Economic Development. And my director of ministerial affairs is the director of ministerial affairs for both departments as well.

Mr. King: This—for the minister, here, I've just got one more staffing question. I've got so much that I want to go through here. Our time's limited, of course.

But—so what is the vacancy rate within your department now, and do you have a target vacancy rate?

Mr. Bushie: So, actually, the number is equivalent across both departments. So, in the Municipal-Northern Relations side, the vacancy rate right now is 17 per cent. And the Indigenous Economic Development side is also 17 per cent, with the goal—and it's been reduced since last year; last year was in the 20-percentile range—so the goal is to get that down to a vacancy rate of 12 per cent.

* (16:00)

Mr. King: In the introduction of the Estimates book, on page 8, it states that employee-related measures are now tracked centrally. So can the minister and department explain where those are now tracked and what changes have been made in regards to staffing and employee-related measures within municipal relations? And can the minister tell us why the department's staffing was reduced by three full-time equivalents? And can he explain what roles were cut? Are they new hires for the government?

And the second part to that would be can the minister tell us the titles of the positions added with those full-time equivalents and who will be filling those roles if they have already been filled.

Mr. Bushie: So just for clarification, we're looking to look at what document the member is referring to. So he's referring to page 8 of the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure?

Mr. King: Sure, yes, it would be page 8 in the Estimates—supplement to the Estimates. In the last paragraph it's—states that performance measures have been updated to align with the department's mandate letters, employee-related measures are now tracked centrally.

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

So training used to be tracked in 2023-2024 in the Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure, but that now—is now recorded in the Public Service Commission.

Mr. King: So it also talks in the intro about tracking the government's strategic priorities and the department mandate.

Can the minister outline his mandate and his department's priorities for the coming year and the next four years?

Mr. Bushie: So the member had asked about, kind of, the mandate that we have as government or we've done so far and what we plan to do for the next number of years. So I'll take some points out of the mandate letter and, of course, it's also a public document that I received when I had the honour of being chosen to be the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations, also, Minister of Indigenous Economic Development.

So some of the things that we had in there was about, first off, creating the Department of Indigenous Economic Development and being able to kind of advance economic reconciliation for Indigenous communities. So that was a priority of that department, and we're well on the way to being able to do that and have that engagement.

One of the other mandated things we talked about was the multi-year funding model for municipalities so they can count on reliable funding. And it gets back to my comments that I've made in my opening comments, but something that I'm proud to be able to say each and every day that we do, is being able to address that on the 2 per cent, for one, but also the predictability that it would give municipalities going forward. So that was important for us to be able to do as per my mandate letter.

And when we talk about the mandate letter, it was a really significant all-of-government approach that we wanted to be able to do, so we had a lot of components of—every department's mandate letter kind of worked together. A working collaboration is truly what the all-of-government approach hopes to be able to do rather than, say, you have a municipal issue; just talk to the one minister; where you have infrastructure, just talk to one minister; you have health, just talk to one

minister—when it's a rather all-of-government approach to be able to do. So parts of what's been in our mandate as a new government for this past year really overlap a lot of different departments and a lot of different aspects of government as well.

* (16:10)

Another part of my department, as well, and part of my mandate, is to expedite treaty land entitlement, and we're well on our way to being able to have those discussions. And for the first time, there's—it's been—we've had to use the word reset on a lot of occasions, because those relationships just did not exist in a previous government.

So it's been met with a lot of optimism and a lot of excitement to be able to say that the mandate of our government is something that we not only had a year ago, but we're delivering on to this point and we're going to continue to deliver on as well.

So one of the other things that we had, too, is kind of the engagement strategy with the Métis Federation and First Nation as well, so we're well on our way to being able to do that in our department.

But also, something, and this is kind of—really kind of a truly all-of-government approach, is being able to develop the infrastructure to improve northern airports for northern Manitoba too. So we were up in Wasagamack quite some time ago with the Minister of Infrastructure to be able to announce that we're actually going ahead with the process of building the airport for Wasagamack, a northern First Nation remote fly-in community that doesn't have any kind of access through airports in any way. And as we get into kind of freeze-up here in the later parts of fall and early parts of winter, it's going to be a significant challenge.

So that's—for us, that's important to be able to do across, really, kind of all levels of government.

Another aspect that was in my mandate letter, as well, was to expedite the review of Bill 37. And that's been a very welcome interaction, if you will, with communities really kind of highlighted by AMM, really coming to the table.

And keep in mind, I mean, legislatively, we weren't mandated to do that for another year. But it was something that we heard from municipalities to be able to—this is something they wanted to see done. So we expedited that review process, and it's still—it's ongoing, but it's—we're close to being able to develop and see the results of that review come forward rather quickly.

But there's a lot of other things that we've done in terms of the mandate letter and the mandated part of our department, and it's significant for us to be able to do.

So we've done a lot of different things. I've touched on the funding model for municipalities; a new Park Community Centre in Brandon; something that we've done, fund 40 firefighters across Manitoba and in the city of Winnipeg here; property tax rebates from the property tax bills at the outset.

So a lot of smaller things, maybe not what you would call in some cases even high profile or immediate things, but there's a lot of rolling up our sleeves and getting to work for Manitobans. So that's something that we want to be able to do each and every day and not necessarily out there looking to do just a government of announcements but actually get the work done.

Mr. King: Costs related to capital budget has increased by 735 per cent year over year.

Can the minister explain the increase and its impact on the departmental budget?

Mr. Bushie: I thank the critic for the question.

It was—it's very important, as well, because there was something that was kind of flagged, if you will, by our department. And that's something, when we talk about the Northern Affairs communities and the assets that were in the Northern Affairs communities were never reflective or on the books, if you will, of the provincial government.

So in order to bring those in line and to actually have them treated as such, as assets, for Northern Affairs communities, that was something that was brought on in March of 2023, and the increased amount is associated with the amortization expenses and decommissioning of some of these assets, if you will.

So it was important that we had a kind of a true reflection of the assets of what Manitoba has and what the Northern Affairs communities had as it reflects to Manitoba. And the—this cost will be recalculated each year, and the projected value will be reflected in the Estimates of Expenditure with the actual amortization expense recorded in the department's annual report and the Province's Public Accounts documents.

Mr. King: Get into some of the funding programs that you talked about—the minister talked about in his opening statement.

One was the ground up program. Couple—kind of a two-part question here. What percentage of that 12 and a half million is actually going to municipalities? How many have applied and been approved?

And the municipal escalator funding, I'm curious to know how negotiations are going moving forward with this, and how it impacts the budget for this year.

* (16:20)

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

It gives me great pleasure to be able to talk about the From the Ground Up Program and what the impacts it's going to have, what kind of the real-world impacts it's going to have, if you will.

So one of the things that's really exciting about the project is it gives the opportunity to partner not just with municipalities but a lot of organizations in the community as well, to be able to kind of get more bang for your buck and be able to really kind of work together and take a real targeted approach to the issues that are in each—while we have—while we're a lot of common issues around—across municipalities—a lot of the uniqueness as well.

So it gives the opportunity to be able to do that not just with the direct impact to the municipality itself, but with the organization in there, whether it be the root causes of crime and those kinds of recreation issues that they want to be able to deal with. So there's a real opportunity to be able to kind of get together and really kind of work all levels of that funding and all levels of the 12 and a half million dollars in the From the Ground Up Program.

But also leads me to talk about the Manitoba GRO program that we have as well too, the \$42 million in those that are directly per municipalities as well. And some of the streams that are in that program is to deal with public safety, flood prevention, infrastructure, roads, bridges, what have you, recreation infrastructure, water, waste water.

So there's a real desire to kind of work together. And every fund and every project that we bring forward for Manitobans, for municipalities and for communities is really meant to work together as well. So there's a real opportunity here for the Manitoba GRO and the \$42 million there and the 12 and a half million From the Ground Up to be able to really kind of work together in communities to really tackle the challenges that they face each and every day.

And there's—it's—also leaves that opportunity for municipalities and communities to take those dollars

that really kind of target the issues that are affecting them personally. Like I said, there's a lot of common issues we have but a lot of uniqueness in our communities as well.

So, out of the Manitoba GRO, out of the \$42 million in the Manitoba GRO project or program to be able to deal with, can really complement some of the things that the 12 and a half million dollars in From the Ground Up can do as well.

So there was a large amount of intakes to those programs as well, which speaks to the challenges that are being faced by communities as well.

So I think, as a good government, we need to be able to come to the table with those municipalities and those communities to be able to help address that. So we addressed it in a way with 12 and a half million dollars in From the Ground Up Program but significantly even more so with the \$42 million in the Manitoba GRO project as well.

Like I said, public safety, flood prevention, infrastructure, recreation, so there's a real desire on the communities to kind of oversee and overlook a lot of different aspects of what they do and what they want to bring to the table, because there's a lot of projects out there and a lot of opportunities out there that they want to be able to go with, maybe just a little bit of assistance, or significant assistance in some cases, from the Manitoba government.

So it's important for us to be able to do that, and we're doing that in From the Ground Up as well as from Manitoba GRO.

Mr. King: Before I close out of this department and move into the next one, I just want to give the minister here another opportunity here to answer the question that I just posed to him. And it was kind of two parts there.

Again, I'll give him the opportunity: How are the negotiations moving along with the municipal escalator funding with municipalities? And with the ground up program, what percentage of that \$12 million is going to municipalities? And how many have been—have applied and approved?

Mr. Bushie: I thank the critic for the question and I apologize I didn't address the funding part of your question in the first time around.

But in regards to the dollar amounts that are being kind of given to municipalities, if you will, and when the member talks about two municipalities, part of the discussion is—the municipalities are part of Manitoba

and municipalities are part of our communities as well, so there's significant contributions made from an all-of-government approach.

So when we talk about the Manitoba GRO and the \$42 million there; From the Ground Up, 12 and a half million dollars; Green Team, \$6 million; the water stewardship board of \$24 million—those are all part of what makes up our contribution to municipalities, as well.

Forty-two million dollars, for example, Manitoba GRO, is just for municipalities. So when we talk about that there, we're at a hundred per cent to be able to deal with that. So our investment in municipalities is significant, as well as the 12 and a half million dollars in From the Ground Up.

I know the member is kind of looking for a line to be able to say, this is the exact dollar amount that goes to whichever organization or whichever part of the community that he's looking for, but at the end of the day, it's a real investment in municipalities across all of Manitoba. And that's where we come from in an all-of-government approach and being able to kind of have every aspect and every program we roll out to be able to hit a lot of different demographics in Manitoba, whether it be in, you know, all four corners of the province—to be able to kind of work together and leverage those dollars with partnerships, with organizations, the community, with municipalities and what have you.

So, again, \$42 million in Manitoba GRO; 12 and a half, From the Ground Up; \$6 million in The Green Team; \$24 million in Water Services Board. So it's significant for us to be able to know that those are hitting home for municipalities.

So that's a significant investment on our part and, again, in collaboration with the municipalities because we've had the conversations to what this means for them and the impact that it would have for them in their individual communities and what that's—what that does, so to be able to create those partnerships.

* (16:30)

On the funding side of things, it's been an ongoing discussion, and it's something that's been welcomed by AMM and by the communities that are represented by AMM. But each and every day, when you get out there and you get out in the communities—and I mean, there's things you can see, and I'm sure the member can attest to the fact that we can look at things on paper and it's one thing, but it's a different thing to actually get out in the communities and be able to talk

to folks. And you kind of hear from first-hand the impacts that would have.

So when it comes to the funding model, of course, it's been very well-received about the predictability of the 2 per cent increase that we have in the funding model, but it's an ongoing conversation. And it's not something that as a government, you say, okay, we've had the conversation, this is a number that's locked in forever. No; it's a conversation that we have on an ongoing basis.

So I'm looking forward to having significant additional conversations when fall convention comes around for AMM, and I'm sure the member opposite is going to welcome back, maybe, some folks that he hasn't seen in a while, to be able to chat with them there at the fall convention.

And when we first formed government a year ago, one of our—one of my first events was, in fact, the fall convention out in Brandon, which is an incredible experience for those of you that don't have the opportunity to go out there and engage; it's fantastic. And again, we were just in the early, you know, weeks of our government. So we went there with, this is what we want to do; this is what—the conversation we had in opposition, so we want to continue that on a government. So we've—we did that. We had the conversation. This is what we heard; this is what we wanted to do. And we implemented that.

So when the member talks about the funding model going forward, that's an ongoing discussion. And I mean, obviously, the—when we talk about predictability and something that was lacking under the previous government—well, should say, you can predict zero, but that's a very easy prediction to make under previous government. But, going forward, you want to be able to have the conversation as to what that means going forward, because we have significant challenges as we progress. And so I think when we talk about the 2 per cent, we look at that and the conversation we've had around AMM and with communities out there is what an escalator would mean and what that means. And I think that's an ongoing conversation, because there is different challenges in different communities.

So it's a big conversation to be had, but again, as good government, you're going to continue to have those conversations with your member municipalities because that's the right thing to do.

Mr. King: Just some closing comments. Not really a question, but—so we can move on to the Indigenous Economic Development.

But I'll take that from the minister that there has been no numbers as far as percentages or whatever increasing or escalating over time just yet. We hope to hear some of that good news in the very near future.

The fact—the ground up, he'd mentioned the 12 and a half million dollars. Again, it's quite a bit considerably less than what the Building Sustainable Communities was. And, of course, the Manitoba GRO is considerably less than what the MEDIP program was, so.

Other than that, I just wanted to put those words on the record as far as my concerns, and I have no further questions, so we can move in—actually, I have lots of questions, but I'll wrap it up there so we can move into the next department and get it wrapped up today.

The Chairperson: Does the minister wish to respond, or can—we can leave it there for the sake of time? Okay.

So acknowledging you have many questions but for the sake of time, we're moving on.

We'll now move to the resolutions.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,467,000 for Municipal and Northern Relations, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,551,000 for Municipal and Northern Relations, Municipal and Northern Support Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$437,749,000 for Municipal and Northern Relations, Community Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,485,000 for Municipal Relations, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$97,284,000 for Municipal and Northern Relations, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 13.1(a), the minister's salary contained in resolution 13.1.

At this point, we respectfully request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of the last item. You can leave all your belongings.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I'll put the final resolution on the floor.

Resolution 13.1.1–13.1 rather: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,734,000 for Municipal and Northern Relations, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Estimates of Indigenous Economic Development.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Indigenous Economic Development.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Indigenous Economic Development): It gives me great pleasure to actually make some opening comments about the Department of Indigenous Economic Development. It's something that it was a priority for us as government to be able to stand up, kind of, the economic power of Indigenous business and development here in the province of Manitoba.

So, as we just came across—or just came past our first year in government, so it was a great honour to be able to stand up this department and to be able to kind of have that engagement through the course of this past year to see what we can do, to see how we

can help and to see the incredible amount of ideas that are out there from Indigenous businesses and non-Indigenous businesses alike.

The engagement has been truly awe-inspiring, and I think it's a great message to be sent to the rest of the country into what we can do for Indigenous economic development here in the province of Manitoba. Again, as we mentioned earlier, I mean pro capita, we have the largest Indigenous population here in Manitoba than any other jurisdiction. So it's a great opportunity for us to be able to kind of develop and build on that economic opportunity.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you to the minister again for getting the opportunity to pose a few questions on Indigenous economic development. Unfortunately, we're limited for time here today, and it's an important department that's been set up here for economic development for Indigenous peoples, as well as our northern communities. I truly believe that it's something that we have to find very important.

Economic development was always a passion of mine when I was on municipal council, so this here is something that I definitely will hold heart—hold close to me as well for our northern communities, our Indigenous people creating opportunities that we have for them here in this province, and we know the opportunities are certainly there to be created.

So those are my opening comments. I think I'll just try and get into some of the questions here that are important for the department so we can get this wrapped up as well.

Thank you.

* (16:40)

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 20.1(a) contained in resolution 20.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Bushie: Just to introduce the folks here with me at the table; as we mentioned, it's a very similar department to Municipal and Northern Relations.

I'm also joined here by my deputy minister, Bruce Gray; assistant deputy minister—executive financial officer, Mike Sosiak; director of ministerial affairs, Marty Gautron; and also Don Hallett, the assistant deputy minister for Indigenous economic partnerships.

The Chairperson: According to our rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. King: I thank the minister.

I did have a number of staffing questions here, but I believe they probably got answered in the last round of questions, so I'll skip over those into some more important stuff.

So under departmental responsibilities listed in the supplement, amongst other things, your department is responsible of implementing and expediting treaty land entitlement agreements.

So can this minister tell us how many treaty land and title claims and net acres have been processed in relation to lands that were formerly Ag Crown lands, and of the treaty land entitlement lands transferred, how many acres have been transferred that were not Ag Crown land and can the minister describe the lands?

Mr. Bushie: Thank the member for the question.

And was mentioned earlier—oh, actually, it was a different department, so I guess I should remind that—the folks that are tuning in for this specific department is that in my mandate letter as Minister for Indigenous Economic Development, I was mandated to expedite TLE as well. So it was something that we took as a high priority.

So the member had asked questions about some amounts and what have you. When TLE was first signed in 1997, it was 1.4 million acres that were, kind of, allocated for the TLE process. And as of this past year, 700,000 has been turned over. As it—and right now there's 40,000 acres sitting with Canada, as well, to be able to go through this process.

The department has targeted 12,000 acres per year to be able to turn over to TLE. We've already exceeded

that target. As of today, we're at 15,000 acres that have been turned over, so we're far exceeding the target that we set, because that was a kind of a really aggressive approach that we wanted to do in terms of being able to expedite the process.

But it was something that was—again, I mean, I talk about many welcome, kind of, things that our government is being able to do. So the engagement on TLE process and—I cite significant conversations that I've had with Chief Gordon Bluesky from Brokenhead, who has an extensive TLE background as well, prior to him being able to serve as chief of his community. So we rely on some of the input, some of the knowledge—again, it's also not about reinventing wheel in a lot of cases.

So there's a lot of things that have taken place that have stalled the TLE process, and we've had the conversation as to how we can expedite some of those things. I don't want to say easy wins, but how can we, kind of, get past some of the simple hurdles that may have existed from between governments and the TLE communities as well. So we've had those conversations as to how we can best do that.

It's a learning curve for a lot of us, so—but it's something we're willing to take on, because, as I mentioned, as per our mandate letter, being able to expedite the TLE process does not necessarily mean doing it quickly for the sake of doing it. It's also about doing it the right way.

* (16:50)

So, as our government, we want to be able to do things the right way, but some of the targets that we put forth for ourselves internally, we're exceeding those targets and we're going to continue to do so.

Mr. King: Yes, I would just—and I—this is a matter of time, I know we don't have much here—but if the minister could clarify and certainly could do it as an undertaking, just since the NDP took over, what those acres were—since the government—the new government—what those acres were as Crown lands and what they were as non-Crown lands. And give me a—some numbers that way.

Has there been any discussions regarding a First Nations-led corporation engaged in power generation with the department, and would such a corporation fall under the purview of Indigenous Economic Development?

Mr. Bushie: Yes, I just—to kind of get back to the TLE question, some of the work that's been done by our

government as well, when I spoke about the—we had a target of 12,000 acres to be able to turn over and we're actually at 15,000 as of today, which is significant steps; it's a 50 per cent increase over what was done previous government as well. I mean, they had the—in 2022-2023 just over 10,000 acres being able to turn down that whole year, so we've already exceeded that to be able to expedite that process. So it's something we're very proud of and something we'll continue to be proud of.

To the member's question on the potential partnerships on companies, whether it be wind or energy or what have you, when we—as a new government, when we stood up our energy policy and even as early as this morning on our critical minerals strategy, Indigenous engagement was a priority in both of those strategies that we're bringing forward.

So when we first stood up the department there was a lot of conversation about what type of business for Indigenous communities, what type of business they want to be able to get into, where they wanted to be able to kind of develop—or further develop, because there was a lot of things that were already significantly off the ground by Indigenous committees.

So on the energy side of things, there was a lot of conversation that have taken place with a number of proponents, number of First Nation partnerships that they've created amongst themselves, lot of stand-alone communities as well, but it's something that we all take in. And for us, it's very exciting to be able to know that Indigenous communities are at the table, are wanting to come to the table and what can we do as a government to help kind of support, but also encourage and engage.

So when we talk about the energy policy and the critical minerals strategy, some of that goes hand in hand and some of it is a stand-alone. But for us it's to be able to have that engagement. So as—it's proud of—I'm very proud of the fact that we stood up that department and we created this partnership with Indigenous communities to really kind of engage what that is.

And I don't think I'm sharing any secrets for the committee here when we talk about Manitoba being a very have province, whether it be on a critical minerals side or on a energy side as well. And we're a leader. We're a leader across not just Canada, but internationally when it comes time to being able to—clean, renewable energy. So that's something that we have in abundance and we want to be able to kind of create and develop in partnership with our Indigenous com-

munities, and they're at the table, too, on a number of different factors, whether it be on wind, whether it be on different types of energy or whether it be just on economic development in general.

And I cite Naawi-Oodena, the former Kapyong Barracks site, as a real leader. And you're going to see that when it comes time to turning into our largest urban reserve in Canada and the economic weight that it's going to carry, not just for the city of Winnipeg or the province of Manitoba, but for Canada in general. So it's significant for us to be able to have those conversations, how we can partner with them as well.

But when it comes time to—specific to the question about the energy side of things, those are conversations that are ongoing and it's very exciting to see those opportunities exist for our Indigenous communities.

Mr. King: I have no further questions or comments, Honourable Chair.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions at this time.

Resolution 20.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,512,000 for Indigenous Economic Development, Indigenous Economic Partnerships, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 20.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding—sorry. RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not—the word sum exceeding is missing—a sum not exceeding 60—let's try that from the top:

Resolution 20.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$67,500,000 for Indigenous Economic Development, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is 21–20.1(a), the minister's salary contained in resolution 20.1.

At this point, we respectfully request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

This completes the Estimates of—

Resolution 20.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$497,000 for Indigenous Economic Development, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department for Indigenous Economic Development and the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply.

Therefore, committee rise.

ROOM 255

**SPORT, CULTURE, HERITAGE
AND TOURISM**

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Robert Loiselle): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here today, honourable Chair. I would like to welcome my colleagues and members opposite. It is an honour and a privilege as Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism to introduce the 2024-2025 budgetary Estimates for my department.

I would like to introduce the members of my department here with me today: Jeff Hnatiuk, deputy minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism; Dollphine Oguna with our Administration and Finance team; Veronica Dyck, assistant deputy minister of Culture and Heritage Programs; Julia Tetrault, director of Sport and Tourism Policy; Scott Goodine from the archives; and we'll add another name afterwards.

Budget 2024 reflects our government's commitment to fostering a thriving and diverse arts, culture, heritage, sports and tourism landscape in Manitoba over the course of our first mandate.

By prioritizing foundational investment in the arts and culture sector, Budget 2024 demonstrates our recognition of the invaluable contributions that arts and culture play in making our communities more attractive places to live and establish roots.

Budget 2024 makes an investment towards strengthening the arts and culture sector and enhancing

its capacity as a social, cultural and economic driver for the benefit of all Manitobans. Just this past Friday, for example, we were pleased to host an announcement with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and members of this Assembly to formally announce our investment of \$1 million more for the Manitoba Arts Council and \$500,000 more for the Manitoba Centennial corporation centre.

This announcement is exciting as it represents the first real increase to the Manitoba Arts Council in a generation. This demonstrates both the faith we have in MAC as well as the need for investment in our cultural and artistic spaces.

One of the things I really appreciate about MAC is their ability to reach and distribute these resources across the province. As a former teacher, I've seen first-hand the difference that exposure to the arts can have for a student. MAC's outreach to the community is exceptional and I'm pleased that our government is continuing to support them.

To support long-term sustainability, strength and capacity, and support artistic and cultural activities, Budget 2024 provides increased annual funding for the following organizations: the Manitoba Arts Council will expand its operating grant programs to new clients in order to better reflect Manitoba's diversity; Manitoba Film and Music will expand their music programs and internal capacity to enhance programs and services for the sector overall.

I want to speak a bit about Manitoba Film and Music. We know that Manitoba's having a moment. One of the things that really amazed me as a new minister is to see how committed the sector is to rowing in the same direction. We see companies, directors, executives, unions; they all work so well together. And of course, this is possible because of the support that we do in their work.

The Centre culturel franco-manitobain will increase its capacity to foster and promote a diverse array of francophone cultural and artistic activity. As a Franco-Manitoban, I know how important cultural spaces such as the CCFM are, and what it means to have—and be able to have—a dedicated cultural centre. This past year, our government almost doubled funding to the CCFM which, again, hadn't been seen in years.

Le Centre culturel franco-manitobain va avoir une hausse dans sa capacité pour promouvoir les activités francophones et culturelles et artistiques. Comme Franco-manitobain, je sais comment importants

ces espaces sont et comment le CCFM est important. Cette année passée, notre gouvernement a presque doublé les fonds au CCFM, qui n'était pas vu depuis longtemps.

Translation

The Centre culturel franco-manitobain will have an increased capacity to promote francophone cultural and artistic activities. As a Franco-Manitoban, I know how important these spaces are and how important the CCFM is. This past year, our government almost doubled funding for the CCFM, which had not been seen for a long time.

English

The Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation will enhance its role as a keystone arts and cultural campus. This is possible of our—because of our support for this community institution, and we have full confidence that our new board members can help strengthen this vital space.

In addition, we will increase funding, serving stakeholder organizations through the Ethnocultural Community Support Program to support the increasing number of organizations in program, and the Community Museum Grants Program, to provide additional operating support to museums across the province.

Budget 2024 includes \$1.2 million in incremental funding for a new funding model that will reinforce libraries as cornerstones of our communities.

I want to speak to the importance of the local library, especially in rural communities. These are community gathering spots and provide an avenue for people to have freedom to work together. It won't surprise people to hear, unfortunately, that libraries are sometimes under attack. We've seen pushes to ban books in some jurisdictions, to limit the freedom of Manitobans to access certain materials.

Our government is steadfast that Manitobans should have the choice to access materials, to learn new things and to gather information without hindrance.

* (15:10)

The new public library funding model will increase total operating funding for rural and northern libraries and the Winnipeg library by \$1.2 million to \$8.3 million in 2024-2025, strengthening the overall public library system in Manitoba and reinforcing our partnership with municipalities.

Budget 2024 builds on the more than \$13.8 million in annual funding currently provided to Sport Manitoba,

with \$500,000 in increased funding dedicated to enhance anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives.

I want to give a particular shout-out to the Anti-Racism in Sport group; they who have challenged us to work together. I'm pleased that we have accepted their offer and have been working with them and Sport Manitoba to address racism and harassment in sport.

This funding will support all provincial sport organizations in their efforts to enhance diversity, equality and the inclusion of First Nations, 2SLGBTQAI+, newcomers and non-traditional communities in their respective sports. Our increased funding will also strengthen Sport Manitoba's delivery of the Safe Sport strategy to promote the awareness, prevention and direct service to address reports of maltreatment in sport.

Budget 2024 maintains a committed—a commitment of \$13.865 million in provincial funding to Travel Manitoba. Tourism funding supports the government's commitment to ongoing efforts to attract investment, foster job creation and improve education and training opportunities that will lead to stronger economic growth, greater trade and innovation.

Our government recognizes the importance of protecting the rights of francophones and improving access to French-language education, health care and other essential services. Our budget increases the investment and of the operations of the Francophone Affairs Secretariat by almost \$500,000, funded through the new Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French Language Services with our federal government partners. These amounts will support the efforts of all departments to improve access to services in French so that we can build a more inclusive province.

Budget 2024 recognizes the importance of government records, publications and archival holdings. Preserving Manitoba's documentary history requires collaboration and partnership with our stakeholders. By working together, we can leverage expertise, resources and technology to develop innovative solutions for managing, acquiring and preserving records and publications in digital form.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît l'importance de protéger les droits des Francophones et pour améliorer l'accès à l'éducation en français, la santé en — les soins en santé en français, et d'autres services essentiels.

Budget 2024 hausse notre investissement dans les opérations des — l'affaire — dans le Secrétariat des affaires francophones par presque 500 000 \$, fondé

par le nouveau entente Canada-Manitoba sur les langues officielles.

Ces montants vont supporter les efforts aux départements pour améliorer l'accès aux services en français pour que nous pouvons être une province véritablement bilingue.

Translation

Our government recognizes the importance of protecting the rights of francophones and improving access to French-language education, health care and other essential services.

Budget 2024 increases our investment in the operations of the Francophone Affairs Secretariat by almost \$500,000, funded through the new Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Official Languages.

These funds will support departments' efforts to improve access to French-language services, so that we can be a truly bilingual province.

English

Finally, I want to thank our department staff. Each member of our team plays a vital role in ensuring a more vibrant, inclusive and prosperous Manitoba.

Merci. Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic for the office—the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Yes.

The Chairperson: The member from Selkirk.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you for the opportunity to sit at the Estimates and ask some questions.

As a new member to the Legislative Assembly of the Province, it's a learning curve for myself and I can imagine that for the minister, this is quite the portfolio to—very fluid in many different areas to try to get a grip on. So I would appreciate the fact that he's got a number of staff here to get it done.

We do have a number of questions today to move back and forth, so between myself and my colleague we'll be asking questions in relating to the Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism portions and each taking a turn respectfully as we move along.

We do want to make sure that we get a number of things on the record. I think that we're all in agreement that every part of this budget affects our communities,

affects the history of where we've come from and also affect where we're going. So hopefully we can have a great dialogue moving forward and get some great things, questions on the record and answers on the record, and we can move forward respectfully.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member for Selkirk.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department—department in the Committee of Supply.

Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 14.1(a) contained in resolution 14.1 at this time. We invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduces staff in attendance.

Mr. Simard: All right, would just like to introduce my staff, as we put a name to the—yes, name to the face.

On my left, immediate left, is deputy minister for sport, culture and heritage, Jeff Hnatiuk. To his left is my director of ministerial affairs, Zach Fleisher. First on that line is the assistant deputy minister for culture and heritage, Veronica Dyck. And just wanted to get everyone's name spelled—yes. And then we have Dollphine from Finance, as well; Scott Goodine from the archives. And we have Julia Tetrault from the sport policy branch. And Kenza Zaoui from the francophone secretary—French language secretary.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

According to our rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Perchotte: Just inquiring to the minister if we can find out what is the number of staff in total in the department.

Mr. Simard: The number for '24-25 is 165.6 staff.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

Also if I can find out, in the office itself, what is the number of staff directly related into your office.

Mr. Simard: Yes, just looking for a question for clarification there: Are you asking for the minister's office only or including the deputy minister's office?

Mr. Perchotte: Both the minister and the deputy minister, please.

* (15:20)

Mr. Simard: Yes, I just wanted to thank the member for that question because—I just wanted, before I answer your question, to let you—to let everyone in Manitoba who is watching know that I'm blessed with awesome staff. The deputy minister's staff and the people who work in my office are beyond compare.

In my time as being a new minister and kind of—you guys know what that's like to show up to work and then kind of be, oh, wow, what's going on here? And the people who work in these offices has—have really shepherded me through my time as minister.

And I just wanted to make sure that, as I answer your question, that they're phenomenal, and any person who's ever had the privilege to hold a spot in government and a minister's chair realize how fortunate we are to work with the people we work with. And I felt like I won the lottery when I was sitting with the people and they were telling me about everything to expect in those early months.

And as we went through the year and had just a great year, those people in that office really were my support; were there for me when I had the dumbest questions you could possibly imagine, and able to let me know, no, that's—this is the way it is, this is what you should be considering.

So before answering that question, I just really wanted to take the time to shout-out those people who do the work. And the office staff: in the minister's office there's five and then three in the deputy's office, including the deputy minister.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that great answer.

Being surrounded by good people my entire life, it's the staff that makes you look good, you know, and there's clearly a tremendous amount of respect between you and the staff that work in the building. And that just is a testament to all the people who come and put their lives forward to work for the betterment of our province. So that's a good answer and I appreciate that.

The total salaries paid to the staff that you just mentioned, could you tell me what that total salary would be?

Mr. Simard: Sorry about that. I just need to do one final calculation—I want to thank Dollphine Oguna for doing that work on the fly here.

* (15:30)

So we have a—

The Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Simard: We have a total of \$773,245.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

I would've thought that that would have been very quick, top of head. Coming from private industry, if anybody would ask me what I'm paying people I always knew what I was—my department was paying them. But I do appreciate the direct and right-down-to-the-dollar answer.

That total salary for the staff, is that an increase from '23-24 year or is it a decrease from the 2023-24 year?

Mr. Simard: Just in response to the question and the commentary made prior, I think that you can appreciate the answer that we gave right down to the dollar demonstrates the type of quality of work that we have in our department, and having exact figures on the top of mind—I think it does us justice to make sure that we make sure all of those numbers that we are sharing are correct. So I thank my staff for doing that.

And specific to the question about whether or not it is an increase or a decrease: Due to MGEU settlements, it is an increase.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer, and my response was no way a slight to the department for taking time. I just thought that would've been a figure that would've been readily available. But taking the time to get the actual exact amount was appreciated and was not a slight on the department whatsoever.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the ACSC fund. How does the minister justify cancelling this fund and cutting off crucial support for community-level arts, culture, sports initiatives that directly benefit Manitobans?

Mr. Simard: Our government approved \$50 million in local community grants through the ACSC fund, investing through Manitoba local community groups, churches, community centres and youth-serving organizations to help them upgrade and thrive and continue operations in some cases.

So when you think about what community means, or—and what we've done since taking over power from the previous government, it's investing in those organizations and in those towns and in those cities and in those cultural groups to make sure that they can thrive.

And taking the time as a government to sit through commitments that were made with the previous government with no signed agreements, I'm sure you can appreciate was really a task that we didn't take lightly, to be able to go through the work made by our government, and the work that we needed to do.

And I think the important distinction here—I think your choice of words is very interesting when we talk about cancel. The fund that you refer to had a shelf life and it was not made a permanent part of the Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism budget, and although that—it did expire, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done within the department as when we were able to, as a government, approve the expenditure.

We're able—you can appreciate the type of work that needed to go in in informing those groups and letting them know that their request to government had been approved and we were ready to sign an agreement with them. We didn't just send letters out the door saying you're approved and then not stick around to sign the contract and agreements with these groups. We were here to make sure that they were able to thrive.

And, of course, another shout-out for my department staff who continue to have the intake and project updates and making sure that all of these community groups that received money in an election year were actually prepared to do the work necessary to pull this type of work off. And as we assist these groups who have these dollars to make sure that they're spent in a responsible, wise and fiscally prudent manner.

And it just speaks to the—what makes Manitoba great; these groups that received dollars for maybe an upgrade on the floor in the community centre, or upgraded lights, I think we were really proud to approve these expenditures. And there is still a lot of work to do in these—in the communities, and a lot of them haven't even started the task of implementing these projects, so having a group that—having a department that continues to buoy and shepherd community groups to get these—this work done is—I think, is really an important part of what we do as government.

And I'm incredibly proud of the work that we've done, and if this was—this group, or this fund, I think,

it was not made permanent. It was not made permanent by the previous government, and I think that's a really important thing to remember, and it wasn't made—it was not cancelled. You can't cancel something that had an end date, and I think that's a really important distinction.

And as I mentioned before during my answer, as these community groups are still grappling with the capacity required to be able to pull off these projects they applied for in an election year, they actually weren't ready for how quickly this supposed 36-month project was announced and then was really whittled down to 14 months in total.

I think it just demonstrates the caution that you need to have as a government to make sure that your investments that are going out into the community are done in a responsible way, in a way that the communities that can withstand what we're asking them to do. Because, ultimately, although they are making an application to the fund, we are asking them to make commitments to be able to complete these tasks in a real and meaningful way.

Mr. Perchotte: What is the current status of all the grants that were allocated under the ACSC fund? Have all the grant recipients received their funding allocations to date, or is there any of the payouts delayed by the NDP government for any of the recipients of the fund?

* (15:40)

Mr. Simard: I can confidently and proudly say that we did not cancel one project of the 936 projects that were approved. And to answer your question, by the end of—as of the end of August, approximately 70 per cent of those 936 projects were paid.

But remembering that a lot of these projects went to municipalities—municipalities that had gone years of no increases at all to their operational budget—to be able to invest in projects in their communities. A lot of these projects needed municipal support that wasn't quite in place. Now that municipalities have a government that is prepared to, you know, step up in terms of increases in funding, the 2 per cent that was mentioned before, they have certainty that they can go.

Some of these projects obviously are multi-year, multi-phase projects that take a lot of design and planning. And as these projects become more and more advanced, I think that it's an important distinction to really remember that when governments prop up municipalities and assist municipalities in getting projects done, there's no limit to what we can do.

And unfortunately for some groups, some of their projects were not able to be completed because they changed the scope of the project, and—but not one group was delayed because of the work that our government accomplished.

And again, I appreciate you asking these questions, because what they did—what you're really demonstrating here is that our department was able to act on these programs quickly and to be able to do the work necessary to be able to get these agreements signed—because I remind the member that not one single agreement was signed from the second tranche of the fund.

And I think that you can appreciate the work that is involved when we create that type of uncertainty in the public service, uncertainty that was created by the opposition with these groups, to saying, well, we don't have an agreement in place. I'm really happy to say that our group—our government was able to be the government that advanced these projects forward.

And just to clarify, it is 946 projects, and really happy to be able to have this type of government that can respond to the needs that municipalities and groups were under, with the uncertainty that was created by this election fund.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

And I also would like to ask the minister what he would say to organizations such as the Indigenous day celebrations for Selkirk that was put on by a wonderful organization that had everything free. They had shelter, they had pancakes, they had face painters, they had entertainment who applied from this government, who is used to getting a grant year after year after year from the Conservative government, and this year did not receive any funding.

What do you tell people who count on something that didn't get any funding what to do in the future or what the government thinks of their initiatives?

Mr. Simard: Our staff is getting those specific responses for you in terms of the group, but we are seeking clarification for a couple of items.

The first is which organization—specifically their name—what it is, and if you can define the years in which they received funding and under which specific grant.

Mr. Perchotte: It was an application put through by Alfred Anderson and I think it was just called—Indigenous people Selkirk was the one, and according

to Mr. Anderson, he had received funding for at least the previous seven years, if not a lot more.

In fact, in my private life, I had donated the shelters back over 20 years ago for a number of years for the organization. It's a large event that happened in Selkirk. I brought it to the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) attention. I had spoken to the minister about that as well, and the Premier actually showed up, did a victory lap prior to the start of the events, did a—spoke to the crowd then quickly left before the event got under way.

This has been going on for years in the park, so I may have the name wrong, but it was certainly Alfred Anderson who's applied for that.

Mr. Simard: Without knowing the specific name of the group and the specific fund for which they applied, it's hard for us to give accurate information.

* (15:50)

We can obviously come back with a proper response as this may be dollars that did not come out of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism. If the fund came out of ACSC the last two years, that is something that we'll have to investigate and whether or not I believe this is Bucky from the MMF. There may have been pots of money that they accessed through the PC government prior.

And I guess it's just another example of trying to scrounge, to see where—what was going on in those seven previous years and to find out what type of stakeholders were getting dollars from who. And I think having a great group of workers in our department, the information that we absolutely want to provide is completely accurate.

And so if the member opposite could be satisfied with that response, I'd like to continue answering with the questions.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd thank the minister for at least attempting to try to dig into it. Again, my question might have been a little vague as to which group was asking, but I did bring it forward to the Premier's attention and to yourself.

However, many of the people were disappointed that Premier shows up, wants to get photo ops, like to get behind the station and start flipping some pancakes to show that he's personally involved, when, in fact, no money has rolled out. And so, we'll just let that one be for now; I don't think we're going to get to an answer on that.

I think that we're in agreement when it comes to history, our culture, our heritage, that once you lose it, it's gone. Whether it be a historical building that is knocked down—you don't get that back. And we have an issue right now where—that we need to transition our archives into digital preservation. We need to make sure that we are moving forward to make sure that we don't lose anything.

I know there's some issues with the brick and mortar of where the items are being stored for humidity, for damage, and we want to make sure that we don't lose our heritage; it's very important.

Can you—can the government please let me know: Does the NDP support the digitization of the Manitoba archives, and if so, why has this budget not allowed or allocated additional resources to support that?

Mr. Simard: Yes, I just wanted to clarify part of the answer or the question.

I should underline that there's significant amount of work being done on the digital preservation of Manitoba's history. And I mean, who wouldn't want to preserve the great history of Manitoba, but also the stories that we can learn a lot from. And as we move forward in reconciliation and chart a path forward to the future, having the digital preservation of our records is extremely important.

It should also be noted that the significant work that is already being done by the Archives, although the matter, the expertise and the staffing and the people working in the archives do fall under Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that the funds to fund the significant work that is being done here comes from our friends in CPGS, computer—Consumer Protection and Government Services, who do a significant amount of work in making sure that this digital preservation project continues.

And as the minister responsible for the archives, I'm just blown away by the work that's done to be able to make this a reality for Manitobans, having visited the government records storage facility and seeing the great work that's going on there to be able to preserve Manitoba's history. Very proud as a government to have done the work in preserving Brandon's history through the Brandon Sun and being able to bring those archives to the Manitoba Archives when they did not have a home, and there was a fear of it being lost to the elements.

And the work that the Manitoba Archives has been doing, and the outreach that it does on X, on open

houses, I just think really underlines the fact that we have a rich and diverse history. Looking at some of the maps that were out on that afternoon, I think they had record amount of people come through those doors over the course of the open house where the people who work in the Archives just do phenomenal work to be able to preserve the history.

And the digital preservation work that you can imagine is very detailed, very precise and very important to being able to put our government and our province's history into digital form. And we, you know, as the member can appreciate the different changing and technology, the different work that needs to be done, upgrading the software, upgrading of the different technical tools that you need to preserve the digital history of Manitoba—or archives history of Manitoba—that it does take a lot of work and that our friends at CPGS who are funding this significant work are advancing our story forward.

And when we continue to talk about our history, we can't keep an eye on history without having an eye on the future. And being able to record those stories, to be able to preserve them for the next generation is extremely, extremely important. And I just wanted to, again, congratulate the archives proactively for working with the Public Service Commission and the Manitoba government and general employees unions to make this possible. They have done great work on looking at what is necessary for the audit, and what that means for the preservation of a digital—the digital preservation of our story.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

I understand that the task is monumental. Who would've thought years ago that we'd be required to do this? Yet, in 2023, the Archives of Manitoba was able to double their target for the number of records added publicly to the available database. And yet this year the NDP chose not to increase that target number of archives added.

Why did the minister choose to undercut the target number of publicly available archive records for the '24-25 fiscal year?

* (16:00)

Mr. Simard: You know, as a—I've—might not know this about me, but my brother, who got his start working in the royal artillery museum in Shilo, Manitoba, was a—is an archivist right now, and he currently—he works in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

And he's personally let me know many times what his job is all about and the amount of detail and the type of work that he and his team does at the war museum. And it actually allowed me, when I took this role as minister responsible for the archives, to really have a pretty keen understanding of what it is involved in doing the work in terms of archiving Manitoba's history.

And I actually wanted to thank the member for really bringing this question forward. It shows a keen interest in preserving Manitoba's history, and it also allows me the chance to highlight the great work that's been going on in the Manitoba archives and the type of work that they do.

And when we talk about the digital Keystone database or the Keystone database, what we're really talking about in terms of your target of 12,000 records added, and it's a highly—it's—this measure is actually very highly variable, and it fluctuates year to year. And one of the reasons, I think that the member opposite can appreciate, is the type of records that may be entered in one year to the next, what's involved in digitizing or adding a map into the Keystone database, what's involved in maybe putting, you know, a ledger from a trading post into the database that comes from the 1800s as opposed to the 1900s could be drastically different, and the type of technology required to be able to advance this type of work is—could be very exhaustive.

And this is an operational decision. We're a government that trusts the workers that we have with the expertise on record preservation and industry standards and best practices. They're the experts on what it means to be able to archive these records, but also to be able to have a database that has integrity, that is easy to access and is public. And, you know, the people at the archives just do fantastic work and—maintaining their vault, maintaining their digital archives, maintaining the heritage of our province.

And the online database in which clients gain access to this data has to be really quite, you know, managed closely. And the work that the—our archivist and our experts do with the support from Consumer Protection and Government Services through the funding of projects like the digital preservation project that is going on, is extremely important.

And when we talk about what a target is in terms of specific pieces, going back to the ledger example, it might be different than what it is to enter, perhaps, something that came from a pioneer settlement in 1700s and telling that story also in the context of what

it meant back in the 1700s to have pioneer settlements in Manitoba, and what it did in terms of what is the Indigenous story related to that.

So having these experts and this historians in the field gives me great comfort to know that the work they are doing, in response to your question, to preserve Manitoba's history is just unmatched and I think we're really blessed in Manitoba to have a really strong group of experts who know what they're doing, who set targets and goals and continue to meet that operationally. And, yes, I just—that's a bit of my lesson on our archiving in Manitoba.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Le ministre pourrait-il préciser quelles nouveaux ressources ont été ajoutées au secrétaire francophone?

Translation

Could the minister specify which new additional resources were given to the Francophone Affairs Secretariat?

Mr. Simard: J'aimerais remercier mon collègue pour avoir posé cette question en français. Ça me donne l'occasion de répondre à cette question en français.

Et comme vous pouvez constater que notre gouvernement a fait des très grands investissements dans la Francophonie ici au Manitoba. Et que, étant un Franco-manitobain qui a été élevé dans un village qui était, vraiment on pourrait dire, une île entourée par des communautés anglophones, que il y a personne qui pourrait parler de cette situation que moi. Et que l'importance d'avoir un nom comme Simard ou un nom comme Lagassé et d'avoir vécu au Manitoba pour des centaines d'années entourés par d'Anglophones, je pense que c'est quelque chose de très spécial qu'on peut continuer d'avoir nos discussions en français.

* (16:10)

Notre gouvernement et mon mandat étaient de vraiment faire du Manitoba une province véritablement bilingue. Et avec nos partenaires en Voyage Manitoba, Sport Manitoba, l'Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba—aussi avec—[interjection]—I found my iPhone—que c'était un privilège pour—

Translation

I would like to thank my colleague for asking this question in French. It gives me the opportunity to answer this question in French.

As you can see, our government has invested heavily in the francophone community here in Manitoba. As a Franco-Manitoban who was raised in a village that

was akin to an island surrounded by English-speaking communities, there is no one who could talk about this situation better than I could—about the importance of having a family surname like Simard or Lagassé, the names of families that lived in Manitoba for hundreds of years surrounded by English-speaking people. I think it is very special that we can continue to have our discussions in French.

** (16:10)*

Our government and I have a mandate to make Manitoba a truly bilingual province. With our partners in Travel Manitoba, Sport Manitoba, the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, as well as—[interjection]—I found my iPhone—it was a privilege to—

The Chairperson: Order, please.

I'll just remind all members to please make sure that their phones are on mute at this point.

Mr. Simard: Mes excuses, Monsieur le Président. Que nos partenaires – nos partenariats avec nos municipalités bilingues, avec nos organismes au Sport Manitoba : c'est là où on a mis des fonds. On a mis des fonds en Voyage Manitoba, on a investi en AMBM.

Très content que la DSFM – la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine – a été une des divisions scolaires qui ont reçu une très grande hausse importante dans leurs fonds cette année – parce que notre gouvernement valorise le bilinguisme. Et avec ces investissements dans nos – les départements d'immigration, d'éducation, en santé, que nous savons que les gens qui cherchent des services en français vont être capables de le faire.

Notre gouvernement a répondu à une population bilingue qui a vécu sept années et demie de coupures à les services en français. Je pense, à ce moment, au Bureau d'éducation française qui a perdu leur ADM et que cette position a été comblée : c'était une des premières choses que nous avons investi nos efforts. Que nous avons aussi, you know, on regarde un certain trou dans les services de traduction qui a été créé par le gouvernement précédent : c'est quelque chose qui n'était pas acceptable pour nous.

Alors nos investissements non seulement en immigration, mais en éducation, en santé et à les affaires municipales. Que c'est super important que les gens peuvent accéder les services en français. Et qu'avoir un Premier ministre bilingue. Nous avons une des premières lois que nous avons – projets de loi que nous avons proposés aux gens du Manitoba, c'était de faire notre premier Premier ministre bilingue – qui parlait le français. Le Premier ministre officiellement,

c'était Louis Riel, qui a fait, lui – comme moi, comme mon père, comme les familles qui ont vraiment travaillé très fort, et ils ont parlé à très haute voix en français pour valoriser notre communauté francophone, franco-manitobaine.

Je veux juste aussi dire que notre – le Manitoba change. Le Manitoba – les Franco-manitobains, ça inclut tout le monde qui vient de loin, qui ont établi leurs racines ici au Manitoba : soit de l'Afrique ou de l'Europe, de l'Asie, de l'Amérique du Sud. Il y a tellement de très bons Francophones qui se sont établis ici au Manitoba parce que nous allons répondre à leurs besoins francophones.

Translation

My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Our partnerships with our bilingual municipalities, with our organizations at Sport Manitoba: that's where we have invested funds. We have invested in Voyage Manitoba; we have invested in the AMBM.

I am very pleased that the DSFM—Division scolaire franco-manitobaine—is one of the school divisions receiving a very significant increase in funding this year. Because our government values bilingualism. And with these investments in the departments of immigration, education and health, we know that people looking for services in French will now be able to find them.

Our government responded to the needs of a bilingual population that lived through seven and a half years of cuts to French-language services. I am thinking right now of the Bureau de l'éducation française, which lost its ADM, and now that position has been filled—it was one of the first things we invested our efforts in. We also have a significant gap in translation services, which was created by the previous government: this is something that was not acceptable to us.

We invested not only in immigration, but also in education, in health and in municipal affairs: it is very important that people be able to access services in French. And to have a bilingual Premier. One of the first bills we proposed to the people of Manitoba was to recognize our first Premier as a bilingual person, someone who spoke French. Officially now, our first Premier was Louis Riel—a man who did what I did, what my father did, and what many families who worked so hard did: he and they spoke French loudly to promote our francophone community—the Franco-Manitoban community.

I just want to point out that Manitoba is changing. Franco-Manitobans include people who come from

far away and have established their roots here in Manitoba: from Africa, Europe, Asia and South America. There are now so many fine francophones who have settled here in Manitoba, because we are going to meet their francophone needs.

MLA Lagassé: Merci, le ministre, pour cette réponse.

Ma deuxième question sera en anglais parce que parle en français, je comprends le français, mais je trouve pas toujours les mots, et il y a de l'information ici que je peux pas—okay, so pardon pour ça.

Translation

Thank you, Minister, for this response.

My second question will be in English because I speak French, I understand French, but I cannot always find the words, and there is information here that I cannot—I apologize for that.

English

Page 36 of the Estimates of Expenditures shows a general decrease to the administration and finance of government—the government's OREs.

Can the minister please confirm that this cut has not impacted—and you did touch on it in your opening remarks—to the Centre culturel franco-manitobain and, if it has, what programming for the francophone Manitobans will be impacted?

Mr. Simard: Merci, monsieur le membre de Dawson Trail (DAL Lagassé). Et j'aimerais aussi te remercier d'avoir demandé cette question, parce que ça me donne la chance à parler d'une hausse de 92 pour cent au Centre culturel franco-manitobain, que nous avons investi au-dessus de 387,000 \$ au Centre culturel franco-manitobain. Et que nous valorisons le groupe qui travaille là.

Translation

Thank you to the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé). I would like to thank you for asking this question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about a 92 per cent increase in funding for the Centre culturel franco-manitobain. We have invested more than \$387,000 in the CCFM. And we value the group that works there.

English

And just really proud to say that we had a generational increase to the Centre culturel franco-manitobain this year, where they were operating with deficits every year. And this year with a 92 per cent increase to their operational funding we were able to

give the CCFM the stability they so desperately required in a once-in-a-generational type of increase.

We continued with investments, as you may know, to the Manitoba Arts Council; just recently announced a—re-announced our commitment of \$1 million more to the Manitoba Arts Council—Manitoba Arts Council, which invests in communities all across Manitoba, and just a fantastic organization that props up, you know, theatre groups in Birtle and Killarney and Brandon, helps out the larger organizations like the Royal Manitoba Theatre Company or the Prairie Theatre Exchange. And those extra dollars that were sent to the OREs and in this case MAC really had quite a—can have a significant impact for what it can mean to live in Manitoba and work in Manitoba.

* (16:20)

You know, Manitoba's a place where you can, comparatively to some of the larger centres, raise your family and be able to go and see world-class theatre and listen to a symphony that plays music from generations ago that—and without the support of our government, you know, and this additional dollars make a massive difference.

And talking to my friends at Sport Manitoba, they're extremely happy and gracious for the increase in funding that we sent to Sport Manitoba last year, and being able to provide programming and partnerships with Anti-Racism in Sport, to be able to help our provincial sport organizations really develop robust, comprehensive programs for anti-racism.

And we know that it's an important thing for youth and adults to participate in sport and culture, because it can change lives. I've seen it personally when artists in schools would come to the school I was teaching at, and being able to sit down with those students and say: Hey, now forget your math; forget science. We're going to do some art projects here or learn how to play guitar or play the Ziguezon on the little hand-mouth thingy there was pretty cool; the kids really enjoyed it.

And what I really noticed as an educator when you invest in arts, and you invest in culture, and you—happening in schools, students are actually more ready to learn because they've activated different parts of their brain, and they really enjoy that type of a break from math reality for some of them; it actually makes them better thinkers. So, really proud of the work that we've been doing.

À CCFM, je sais que ils font du très grand travail, du très beau travail, pour répondre à les demandes de

la communauté franco-manitobaine: le patio, les expositions d'art, le support pour le Festival du Voyageur, des groupes communautaires qui font l'art, les belles chansons, les soirées de jazz, les partenariats avec le Cercle Molière. Et je pense que, avec notre investissement historique dans cette organisation, ça va faire une super-grande différence pour eux.

Translation

I know that a lot of work—very good work—is done at the CCFM to meet the needs of the Franco-Manitoban community, with events like the patio, art exhibits, support for the Festival du Voyageur, community art groups, great songs, jazz evenings, partnerships with the Cercle Molière theatre, et cetera. I believe that our historic investment in this organization is going to make a very significant difference for the CCFM.

MLA Lagassé: I thank the minister for the answer to that question.

Going to switch to sport a little bit, you touched on it there. I had the opportunity to tour Sport Manitoba; what a fantastic facility. It's—in my conversations there, I was reminded of how important sport is to mental health, and how it just seems to be this—I guess they're directly tied together.

And my question is not about the mental health component, but I just wanted the minister to be aware of that. We should most likely invest more in that, especially since mental health is something that's near and dear to myself and I see the effects on boys and men—and not only on boys and men, but in particular in my case, that.

Can the minister update on the status of the Pathway to Safer Sport program? What resources have been provided to coaches and sporting officials from this program, and how many coaches and sporting officials have participated in the program since its inception?

Mr. Simard: I just wanted to thank the member to do that shout-out to the Sport for Life Centre that is a jewel of our downtown that—really proud to have been—to be part of a party that really invested in this centre.

And, you know, I was a coach for a long time before I became a politician. I'm still not convinced that I'm a politician; so once a coach always a coach, once a teacher always a teacher. And I spent a lot of time in the Sport for Life building before it was a Sport for Life building, doing a lot of the work that local sports organizations do, as mandated by the provincial sports organizations. And in Manitoba,

we're extremely blessed to have 70 PSOs, over 70 PSOs in Manitoba who put on quality sport experience for kids.

And I—prior to being a politician, I spent a lot of time coaching kids. As a teacher and phys. ed teacher, and middle years school coach, track commissioner; you name it, I did it. I had my own volleyball club, Volleyball Manitoba was really essential in making sure I could set that up. And I could tell you that the number—the time—the certification required, the Respect in Sport group, partnerships that we have here with Sport Manitoba, all play a really important factor in developing a coaching pool in our province that allows us to provide Safe Sport to all players.

And it's rooted in the fact that—what you were saying before—sport can change a life: changing how people feel about themselves, being able to be part of a team, being able to set goals and achieve them. There's—you know, my sons are high-performance athletes and there's nothing like beating your personal record at a meet. It's sometimes more rewarding for them rather than winning awards. And I think the parents all agree when—and sport providers—that they want values of fair play, values of respect, values of true sport being exhibited in Manitoba.

You know, Sport Manitoba is one of the, I would say, national leaders when it comes to Safe Sport. Just in April, this spring, we had a number of—we had a series of workshops that were put on for athletes, for coaches, for community sport leaders, where we had, you know, Allison Forsyth who is a strong advocate of Safe Sport, come and work with our provincial sport leaders.

And, you know, that relationship that was created in April paid some dividends as well this fall where Allison, you know, an Olympic calibre athlete in her own regard who, you know, was a victim of unfortunate circumstances in the Safe Sport realm, was able to share her stories and—with high school students in Brandon and Winnipeg. And that's because they see—she saw Manitoba as being that place where we're listening, where we're actually acting on what it means to keep children safe.

And being able to respond to when the—those things don't materialize, where there are unfortunate incidents, I think, is really important; that we have a—in Manitoba we can be, you know, quite proud of the fact that we have a industry leader. And when we have partnerships with the Respect Group and people like Sheldon Kennedy, people like Allison Forsythe, people in those realms who can do that type of work, I think

it speaks volumes to the type of environment that we want adults and kids are—participating in.

* (16:30)

And you know, I just got a note here: we had—92 per cent of our coaches have completed Respect in Sport according to Sport Manitoba, which is a really high percentage. And that—I'm sure that those 8 per cent of coaches are being tasked with either completing their certification or probably won't be behind a bench for very long.

So, really happy to know that our Safe Sport strategy and the resources that we provide to our PSOs are really making a difference. And proud to be a leader of Sport Manitoba, where we're an industry and national leader.

Mr. Perchotte: I want to thank the minister for endeavouring again to get an answer; it's nice to actually get some answers.

In the area that I represent, St. Andrews and the city of Selkirk, we're very blessed to be along the Red River and have so many historical stops along the way. We have the rectory in St. Andrews, the historic St. Andrew's church. We have the Dynevor church along the way. We also have Lower Fort Garry. But another one of the areas that we have spoken about was Captain Kennedy House.

Captain Kennedy House was an—it's an icon in the area and, as a matter of fact, my first wedding, we had pictures there—though nobody looks at those pictures now because I've gone to my second wedding—but it's a great spot; it was a tea house at one time, and there's a tremendous effort by probably the citizens in the area and Red River North Tourism to get that open.

What is the plan to get that open and operational moving forward?

Mr. Simard: Well, I can appreciate how members opposite think I'm the minister of everything, but in respect to this—the Kennedy House, specifically—I can tell you I'm not the minister that is shepherding that project to completion. It is—it stays with the parks and climate change.

We—I can advise the member opposite that I did meet with representatives from Red River North Tourism; I think they're a fantastic organization. And from a tourism aspect, I think that the places you mentioned: St. Andrew's Rectory, Lower Fort Garry, community of Selkirk and then heading north along the Interlake—Interlake Tourism, here's a shout-out for you: You just do incredible work—but we met with them.

I can appreciate the member's question, but I can advise that the work is ongoing on the restoration of Kennedy House and that it is going to be a significant piece of what red—what will happen in tourism in the Red River North area.

However, that's my full response.

Mr. Perchotte: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer and I certainly will follow up with the other minister on that.

And in our film industry, we all know the success of the existing tax programs that we had in place, implemented under the PC government; that was for film and video production in the province. Despite campaigning on doing so and promising again in the budget, the NDP have yet to, quote, modernize, end quote, the film and tax credits.

When can we expect an update on what changes or cuts may be made to these tax credits?

Mr. Simard: So, one of the first encounters I had with the Manitoba Film and Music community was at their holiday party. And they had coasters there, and it said, MFM, best film tax credit in North America. And I thought that was really great. Like, we're No. 1, so how do we be No. 1-plus? And I think the way that you do that is you continue to support an industry that is doing great things.

You know, this year's budget has an increase of \$461,000 to Manitoba Film and Music. As you can imagine, you know, Manitoba Film and Music's budget was decimated in 2017. You know, we want to talk about budget days and how people reacted during that time; you can imagine being someone in MFM's office when they were told that their budget was being slashed.

And we've made this investment in MFM. It really is one of the things that Manitoba is being known for. You know, Manitoba is Hollywood North. You can't turn your head in this city or in this province without seeing a film shoot happening.

That was pretty exciting, where I'm from. You wouldn't think about this, but St. Lazare, on the border of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, just south of Russell there, there was a film came and filmed there this summer. And it's pretty—a pretty big deal for a town of 300 or whatnot.

And you know, sometimes politicians take credit for things that they shouldn't, so you can imagine all my cousins and uncles and people I grew up with saying, hey Simard, is this because of you? And I have

to say that, you know, I think it's because of the environment that's been created here in Manitoba, right. Manitoba has an environment that is known for its natural beauty.

* (16:40)

You know, we have downtown Winnipeg that can sub off for downtown Chicago. It's just a beautiful buildings in the Exchange. We have some great leadership in the MFM, and they were obviously, as you can imagine, extremely happy with the work that they've been doing, but also that the investments that they're seeing from us here in Manitoba. And being known as Hollywood North and having restored Manitoba's reputation for being inviting to business I think is really something that we can point to as being something to be proud of.

And as we work through the work that we need to work through with our stakeholders, we get to appreciate the type of work that happens here in Manitoba. The number of set designers, keys, grips, camera operators, hair and makeup, costume designers, production managers, all of the support people that exist here in Manitoba that allow these companies to be able to invest in coming to Manitoba and shooting these big-budget films.

And having a banner year this year in Manitoba film industry I think is an important piece, and knowing that we have a government and a landscape that is prepared to receive them. Driving up to Birds Hill this summer, you couldn't drive up there without going past a camera crew and a bunch of operators. Lilac Resort, you know, it's a night scene for what's going to be showing up in a movie.

And it's kind of like getting to the point here, you know, it's Christmas season, holiday season, I'm going to have to confess to a guilty pleasure where my wife and I get to watch these Hallmark movies, even though we know the ending well in advance. And then I say, hey, I bet you this one was filmed in Winnipeg, and then we try to use our eyes to be able to pick out the locations. And I see some smiles coming from across the way here because I bet you some of them are doing that too.

And I'm just really, really proud of the people who put on these shows, the people who support these shows; proud of the fact that on that coaster we can see MFM, best tax credit in North America. I just think it's something that we will continue to look at and work with our stakeholders with and just continue to spread the good news of Manitoba.

The Chairperson: The honourable—or, the member from Selkirk.

Mr. Perchotte: I am honourable.

The Chairperson: Yes, you are.

Mr. Perchotte: I want to thank the minister and the department for taking time today to spend with us and go through the answers. I did this previously in Advanced Education and Training and got no answers, so it was kind of refreshing to actually get some answers.

We are in agreement here on both sides that we're—nearly do not have close to the amount of time that we want to spend. We've got, literally, probably hundreds of questions out there. We feel that we've been kind of forced into wrapping this up as quick as possible.

However, in—when you take a look at what the movie industry does, Woody Harrelson and the movie Champions, part of that was filmed in my location. They came into Selkirk and they rented my space for a week. It was—it's extremely impressive to see that operation under way. And I think that we need to do more to encourage the film industry to keep coming here and developing in our province.

I think we need to do a lot more for areas like we just mentioned with Alfred Anderson and the Indigenous group that put on a celebration in Selkirk to find out that funds that they depended on just weren't there.

I think that we can all agree that with culture and heritage, we need to maintain that, we need to focus on that; make sure that it's going to be here. Right or wrong, we need to preserve that. It's the historical record of what's happened, and we need to make sure that we can learn from it and move forward, especially when we're looking at reconciliation and bringing everybody together as a province.

So at that time, I will say that unfortunately our time has been cut short, but we're just going to leave it at that for now.

Thank you very much for your time today.

The Chairperson: Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

I will now call resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,368,000 for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Culture and Heritage Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,855,000 for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$36,200,000 for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 14.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 14.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of the—this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

MLA Lagassé: So I going to have a thing that I'm going to move here in a second, but I'm going to just give you a little bit of a preamble as to why I'm moving in this direction.

I was quite surprised when we received the book of Estimates for sport, culture and heritage, and if I don't find them, I'm going to leave that out of there, but it was very small, and I—a little bit shocking to have such a small expenditure book handed off to us.

So what I'm going to do right now is I'm going to propose, or move a motion, on the minister's salary, which is going to be, ironically, \$1 less than the total amount of pages found in the supplements book.

So I move that line item 14.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage and Tourism's salary be reduced to \$16.

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable—[interjection]

Order, please. Order. Order, please.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) that item 14.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism's salary be reduced to \$16.

Is the committee ready for the question? Oh, sorry—the motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: So all those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Sorry, I would like to add the motion is accordingly defeated.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): On division, please.

The Chairperson: So the motion is accordingly defeated, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: We move on to resolution 14.1: RESOLVED there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$42,853,000 for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

* (16:50)

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Chairperson (Robert Loiselle): However, this section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Legislative Assembly.

I have been informed that members do not have questions on the Assembly Estimates this year, so we

will proceed directly to putting the question on the resolution.

I will now call resolution 1.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,703,000 for Legislative Assembly, Other Assembly Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,863,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,820,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Ombudsman, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 1.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,745,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer—pardon me—for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution one point six: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,765,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed.

Resolution 1.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,119,000 for Legislative Assembly, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Legislative Assembly. This concludes the consideration of Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply.

I would like to thank the departmental staff, ministers, critics and all honourable members for their work during this process.

The time being 4:53, committee rise.

CHAMBER

FINANCE

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): 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 Finance, which last met on October 30, 2024 in another section of the Committee of Supply.

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

Could the minister please introduce his staff in attendance?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Thank you, Chair, for your patience in the introductions there.

Appreciate the opportunity to introduce the team here. Start with Ann Leibfried, our ADM and EFO. We have Matt Wiebe, our ADM and Treasury Board secretariat. And of course our deputy, Sil Komlodi from Finance.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

And could the critic please introduce her staff in attendance

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Pleased to have our staff Duncan Hamilton with me, who is a wealth of knowledge on the Finance portfolio. I'm very happy he's here.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Stone: It's great to be back here today and pose a—numerous questions last week to the minister, and hopefully today, we can get some more direct answers from him.

The minister and the NDP campaigned on not raising any taxes, but now they've been busy breaking that promise in this year's budget Estimates and their first year in office.

We have not only seen a 17 per cent school tax increases and higher education property taxes that are coming for Manitobans, but they have also ended the phase-out plan for education property tax altogether. And their increases to school taxes will eventually erase any benefit that their homeowner's tax credit will have on Manitobans.

And now the Premier (Mr. Kinew), as we've heard, is speculating on much higher municipal property taxes that will also erase any benefit that the NDP's homeowner tax credits will have. Everyone will be back to paying crippling property and school taxes that will make owning a home significantly less affordable for young families.

* (15:10)

Now the NDP is again breaking a promise to deliver a new middle-class tax cut and instead proposing to phase out the basic personal amount, which will soon impact doctors, nurses, police officers, schoolteachers, engineers, farmers and many small-business owners, but they have yet to provide any details on who this tax cut—or tax increase—will impact.

I asked the minister numerous times in committee, as well as in these Chambers, what his income tax will impact with the \$200,000 threshold. Not only was he able—unable to answer how he came up with the \$200,000 threshold to begin clawing back the basic personal amount, but he was also unable to answer how many Manitobans that tax grab will actually impact. We don't know if this will be indexed every year, so that when wages of teachers, nurses, police officers go up, will they be impacted or will they not be?

So I will ask the minister and the department to tell us today whether they will be indexing this new basic personal amount phase-out so that middle-class working families are not gradually taxed more and more as wages climb to keep up with inflation.

MLA Sala: It's great to be back in committee with the critic. Appreciate the opportunity to talk about the great work that's happening under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our government.

I want to start today just—with this opportunity to put words on the record—just to, again, recognize the loss of Judge Murray Sinclair and what that means to Manitoba. The Premier spoke eloquently today about the impact of that loss, but again, just want to use this opportunity to send my condolences to the family of Judge Sinclair, all those who were close to him and that he was connected with and, frankly, to all Manitobans

for this loss. It's almost impossible to articulate what this means, I think, for our province. The loss is enormous; it impacts us in so many ways. We've lost a giant and today we mourn that loss.

So having said that, I'm happy to turn to the question at hand that was raised by the critic. And frankly, just delighted again to have an opportunity to talk about the good work that's been happening in improving affordability here in Manitoba.

You know, maybe just to start, is something that's been raised—I've heard in committee—several times by the critic, which is something that—a promise that we heard articulated from the former government that frankly, I think, just like so many other things that they promised, they had no plan to pay for. And that's this idea that somehow they were going to wipe away all school taxation in the province. I think just like their commitments to, you know, their promises about schools and a number of other things which were never in budget and frankly they had no plan for.

I think we know we can't trust—and again, we just have to look at the reality of the situation when we look at their promises around schools—that they didn't have a plan. And I think that lack of planning and that lack of, you know, focus on sustainability, is one of the factors that led us to having a \$2-billion deficit that, again, was reported not so recently now, but we saw emerge through Public Accounts, which created a giant hole, that we now have to dig ourselves out of, due to mismanagement on the part of the former government.

And so, you know, lots of promises and things that, I think frankly, they were telling Manitobans, that set Manitobans up for, you know, again, thinking that they were going to be doing—taking actions in any number of areas that they were speaking to—that we know again, very clear that they did not have a plan. And that is what led us to where we found ourselves, with that \$2-billion deficit, and we know that that's, again, a big challenge that threatened our province's core finances. We know that that placed us in a tough position as a new government, in terms of, you know, how to find our way out of the hole that they'd created for us here.

And also, you know, frankly, just in terms of rebuilding confidence in the market, making sure lenders knew that as a new government, we were not going to be taking the same approach that the last government had brought to the table. And I think we saw—we've seen that we're seeing success in that work we're doing, and rebuilding confidence and developing

relationships with lenders, with those who want to invest in Manitoba.

But again, it's a deep hole that we've been forced to dig ourselves out of due to their mismanagement. And, you know, to the member's question, which is fundamentally—I think the premise is wrong—which is that we are not bringing savings to Manitoba. I'm happy to report that we are, and that we're doing a significant number of things here. We've got a number of measures that are focused on reducing costs for Manitobans, whether that is our gas tax holiday, which is—will have been in place for a full year in December 31, and we know that's going to save Manitobans an approximate \$500 per family, or our \$1,500 homeowner affordability credit or our basic personal exemption increases or our bracket changes.

* (15:20)

We are working to save Manitobans money every single day and we're proud of it.

Mrs. Stone: I have said this numerous times on the record, that the education property tax model is an out-of-date concept that Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in Canada to continue to use.

When former premier Brian Pallister was elected, he increased the rebate to 25 per cent, it then became 50 per cent and the PCs were well on their way to completely eliminating the education property tax and developing a sustainable education funding formula.

You know, I'd like to remind the minister that his own party, during the election, made promises to Manitobans saying that they would retain the 50 per cent provincial property tax rebate and continue to index provincial income tax brackets to inflation.

These are very simple questions that I'm asking the minister: If he's planning to keep those promises that his Premier (Mr. Kinew) made during the election campaign, or if his Premier was just paying lip service to Manitobans to get elected.

They promised a middle-class tax cut, but now what they're delivering is a middle-class tax grab, whether it's increases to school taxes and property taxes, ending the phase-out of the education property tax and canceling of the basic personal amount for dual-income families with their new doctors tax.

So let's work this out. If we have two school teachers, or a nurse and a police officer, or two police officers, they are going to start to lose their basic personal amount when you start combining that family's income. You know, from what I've heard, and I've

asked this numerous times of the minister, whether he has thought this through, this \$200,000 income threshold.

And I've asked him numerous times if he could provide details on how he plans to implement the basic personal amount and whether it is going to be indexed as wages increase and to inflation, the minister nor the department have not provided any detail, in particular during the bill briefing last spring, and this has continued on into this fall session.

So can the minister now deliver us more information on how he plans to implement this basic personal amount phase-out to dual-income working families, and how much more tax dollars does he plan to be taking from families, and how many families will this be impacting?

MLA Sala: Again, appreciate the opportunity to talk about the good work that our government is doing to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

There was a lot in the last question. I think I might just start by just referencing—or just speaking to one of the comments: that the last government was well on their way to—I think the proposal is that they would well on their way to eliminating education taxes entirely. Again, that is, at this point, a myth; there was no plan to pay for that, just like there was no plan to pay for the schools they were committing.

And again, we know that they left us with a fiscal challenge that this province—the likes of which this province has not seen—with a \$2-billion deficit; and that's as a result of a failure to plan, poor fiscal accountability. And, again, I had a chance to talk about this last week, but I think it's worth repeating here today for folks who might be watching online or are interested in, you know, today's committee: that we saw, really in black and white, some of the things that really drove that \$2 billion deficit when MNP, a very respected independent accounting firm, did a review of PC government decision-making—financial decision-making specifically—and that report does a really good job of outlining the factors that went in—the many factors that went into Manitoba being left with a \$2 billion hole that we need to now contend with the impacts of.

And, you know, I think in looking at that report, I think the average Manitoban takes away the same feeling, the same concern, which is that it was clear that the last government tried to make, obfuscate or really create an impression that there was a certain

state of affairs within Manitoba's finances that simply were not in place.

And we can look to July 28th, which was an important day here in Manitoba prior to the last election, when the last government came to provide a fiscal update to Manitobans before the election—the last one that they would ultimately provide prior to October 3rd; and they presented information which was not reflective of the actual state of affairs.

And now they have to wear that, and unfortunately I know that's not something—I'm sure, for the member opposite who wasn't there—that they want to have to contend with, but that's just the reality of what Manitobans experienced under their leadership. It was that lack of transparency with what was actually happening, and it made clear that they did not have a plan that was financially sustainable.

* (15:30)

One of the things that I spoke about last week, and that's referenced in the MNP report, is the fact that they made hundreds of millions of dollars of spending commitments; actually the day before the—on July 27, that were not reflected in that quarterly update that they provided to Manitobans on July 28. So that was sort of the first thing that they didn't disclose.

They also had a very difficult water year in that year, a drought year. And in that year, they budgeted an 'exorbitant' amount—exorbitant amount for Hydro net income profits, over \$500 million. And even though it was deep into the summer, and we know that the majority of our water comes between March to, you know, throughout the summer, that we'd had this drought, which was not a—again, this isn't a surprise, that we were going to have a tough year. Even though they'd budgeted this gargantuan amount for net income, 500-something million for Hydro profits, they didn't disclose that. And ultimately we landed in a net income deficit of \$150 million for Hydro in that fiscal. Almost a \$600-million swing.

Now I know why they didn't want to disclose the state of affairs for Hydro's net income, because that would have really—that would have been very concerning for Manitobans, just in advance of an election. But it's important, Mr. Chair, that we bring forward transparent information to Manitobans. And that's especially true before an election.

So there, I think those are just two items. I'm not even, you know, mentioning the fact that even though they had every reason to know that tax revenues were headed in the wrong direction relative to budget, they

also failed to disclose that. So, overall, just a deeply concerning record.

And I would just say, you know, one last point: the member's misleading Manitobans, in that Manitobans are assessed on an individual basis when it comes to taxation.

Mrs. Stone: Maybe I just need to reframe my questions and make it more simple for the minister as he takes five minutes to answer a question without an answer within his answer. So I'm going to be very, very simple and he can—I'd appreciate if he could provide the exact amount or at least an approximate amount.

We're looking at \$148 million more out of Manitoba's pockets with the increase to education property taxes and we have the end of the phase-out. He is yet to answer how much he will be collecting from his phase-out of the basic personal amount for dual-income, middle-class families, so I'll ask this very clearly.

Can the minister tell us how much more revenue he will be collecting from his phase-out of the basic personal amount for dual-income, middle-class families?

MLA Sala: Again, really pleased to have this opportunity to talk about our affordability measures and the impacts—the incredibly positive impacts that they're having on Manitobans after many years of Manitobans' needs, especially on the affordability front, just not being met by the last government.

You know, I'm often lucky to stand up in this House and to talk about our affordability measures here in this Chamber, which I'm grateful for every time I get that opportunity. And I often, when I do have those opportunities, it's important to not only talk about the work that we're doing to reduce costs for Manitobans, but we also need to remind Manitobans of what happened for seven and a half years under the previous government. And I can just point to a lot of really bad decisions that were made by the members opposite over seven and a half years, whether that was increasing costs through hydro rate increases, new and novel creative ways of doing that.

I mean, not only did they seek to, you know, eliminate the role of the Public Utilities Board with their bill that essentially kneecapped the PUB and did away with their role and, instead, did away with the role of the PUB in favour of financial targets and, ultimately, hydro rates set at the Cabinet table, they also did things like raise taxes on renters. They raised

taxes on renters by \$175 in one year, in the midst of an affordability crisis, I might add.

Those are the kinds of decisions, I think, that highlight the kind of government that Manitobans had for seven and a half years. And so, you know, reflecting on what we've done since we've come in to make life more affordable, the member is—again, I appreciate that she's asking questions about the impacts of our affordability measures and I'm here to share them.

We have not only, as we talked about a lot in the House today, and that was a lot of fun, talking about the impacts of our gas tax holiday, but we know that that measure—again, we brought that in almost immediately after we came in and that was, you know, put in place for January 1, saving Manitobans money every time they go to the pump. And again, we're estimating about \$500 in savings for the average family stemming from that.

Our homeowners affordability tax credit, \$1,500. This is going to go such a long way for Manitobans in every corner of the province. We know that it's going to really help new homeowners who are just getting their first home. And the reality is, this credit and the way that it's being implemented is likely going to wipe out school taxes entirely for a huge portion of Manitobans.

That is going to be life-changing for so many in our province. And I know when I have the benefit of going out and speaking with people in my community and when I travel around the province, this is something we know that Manitobans are going to feel a huge impact from in such a positive way. And I think it speaks to the focus that our government has on the well-being of Manitobans and understanding those challenges.

That's saying nothing about the—you know, the changes that we brought into the basic personal amount, which the critic is asking about, which was increased in a way that will, again, bring significant financial benefits to Manitobans. In addition to that, we also brought in, of course, our bracket changes, which will ensure that Manitoba is a more competitive province relative to other—our neighbours. We've made a big jump there in terms of our competitiveness, lowering taxes on more of the revenue that Manitobans are earning. And again, this speaks to who—the good work that's happening.

So we can't just focus on the positive—the increases we made to the basic personal exemption. We can't just focus on the bracket increases. We can't just focus

on the homeowners affordability credit. We shouldn't just focus on the gas tax holiday. We can look at the long list of other things we've done as well, including responding to that rather, like, concerning tax increase they placed on renters of \$175 a year, that they took out of the pockets of seniors, people on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, who make up the vast majority of folks who are renting.

You know, if the member is interested in learning more about the fiscal impacts of the measures that we took, I do invite her to refer to page 122 of the budget document.

Mrs. Stone: I appreciate that the minister is taking credit for the bracket increases that were implemented by the former PC government.

But I'm—I appreciate that the minister has brought up Manitoba Hydro, because while he was in opposition criticizing any increases to hydro rates, he has now proposed as high as 4 per cent annual rate increases at Manitoba Hydro while setting them himself at the Cabinet table. This is more than a little hypocritical and seems to be the exact opposite of what the government would be doing to help make life more affordable for Manitobans. Further, by doing this, he has completely broken his promise to freeze hydro rates. The NDP's pile of broken promises is piling up quickly along with their hypocrisy.

* (15:40)

So I ask the minister, when his promised hydro rate freeze will be delivered for Manitobans, how would he pay for that rate freeze, and if he's going to reverse these 4 per cent annual rate increases that he and his Cabinet colleagues have approved?

MLA Sala: I love Hydro. I love talking about Hydro, so I want to really just say how much I appreciate the chance to talk more about Hydro and just the good work that's been happening under our government and moving things ahead.

Just speak briefly about how proud I am about the energy policy that we released not too long ago. You know, there's a number of really exciting commitments that are made through that policy—directions set. But one of the things that I'm really most proud of is that we set a clear course ahead on how we can meet our energy needs in the near to medium term through partnerships with First Nations to develop 600 megawatts of new wind energy here in Manitoba.

You know, for seven and a half years, the only thing—the only thing—that the last government did

when it came to hydro was work on raising hydro rates as quickly as they possibly could. That was their record. And I know the member opposite, they're—they know that that's accurate, and it's—all we can do is almost laugh at how unbelievably bad it was as a record of governance at Hydro. Seven and a half years. And we saw that instead of, again, building out Hydro, they focused on rate increases.

And so just something we really can celebrate here, which is that in a year after getting in government—less than a year—we released a policy that outlined how we are going to ensure that Manitobans and Manitoban businesses will have the energy they need to keep doing—in the case of businesses, growing—the work of growing our economy. And of course how we'll ensure that Manitobans can have the energy they need to power their homes and take care of their families.

So that's, I think, a really important thing that we've delivered with that policy. And it shows just what you get when you elect an NDP government: a focus on ensuring that needs are met and that we will have the energy we need to meet our needs and we're going to do that in a way that ensures energy remains affordable.

Look, when we're talking about hydro rates and our commitment to keeping them low, I don't think there's any question, Chair, about which party is actually focused on keeping hydro rates affordable. We saw for many years the—you know, the various approaches that the last government took to try to increase hydro rates in new and novel ways.

One way that I haven't talked about yet today is the fact that they used a BITSA bill. A BITSA bill in the middle of an affordability crisis, during COVID, to implement a hydro rate increase in a way that it has never been implemented in this province before. Skirting around the Public Utilities Board, no accountability to that process. They put it in a BITSA bill. And, again, that was the very first time that our province has ever seen a government attempt to do that.

And why is that concerning? Because it's very important that when hydro rates are set, that Manitobans have the benefit of knowing that they're not paying too much. And how do we know that? We know that through a robust process that occurs through an independent regulator, specifically the Public Utilities Board.

So they legislated a hydro rate increase and again, for the first time did that to Manitobans without the

benefit of knowing whether or not that increase was needed through a Public Utilities Board-led process. And then, of course, for three years in a row they brought forward various permutations of what ended up becoming bill 36, which was a bill that was entirely focused on one goal and one goal alone, and that was to raise hydro rates as quickly as possible.

And I invite the member to look back at those financial targets and to consider what the impacts of that were—would be. What were the impacts of those hydro rate—of those financial targets that were outlined in bill 36? They were set at the Cabinet table; they were set without any connection to Hydro's financial needs or their need to service their debt. They were set by politicians around a Cabinet table with one goal and one goal alone, and that was to have Hydro—to force Hydro to meet unachievably high financial targets that were guaranteed to jack up hydro rates as quickly as possible. And that's their record.

What's our record? Our record is we made a very clear commitment to freeze hydro rates for one year. We're committed to that and we're looking forward to delivering on our commitments as we are in all of the commitments that we made to Manitobans.

Mrs. Stone: Like the minister, I love talking about Hydro. And as someone who has had the opportunity to watch and participate in a PUB hearing, I know how important it is that interveners, industry and consumers have the opportunity to present their concerns to the public utilities bill.

So I ask the minister: Will he commit to taking any hydro rate increase to the PUB, yes or no?

* (15:50)

MLA Sala: I thank the critic for further opportunity to talk about Hydro here today, and to talk about the importance of the Public Utilities Board, and the work that they do, and the fact that our government respects the important role that they play which is very different than the last government. And, of course, we saw many, many Manitobans raise concern with the bill that had been brought forward by the previous government, bill 36, which, again, had gone through multiple iterations over a period of several years where they, you know, creatively tried to find new ways of undermining their work.

So, you know, it is—I believe the critic when she says that she supports the role of the PUB, but I have to ask, you know, in response to that, has she looked carefully at what their bill sought to do, which there's

no argument to be made other than to say that that bill was focused on kneecapping the PUB.

The PUB's role changed with that bill, or it was set to change, by virtue of it changing their role from examining rate requests and determining whether or not those rates were sufficient to meet Hydro's financial obligations, to instead their role was completely altered to be focused instead on whether or not rate increases were sufficient to meet the financial targets that her previous government had put in place.

So that is literally the definition of undermining the role of the PUB. We just have to say that with total clarity here, and it's important for Manitobans who are listening in that they recognize that that's what happened under the previous government.

And thankfully, thanks to the amendments that we brought forward and the changes that are being proposed to that bill that they brought in, we are doing away with those financial targets. Because those financial targets had one impact and one impact alone, and that was to—well, two impacts; firstly, to undermine the Public Utilities Board and their work, and their very important work; and two, to raise rates—hydro rates on Manitobans.

When we're talking about respect for the Public Utilities Board and their work, and again, the member opposite has suggested that she does respect the importance of their role, I appreciate that, but I would say that that's not the way things have panned out in terms of the record of her party.

We can look at their record when it comes to Centra Gas. There was a period of almost two years where, because—I don't know, there's a number of reasons, but I would think maybe basic managerial—a lack of managerial oversight. I could be perhaps less parliamentary here, but I won't. We saw the government, Hydro, Centra being fined every day for almost two years.

And what was happening as a result of that? Those fines weren't just being paid, of course, by Centra or Hydro. They're ultimately being paid by Manitobans. That is the record that they have when it comes to respecting the PUB; they completely refused for two years to honour really what amounts to a legal obligation. And, again, we were fined, I think it was \$100 a day for an extended period of time; that fine changed.

But for years, they failed to that—live up to those basic requirements that created significant fiscal pressure at Centra. And ultimately, Manitobans are the ones

who paid for that managerial incompetence, because all of those fines ultimately had to be paid by somebody, and at the end of the day, they were going to be borne by ratepayers. That's their record when it comes to Hydro, when it comes to Centra, it's a chronicle of failures.

We're continuing to find—you know, dig our way out of the challenges that they put in place, they created for Manitobans. And, again, when it comes to the Public Utilities Board and respect for their work, there's no question that there's really only one party right now left in this province that has a demonstrated commitment to the role of PUB.

To answer the question that was asked very succinctly here: we will honour the role of the PUB in going forward with any rate changes at Manitoba Hydro, because we respect the important role that they play. The amendments we're making to the bill they brought in that undermine the PUB will support that, and we know that's important because through that, we will ensure that Manitobans pay the lowest electricity rates possible.

Mrs. Stone: You know, I've mentioned it in this Chamber in the past and the minister well knows that financial targets are a critical component to running any successful business, and especially critical when it comes to debt recovery; and we're talking about \$24 billion of debt that Manitoba Hydro is in as a result of the former NDP Greg Selinger government.

The minister has mentioned his new Hydro policy. However there is limited details on the cost for this project, and let me remind Manitobans that the last time the NDP meddled in Manitoba Hydro, they put Manitoba Hydro \$24 billion in debt while using it as a slush fund for their spending.

The new energy plan, released this year—only 18 pages I might add—lacks any transparency on time-lines or costs, so can the minister—seeing as how he has brought it up today—can the minister provide how much, if any, has been budgeted for the new energy policy this year?

* (16:00)

MLA Sala: Again, really great to have this opportunity to talk about Hydro and our energy policy here today, and I appreciate the critic's interest I'm hearing in all the details about that new policy.

One thing that I know I was deeply concerned about, along with my colleagues and our Premier (Mr. Kinew), was the lack of progress that we saw being made over

the seven and a half years that the last government was in place. And, you know, when we came in, what was clear was that there is a significant number of industrial load asks, for example, that are out there of businesses that want to come here and invest in the province—that we have significant opportunities to support more investment, but we need that additional energy to meet those needs.

And, unfortunately, what we had was a government that for seven and a half years didn't develop one single megawatt of new energy under their leadership. There was no plan to meet those energy needs; there was no sense at all that there was risks that were being created as a result of that inaction. There was no vision of any kind for how to move Manitoba forward, to take advantage of the incredible opportunities we have as Manitoba, as a province that has four watersheds running through it. Nothing, Chair. There was no movement.

And so we came into government and we unfortunately inherited that legacy of inaction that the last government forced Manitobans to endure through and had to pick up from there. And, ultimately, we brought forward an energy policy that I think is forward-looking, is focused on ensuring that we keep rates as affordable as possible and that is focused on growing jobs, business opportunity, investment in Manitoba.

And that's what we need to be doing as governments. We need to be setting the stage for more investment, for more opportunity. That was something that, unfortunately, the last government didn't seem to be tuned into, or at least didn't have the wherewithal to understand the importance of that.

And again, they, you know, took seven and a half years, and instead of focusing on setting a forward-looking vision for Hydro, they instead focused on legislating hydro rate increases. That's the record that they have, Mr. Chair.

You know, our energy policy does—I think sets a really remarkable course, and one of the things I think that really stands out—again, as I've spoken to here today—is that Indigenous partnership and the partnership with Métis in Manitoba to develop 600 megawatts of wind. And to facilitate that and support that investment, the policy implements—commits to implementing a loan guarantee, an Indigenous loan guarantee to support the ability of First Nations and Métis communities to be part of that incredible opportunity, to do economic development, to have that power of self-determination, to focus on creating those opportunities within communities.

It really is a remarkable partnership and something that I know is being very well received in our conversations with First Nations and Métis communities, and you know, I'm really excited when I see the Métis have already stood up a wind power corp. Excited to see them moving on that opportunity, as well as other communities as well.

You know, another thing that we highlight in that energy policy is faster hookups for homes. And we know that's something that we've heard loud and clear from Manitoba home builders that's incredibly important to support their good work of developing new housing stock in Manitoba and ensuring that the costs of that new housing stock are as low as possible. And that's something that we were proud to commit to in that energy policy: understanding, again, the importance of that relationship between the energy policy and our overall economy and within that, housing as one key sector within our economy.

Of course, there were other really exciting announcements in that energy policy, whether it's EV charging or otherwise but, you know, the policy is set to put us on a course towards growing this province in a way that it hasn't seen in many years. It does that in a—I think, a way that's financially incredibly responsible and it's something that I think we can all be incredibly proud of, and I invite the critic to support that energy policy at every chance she has.

Mrs. Stone: On behalf of my PC 'colleas' and former PC government, I'll say you're welcome to the minister that he was able to inherit the second lowest hydro rates in North America because the PCs kept hydro rates so low.

I am curious with this new energy policy, what the impact of Hydro's new energy policy will be on net income of Manitoba Hydro and your future budgets. And, you know, I'll ask another question as well as I know we're running low on time, still related to Estimates and Manitoba Hydro.

The minister has hired a new energy adviser on Manitoba Hydro within the Department of Finance. And if the minister can confirm the salary of the new energy adviser today and that compensation from the Department of Finance is the only compensation that his energy adviser will be receiving from a government entity or Crown entity.

* (16:10)

MLA Sala: In response to the question that's been asked by the critic—or the questions—may be good to just start by talking about, you know, the—she's asking

about the impacts of our energy policy and what that will mean, ultimately, for Hydro.

One of the main things it'll mean is that we will have, actually, confidence that we will have the energy we need to meet the energy needs that Manitobans have to, again, power our homes and meet our needs every day. But it will also mean that we're going to have the energy we need to power businesses and new investments that wanted to come to Manitoba but, unfortunately, because of years of inaction and, again, just a total focus on rate increases as opposed to setting a path forward for new energy and the development of new energy, we were unable to do—to focus on things like economic development for years.

But that's changed, of course, thanks to the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our team, and I'm really proud that that energy policy spells out that path forward.

In terms of the costs associated with developing that new energy, we've been very clear about the nature of that new energy development that's been committed through the policy and that it will be delivered through partnerships with First Nations who will be bearing the cost of those capital investments.

And so the costs associated with this from a rate pressure perspective, there will of course be some costs for Hydro, but ultimately the costs associated with the development of that wind will be borne by those partners. And, of course, those are good investments that will allow them to get benefits for many years through a relationship with Hydro and with our government and will ultimately help us to move forward and ensure that we have the energy we need.

In terms of the development of that policy and the importance of staff in supporting the development of that policy, one thing that I'm really proud of, Chair, is that that policy was developed, not, you know, perhaps as the former government would have developed a policy, where they would have done something at—you know, exclusively at a Cabinet table or with input from a small select number of people from within their team—we wanted to ensure that this policy was reflective of input from Manitoba Hydro, Efficiency Manitoba, energy experts internal to government.

And one of the things that's just so incredibly exciting about this policy is that it reflects those inputs, it reflects a team Manitoba approach, which we used to ensure that we brought forward a plan that, again, wasn't just reflective of the views of folks sitting in this building, but that was more broadly

reflective of what Hydro understood as requirements for it to help us move forward in the right way, what Efficiency Manitoba recommended as an approach to moving forward.

And so the policy is impressive in that it reflects, again, a broader approach, where we're bringing in expertise across government from the key Crowns that, of course, we'll need to deliver on that policy to ensure that we are moving forward together in a way that reflected the needs as identified by experts within government and our Crowns.

You know, in terms of the other folks working to support this, the energy advisers and the energy adviser that supported myself in the development of this policy—again, it's important that we have talented, knowledgeable people in place to help us deliver in the development of policy, like our energy policy. It's critical, in fact, that we have that expertise.

And we're fortunate to have brought in my energy adviser who brought that expertise throughout that process and continues to support us in moving this policy forward. That's critical to moving forward in the best way possible.

And we know, for years under the leadership of the last government, we lost a lot of experts. We lost a ton of talent within our civil service because they were feeling defeated, because they felt for years that they weren't supported or valued or recognized for the important work that they do.

Things have changed, Mr. Chair, and we're proud to bring forward that change and to ultimately bring a new day for our civil service and the important people that support us throughout government.

Mrs. Stone: I'll set the record straight again, that the former PC government kept hydro rates low, the second lowest residential electricity rates in North America. And I'll table these documents for the minister so he is reminded of that.

In the essence of time, I'll just be switching gears, here.

Looking at the Manitoba order-in-council, can the minister please explain why he has three directors in ministerial affairs? Who do they report to, do they report to the minister or do they support other departments, and if the minister could define their roles and explain what those three individuals do?

* (16:20)

MLA Sala: I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the incredible support I have in my office. I'm very fortunate to have Paul Bretscher serving as my director of ministerial affairs. I can confirm for the critic that I only have one DOMA working for my office.

Paul has been here since January, and I can say that his presence in our office has been unbelievably beneficial to the operations of the Finance office. And one of the reasons I appreciate Paul and his work is because he always keeps the focus on where we need to be placing the focus, and that is on the best interests of Manitobans.

And I know he gets up each and every day and comes to this building with that at the top of his mind. And I continue to be grateful to have his lengthy experience serving myself, serving our government, and it really is impressive to see, you know, the benefit of a seasoned professional like Paul and what can happen when you bring someone like that in. He is—just transformed our processes and our day-to-day operations in Finance, and I'm grateful to him for that really important work that he's done.

We do know that, of course, you know, under the PCs they housed legislative directors, co-ordinators for ABC appointments, Cabinet operations, all under Finance during their tenure; multiple positions with no relationship—no direct relationship to Finance. You know, that's—I can't comment much further in terms of how expansive that was, but we do know that they housed a lot of positions that were not directly Finance-related, underneath the auspices of Finance.

So, again, very proud of the work that's being done in our office, and proud of the fact that that's being supported by an incredible DOMA and looking forward to continuing to work alongside him as we serve Manitobans each and every single day here in this province.

Mrs. Stone: In looking at Manitoba's order-in-councils—and I believe these have not been rescinded—we do have a Dane Monkman as director of ministerial affairs that is under Minister of Finance. We have a Zachary Saltis that's also under Minister of Finance, as director of ministerial affairs, and then Paul Bretscher as director of ministerial affairs under Minister of Finance that the minister has referred to. But I do, in the essence of time, just want to move on to another question.

And I did allude to this last week, but we are looking at almost a billion-dollar increase in federal

transfers, which is not only an increase from previous year forecast and from budget but also a massive increase from forecasts as well.

So we're, you know, halfway through the fiscal year now, and if I look at, in the minister's budget documents from '23-24 to '24-25, year-over-year revenues are almost a billion dollars; \$960 million or so.

But in looking at a three-year projecting—projection, '25-26 projection, up \$790 million; '26-27 projection, up \$865 million; '27-28 projection, up \$874 million. So, in looking at that, revenues will be up \$2.5 billion, plus the billion dollars from this year in federal revenue transfers.

So, if the forecast that he's using in his own budget end up being accurate, he's going to be taking in excess of \$3.5 billion of revenue, so there should be no reason why this minister cannot return to balance with that increase in revenue coming from the federal government.

So I just ask the minister, from his perspective: Does that sound accurate?

* (16:30)

MLA Sala: Appreciate, again, the opportunity to be here today to be in this committee and to talk about good work happening in Finance and Hydro and otherwise.

I just want to follow up on, you know, some of the comments made by the critic there previously. Zach Saltis my previous—my prior DOMA, prior to Paul coming in, so that's—he's moved on—since moved on to other opportunities.

And then the other individual is the DOMA in the ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation, and that's an individual named Dane Monkman who is doing phenomenal work there in support of the Premier (Mr. Kinew). That—MIRS, the Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation, as the critic likely knows, is housed in Finance, and we're doing that as that helps to reduce overall overhead. So hopefully that provides the critic with clarity on those roles.

Going to the question that was asked, which is about, ultimately, you know, federal transfers and their impacts. It is good here, I think, for—I guess, again, for us to talk about the good work that our government is doing, the fiscal stewardship, the sustainable plan that we've put forward in our last budget, which spells out assumptions in the years ahead.

And I think that this is a budget document that Manitobans can celebrate. We know that it essentially reiterates our commitment to that balanced budget in our final balance year at the end of our mandate. And we know how important that commitment is. That's something that knocking on doors, knocking on a lot of doors this summer, I heard about over and over again, which was the importance of financial sustainability.

Manitobans really wanted to see a government that was finally focused on ensuring that we developed a real plan, to develop a plan focused on delivering a balanced budget, but that also balanced that commitment with the need to make investments in the things that Manitobans care about.

And I think one of the wonderful things that changed on October 3 was that, finally, they had that government. They had a government that was willing to do the work of doing rigorous planning, looking ahead—many years ahead, with a focus on delivering on that balanced budget commitment.

And you know, making the decisions that need to be made to deliver on that while ensuring we balance that with responding to the need to invest in areas like health care, education, child care, improving affordability. Areas that, for many years, were attacked and saw cuts, year over year over year that really set us back in a way that Manitobans felt every time they went to a clinic to get health-care supports. They felt when they heard about a lack of proper supports for the children at school. They felt when they couldn't access child care in their communities where they needed it, when they needed it.

That's the record that we've been forced to contend with. That's a deep hole that they dug for Manitoba, and frankly, it was, in its own right, a giant sort of social deficit, if I could, that had been created by them because of how far we'd been set back.

But again, fortunately, you know, our Premier (Mr. Kinew), our team is committed to doing the work of finding that balance between reinvesting in those areas, making real commitments to investing in education, supporting municipalities, investing in health care. Of course, our budget saw \$1-billion increase to the—health. We did that while we ensured a focus on that long-term fiscal sustainability, and with a commitment to balancing our budget in our final year.

And that's something, again, that we know is critical. It's incredibly important that we prove to Manitobans that we meant what we said. I know when

I go back to the doorsteps in a few years, I'm going to be having those conversations and I'm excited to talk about the good work that we did to deliver on that commitment.

Now specifically, if the member is interested, she can tune to—or, look at page 92 of the budget document, the fiscal outlook summary there, which will spell out revenue assumptions for the years ahead.

Mrs. Stone: Well, it's a good thing that in my previous question I answered that for the minister already, that we're looking at \$3.5 billion in fed transfers over the next few years.

But you know, I've asked this of the minister numerous times. We have \$1 billion in—almost \$1 billion in transfers coming this year, interest rates are coming down. I've asked the minister to commit to showing an audited, balanced budget in the 2026 public accounts. He has yet to provide me with a firm answer on that, so I'm going to give him another opportunity today.

* (16:40)

The S&P credit rating agency has said it's possible to show balance again as early as 2025. But so far, the minister and the Premier have shown commitment to running years of deficits and has no plans to return to balance in the meantime.

But if S&P believes that it is possible to return to balance next year, can the minister today commit to at least showing an audited balance in the 2026 public accounts, yes or no?

MLA Sala: Again, as with the rest of today's conversation, it's great to have an opportunity to talk about these priorities of Manitobans. Whether it's Hydro or our commitment to fiscal sustainability, it is really wonderful to have this opportunity here in this House and especially in this beautiful Chamber to talk about those commitments and the work that we're doing.

You know, when we talk about fiscal sustainability, a big question here is the—you know, the credibility that the last government has in talking about fiscal sustainability. And I've had many opportunities to talk at length about the MNP report, which was developed, again, after the last election, where we had them look at the various decisions that went into creating the fiscal disaster that was the deficit result from last fiscal. And you know, it's—this is not a product of NDP, you know, analysts in the basement of the Leg. or political staff of any kind. This is the

work of a highly respected independent accounting firm.

And so this document is something that I think all Manitobans would benefit from reading, and I know a lot have read this document. And when they review it, I know they share our concerns with the previous government's lack of transparency, their accountability on the decisions that they made or that they failed to make.

And so, you know, when we're in here today talking about the perspectives of credit rating agencies, which we as a government have a deep appreciation and respect for, it's important that we at least talk about the reality of the mess that they left to us and they left to all Manitobans, frankly, to clean up, which was, again, one of the biggest deficits in our province's history—a \$2-billion deficit that was driven by, again, poor planning, bad budgeting, any number of ways of putting it.

But one of the—I think the worst parts of that year's fiscal performance isn't just that terrible result that we're all, you know, being forced to deal with and the impacts of that, but it's just knowing that, ultimately, they sought to hide this—the direction of that deficit number from Manitobans prior to the election.

I think that is deeply concerning—to know that, you know, even though Manitobans had every reason to expect that on July 28, when they received that quarterly update, that they were getting accurate information in advance of an election—which they had no reason to doubt at that point—it's difficult to learn that it was in fact a smoke show and that there was a clear awareness that things were going to be billions of dollars worse than they had presented during that quarterly update. And that they knew that and that they sought—even though they knew that things were going to be bad—that they sought to hide that all with the—you know, the desperate hope that they could stay in government.

And we know that Manitobans were—you know, after seeing the result, that even without the benefit of understanding the dismal fiscal performance that the last government had in the last fiscal and the direction of things, they still showed the last government the door. But I can't imagine how that would have been different if they knew the full picture of the reality of our financial situation, and the fact that, you know, the numbers had been—that they'd been presented were not reflective of reality.

You know, so we continue to tell that story. I think it's important when the members opposite talk about financial sustainability, fiscal responsibility, the perspectives of credit-rating agencies, that we remind them of what they left us—and again, that we have this document. And I invite the critic—I don't know if she's had a chance to review the MNP report, but it's helpful. It gives great insights into what not to do as a government.

And, again, this is the record explicitly of her former government that left us this mess that we need to clean up. And so, in terms of the perspectives of rating agencies, again, we're grateful to be continuing to develop trusting relationships with them, to do that important work of building confidence after that dismal result that Manitoba had on the scorecard due to their decision making and their performance. We're going to continue to build strong relationships with S&P, DBRS and others.

And we're going to show through action and good planning that we're committed to that balanced budget target in our final year of our mandate.

Mrs. Stone: I do have many, many more questions, and I would appreciate that—for the questions I have asked today that the minister didn't answer—that he would take those under advisement, but I do know that we have to close out today.

So with that, I have no more questions and we can move into resolutions.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we will now turn to the resolutions, beginning with the second resolution, as we have deferred consideration of the first resolution containing the minister's salary.

Resolution 7.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,096,000 for Finance, Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,518,000 for Finance, Finance Policy and Research, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,694,000 for Finance, Communications and Engagement, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,497,000 for Finance, Treasury, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,986,000 for Finance, Taxation, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,908,000 for Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,738,000 for Finance, Community and Economic Development Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:50)

Resolution 7.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,023,000 for Finance, Intergovernmental Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,906,000 for Finance, Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution seven point one one, resolved that there be granted to his—7.11: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$706,384,000 for Finance, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 7.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 7.1.

At this point, we ask that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I'll put the question to resolution 7.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,263,000 for Finance, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Yes. This completes the Estimates of the Department of Finance.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is Tax Credits.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the First Minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 4:52 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:53 p.m.

TAX CREDITS

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for Tax Credits.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

At this—no, the floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I will put the question to the resolution.

Resolution 33.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$176,800,000 for Tax Credits, Tax Credits, Fees and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for Tax Credits.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for Enabling Appropriations.

ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for Enabling Appropriations.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

In accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of—floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions, we'll move on to the resolution.

Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$791,179,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Service Adjustments, Contingencies and Limited-Term Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$40,000,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Green and Carbon Reduction Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,000,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Capital Assets—Internal Service Adjustments and Contingencies, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$268,900,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment—Internal Service Adjustments, Contingencies and Limited-Term Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for Enabling Appropriations.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Public Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister have any opening statements?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

The floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I will put the question to the resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,430,000 for Public Service Commission, Public Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Public Service Commission.

EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I will put the question to the resolution.

Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,666,000 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This also concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply—this completes the Estimates for Employee Pensions and Other Costs. This also includes our consideration of the Estimates in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber.

I would like to thank the minister, critics and all honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process, as well as all the Assembly staff working tirelessly behind the scenes.

Committee rise.

* (17:00)

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 4, 2024

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>