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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 24, 2016

*The House met at 10 a.m.***ORDERS OF THE DAY***(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS***(Continued)***COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY****(Concurrent Sections)***(Continued)***INDIGENOUS AND MUNICIPAL RELATIONS**

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'd like to ask the minister a few questions about the operating assistance that her department gives to the City of Winnipeg for public safety, and I'm going to start on page 73 of the Estimates book.

To begin with, in my view, we're losing a very good chief, with Devon Clunis announcing that he'll be retiring, and I know that a search is under way. I think Chief Clunis has been a great partner in building public safety in the city. He's spoken, of course, not of arresting the way out of the problem trying to deal with a lot of the social issues that we know result in people having contact with the justice system.

Given the relationship between the minister's department and the City of Winnipeg and the considerable funding that the department gives to the City of Winnipeg for public safety, does the minister plan to have any role or play any part in assisting the Winnipeg Police Board in choosing a new chief?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Thanks for your question, and I have to agree, although I haven't been a resident of the city of Winnipeg, just watching the news. And since Chief Clunis was hired, I think we've seen a huge turnaround in crime, and the

approach that he took, I think it has served the city well, and, of course, that serves the city—beyond the city as well, because there's a lot of people from throughout Manitoba that end up living in Winnipeg, not unlike myself, but we also spend, even if we're from the rural, we spend a lot of time in the city of Winnipeg, so crime throughout the province is a huge issue. And I have to be honest, I think his approach has been very people-friendly and I think he's brought a lot of awareness to people in general that we all play a role in the safety of our residents.

So, in regards to the Province with this, there is consultation with our department because we provide operating support for public safety. Now, this includes support for the police officers, cadets, the police helicopter, as well as the warrant enforcement unit. And the main department lead in regards to hiring of a new chief of police would be with the City of Winnipeg and the Department of Justice.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that. The Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) in Estimates didn't really see any role for her in being involved with the hiring of a new chief, and, again, it will be the police board that ultimately makes that decision, but I guess the question is whether the minister believes it's appropriate to contact the police board and to have those conversations. I do agree that with Chief Clunis there had been a major advance in the way things worked which dovetailed well with what the RCMP was doing under the leadership of Kevin Brosseau, who was the assistant deputy commissioner, and, certainly, the objectives of the Department of Justice and the old Municipal Affairs department.

I guess I'll ask the question again: Does the minister see any role in giving advice or providing some assistance to the police board in making its decision? And I ask that because the Police Service will have a difficult choice to make. One way they could go is to have somebody who might fit in with the mindset of Devon Clunis; he's surrounded himself with an excellent executive team. Or they could choose to bring someone in from outside of Winnipeg or outside of Manitoba that may not have the understanding of issues in the city of Winnipeg who may be hired to accomplish some different things. I think the former would be a much better

choice. It's not our decision as the Province. I'm just wondering whether the minister, though, is prepared to engage with the police board and make sure that their choice dovetails as best as possible with what the provincial government sees as appropriate for public safety.

*(10:20)

Ms. Clarke: I definitely share your opinion that, you know, following in the lead of what their current Chief Clunis has done, and I know in hiring practices very often when they do have a—what they consider a very valued person in charge, they will include them in the hiring process, and perhaps in this case my personal opinion and obviously yours as well would be that that would probably be a good choice.

However, as I've indicated, if they did want input from the Province, it would have to come through the Justice Department, and—but very likely, these are—you know, is the responsibility of the board, and those conversations would have to take place between Justice, not from the Department of Indigenous and Municipal.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

Again, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) didn't seem to have any interest at all in being part of that, so perhaps you can speak with your colleague and have a discussion.

I'm not suggesting at all that it's the Province's choice, but I think that the Province's voice as the senior government and as a major funder of the Winnipeg Police Service certainly could be a useful voice in those discussions.

It is a different circumstance with the RCMP as the provincial police force, but Justice has been at the table and acted in choosing a new assistant deputy commissioner, Scott Kolody, who we think will be a—who will be a very, very good choice.

When I became the Attorney General, of course, all that people could talk about was the crime rate in Winnipeg. Five years later all people could talk about was the cost of policing and how we had too many police officers. So I think we were able to make some progress, as the minister has noted.

There have been some musings by the City that perhaps they believe that reducing the number of police officers is something that would be appropriate. Whether or not we agree with that assessment, what position would the minister take if the City of Winnipeg began cutting police officer

positions while we are providing major financial support to the City?

Ms. Clarke: As you already know, I mean this—these questions are very familiar to you because you have served in this role. So, again, in regards to the—whether they're increasing or reducing the City of Winnipeg police force, that is a role that is done through Justice; that's their role.

As a government we work closely in regards to the funding support; that's our role, and that will, you know, stay with the Department of Justice. And I'm sure those discussions will be held between the board and them to continue discussion, and there has been lots of speculation as to whether that will happen or not. So I don't think decisions have been made.

Mr. Swan: Well, I've got to say I don't agree with the minister. As the Minister of Justice, the Justice Minister doesn't really have any control over what the City intends to do. I'm really asking this minister if she would exercise any influence if word came back that the City of Winnipeg was going to reduce its own complement of police officers, yet expect the Province to keep funding the City of Winnipeg at the same level.

I'm asking this minister: If the City was to come back and propose cutting officers, would this minister use her influence to try to either stop that from happening or to threaten the City with a reduction in the amount of public safety support that's being given by the Province?

Ms. Clarke: Probably at this time it isn't in our best interests to speculate what may or may not happen. We know through the media that there definitely is discussion and it's been ongoing. We will definitely work closely with the City. I've met with Mayor Bowman already, and we plan on meeting on a fairly regular basis to discuss whatever issues he or I choose to bring forward.

In our initial meeting he did not bring up justice. Clearly that could change at any time. But we will work with the City and the mayor and we will work with Justice within our own departments here, and any consultation or discussions that need to be had, we will definitely be there.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that response, and if you are able to choose which things to bring forward, if, indeed, the City of Winnipeg does choose to cut the complement of officers, all I can do is encourage the minister to use whatever influence

she has at her disposal to try to make sure that public safety is top of mind for people.

Within the public safety support envelope, of course, in the past the money was always used to purchase officers, police officers. With Chief Clunis, we were able to modify that a bit. And, actually, with the support of the Police Service and with the Police Association, some of the money was used to hire crime analysts, the idea being that boots on the ground were important, but if we actually use some of the capacity behind the scenes to help direct officers to make the officers out there more efficient to deal with crime hot spots, that was a good idea.

Can the minister just confirm that there's no intention to change that support with the City of Winnipeg?

* (10:30)

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Just a reminder to keep your cellular devices on silent mode. Thank you.

Ms. Clarke: Clearly, the honourable member from Minto has an extensive background in all the questions he's asking, so I have to depend on my qualified people here.

At this time, there's no changes in the funding for policing with the City of Winnipeg, and also, at this time, there are no changes as to the allocations or the parameters of that funding, so it would be status quo.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

And one of the other successful ventures that we were able to work on with the Winnipeg Police Service was creating the cadet program. Cadets who are visible in their bright blue shirts are, I think, quite popular. They do good work, freeing up officers to do what they're best trained to do and also building goodwill with the public.

I know for the cadet program there have been challenges. Some of the successes have been challenges. A lot of young men and women who join the cadet program ultimately wind up becoming recruits for the regular police service. I know that a number of cadets have taken up jobs in other areas of law enforcement, whether it's sheriff's officers or correctional officers or conservation officers, the complement of cadets has sometimes not been full or close to it.

The question I've got for the minister is: The money that's set aside to be paid to the City of Winnipeg for our 50 per cent share of cadets, is that based on how many cadets there actually are, or do we simply give the envelope of money to the City of Winnipeg and it doesn't matter how many cadets they have working at any time?

Ms. Clarke: In regards to the cadet program that you've been asking about, the funding is based on the current number of cadets that are currently in place. So that's based on numbers. The Province shares the cost of the cadets with the City.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

Can the minister find out, because I don't expect this will be at her fingertips, but can she find out and let me know how many cadets, then, are currently working within the Police Service?

Ms. Clarke: We will get that information for you. It's not something we have on hand here. It's my understanding that these programs start fully complemented, but there are reasons that they don't always end up the same number after training, et cetera.

Mr. Swan: I appreciate that from the minister, and if I can just confirm, what I'm asking is the current number of cadets that are working as of today.

Ms. Clarke: That information will be provided to you.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister.

There's been a lot of discussion in the past year about finding better ways to keep drivers and passengers on Winnipeg Transit safe and there were some different ideas that were put forward, whether it should be police, whether it should be cadets, whether it should be a separate transit police service. Can the minister just bring me up to speed on what the solution is and the amount of funding that the Province is providing to the transit service or any other body to assist with this?

* (10:40)

Ms. Clarke: In regards to your first question, the Province actually isn't involved in this process that you've asked about. The City of Winnipeg has to do their own investigation and it's our understanding that they're currently looking at options in order to keep the patrons that travel on the transit system safe at all times.

In regards to the funding, we just do, the province does an overall funding. There's an overall forming—for funding for 50-50 for operations of the transit system.

Mr. Swan: But if then there was to be an additional cost, whether it's by expanding the cadet program for the use of transit or hiring some form of transit police—if I can call it that—would that not then be an additional expense for transit that the City would be asking the Province to share?

Ms. Clarke: This isn't a discussion that we've had with the City in regards to any type of funding or anything. We definitely need to see some type of proposal. They would have to bring something to us before we could make any kind of a commitment because this discussion hadn't been talked about. So, unless we have some sort of details, it would be difficult to move forward. Again, we can't speculate on this because those discussions haven't taken place.

In regards, like you mentioned, perhaps the cadets could be part of this solution and it may be a good one, and, as you know, we already do fund cadets so that anything is possible. We would have to know—but we definitely need to know what type of solution that they're looking at, and those discussions would have to take place before decisions could be made.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that, and that may well be something that we're discussing again in this year.

The police helicopter has been operating for several years. There are many who are very supportive of the helicopter and some of its successes; there's been others critical of the helicopter, including the limited amount of time it appears to be in the air and the cost. Previous government ordered a review of the operations of the police helicopter. Has that review now been completed, and, if not, when does the minister expect to receive that?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your question.

Once again, I'm going have to refer you to the Department of Justice because it is within their portfolio to—the review is with Justice as well as the operations of the police helicopter.

Mr. Swan: Then just to confirm, the financial support for the police helicopter unit is within the minister's department.

Ms. Clarke: As with other issues or—I shouldn't say projects. In regards to funding policy, in some cases, and in this one in particular, the policy, et cetera, is with Justice. The funding, however, comes through our department, but it's a very broad scope of funding, so it's kind of a two-part answer to your single question.

Mr. Swan: Okay. At some point I expect the Minister of Justice will come to this minister and either propose things remain the same or that there be an increase or a decrease.

Will this minister make public the review of the helicopter unit when she receives it?

Ms. Clarke: As we can see through our lines of questions and answers here, many departments other than Justice—and Justice is the one we're talking about, but clearly our departments have to work closely together because of situations like the one we were just talking about right now, policy, funding, and with it not necessarily all coming from one department.

So, in regards to this particular review for the police helicopter that you're asking about, I would definitely hope that the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and I would be having those conversations and as well as the other questions that you've proposed here today. I look forward to having the opportunity to meet with her, and I think probably my schedule wouldn't have accommodated her right now in the past few weeks unless it was of extreme priority, and I don't think her scheduling would have been any different.

But, moving forward, I think these are definitely discussions that we'll be having, and, you know, so I have a better understanding of what our roles are, I look forward to that. And I'm sure that the other departments that overlap, especially when it comes to the City of Winnipeg, well, as far as throughout the province, with my portfolio as Indigenous and Municipal, I'm kind of like an umbrella because it does include, you know, in this case, justice, infrastructure, health care, education. There is a component within my department, but not always necessarily the policy or the projects, I guess, as you might decide.

But I look forward to these conversations coming forward and they'll definitely happen, and the review will be one of them for sure. I've got a notation here, and that's a discussion we definitely will have.

* (10:50)

Mr. Swan: I understand the minister's point, and when I was on the other side of the table as the Justice minister, I acknowledged sometimes it would be a—it could be a frustration that the decisions being made were being funded out of another department. These are your—I'm sorry, these are the minister's Estimates, and I'm asking the questions to determine whether there's going to be any change in the upcoming year, whether there's going to be any reallocation. So I do need the minister to do her best to answer those questions because Estimates are really the—one of the few ways that we have to find out what money is actually going to be spent by each department in the upcoming year.

So I appreciate the policy may be in Justice; the money is in this department. So I would ask, again, if the minister would be prepared to make public the result of that review of the helicopter unit when it's available.

Ms. Clarke: And I would hope that this would clarify but, as I'm sure you understand, in these types of reviews there is a lead, and in this particular case the lead minister is the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), and I would certainly expect to appreciate that this is the decision from that department. I would be in consultation but if I was the lead on a review, et cetera, I would hope that these decisions would be coming out of my department, but in this particular case it's not.

So I will wait until this review is completed. I'll have those discussions with the Minister of Justice, and whether that department decides to release the information that will be a decision I guess after those consultations. It's really inappropriate for me to speculate at this time what the outcome will be, but it's—as I said, the discussions will be held, and I will wait for her to—the Minister of Justice to provide that information.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister.

One of the other areas which is paid for out of the department's public safety envelope is the Warrant Enforcement Unit. That enforcement unit was set up a couple of years ago to assist with bringing in individuals who'd refused to show up for court, who'd refused to follow court orders, and it has been quite successful.

The funding envelope currently pays for the cost of three City of Winnipeg police officers. It's then matched by an RCMP component. Does the minister

expect any changes to the way that that unit is funded in this fiscal year?

Ms. Clarke: We'll make this one really simple. We'll make it one of those yes or no questions. No changes in funding.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that, and we'll move on to the next area.

The minister may be surprised to know we're one of the few provinces that pays for what used to be called the drunk tank, but I think we've got better words for that now. Of course, the Province provides support for the Main Street Project. Most other western Canadian cities, the minister might be surprised to know, take on that responsibility themselves.

Be that as it may, could the minister advise how much funding was given by the Province to the Main Street Project last year and in this current fiscal year?

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your question.

In regards to the funding for the detoxification unit, the funding from our department, Indigenous and Municipal Relations, it's based—or budgeted towards the short-term detoxification portion of that overall project. The budgeted amount for '15-16 was \$725,000, and that same level of budgeting is going to be for '16-17 budget period.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

Another surprise the minister may not know is that unlike pretty much every other western Canadian city, the Province actually bears most of the responsibility for short-term housing of people arrested by the police. There's a lock-up at the Public Safety Building, and I presume in the new public safety building that opens today, if I'm not mistaken, but very quickly police then move people out largely to the Winnipeg Remand Centre.

Does the minister have any plan to change that practice in the current fiscal year?

* (11:00)

Ms. Clarke: I should be thanking the member from Minto for all the education he's providing for me here today. This is—it's a learning process and he's providing lots of information, so.

It's our understanding that the funding for this type of housing that you're speaking to is through the Department of Justice and that there is no funding from Indigenous and Municipal Relations for it.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

Last summer, I got around to every house in the West End to talk about issues. I was frankly surprised that the No. 1 issue that came up on the doorstep was the condition of trees. Often, when I knock on doors, municipal issues are top of mind: their front streets, their sidewalks, garbage. The condition of the trees, which are very important in many parts of the city and certainly the West End, has become an increasing concern for people I represent in the Legislature, and I see that one of the objectives of the operating assistance from this department is programs to control Dutch elm disease.

I wonder if the minister could tell me how much money from her department went to the City last year, how much is being budgeted this year, and does the minister have any plan to discuss this with the mayor and the City to try and protect our canopy of trees here in Winnipeg.

Ms. Clarke: I share your concerns about Dutch elm disease. I'm very familiar with it in my previous years of mayors. This is an issue that affects not just the city of Winnipeg but our whole province. In some communities, literally, their trees will be wiped out within their communities.

But your question was directed towards the City of Winnipeg and what's being done and discussions with the mayor to address this issue. In the past year, budget year '15-16, there was \$1 million budgeted towards this and the budgeted amount for '16-17 is equal to that \$1 million.

Mr. Swan: I certainly wish the minister luck in raising this with the City. When I did get so many people—again, it was striking how many people wanted to talk about trees. The fact that on a couple of streets that foresters were coming down and cutting down the trees while I was on the doorstep was maybe a reason for that. I did write to the city councillor. I did write to the mayor in the hope that more resources would be allocated to that by the City in the spring's budget. As far as I can tell, there was no additional money put in the City's budget.

So I hope that the minister will use her influence to try to get the City to understand the seriousness of the issue. When we lose trees, of course, we lose shade, we lose the value of properties, the City itself winds up getting less money from taxes because of the assessed value, and our school divisions actually wind up getting less money based on the assessed value. So even though some people may say it's just

a tree, it adds a lot to the enjoyment of people, to safety, there's shade, and even to revenue for the City.

So I will take a break and pass it over to my colleague.

An Honourable Member: Can I just respond to your comments?

Mr. Swan: You're the minister.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): The honourable minister.

Ms. Clarke: All right then.

I share your passion, and interestingly enough, during my campaign period I also had fairly extensive discussions on trees. People do value these trees, and—but having been on the municipal side as a mayor, I also know what it costs to take down these trees. The costs are over and above what I think any municipality can afford. And for the City of Winnipeg, those costs are so unbelievably high that, I mean, there will—there could never be funding to accommodate what needs to be done.

I totally realize how serious this situation is, and I totally realize how much people are attached to their trees. It's a big issue. And I actually visited Sandy Bay First Nation in my constituency. And it was kind of interesting because they didn't really want to have a big political discussion, but I asked them their top three issues within their First Nations community that they felt our provincial government should look at. Their No. 1 concern was trees because in the rural area, our farmers are bulldozing down every tree that's standing, for additional farming acres.

So there will be discussions going forward not just in regards to Dutch Elm, but trees is nothing to be taken lightly, and I certainly don't either because I know the value. Everything that you've described, I share your views on that, but this is something that we're going to have to talk about with conservation, Agriculture, for sure, and I do intend on having those discussions because it's important to my constituency, but it's also important to the province of Manitoba.

So I'm very certain that we'll be having these discussions with the mayor and his people in the City, but I, as I've indicated, I also know what the costs of taking down one tree, and it's a lot cheaper in the rural area than it is in the city of Winnipeg

because the trees here, they're so large and there's a lot of them. So it's a big financial issue for sure.

Thank you for your comments.

Mr. Swan: I just think that if there's a producer that doesn't want a tree on his land, I'm sure there's some people on Ingersoll Street that would love to get them; if there was a reasonable way to transport trees from place to place, we could solve everybody's problems. But I do thank the minister's—the conversation around that issue because it is something that's important to people, both in rural and urban areas.

And I will now truly pass it over to my colleague from Elmwood.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): As the official opposition critic for the municipal affairs part of your department, I wanted to begin by following up on some conversations that we had yesterday regarding bridges in the city of Winnipeg or, I guess, anywhere in Manitoba.

Seems to me that as far back as the collapse of the bridge in Minneapolis—forget how many years ago that was now, but it seems like it was very recent, but maybe not—the Province of Manitoba, up to that point, had given the City of Winnipeg the responsibility of doing, you know, safety reports on bridges. And my understanding was that after that event, the Province took control of that particular safety element and basically told the City that it was now the Province's responsibility to deal with safety issues regarding bridges.

Can the minister confirm that that is, in fact, the case?

* (11:10)

Ms. Clarke: I'd like to thank you for the information you've provided here today, but we're not—we do not have this information. That would be within the Department of Infrastructure, and we can definitely have a consultation with him in regards to that and get back to you.

But at this time, I'd like to provide a response to a question that I received on *[inaudible]* and proposal for active transportation initiatives in Manitoba. The government to date is funding the following active transportation organizations and works in progress with Trails Manitoba, Green Action Centre for Active and Safe Routes to Schools, Commuter Challenge programs, the Spence Neighbourhood Association to promote a variety of

open space initiatives including active transit, the South Point Douglas trail extension, the Trans Canada Trail Border to Beaches project and an active transportation through pass on the north Perimeter Highway.

Funding is being provided to the City of Winnipeg for various active transit priorities, which is defined by the City of Winnipeg as part of their overall capital planning. Manitoba is also administering funding to the following projects: a sidewalk work in the town of Teulon, walking paths and lighting in the city of Portage la Prairie, walking paths lighting in the RM of East St. Paul, and walking paths in the RM of Stanley and the town of Carberry.

Consideration has been given to Manitoba to administer the following projects in 2016: the Stony Mountain active transportation infrastructure project, a multi-use path in the city of Thompson, path lighting in the city of Portage la Prairie, the Headingley walkway pathway extension program, and we wanted this entered into the record. Thank you.

Mr. Maloway: Now just to follow up on what the minister said about the safety requirements.

If you ask the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) that question, he will tell you that it's your responsibility, not his. He's been pretty clear about that. But I also know that that's the case as well because having had some previous experience with this, I know that it was the—Drew Caldwell was the minister before you in this department, and he was the person responsible for dealing with the City on all the infrastructure issues, not Steve Ashton, who was the Minister of Infrastructure, even under the old system for the old government.

So that was where it was at, and so I guess I would ask you if your department has any—I'd like to ask the minister whether her department has any safety reports on the safety of the Louise Bridge.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your question.

It's my understanding that the safety reports for the bridges are the undertaking of the City, and at this time we do not have a safety report for the Louise Bridge.

Mr. Maloway: Well, that is interesting response because if you ask a city councillor, you know, if you ask your city councillor the city councillor would check with the City, and the City will tell you

that—or tell the councillor, anyway, or has told the councillor, that it's the Province who is responsible for the safety issues and the safety reports, as per what I mentioned earlier, since the collapse of the bridge in Minneapolis.

So can you endeavour to contact the City and find out if there are any safety reports on the Louise Bridge?

Ms. Clarke: I'll certainly be having further conversations with the mayor. I have had one meeting with him. We did not discuss any particular infrastructure projects. We spoke more generally, of course. It was an introductory meeting. As my staff has indicated, we do not have those reports that you're talking about, and I know the member has done extensive work and lobbying on behalf of his constituents and he's—in regards to this bridge. I'm aware of it not only from our discussion yesterday, but also from TV ads over the last number of years, and you said to me yesterday that it's been, I think, around seven years that you've been working on this project.

So, you know, the length of time is expensive—our extensive, and I know that you've certainly put a lot of effort and time lobbying on behalf of the people in the city of Winnipeg where this bridge is very important, and I'm sure the City is very well aware of your concerns, and perhaps within my next meeting with Mayor Bowman we can discuss this in particular.

They do have a list of priorities, I'm sure, in regards to infrastructure, and the decision, as far as priorities, is in their hands. They provide the information to us for funding for sure, and we do and will be having those discussions, but the Louise Bridge has not been discussed between the mayor and myself to date.

Mr. Maloway: And I'd like to, then, I guess, tell the minister that it was in 2008 that the City did make a decision to replace the bridge, I think, by 2015, and in 2010 I believe it was Councillor Steen was elected councillor for the area, and once that happened things accelerated even faster to the point where the Mayor Katz and Steen had a plan where they were at the point of handing out the contract to do the engineering and design work, \$2 million, something like that. And this was all ready to go and they had a route which was almost all on City property, so no expropriations really required, and they were going to keep the old bridge active while they were

constructing, which was a big issue with the Disraeli Bridge that we were involved with before that.

* (11:20)

And this whole project was supposed to be done certainly by now anyway, supposed to be finished, and the senior citizens at 404 Desalaberry were very pleased about all this because the councillor funded that area, which is close to the Elmwood Cemetery which had riverbank problems back in the Filmon years, and where graves were, caskets were showing on the riverbank.

At that time, what happened was former Conservative MLA Charlie Birt and former mayor Bill Norrie, whose parents are buried in there, they formed a Elmwood Cemetery group and they took over the cemetery, and the provincial government of Filmon in those days even went so far as to put some money into the project to help the City, because the City had to take it back from the private owner who had deserted and gone to Toronto.

And so this is basically an extension of that riverbank and it's rated as one of the worst parts of the riverbank in the city according to a City study. And so this project, the bridge project, was going to alleviate that problem of the riverbank between the La Salle Hotel and 404 Desalaberry. So it was a win-win all the way around. And something happened; I think it was an election, where Councillor Steen was unsuccessful and there's a new mayor and all of a sudden what was a priority and ready-to-go project has been essentially forgotten about.

So I'm counting on you, Madam Minister, to get this project back on track because I know the Province is a-going to be a major funder in any infrastructure project, and there's a certain amount of horse trading going on there and this project—this bridge is over a hundred years old. It's a one-lane-in-each-direction bridge and any first responder—be it ambulance, police or transit driver—will tell you that it's—when that bridge is shut down, which is quite regular with accidents and people jumping off of it and other events, the bridge can be shut down for, you know, a half hour in rush hour; 25,000 cars a day are going through there.

So this was a priority. In fact, just last year, the bridge was like the City's, I think, No. 4 priority, if I'm not mistaken; it wasn't No. 1 but it was up there. And all of a sudden the Waverly underpass got announced, just out of the blue; it wasn't even on a priority list. If we want to talk about the flexibility of

the City on its—and its priority list, all we have to do is look at the Plessis Road underpass which was on nobody's priority list, and yet it's an underpass that is built now. How in the world did that happen, right?

So, in any event, I'd like to ask the minister, you know, dealing with that whole issue, whether she would do her best efforts to try to accelerate this Louise Bridge replacement given that it is so old, and, in fact, the second oldest bridge I think it is in the city; No. 1 and 2, Louise and Redwood Bridge, both in my constituency. So, if she would commit to take it up with the mayor and try to get this job done, it would be very positive for our area.

Ms. Clarke: Well, I have to thank the minister from Elmwood for having so much confidence in me that he expects that I'm going to come into this position and within eight weeks I'm going to build him his dream bridge. Considering, as you've indicated, and I know you've worked hard on this project as you say for eight years, but you also worked with a government that was in power and the Louise Bridge still isn't there.

And, in regards to how the priorities of this City have run in the past and these bridges appear and, you know, the priorities change, disappear, they come, they go. And, as we both know, too, as elected officials, we come and go as well. And you're right; projects do change and priorities change and, you know, the people at the table that particular year or that particularly budgeting year, they make the decisions and in this case with the City of Winnipeg and bridges we both know that there's very often three-level funding there, sometimes two.

And I think, as elected officials, we also know that the infrastructure dollars that are needed are so far beyond what's available through the province, regardless of who the government is, and from municipal, the City itself, and you also know that the demands are so high. Every—this is your individual project that you're very, very passionate about. I mean, it's clear. We see you on TV frequently about the Louise Bridge. It became kind of your caption or whatever for the past election, so we all know about Jim—pardon me, the honourable minister and the Louise Street bridge.

But, as I've indicated, the mayor and I, we can have these conversations. I do not expect that as minister and part of the funding process that I am going to have a huge influence. It's a discussion that can be held. I completely trust the mayor and his council; when they're making decisions, there's a lot

of criteria that goes into this. They have priorities, whether it's safety, and I certainly share your concerns in regards to safety, but I also know what bridges cost. Having been on the funding portion of the bridge program with the Province of Manitoba, I know what bridges cost.

And, you know, you explained to me yesterday it's not that big a deal; it's only this, this and this. But that translates into literally millions of dollars, and decisions for the City of Winnipeg include a lot more than roads and bridges and that, which I totally respect, and I know you understand that as well. So, yes, we can have that conversation for sure, but they've made their priorities for reasons, and at the end of the day I will respect their decisions.

Mr. Maloway: You do have to wonder about the City's priorities, how, you know, you would have a situation where the Louise Bridge was high on their priority list, on their actual list, and there's a plan to get it done by a certain period of time, and then all of a sudden the Waverley underpass, which is not on any list, gets put right to the top and it's being done.

And, if you want to roll back the clock to 2011, I guess it is, regarding the Plessis Road underpass—and once again, you know, we're talking about underpasses here, not bridges. Bridges are over water and—well, don't have to be, but in these cases they are, and bridges are always going to have to be replaced because at the end of the day if they're not, they're going to fall in the water. But an underpass is something a little bit different, and in the case of the Plessis Road underpass it, too, was on nobody's radar whatsoever except for the councillor, Russ Wyatt, who managed to put up a few signs up on the roadway.

Just because you mention like you can't do much in eight weeks, well, let me tell you, you can do a lot in eight weeks. By putting up those signs in—just in advance of a federal election, I guess, maybe to his amazement too, before the election was over, he had the provincial commitment of \$25 million for the underpass, probably within 10 days into the election. He had Vic Toews promising to build the underpass, on behalf of candidate Vic Toews. And at the end of the day, this underpass, they were already getting ready to construct it, and the City—the councillor who started this whole thing didn't even have his share of the money. So he puts up a few signs; within weeks he's got commitments from the federal and provincial government and doesn't even have his own mayor on side. So he grabbed him and got him on side at the

last minute, and you see they have an underpass there right now.

But that brings us to the question of how many of these underpasses we need and should be building as opposed to just moving the railway lines, right, to a different area. And we were doing a calculation in Transcona at the time and we said, well, there's an enormous amount of people here who are thinking that this underpass was going to be up on Plessis and Gunn Road, which is north. And they were saying, oh, you did a great job getting this underpass built; my God, I'm really keen about getting to work a lot quicker. And then I'd say, well, yes, but it's on Plessis Road and, you know, way south, and then, what?

So, you know, there was a need for a second one with—almost within sight of the first, and even from Plessis Road, if you are looking to the east, the traffic's all bottled up there. So just how many of these underpasses at 70 to 100 million dollars is the public expected to build?

*(11:30)

So, at a certain point, the Premier made a decision to ask for a study on rail relocation and other noted—and I'm just not certain of the fellow who owns Palliser Furniture. Excuse me; anyway, there's a well-known businessman in the province here who went on the airwaves in support of relocation of the lines which was—gave the idea a lot of credibility and—

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Order. The honourable member for Elmwood, your mic had been turned off.

Mr. Maloway: Oh, sure; well, thank you, Madam Chair. And so a well-known businessperson in Winnipeg has presented a case very strongly for relocation of lines, so the rail lines, and—*[interjection]* yes, Art DeFehr. I think many people know him and it's a well-presented case, very good argument, and as a result of that, in a short time after that the Premier did announce that Premier Charest, a well-known Conservative, would be called in to do a study on rail relocations.

I'd like to know just where that's at with this minister.

Ms. Clarke: Again, thanks for all your information on the Louise Street project. It's interesting that, you know, given your drive on this project and you say that, you know, it was right up in the queue and then

it was gone, but I think we realize that that does happen, and I'm sure that you're going to continue to lobby on it. You will be a strong voice for that project and that keeps it out there. So, you know, it's in my notes and so on and so forth, and I'm sure we haven't heard the last of that project.

Further to—you brought up the question regarding rail lines, et cetera. And, as I indicated to you, I have met with the mayor, and we have had discussions in regards to, actually, a lot of infrastructure in general and outlining, you know, their priorities and stuff so that, when there is funding available, that we can move forward on their projects and work with them on that.

So we have had that discussion and we have been identifying where we need to go, you know, now that we are a new government. And we will be continuing those. That will be an ongoing—I don't think infrastructure discussions probably ever end. There is no season to infrastructure needs and the need for funding for infrastructure.

I think you probably heard, too, throughout the campaign process, the mayor, as well as municipal officials talking about the fair say. And, in our mandate, we are committed to that fair say to the City of Winnipeg, to work with them, and that there's a very open communication and dialogue, a lot of transparency as to where the infrastructure will be taking place and the projects.

So I expect we will be meeting again consistently to keep these talks ongoing and do the best that we can with the dollars that are available from the three levels of governments.

Mr. Maloway: But the question, though, was about the study, the rail relocation study. And Jean Charest was retained, who was, as the minister knows, a former Quebec premier, former, I think, national leader of the Conservative Party, you know, a well-known individual and well respected. And my information is that he's been told that he's not going to be needed any time soon, over the summer, anyway, to produce his study or work on the study for relocating the lines.

And, to me, I—it seems to me that either the government's kind of just getting its feet under itself on this issue, but we'd like to know, like, what's happening. Is the—are we proceeding with a study to move the lines or move some of the lines?

You know, I think there's a recognition that there's quite a few facets, here. It's not just the rail

yards, necessarily. But there's also rail lines. And some of those rail lines can be repurposed for, you know, high speed rail or other needs. So it's not a case of where you're going to dig up every rail tie in the city of Winnipeg and move it somewhere. I'm not talking about that. I'm saying each—there's different components to this and different timelines on these components.

So I would assume that that's what Jean Charest was supposed to be doing. And, if the government delays that or just doesn't do it altogether, I don't know how that's going to help us in the future, because the—we're just going to keep building these underpasses. And if—what's the point of building the underpasses, then? We don't have to move the rail lines, I guess. I mean, at a certain point you're going to have all these underpasses but the rail lines will be gone, right? Doesn't make sense.

So, to me, the study probably should have been done a long time ago. And the question, to me, is why is the government dragging its feet on the study?

* (11:40)

Ms. Clarke: Interesting comment. It should have been done a long time ago. You're probably right; however, it wasn't.

An Honourable Member: Yes, Filmon government.

Ms. Clarke: How far back do you want to go? We can't rewrite history, as we both know. And this was just introduced, of course, very late 2015, so the time frame has been very short and, of course, as you know, we did have an election and change of government in that time.

So, being a new minister, I am committed as all—as is our government on all issues of very high expenditure dollars. We want to take the time to review this issue, and we'll definitely—there will be consultation with the mayor and the City of Winnipeg to ensure, you know, where we need to go from here. We need to know that there's a clear direction on rail rationalization. And these kinds of consultations don't happen overnight. There's—as you can tell from the discussions we've had throughout Estimates, there's a lot of issues to discuss, and—

An Honourable Member: So it's going ahead.

Ms. Clarke: —we will—it's in discussion, and I can't make any comment to—as to where it goes from here until we've had time to re-evaluate and see where the

best—where—best direction that we need to go along with the City of Winnipeg in regards to this.

Mr. Maloway: Well, that's encouraging, because we had—or I had heard that Mr. Charest was being told that, you know, we're not going to be doing anything in the next few months on this matter, so minister's just simply saying that's not an issue where they're going to walk away from the study. They're going to be proceeding with it, but they just—nothing's happening at this time. I guess that's what she's saying.

Ms. Clarke: I neither said that we were walking away or that we were going to continue. I said it is under review. I'd like to be very clear about that, very clear.

Mr. Maloway: Now, the fact of the matter is that, you know, if we look back to relocating some rail lines, I mean, we had the very successful issue at The Forks, right? I mean The Forks was just a rail yard there, and until the three governments got together and decided that there was a higher purpose for that area and they moved the tracks, and you see The Forks that we have right now, a very successful tourism centre, actually very popular. And this is the type of activity that can come out of doing something like this, repurposing the rail yards in that case.

So I'd like to ask the minister to think in terms of how you would look at the rail yards currently in the Logan area, if we were to repurpose those. I mean, we just simply look at it, what's the cost, and yes, there's a big cost here, and the railways have been very clear; they want to be moved to somewhere else but they don't want it to cost them any money is what they are saying. But we are now looking at, well, what is the cost going to be to move it, to the public, but we're not looking at the other side. What could come out of it? It's like The Forks. If you say, well, what was the cost of moving the rail, but you have to juxtapose that against what is actually there now, right? So, what could be done with those rail yards?

And CP Rail—one of the CP Rail people did tell me some months ago in passing that, you know, people think of us as a railway, but reality, rail lines are just an incidental business to us. We're really in the real estate business and development business.

So I would encourage the minister to have a meeting with CP officials and just feel them out on this whole issue. But, I mean, I think what they were asking was, well, okay, we'd be willing to move the lines, remove the rail lines, but we really would like

to have first option on that land to redevelop it. And, I mean, there's a myriad of different options that you could do. Housing, you build housing in there; you could build all sorts of things that will make the area, you know—improve the area a lot.

So I'd just ask the minister if she would be open to following up on that idea, because, once again, they were not just—they were letting us know that they were just not a one-dimensional company, that they were not just a rail line making money on transporting goods, that they were actually a development—real estate and development company and that they felt that if they were going to move those lines, there was lots of ideas that they would have that they could help the Province and the City develop.

Ms. Clarke: Thanks again to the member from Elmwood for his extensive sharing of knowledge.

And by your own accounts, this is a very, very broad project. And there is a lot of stakeholders involved. There's a lot of discussion that needs to be held. It's certainly not a short-term project. It's a very long-term project, without a doubt, a very, very expensive, costly project. And I think that really speaks to the point why we want to make sure that a proper review is done. And there's so many aspects to consider and so many people that have to be consulted in working in partnership on this type of a project. So as I indicated, it's under review. Those conversations will go forward with the City of Winnipeg. And there's no timelines on this. It's—it hasn't happened 'til now, and it's another one of those things that's on the list and has been raised. The conversations have been started. So we'll go from there.

Mr. Maloway: Well, my guess is that The Forks development would not have proceeded either if it hadn't have been for the political will of Lloyd Axworthy and whoever the premier of Manitoba was at the time. I mean, the reality is that talking about it is, you know, is good, but there has to be an intention to come up with some sort of a conclusion within a certain time frame. And my concern here is that we keep committing to and building more underpasses. And that's just not going to help us in the long term. I can see us, like, 50 years out, when none of us are here anymore, having all these underpasses and the rail lines are still there, right? So there's got to be sort of a commitment and a time frame to get this job done. That's what I would think. And I'd just ask the

minister if she would commit to that with some dates.

Ms. Clarke: Well, I'm definitely not here to commit to dates. That absolutely is—would be a lot of speculation. I can commit, however, to that—I'm committed to economic development, whether it's the city of Winnipeg or throughout the province of Manitoba, whether—definitely northern Manitoba. I'm committed to economic development throughout the province because that's what we need for our province to grow and to succeed. So economic development and anything that's progressive, I'm definitely in favour of. Committing to dates at this point is just not even a consideration.

Mr. Maloway: I'll take that as a maybe. And the—or my colleague would like to ask some questions now.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So to the minister, I would say congratulations. I haven't had an opportunity to say congratulations on your election. And as I shared with your colleague, the Minister for Status of Women, women's journeys to public office often look very different than our male colleagues' and involve—necessarily involve a lot of different obstacles and other things to consider, so I generally just say congratulations, and I congratulate you on your appointment as minister of indigenous and municipal affairs.

I want to talk, obviously, quite obviously, in the short time that I have, in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. There's a myriad of different things that we could talk about in respect of indigenous women's rights and particular economic and social and cultural context. I will just keep my comments in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

* (11:50)

No doubt your staff have already advised you of the work that we've been doing for the last many years in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. In particular, some of the events that we've been doing that, as I've shared in a couple of Estimates, in a couple of committees are some of the only work that was taking place across the country like that. In fact, many provinces and territories emulated the work that we did, and I offered advisory support to other provinces and territories in executing some of the same work that we were doing here. I'm extremely proud of the work that we did, and I think that it's something that you

can be extremely proud of as well as you move forward.

So some of that work—obviously, the minister no doubt would know that we did have a strategy, a provincial strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and I've shared a couple of times that that strategy is actually, for the longest while, the only strategy from a province across the country. So there's across the country and provinces and territories, there's been different kind of, you know, projects but not a bona fide strategy, and so by the time that I had left, we were into phase 4 of the strategy, and I don't have enough time to get into all of it. I'm sure that your excellent staff, Mr. Rob Ballantyne, who I had the pleasure of working with for several years, has already advised you on that.

My question before we get into the national inquiry stuff is in respect of, more specifically, the Wiping Away the Tears gathering, which is specifically just for families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, which, as I'm sure you've been briefed, is considered a best practice, and for up until the last six months, was the—we were the only province and territory to do that, and it offers families a very unique opportunity to connect with one another in a very intimate and protected and safe manner.

As I'm sure the minister can understand or can appreciate that families going through having a loved one missing or a loved one murdered—and in many cases in Manitoba many, many, far too many in my limited time here, very savage, brutal, brutal cases of murder—families are able to connect with one another more than the minister and I will ever connect with families because they understand that very intimately, emotionally and spiritually.

And so Wiping Away the Tears has been able to solidify the relationships and be able to offer families an opportunity for healing and, you know, navigating through their trauma. And so my question to the minister is: Is the department still considering to support the national inquiry—oh, sorry, the Wiping Away the Tears? Miigwech.

Ms. Clarke: Can I just ask that you change places with the member from Elmwood? I'm having a really hard time hearing you, and just so that our dialogue can be—I don't want to miss your conversations. Thank you.

I want to thank you for all your kind wishes to start this session today, and I extend the same to you as a new member. It's my first time in provincial government but not in—I did serve in municipal government for eight years, and your comments in regard to being male colleagues, et cetera, I've actually had a really great experience working in municipal government. And I worked with the provincial government, as well as the federal government, and I actually had some international work experience as well, and I'm really proud to say that after eight years, I had nothing but really positive experiences, and I enjoyed my time working with male colleagues and I hope that I share that again in the coming years, so.

So your experience in the past with Truth and Reconciliation, with missing, murdered women is extensive and we hear that from you on a regular basis. And I've also talked, as I've indicated in question period, to other families. I know some of these families personally. I've also talked to many of the indigenous communities and the effects that it's having on them.

I sympathize with them but, not having walked down that road, I, certainly, can't share the same experiences that you have. And I was at a meeting in Ottawa recently with my deputy minister and some of our staff from the Aboriginal secretariat. And I wasn't surprised that your name was mentioned there and you were recognized for the work that you've done nationally.

They talked about the meeting that was held here in—earlier this year, and what a success that they felt that it was. And I'm certain that you certainly contributed in a very big way to that success. So I thank you for that. That's important.

Work in the past, and these initiatives that have been created, I'm sure, without a doubt, that the families—it has made a big difference to them and that—but you're right, it can't stop there. The initiatives have to continue and, as Minister of Indigenous Relations, I'm committed to that, and I think I've been very clear about that.

There's a lot of information, without a doubt, and I have been researching, and I have been speaking with people to the best of my ability to find out what's taken place in the past. I attended the blanket ceremony so that I would also have a better understanding of what's been happening in the province of Manitoba, and we've got a lot to learn

from our other provinces, as well. So it's nice to have that national affiliation, and et cetera.

You asked specifically about Wiping Away the Tears; that was your final question. And that program is funded from multi-departments. It's not just from this department. And, yes, definitely consideration is being given from our department to continue that support.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Before I recognize the member, I just want to remind all members that it's hard to hear conversations that are happening for Hansard when there's other discussions going on. So I'd encourage you to take your conversations to the hallway if they are important.

Thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: I just asked your colleague, the Minister for Status of Women and, of course, I'm fully aware that it was actually multi-department in respect of supporting Wiping Away the Tears, and, in fact, that is, for the minister's own information, sometimes problematic. It was, kind of, it always got done, but it was problematic to go to different departments for pockets of dollars. And so your colleague—or your staff, Rob—Mr. Rob Ballantyne, will know that, in fact, we started talking with the department to start looking at full funding from what was, then, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. And, in fact, the amount that we were looking at was \$50,000 to support nationally the—or—sorry, Wiping Away the Tears.

Typically, the—actually, the first year that I had—when I had come on, I think we had gotten like 35,000. And, then, as the numbers increased in respect of families participating in Wiping Away the Tears, every year I would ask for additional dollars to be able to support. It cost a lot of money to bring in families from all over the province and, then, the activities that were planned with the families. And so that's why we had started discussions in respect of a \$50,000 allocation toward Wiping Away the Tears, and we were hoping to have it annualized—right—because every year that proposal had to go in. But we were hoping that it would be an annualized program. And so I share that with the minister for her consideration and for her staff's consideration.

And I asked your colleague, the Minister for Status of Women, just prior to coming in here in respect of Wiping Away the Tears because, of

course, they were a partner on that. And she had indicated that she has not seen a proposal.

* (12:00)

And so my question to the minister is whether or not that proposal has gotten—has actually been received, because if it hasn't, I had made the commitment that I would reach out to Angie Hutchinson from Medicine Bear in respect of getting that proposal in as soon as possible.

Ms. Clarke: We have not received that proposal as well. And my staff has just given me a note here. In September 2015, which of course was just last fall, Manitoba invited families from MMIWG from all across Canada to attend the Wiping Away the Tears gathering, and some of these jurisdictions have actually indicated that they may also host similar gatherings in the future, so that speaks.

And just further information, and I think this kind of goes back to some of your questions or that have been directed to my department in question period in regards to staffing on the special assistant, or forget—[interjection]—pardon me, special adviser within the department, and consideration has been given to fill a position. The title has not been identified at this time, but there is discussion to appoint a staff person as a lead on this file.

And I—it is very evident to me in missing—with this file as well as the truth and reconciliation that there's an awful lot of work to be done and that additional help is definitely needed.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm glad to hear that because that is, of course, a question that I get every other day from families directly in respect of whether or not there's been a special adviser appointed to specifically be that go-between between community, families and government. So I'm pleased to be able to advise that there is consideration in respect of a staff person.

I will advise as well that, of course, I know that Wiping Away the Tears was national, and, in fact, that Wiping Away the Tears, the national component for Wiping Away the Tears 6, actually came out of our meeting at the first national round table in Ottawa in which Manitoba, we supported many families. I think we had about seven families attend the first national round table. And for the minister's information, which I'm assuming she would already know, that was actually the first time that the federal government, the provinces, territories, the five NAOs and families actually sat in the same room to start beginning looking at a strategy in respect of missing

and murdered indigenous women and girls across the country.

As we travelled back from that, our Manitoba families participated in a first day of a families event that was actually February 26—or February 26, yes. And in that families gathering, our Manitoba families, which are so used to the way we do things here and the enormous amount of supports that we provide families, really saw first-hand how other provinces and territories didn't have that support.

They—and so when we happened to be travelling all back, it was actually at the airport that the families had said to myself, and said, you know, we really need to host families from across the country and let them see what we do in Manitoba. And so, you know, we brought that to the former premier, and right away it was, yes, let's make it happen.

And it was such a successful event and that, of course, families from Manitoba have connected with families across the country, but what it did, as well, is that Prince George had a families gathering in BC which was massive; their budget was \$500,000, and myself and Bernadette Smith actually helped to go facilitate things and were on the planning committee. Yukon did a families gathering. So it really was some phenomenal work that we were able to kind of spread the ability to work with families. So I share that just for your information, some background information.

In respect to the national inquiry, of course, I know and I'm sure the minister is well aware that, of course, I realize that there's been some preliminary information that's been disseminated to your office in respect of the composition of the commissioners for the national inquiry and some of the terms of reference.

I also understand that there's a little bit of back-and-forth respect of provinces and territories and the federal government in respect of how this national inquiry is going to get executed and looking at those terms of reference. So I know that the minister's department will be starting to—and if not already, having those discussions, obviously.

I also know that there was not that much information in respect of support for families and what families' roles will be in the national inquiry. And so my question is—to this government—is similar to Wiping Away the Tears or any event that we've put on. Families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls need a wide range of supports from

bus tickets to flights coming in from the north, from travel to coming in to the north, to hotels, to child care, to food. Anybody that's been to the events that I put on know that I feed everybody. We all gain about 10 pounds once we're finished, and I know that it sounds funny, but food is such a vital component to ensuring that families are able to fully participate.

So my question is: What is the plan from your department, from your government in respect of fully supporting families to participate in that national inquiry, which, as I'm sure the minister can, you know, understand will be such a long and arduous emotional, physical and spiritual draining process, but it is the one shot that many families get at some semblance of justice and closure.

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your information.

The—I totally understand what you—you know, when you're talking about people coming together and the value of that on many levels. And at our meeting two weeks ago in Ottawa, there was an elder there—and I'm sure you likely know her; her first name was Theresa [*phonetic*], I believe, but I'm sure I think she's the one that mentioned your name—and she spoke on that and the value of our indigenous families going back to the ceremonies, et cetera, for healing, and, you know, what a priority that should be. And she spoke really, really well about family and a lot of what you're sharing here today, and I really listened to her, as well as the national women's indigenous chairperson, I forget the full title; the titles are quite long, but she also spoke on a lot of these issues and they were well taken. Like, I mean, you know, it certainly brings a vision and an understanding of what's going on right now.

You spoke on the terms of reference. There was a lot of discussions on—the discussion on the terms of reference were lengthy. There was a request to all provinces and territories that an order-in-council be signed in regards to the terms of reference. We did reply to that, our government—our Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) did reply to that just recently.

As you've indicated, we felt that there were a lot of answers that needed to be clarified in regards to that term of reference. So there was—you know, hopefully there'll be clarification and hopefully when it, the term of reference, is accepted that it will be all-inclusive and something that all our provinces and territories can move forward with.

In regards to the commissioners, that announcement is supposed to take place actually any

time soon. We're very close to hearing the announcement in regards to the inquiry and the commissioners, et cetera.

The one discussion that came forward for that, and I think that will speak very much to what you bring forward to us all the time is don't wait two years for this inquiry. As individual provinces, keep working. Don't wait for the inquiry. There's so much that can be done in the meantime. When the inquiry is complete and the information comes forward, don't let it die—action—you know, take action from there as well.

So there was a lot of information provided and, you know, the different provinces all spoke as well as the leaders from different groups, the Metis Federation.

*(12:10)

I mean, you've been at these meetings. You know and understand who's all at the table. So everybody had a very good opportunity to express what their expectations were. I made it very clear to them that because I was in this position for such a very short period of time, I felt my main role there was listening, as I have listened to you and other people that I have met with. And I'll continue doing that.

But I want you to be assured that there's going to be a lot of support and, you know, it is my intention to work with all the different areas that have to be—and certainly the work done in the past by people like yourself will not just go away, that, you know, we all have to work on this together. This isn't a job that the minister is going to be able to complete. This isn't a job that this government's going to be able to complete. It takes those families; it takes the communities; it takes the leaders from all the province and all of Canada. It's what you described as when everybody was at the table; that's what it takes. It takes everybody working for the same common goals.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

So I—and I appreciate everything that I've heard thus far, and I understand that, of course, it's—you know, you're navigating through all of these new things and really in the—at the cusp of a national inquiry, right? Which will—is a massive undertaking and years in the making and years to get to where we're actually at a final completion of it, years. So, you know, what I—and I offer this to your colleague for the Status of Women, and I offer this in—you

know, at the end of the day I care about the families that I've developed a relationship with. And if you know the work, you would know that in Manitoba, we're very connected, our family. So we've kind of created this massive network of family, right. So I—my priority is that the families, as they navigate through this massive undertaking, that they are safe, that they are protected, that they are supported, and that they—and in that, that they are fully able to participate in this national inquiry that they so deserve.

So in that spirit, you know, I offer the minister any of my expertise, any of my wisdom, any of my recommendations in respect of ensuring that piece. And I—and it is there if the minister so desires, in order to ensure that we have the best possible outcomes and the best possible process in respect of the national inquiry.

I—and, of course, I understand that we're at the cusp of the announcement. We—a lot of us thought that it was going to be on National Aboriginal Day and, of course, it's not coming.

What I will also recommend or offer to the minister is that if the minister—if the department does have, you know, a heads-up in respect to the announcement, and if there is anything formal, to include some of the families. If the department—if the minister wants some recommendations, of course I have recommendations in those family members that would participate in any of the formal announcements or anything like that.

My other piece is that I would recommend to the minister and to the department—and, again, these are just my recommendations—that, you know, families will have to understand what's taking place.

What happens is every time there's an announcement, every—any—and, I mean, this doesn't happen all that too often, but when there's an arrest or when a—we just had Divas Belanger, who only just yesterday was sentenced to life—whenever there's any type of announcement or new activity or—families across Canada, families in Manitoba, almost instantaneously get triggered. All of their trauma gets triggered in those moments. There's a sense of not understanding or not knowing what's going on, and then it gets manifested in anxiety.

So I'm constantly fielding calls when these things go on. And I've always done my best to say, look, this is what's going on; this is what the

announcement is about; this is what they're going to say. Do you want to participate?

So my recommendation is that, particularly with the national inquiry, you know, if there's some way to give families a heads-up, if there's some way to be able to provide families with some information—it may be minimal or it may be substantial. Like, whatever the department can pass along, I would recommend that as well.

And so my question, after all of that, is I didn't necessarily hear, in respect of my last question, whether or not the department was working on a bona fide strategy in respect of how to support families through the national inquiry. I mean, I would imagine so, but I'm asking that—formally asking.

Miigwech.

Ms. Clarke: I'll answer your question first and then I'll make some comments.

I think, probably, at this point, we'll wait to the actual terms of reference. We don't have that completed yet. When we do, we will be able to move forward. And, as I indicated, you know, there is consideration for this special assistant to work within this—these issues and going forward. So we will continue working on it, without a doubt.

I very much understand, when you're talking about all these people that you've worked with, that they become family. They become family because the issues that you're dealing with are matters of the heart, and they—that bond becomes very, very strong. There's no doubt about it. And I also understand when you're talking about people calling you, et cetera, looking for information, and I think that's the biggest achievement we can work towards is good communication, that people know and understand, not just your indigenous families, not just the families that are affected by murdered, missing women and girls, but the general public. I think there needs to be a lot more communication and a lot more understanding, and I'm hoping within the roles of this department that I can work within that to inform the general public.

I spoke at the elementary school, Lord Selkirk, on Tuesday, I think it was, where the children have created a sacred heart garden in recognition of residential school survivors. And it was—it's pretty amazing because there were students from grade 1 to 6, they also put a cairn, as such, with a poem that the grade 6 students wrote, and it's—there's a plaque on

there in regards to that. They also designed silhouettes along their whole fence that depict images that—and it certainly brought forward to me that, you know, this is a really good starting point for the future, and we've talked about that in different aspects, that we need to start doing different things with our children.

I met with the principal, vice-principal and some of the teachers in that school after this event, and we had a very brief meeting, but we are going to meet again very, very soon, because they're working on prevention. They are working on educating these children from kindergarten up. And I was so inspired by their plans, and they've already implemented plans and are working on a better reading program for grades 1 to 3. And it includes all teachers being involved at all times. There is no one teacher designated. If the teacher's in the area, they work with these children, and they said the results already in, I think, two or three short years are amazing. The kids—there's better attendance. They're making sure that they're fed. And I think it's a really good model and I want to meet with them as well as our Education Minister and, you know, listen to what they have done and are doing within their school. They're really excited about it. They're seeing such positive results.

So, yes, we have to go and we have to deal with the past, and there's some really good healing processes in place. There's an inquiry in place. I have a stack of inquiries that have taken place in Manitoba since the 1990s on these same issues. There has been studies and studies and studies, and there has literally been hundreds and millions of dollars spent by the Province of Manitoba on these studies. Let this not be another study that sits on the shelf. Let's make sure that the actions are taken and that the work is done. That is our responsibility.

So we've got a big mandate going forward, and that rests on all of us.

* (12:20)

Ms. Fontaine: So, of course, you know, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is at the bottom of this real historical continuum of violence against indigenous women and girls, and this is the unfortunate and tragic consequence of all of this other piece here.

And so my question is to the minister: I'm sure that the minister is, you know, should be aware that indigenous women are, you know, seven

times more likely to be murdered, face just a myriad of different statistics in—which really entrench indigenous women's marginalization, you know, across the country in Manitoba. Part of that piece is that indigenous women are—you know, face higher levels of domestic violence. Indigenous women and girls face higher levels of sexual assault, of rape, of incest. And then, of course, these are the consequences.

So my question is: What is the minister's vision and direction to the department in respect of dealing with this stuff before we actually get to this part, right? Because I know that, you know, we don't want to be at this part, and so it involves necessarily looking at domestic violence and sexual violence against indigenous women and girls. And so what is the vision? What's the mandate? What are the—the what's the department going to be looking at in the next little bit under your mandate, under the minister's mandate?

Ms. Clarke: I'm well aware of the statistics that you bring forward. There's the—such a long list, and I do understand that. Going forward, I think we all understand that this is not just a political matter. This is a, you know, this involves the police force. This involves the general public. And I guess my vision is, going forward, is to get all the partners at the table, as you've already indicated happened, you know, at the level of survivors and families and so on and so forth.

But if we're going to move forward, I think we have to have a lot of partners at the table that are all focused in the same direction and that are committed not to just talk about it, but take action within their own departments, within their own areas and carry through. You know, there's a lot of people here that have extensive experience, like yourself, that can be such a—make such a difference going forward.

So I'm committed to that process, but I'm also committed to educating our children and getting these children growing, and that's the one thing that the elder spoke about in Ottawa too, that we need to start working with families. We have to start working with the men in our society to teach the young men respect for women. There's—you know, that's a big part of it. There's so many different aspects of what she felt needed to be done, and they were very realistic. And, again, it's about educating and—educating, listening.

We will be there. We will do it, but it's going to take a lot of work, as you're aware. You've walked

this path; you've walked this journey. You know what's been done, and going forward, you know probably very much what should be priorities.

Ms. Fontaine: So I, of course, I couldn't agree more that—you know, and the narrative in respect of violence against women has really shifted in the last, I would say the last five years, where we've really kind of focused on engaging men and boys. That's what we call it, engaging men and boys. And, in fact, I remember a couple years back, I was at the United Nations' status of—Commission on the Status of Women and it was actually a panel that was hosted by Canada at that time in respect of engaging men and boys. And so they highlighted a couple of such programs, particularly BC's program, and I—don't ask me anything about sports—but whatever their football team is, they were engaged in this public awareness campaign in respect of violence against women, so whatever the football team is out there.

And, actually, as I'm sure, and I would hope that you would have been briefed already, Manitoba, you know, in Status of Women, we did some phenomenal work in respect of engaging men and boys, and for the purposes of your mandate as the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Affairs, one of the things that we did, and I just shared this with the minister of Status of Women was we engaged in an Aboriginal men's anti-violence campaign—and I hope that you've had the opportunity to see the posters—and that—I worked with an advisory committee in the community, and we really kind of deconstructed what we wanted to do on this public awareness campaign. And so some of the early discussions were, well, do we want it to be shocking and da, da, da. And the elder in our—in—and the elder and a youth, really actively engaged in the community, said, no, like, we need to highlight our men who are so positive in the community and really have our men highlighting—highlighted in taking a stand against violence against indigenous women. And those were the posters that were produced.

And what I'll share with the minister, and I'm so proud of this, is that one of the young men, and I—if you haven't already met with him, I hope that you'll have the opportunity. His name is Kevin Settee. He is just an extraordinary, extraordinary, extraordinary young indigenous man, and I absolutely love and adore him, and I can never say enough good things about him. Now he's a father. He's a phenomenal father, and you just—you see in there our future. And his poster—he didn't have a child at the time—he just

this handsome indigenous man with long braids, and he was just so, you know, beautiful in his poster, and it was him about, you know, standing up for violence against indigenous women. His poster was shared—I cannot even tell you how many times—on social media, and it actually made it's way around the world as far as Papua New Guinea. They have a women's organization there that deals with violence against women, and they have his poster out there.

So we've started a really good framework and foundation in respect of engaging men and boys, and so I hope that the department would look at, you know, maybe even extending that Aboriginal men's anti-violence campaign. It wasn't a lot of money, and it has done some phenomenal work already, and those posters are everywhere.

So I leave that with the minister. I do have another meeting, so, again, oh—

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): The honourable minister.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your last comments.

In my personal opinion, these are probably the most powerful comments you've made in the last eight weeks: highlight the positive. And I think that's very, very important going forward.

Nobody denies that the past is tragic and that the present, it's still happening. And I think that concerns all of us; that isn't just the indigenous communities. That concerns all of Manitoba; that concerns all of Canada. And the awareness, as you've indicated, in the last five years is much broader, and that's important because without the awareness and the communication, nothing's going to happen.

But I so much agree that we have to highlight the positive, and there are so many great leaders, and we need to use these leaders to be positive role models going forward, and I think that's just a great statement, so I thank you for that.

Mr. Swan: So, while we're in this area, I'd like to talk a little bit about Aboriginal consultation—like to speak a little bit about Aboriginal consultations, which is the responsibility of this minister. And, of course, we know that there is—that there are responsibilities on the government of Manitoba to make sure that there's full and complete consultation with First Nations before projects—before work is undertaken. We also know that it's the—that can be done in a way that can move things ahead in a

reasonably timely way, and I know it's not always an easy balance to reach.

I guess the first question I want to ask is whether this minister plans to do anything differently than her predecessor in the other government, our previous government, would have done.

* (12:30)

Ms. Clarke: I think we've already done something different and not by my hand, but by the new Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the transition committee by putting the Aboriginal–Indigenous and Municipal Relations as one department. And in all the meetings that I've had in the initial weeks, and I've had several, but—I invited as many different chiefs and councils, indigenous groups, grand chiefs, as many different people that I felt were key leaders. And also stakeholders from the municipal side—met with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Capital Region, City of Winnipeg and as many different groups that I could to discuss, you know, the past and what the connection was between the First Nations communities as well as the municipalities. And it became very evident very quickly that this was a good decision, because there's so many projects and issues that are jointly—have to be dealt with jointly.

So I think joining this department is, probably, one of the first big steps that have taken place. And I—actually, during the summer months, the list of people waiting to meet with me to continue these discussions is very lengthy, and I will be working throughout the summer to make sure that this happens so I can be well-prepared for our next session and ensure that—we've already seen these two paths right now are parallel. But I guess my vision, and I think—believe the vision of our government, is to bring them closer together, and working in unity. This is good for both sides, both communities, because the funding that they can—the First Nations and the municipalities can access different types of funding but, working together, they can complete these projects more efficiently.

I think there's a lot of opportunity going forward, and I certainly will be at the table and making a lot of effort to see that there's new relationships, one where there's positive communication, open communication, and, from what I'm understanding and hearing, that's a good step in the right direction. But, of all the people that I've met with, they are very, very open to a new way of doing business, and for me that's really encouraging.

Mr. Swan: Well, I thank the minister for that, but I'd like to address the issue of Aboriginal consultation further.

I appreciate the minister is going to be busy—very busy. As she's indicated, Aboriginal and Indigenous Affairs has now been merged with Municipal Affairs, which means that she's going to have a lot on her plate. And I know there's going to be every municipality wanting to line up, and I know there's going to be a lot of time by various First Nations wanting to talk about issues.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

But there is a difference between those two groups. Yes, there's a desire to meet with and to negotiate with municipal governments, but when it comes to First Nations, there is a much more complex relationship because of the government's constitutional obligation to consult, under section 35, with First Nations. And my specific question was about whether this minister plans to do anything differently when it comes to fulfilling Manitoba's role under section 35 to engage in appropriate consultation with First Nations.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, I'd like to expand on that question that you've just presented.

We do have an interdepartmental group that, right now, is working on the consultation process. And, within our mandate, there is a framework to consult. So that—we are mandated that. And that framework is being reviewed. And it's part of our 100-day mandate. So 100 days are quickly passing by, so we certainly expect to meet that criteria.

Mr. Swan: All I see—I mean, there's nothing in the minister's Estimates that suggests there's any more resources being put into the Aboriginal Consultation Unit. I look at page 101 of the Estimates book, and there's still the same number of employees. There's not any other allowance for any other expenditures.

So can the minister give me some advice if there's going to be a change to how things are being done, even if the minister isn't quite certain what that will be? Where's that money going to come from?

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your question.

The process at this time is, as I indicated, there is a review going on. And we will wait until that consultation is done within that 100-day time frame. Following that, then, we will have to make decisions as to where we go from there so that we're prepared for the next budget.

Mr. Swan: Well, sure, and I understand there's been a number of different reviews being undertaken which, for a new government, doing a review isn't unreasonable. Although certainly we may have questions about who's doing the review and whether it's the best way to do that.

Can the minister tell me: If the way that the Province is meeting its obligation to do proper consultation under section 35 are being reviewed, who's actually doing that review?

Ms. Clarke: This is—the review is done internally by our staff, but they are also collaborating with other departments such as Sustainable Development, and they'll also be included.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm just trying to understand. When that review is done, how does this minister, who has the responsibility for section 35 consultations—how is the result of that review going to be explained to First Nations communities and to Manitobans?

Ms. Clarke: In regards to your question, the indigenous communities or leaders are actually involved in the review, so they will be a part of it.

Mr. Swan: Well, that's—I think that's obviously a good thing to involve indigenous leaders. But, presumably, after those consultations take place there will be some kind of policy paper or something else prepared.

My question is: Will that be made available to indigenous leaders? Will that be made available to other Manitobans? How will we know if there are any changes being made to the process by which section 35 consultations are taking place?

Ms. Clarke: Well, as I've explained, the indigenous communities and leaders will be involved in this review, and this process is to work towards the new framework for consultation. Once we've reached that stage and that framework is complete, then it will be shared publicly.

* (12:40)

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

I know that one of the frustrations has been the pace of completing Treaty Land Entitlement work, and it's not entirely within the provincial government's hands because even though there's work done by the provincial government and First Nations in Manitoba, I know there's been delays and a lot of frustrations with the pace of the federal government moving ahead with that.

Within the control of the provincial government, can the minister point to anything different that will be done on this front by the province, and are there any additional resources that are being put into trying to resolve these treaty land entitlement claims?

Ms. Clarke: Your question's very timely. It's the reason I was late this morning for this process.

We actually have—there's an upcoming meeting with Grand Chief Nepinak, and we are expecting that the TLE consultations will be a topic of discussion. So definitely we will—it's my understanding from my staff that a lot of the process is being held up at the federal level, that the province is where they're supposed to be. Their work is done; they're ready, but the process is being slowed down. And, you know, a lot of these TLE processes are taking seven years, much too long. It's driving the costs up on the land, et cetera, which is causing undue financial stress going forward. So, definitely, these conversations will be held and we need to find a better way of doing business.

Mr. Swan: Well, I appreciate the minister's comments on that, and you will find as you go to federal-provincial meetings that there's nothing that unifies provincial ministers, potentially from different political parties or different backgrounds, from getting them united than dealing with a federal government that maybe hasn't shown the attention.

So, just from that point of view, the minister's point is that the Province is doing everything reasonably to advance these things, that it's the federal government which has created undue delays in allowing First Nations to receive the land they're entitled to.

Ms. Clarke: That's my understanding.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

And we're just going to change gears considerably. I want to talk a little bit about a program within the minister's portfolio that is certainly important to the people I represent in the Legislature, and that is Neighbourhoods Alive! In the West End, the area I represent is actually covered by not one but two Neighbourhoods Alive! areas. One is the Spence area; the other is the Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews area. Even earlier today the minister was talking about some grants being paid out to the Spence Neighbourhood Association. You'll find these are two very strong organizations with a lot of local input. It has been a, in my view, a very

successful program for a relatively modest amount of support from the provincial government.

Can the minister just confirm that within this fiscal year there is no intention to cut or to reduce the amount of money which is going to the various Neighbourhoods Alive! organizations?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your questions.

Neighbourhoods Alive!, of course, we just did funding decisions on that just in very recent weeks. I share with you the relevance and the extreme importance of these. Although they're not huge dollars, in small communities and—they can make such a difference, and we discussed recently within question period, too, the Community Places grants which is equal to Neighbourhoods Alive!, basically, is in your larger centres, but Community Places is throughout the province. And these small pockets of money can make such a difference in our communities, and I would certainly be a very strong advocate going forward that the funding not be cut in these programs. I'm a very strong believer. They are community grants that I accessed in my community for many years. I know the difference it can make, and, unfortunately, the level of funding where it was eight, 10 years ago has dramatically decreased during that time. I certainly will help that—that they stay strong.

Mr. Swan: I certainly share with the minister her view. It is—I will ask for the community assistance programs as well, the Community Places Program. I've also had the opportunity to see the benefit of those programs. The beauty of it is that an organization has to step up itself with funding and then there can be a matching, or at least some assisting funds from the Province. I take it as with Neighbourhoods Alive!, there is no intention in this fiscal year to reduce the amount of the money that will be available under the Community Places Program.

Ms. Clarke: No, the funding level has no indication of being cut.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that, and there will be some happy folks, I'm sure, with good ideas for funding.

Generally, there has been either two or three intakes each year for the Community Places Program, I presume that that will continue for this fiscal year.

Ms. Clarke: There was a funding intake. And, of course, this year normally the funds would have been rolled out much sooner, but we had this election that just happened to fall right in that funding period. So all those funding decisions have been made, and decisions, cheques are done and communities should be receiving their cheques very shortly. So there will be another funding intake, but that will be going into the next year.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

On page 49 of the Estimates book, there's a subappropriation for Urban Development Initiatives that was \$26 million for the 2015-2016 year, and it's in the budget again at \$26 million for 2016-2017. There's seven organizations that are listed as being identified in these budget papers. Are those the only organizations or programs that are being funded by UDI, or are there others?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks. What you're reading in the, on the page that you're identified, page 49, those are just examples. There are many, many more, but those are just to highlight a few.

Mr. Swan: Could I ask the minister, then, has all \$26 million been allocated already, or is there still the ability within year to add different organizations to this?

* (12:50)

Ms. Clarke: I'll just give a straightforward answer if that's okay. You're good with that? Okay. Yes, there is \$26 million allocated as you have indicated, and this is part of normal budgeting. Some of this has been already granted, but there will be more applications so the process will be running throughout the year.

Mr. Swan: I expect that this information is readily available, so I would ask if the minister would undertake to provide me with a list of the grants or payments that were made in 2015-2016 as well as the budgeted payments or expected payments under UD for 2016-17.

Ms. Clarke: So noted. It will be supplied.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

I'm going to touch on another area, which is really where the Department of Justice meets the minister's portfolio, and I expect this is an issue that the minister would be very familiar with. When I was the Justice Minister, we had a very good question asked by municipalities; namely, when it

comes to parking tickets and bylaw enforcement, why do—why does somebody who gets a parking ticket basically have the same series of procedural protections and steps available as someone who's been charged with manslaughter. And there was a real desire by the AMM and by municipalities to come up with a better way to allow municipalities to enforce their bylaws.

Bill 36 was passed some time ago, allowing for a different way of taking parking tickets and some bylaw offences through the system, replacing the courts system with a local system of resolving those cases. I had a good discussion with the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) about this. She said that things were moving along, although the City of Winnipeg had actually wound up being the biggest obstacle to moving ahead with this.

I'm wondering if the minister is as familiar with where we now stand in being able to bring this bill into effect, and whether the minister can help out municipalities who truly want this to reduce the delays and the costs of having to have lawyers represent them to collect parking tickets in court.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Clarke: Well, I thank you for your question. It's certainly not a new topic of discussion for me. Very high level of frustration on municipalities for many, many, many years, and the City of Portage la Prairie has been more than frustrated. The—when you hear the dollar values that are outstanding in parking tickets alone, it's pretty overwhelming. Pretty good infrastructure jobs sure could certainly be completed with those funds.

As you know, we work very closely with the City and the Justice Department, as well as AMM. So, going forward, if the Justice Minister has indicated that things are moving along well, that's really good news. Even from the time that this was passed, it seems like a lot of months have passed, and it's still not in place. And I don't think, from a general understanding of our municipalities and that, that they've—the number of meetings that have been held in regards to this decision and getting this far have been extensive. There has been a lot of work gone into it, a lot of people working on it, and we're still not exactly to where we want to be so that this can actually be a working document, as such.

So we will continue to work with these stakeholders and ensure that things move forward,

and that people have to be accountable for these parking tickets, as well as other bylaw infractions. Parking tickets is only one of them. Unsightly properties is another one that's cited on a regular basis, and I know the City of Winnipeg has their own bylaws in regards to that. And there are some pretty drastic measures that have taken place in the past in our municipalities that are slightly within the law.

But anyways, yes. These things need to proceed. And, as you know, I'm very supportive of that.

Mr. Swan: I appreciate the minister's comments on that. And my cottage neighbour would be the first person I would want to have the new laws apply to.

In all seriousness, I do understand that there's frustration by the Department of Justice, and there's frustration by a number of other municipalities who believe that they are ready to go, to start using this new regime, to hire an employee to actually deal with these cases, keeping in mind there can be a review. I certainly urge the minister, next time she is meeting with the mayor, to make sure that this is a priority for the City of Winnipeg. I think it's the right thing for the City of Winnipeg, and it is frustrating if it's, indeed, the City of Winnipeg taking an inordinate amount of time when all the other municipalities sound quite keen to move on this.

On the local front, I am going to put us—a question to the minister, and I appreciate she may need to get back to me with a response. There's been, in the last couple of years, a lot of attention given to improving sports facilities within the province. Within the city of Winnipeg, there's been a number of new sports fields and improvements. The West End of Winnipeg desperately needs better sports facilities.

There has been a group formed to try to get a field turf field somewhere in the West End, whether it's near Tec Voc school or whether it's at the Clifton site of Isaac Brock community centre, right by what you may know as Garbage Hill in the West End of the city. There are people quite prepared to raise money and to move ahead on this. We think it'd be great for football, for lacrosse, for soccer, for the use of local schools as well as local organizations.

With the new government, what is the best pot of money, or what are the options for a motivated, great group of people to try and advance an infrastructure project that would keep young people in the West End busy, active, out of trouble and healthy?

* (13:00)

Ms. Clarke: Well, good news for the member from Minto. Need a little good news?

Actually, we funded a feasibility study through rec feasibility study program. And the funding was to Football Manitoba. That feasibility study is complete, so now it is—the next step will be working with the City and making it a priority, getting to the top of that list.

As we know, that list for the City is long, just the same as it is for the rest of us. So there's—there is progress in that project.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that.

If the minister could just let me know—it doesn't have to be on the record today—but if she could just undertake to let me know the best person within her department who would be the contact, that would be very helpful for the folks in the West End.

Ms. Clarke: It would probably be your best interest to directly work with the City of Winnipeg, because the study has been completed, and it has to be their priority and their decision going forward from there. So the city councillor in that area, if you will, would probably be your best choice.

Mr. Swan: I thank the member for that.

Councillor Gilroy's heard from me a lot about trees already, so I think she—she is aware of this project and will continue to work to make that a reality.

I'm going to pass it over to my colleague from Fort Garry-Riverview, who's got a few more questions.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Like my colleagues, I certainly want to congratulate you on your election as an MLA and, of course, your appointment as a Cabinet minister as well. I know it's very personally satisfying, but it's also, from a family point of view, very satisfying as well. And so I hope you're able to enjoy this short window of time, anyways, in terms of celebrating a really, really fine personal achievement.

Several months ago—I can't quite date it, but I would say in the last six months—the City, the Province, Red River College and New Flyer got together to establish a task force on electrifying the bus fleet.

Could you tell me what the status of that particular task force is, whether it's complete, what the recommendations are?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your question and thanks for all the nice comments.

I'm actually quite excited to have the opportunity in this stage of my life to be a part-time resident in the city of Winnipeg for—I've lived a very busy business life and municipal life for many, many years, which didn't afford me the opportunity to do the things in Winnipeg and—culturally, socially, to have accomplished. Certainly being within government opens a whole new world for me and I actually am very excited about being part of Winnipeg, and so is my family that lives in Winnipeg, so that they get more chance to spend with me. So it's a win-win all around, and one that I'm really excited about.

But I'm also really excited about the position I've been appointed to, both areas are ones that are really important to me, and a lot of the issues that are coming forward, because the city of Winnipeg is a municipality, there are issues that I have a bit of knowledge about, at least, you know, to get started. This is really exciting, electrifying our bus fleet, I mean, that's really moving forward in a positive way, so I'm really excited about that.

But, to answer your question more specifically, that task force has met several times since it was established, and I just checked, and my understanding it was established just this year, so they have met several times and they will continue to meet. There's an upcoming meeting very soon with all the stakeholders as you listed them, so, looking forward to the possibilities in expanded electric service in Winnipeg is an exciting one. So they will continue to do their work and when they're done, we'll look forward to seeing what outcomes will be.

Mr. Allum: Thank you for that.

Can you tell—could you just tell the committee when the report—task force will conclude their meetings?

Ms. Clarke: We don't have a specific date on that there is not an end date. But my staff have indicated they feel that it's very close.

Mr. Allum: Good, that's very good news.

Will the minister commit to making that report public?

Ms. Clarke: In regards to a public report on this, as you've indicated, there are multiple partners, so it would have to be a consensus of all partners because they all have information in that report and it would have to be a general consensus of all as to making that public report—or report public, I should say.

Mr. Allum: Well, thank you.

So, then, can I ask the minister whether she will make her best efforts to convince the other three members of the part involved, or other members, as may—to make that report public so the people of Winnipeg and people of Manitoba can see what it is that you're talking about.

Ms. Clarke: I certainly don't see any problems. I know that this is an important part of Winnipeg's future, so I know that the right pairs would certainly—they're always very interested in these reports and where their city is going to be going and their transportation modes in the future. Transportation in the city of Winnipeg is a hot topic so, you know, if at all possible, I would certainly encourage that. We are about transparency and I very much support transparency communication, I think it's important.

Mr. Allum: Well, I appreciate you saying that and, of course, we can talk about transparency and we can say that we actually hope we'll practise it as time goes on. As well, we know that the Finance Minister has already unleashed a secret audit of value for money, I believe it's called, and so there are elements of secrecy already pervading into the government's agenda. So we're trying to make sure, of course, that those things that the public has, that there's a public interest in, is transparently reported to the public at the same time.

* (13:10)

The minister will know that our government increased the share of transit funding to a 50-50 operational. Will she commit today to maintaining that 50-50 formula?

Ms. Clarke: We do have a 50-50 operating agreement with—that's in existence right now with the City of Winnipeg. And, as I've mentioned earlier, our consultation with the City of Winnipeg on public transit as well as everything else will be ongoing. And we will be consulting with them on all issues, and I mean, this definitely will be included.

Mr. Allum: My friend from Wolseley reminds me that that formula may well extend to wherever there's public transit in the province, whether it's Brandon or

Selkirk or Flin Flon or wherever. So it's pleasing to us to hear that you've made that commitment.

The Province has had to intervene on more than one occasion to keep transit fares low. Will she commit to making those same kind of interventions in the future if the City should try to jack transit fares up?

Ms. Clarke: Well, as indicated in my previous answer, discussions with the City are always ongoing, and whether it's transportation of, or any of the other matters that come forward, ultimately, the City is responsible in regards to these changes.

And, but we will have an open dialogue, and I'm not going to speculate on something that might happen. It has happened, very aware of that. And, should situations occur that we need to be at the table, we'll be there for sure.

Mr. Allum: I thank you for that. I know you can appreciate that transit is often the only form of transportation for those who have the least in our communities, and therefore low transit fares are a matter of public interest. And that's something that the provincial government can't, in the future, just look away and say, well, that's the City. It's absolutely essential that you be seen to be a partner in those things, especially because of the 50-50 formula that exists right now.

I'm going to change gears too. I'm a little all over the map, so you forgive me for that, although this comes oddly together. I have to tell you that, as I'm sure many of my colleagues have already said and I know you're not responsible for this, but it's an objectionable combination to find Indigenous and Municipal Affairs together in the same department. But I won't ask you to comment on that because I know others probably have and it's not your call in that respect.

But several, in 2010, the Province, the federal government and the City of Winnipeg signed an unprecedented agreement called the Intergovernmental Strategic Aboriginal Alliance. It is a five-year agreement from 2010 to 2015. Is there any plans for the government to renew that particular agreement in order to try to align resources, programming and services to support indigenous people living in the city of Winnipeg?

Ms. Clarke: As you indicated, that agreement ended in 2015. There was a study initiated last year, from what I understand, to move forward on this, and

we're just waiting for the results of that study, but we do not have that at this time.

Mr. Allum: So I take it this is like a final review of how the five years went, and—

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): The honourable minister.

Ms. Clarke: Well, certainly, the review is a review of what took place, but the indications are that this study is looking for new options as well.

Mr. Allum: Such as?

Ms. Clarke: Indications are it's going to be based on new projects. It was an agreement that was project driven, so they're going to be looking at new indigenous projects. So it will stay within the realms of the indigenous economic development.

Mr. Allum: Well, I suppose, having spent an inordinate amount of my professional life negotiating that particular agreement with some of the members of your staff here, it wasn't always project based. Part of the rationale was on an alignment of precious resources in trying to align strategies at the same time so that we were using our collective resources in a way that promoted better outcomes in the community. And I'm not suggesting that that's entirely what happened with the first agreement, although it does please me to hear that there's another iteration coming together, because, I think, there is a substantial role to be played among the three levels of government when it comes to addressing urban indigenous issues.

Prior to that agreement, for the most part, it seemed to me those things operated in splendid isolation, so just getting an agreement together was—in the first place, which that was signed at—I'm trying to think where we signed that. But anyways, that was signed by all three levels of government. Just getting that signed was an accomplishment. One of those things that came out of that was the—known as the 21 block project, which is now called Thunderwing, and my friend from Minto confirmed that that project is continuing. And those are very important kind of undertakings, because they represent a comprehensive combination of government resources going into a particular area with high needs.

One of those things that happened in there, of course, was the purchase of the Merchants Hotel. Could you give us an update on what the status of that project is and whether you're continuing to work on it?

* (13:20)

Ms. Clarke: Good information; sounds like a great project actually, and lots of good news. There's housing actually being built within that specific building and North End development corporation has raised funding for the project.

A second part of that is University of Winnipeg is looking at classrooms in that building. And the third component is community use, and there's a lot of different options apparently that have proposed a community kitchen, a nursery. Those are just a couple of various brief examples, but overall it sounds like a very comprehensive use and well-thought-out.

Mr. Allum: In fact, it's had—the community—that's a community-based idea that it needed to stop being a hotel, and three levels of government responded to that, but at the end of the day it was actually the provincial government, our former government, that actually responded. And it's a reminder in your portfolio, I think, that there are times when you need to invest money if you're going to take preventative action. The crime rate around that area has decreased significantly as a result of the merchants going down. And we never want to lose sight of the fact that those investments are actually preventative measures that improve quality of life for those who don't have sufficient means.

So I'd just take that—I'm pleased to hear that it's going—we're very interested in that particular project on our side of the House and will want to be sure that it continues on and has the kind of benefits that—for the community—that I think we would all be pleased by.

I heard you talk a little bit about the Fair Share, Fair Say—AMA, I guess—program, platform. I know in the election, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said, well, you can have your fair say but you don't get your fair share; you're not really going to get any more money.

Could you describe what this single-window thing is for the committee? And also to try to tell me—I spent 15 years working for the City of Winnipeg so just so that you know—tell me how it's going to be different than what currently exists?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your question.

Of course, we heard throughout the campaign weeks that fair say was a very strong message coming forward from municipalities. And our cities also were very committed to this. It was a very unified ask of the next government that was elected.

As a government, we did commit to the fair say portion of that Fair Share, Fair Say, but we are committed to the fair say. And I think it's really important, having been on the other side, and I think what we've chosen to do going forward is going to really benefit the city of Winnipeg, other cities, as well as our municipalities.

* (13:30)

So it—we have identified some steps going forward to make this happen. The first one was consultations with our municipalities, and this happened just recently over the past two to three weeks. There were seven regional district meetings that happen annually. They're called the June District Meetings that the AMM runs. And, although I was not able to go because of work within the House, I had staff that attended them. And they did a presentation on what our government is hoping to provide to them and work with them in the coming years, and develop a new funding plan. And it seems to be really positive.

So this first step in this was the presentation to our municipalities, and it gives the opportunity for—*[interjection]* I'm fine, I'm not scared—gives the municipalities the opportunity to speak. Because they're in regions, they're in smaller groups. It gives them the opportunity to ask the questions of our government. You know, different aspects and—so that they have very open opportunity to ask those questions. And it gives us an opportunity to listen to what the municipalities have to say. And I think that's really important because the needs are different from one municipality to the next, especially when you're talking northern areas that have been flooded out often. I mean, the needs are different. They need different infrastructure dollars for different things.

I also had this discussion with the mayor on an individual basis, talking about the fair say commitment. We just feel that the municipalities are best-suited to identify what their funding needs are and where that money needs to be allocated, and we respect that they have a better idea because of—different municipality are in different stages. Some, their deficit for wastewater, clean water, all those types of things, they're in such dire need. Other municipalities have already completed that and are moving on. Sometimes it's the road constructions. So it's really good to have an open—more opportunity for them to choose where they want to go.

The next step in our process is a survey. And this will be going out to all municipalities in regards to

the fair say and where we go from here. Information, of course, that gives us good opportunity to collect data. When we receive that back, it will be analyzed and priorities will be identified. It gives us a good indication of what the expectations are throughout the province. So, from that process, we're going to go into regional round tables where again we can go back with the information that we've received from them—from the municipalities. And again it opens up the questions and dialogue as to getting their feedback and understanding what their questions are.

Now, you asked about the single-window funding. I'll have to go through this quickly. We've been told that there's too much red tape, and there is. So what we're looking at is an application where multiple funds can be accessed, and they can be accessed at different times of the year, which is really beneficial.

So, bringing all this together: a single intake is important, reducing red tape is important and flexibility of the funding to meet the needs of the individual municipalities.

Mr. Allum: Thank you for that. Sounds like we've got a—on the fair say part, sounds like there's a lot of talking going on. It's—I mean, it—I don't know when municipalities didn't have a fair say in joint projects between the city and—between the municipalities and the province. And I think that there's a legit provincial interest sometimes in what happens within the boundaries of municipalities, where it's important for the province to have a fair say, as well.

In terms of the fair share, it's still not clear to me—and maybe because it's an evolving thing—how it's actually different from what existed in the past. Could you help me to understand what that—how it's different?

Ms. Clarke: As I indicated already, we did not commit any dialogue towards fair share. The fair say is where we're starting in this process.

And I guess my perspective is slightly different because my background is municipal. And there was a lot of confusion on many occasions where municipalities were frustrated. And I've listened to that within my perspective and on the AMM. The municipalities are actually very excited about this, as is the City of Winnipeg and the AMM. So I think it is a good route to be going. I certainly would support it and I look forward—and it's not a long time frame. We're not talking—we're not going to be doing this over the next few years. This is a very short time

frame and we're ready to go. This plan is in place and it's already being implemented, so I think it's a very good opportunity for municipalities and the province to come together.

Mr. Allum: Well, I can appreciate, I guess, you were a municipal councillor at some point or a mayor or—so I can appreciate your perspective on that. But I was at many AMM meetings where Doug Dobrowolski, former president of AMM, said that our government was among the best, if not the best, partner that the AMM had ever had, so I find that hard to understand how there can be such conflicting views in there. And so I'm not sure what the single window is. It's not clear to me how that's different. Fair share sounds like the same kind of discussions and the same kind of dialogue that would have happened under our government, and fair share, since you're clearly committing not to—for more resources for municipalities, I don't know how that's going to work for you in the future, so I guess I'll just say good luck with that.

I have a variety of other questions. Can you tell us what your plans are for—or if there will be any changes to The City of Winnipeg Charter that you foresee in the next little while?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your question, and it seems this is a repeated answer, but as I've indicated earlier with the different questions that have been forwarded in regards to the city, ongoing dialogue, whether it's the City of Winnipeg, municipalities, you know, that is my place to be, and I will be there. And should there be legislative amendments required, definitely we'll be there; we'll look at it. And it would be an expectation that—I was very impressed with my first meeting with the mayor. He is eager and excited to work with us. He is—I have no reservations at all that we will have a good working relationship and I would not hesitate to go to him should I have concerns or things that are moving forward positively and there are successes. I'm looking forward to many good successes with the City of Winnipeg.

But working with whether, as I've indicated, City of Winnipeg and municipalities throughout the province of Manitoba and all our First Nations communities, a positive working relationship is a very high priority for me.

* (13:40)

I intend to be very accessible, and I'm a pretty good listener. So—and I'm having to learn at a very

fast speed, especially on the indigenous side, but I'm quite excited about that.

So we've got a very long road ahead and a very short road just behind us, so there's going to be a lot of communication required and a lot of learning. So we look forward to that.

Mr. Allum: Well, I thank you for that. We would need a lot more time to discuss a lot of these things. And we have very few minutes left in our time.

Plans for active transportation across the province?

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Order, please.

I am interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired.

Our rule 76(3) provides, in part, that we are not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply. Further, our rule 76(5) provides that, when time has expired, the Chairperson shall forthwith put all remaining questions without debate, amendment or adjournment.

I would remind members that these questions may not be debated, amended or adjourned according to the rules of the House.

Resolution 13.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,027,000 for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$58,978,000 for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$17,567,000 for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Infrastructure and Municipal Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$386,587,000 for the Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$30,768,000 for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Indigenous and Northern Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$96,000 for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 254.

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

Committee rise.

SPORT, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

* (10:00)

Madam Chairperson (Colleen Mayer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume considerations of the Estimates for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): So, yesterday, I did not have an opportunity to complete my answer when my former critic had asked the question about sport in Manitoba, in northern Manitoba. So I'd like an opportunity to complete that question and get on record some of the opportunities that we do in northern Manitoba with sport in Manitoba.

So there are a number of grants that provide programs in north Manitoba. Current grant programs include: Sport Manitoba offers sport developmental grants that facilitate the development of athletes, coaches and officials at the community level,

emphasizing training and skill development; Sport Manitoba's regional sport development grants program is mainly focused around the impact that these grants will have at the Active Start, FUNdamentals, learning to train, training to train and training to compete stages within the Canadian Sport for Life Long-term Athlete Development framework.

Community-based, not-for-profit sport recreation organizations that are recognized by Sport Manitoba are eligible to apply. This includes, but not limited to, sport-specific organizations, leagues, clubs, schools, community centres, ethno- and Aboriginal community groups and municipal recreation departments. Grants are available to provide assistance with expenses which are directly related to moving through the Canada Sport for Life development model.

Individuals including athletes, coaches and officials may apply for funding assistance for professional development opportunities and travel within their sport. This may include travel, accommodations, meals, and, of course, fees.

In 2015, 48 grants were provided to participants in areas such as Opaskwayak, Cranberry Portage, Norway House, Nelson House, Thompson and The Pas. In addition, Sport Manitoba has gently used equipment program, and much of this equipment goes to northern communities.

The Fit Kids Healthy Kids program has had tremendous success in partnership with Doctors Manitoba. This program provides leader training and programming for the Active Start and FUNdamentals age groups.

In 2015, we touched almost 30,000 participants, including 7,000 adults who act as ongoing leaders. It is a critical first step in building healthy and active lifestyles for young children. It focuses on developing their physical literacy skills, ensuring that they can confidently move into sport activities. This program takes place all over the province.

And the bilateral sports program supports programming that reduces barriers for children and youth from Aboriginal and newcomer populations to participate in sport. It is a key foundation for increasing levels of physical activity in inner-city, ethnocultural and Aboriginal populations.

Communities that have participated in this program include the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, Birdtail Sioux First Nation, Waywayseecappo First Nation, Peguis First

Nation, Duck Bay, Cross Lake Band, Norway House Cree Nation, Leaf Rapids, Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Thompson, St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Hollow Water, Fisher River, Peguis, The Pas, Cross Lake, Pukatawagan, Nelson House, Garden Hill, Sagkeeng, and Swan Lake First Nation, among many others.

For the 2016-2017 year, the following outcomes are expected: opportunities for over 8,000 youth, ages five to 18, in over 50 schools and 35 communities, including up to 20 Aboriginal and First Nation communities; education and training opportunities to over 300 coaches in the sports of athletics, badminton, ball hockey, basketball, hockey, lacrosse, paddling, skating, softball, cross country and volleyball.

And I would be remiss if I didn't point out that infrastructure is just one component when we're dealing with remote and northern communities. We also need to have coaches that are available to coach and encourage the kids to get involved in sport. If you have an ice rink but no hockey coaches, I don't think that we're going to achieve the outcomes that we want. So this is a really good program to provide the skills for the coaches who will then play a role in developing and encouraging kids to participate in sport in these communities.

The Power Smart Manitoba Games team in-team Norman is an integral part of these games. They are provided with support to create their regional teams and programs. Again, the North does have greater challenges due to travel, but athletes participate in regional trials first and then successful participants go on to the Manitoba Games. And there are over 1,800 participants in the games.

The Calm Air sports series, in partnership with Calm Air, focuses on sports popular in northern communities where sport is established. Sixty to 70 kids and 15 to 20 coaches and officials all receive training in camp environment from top coaches and technical staff flown in for the weekend. Each camp is held in a different community with a sport specific to their community. Sports, to date, have included badminton, basketball, hockey and volleyball.

And I hope that I've got more information regarding our Northern Manitoba Sport Program, but, if asked, I would happily clarify and outlay some more of those initiatives.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, on behalf of my colleague, miigwech for the answer and for the record.

So let me just begin by congratulating you on being elected and as your role as Minister for Status of Women. I always have an enormous amount of respect and—for women that go through and engage in public service. I appreciated your inaugural speech in where you shared some of your journey. And so, of course, for women, it is always a different journey, and it looks very different for women—the journey, the process and then when we get into this space.

And so, from one sister to another, I say congratulations and I look forward to—while we are on opposite sides of the House, I do, in all sincerity, look forward to working together. And I think that there are opportunities to do some good work together and to understand, you know, what I would offer the minister in a good and humble way is that the work that I've done for the last 20 years, in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and violence against indigenous women, in its myriad of forms, you know, economic, physical, sexual, you know, cultural, all of that. I offer that expertise to the minister if she ever feels that she is wanting to have some of that narrative and that expertise. And so, again, just for the record, I do say congratulations, and I wish you all the best on this four years.

So I will concentrate my questions in respect to Status of Women, in your role as Status of Women. So, I guess, first, what I'd like to begin with, if we could, if the minister would be so kind as to provide me with the names and titles and classifications of her staff.

* (10:10)

Ms. Squires: So as a point of clarification, did you mean staff for my entire department?

Ms. Fontaine: I apologize, I should have been more specific: strictly just for Status of Women.

Ms. Squires: Okay, first of all, I wanted to say congratulations to you as well for your success in St. Johns, and I know running in an election and winning is just always—it takes a strong, courageous and huge amount of effort, and so congratulations for that, and you were successful on your first time, unlike me, so I really applaud you for the hard work that you did in your campaign.

And I also want to honestly say that when I learned that you and I would be working together on the Status of Women file I was very encouraged by

that and very excited to be working with you on this very critical issue—on these critical issues facing our province. And I thought that the expertise that you bring to the table certainly does complement the expertise that I feel that I have acquired over the course of my lifetime.

And, of course, with your specific work relating to murdered and missing indigenous women, and I say this with all sincerity, that it is arguably the most heartbreaking issue facing our nation. And I don't know anybody who is just not entirely distraught about, you know, the numbers of women, indigenous women, who face violence and are at risk in ways that other women aren't necessarily at risk, and that is very heartbreaking. And I don't mind sharing with you I have five girls, and one of them is indigenous, and it does break my heart to think that one out of five—one out of my five girls is at greater risk of facing violence in her lifetime because of her ancestry.

And I'm—you know, and I know our government is very passionate, and we want to work and we want to extend a hand and work with all the partners and all the stakeholders involved and to get some action on this. And, to that end, I know that in partnership with my colleagues in Cabinet, we are awaiting the terms of reference from the federal government, and we will be working with—this is a federal—this is a national problem. And so we are engaging with many people across, throughout Manitoba, throughout Canada, because this is Canada's problem and we want to be part of the solution. So thank you for the expertise that you bring to the table, and I look forward to working with you on this file.

Now, to answer your question about the positions within the Status of Women. So we do have the executive director which is Beth Ulrich and I'm sure you're familiar with Beth. And then we have the Manitoba women's advisory chair, Nadia Kidwai, and I'm not sure if you've had an opportunity to meet her, but she is the chair. The office manager is Heather Sveinsson, and we have an administrative assistant, Lola—and I apologize to Lola; I'm going to make an error in the pronunciation of her last name, but it's Oloyede. I'll spell it, O-l-o-y-e-d-e. And so she is the administrative assistant in Status of Women. We have Cheryl Laurie, a senior policy analyst, and we have one vacant senior policy analyst at the PM3 level, and because she's on secondment to the Manitoba Police Commission and in—on December 31st of this year, when that secondment is over, she will be back in her position at Status of

Women. And then we have a senior policy analyst, Ali Millar; another senior policy analyst, Monika Franz-Lien; policy analyst, Nicole Everett; and then one vacancy, policy analyst at the PM2 level.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

The vacancy other than the PM3 level, the last one that you noted, will that be filled? And more specifically, besides Nicole, I'm wondering if there's any other indigenous staff, and if that vacancy is going to be filled, whether or not it would be Aboriginal preference.

* (10:20)

Ms. Squires: Thank you for that question. And in regards to the senior policy analyst that is on secondment, she is a Metis woman, and so along with Nicole, that's two indigenous women right now. And if we were to fill that vacant policy analyst position, we would make it a preference, in the competition, that we would prefer indigenous applicants and make that a priority.

However, we are—this has been a long-standing vacancy in the department, and there has not been, in the last year, been identified an operation—a need for this position. And so we are conducting our own operational review to see why has this been a long-standing vacancy in the department. Is there no longer a need for this position, or will there be a need in the future for this position? So we have to look at why this position has been vacant for so long and do a review in terms of whether or not we need to act on that.

And I have indicated to the Status of Women division that I will certainly be a more active minister and that this file is very important to me and that there has not been a lot of engagement in the last—specifically in the last three years from the government side. The minister—the former minister responsible for Status of Women had not met with the advisory council, had not been engaged with the division. And therefore, there were a lot of projects that were probably not completed or not even undertaken. And so as we move forward with a more active role between government and this division and moving forward on helping women throughout the province of Manitoba and—we will be looking at the operations.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

Normally, I mean, as we're getting down to the crunch time here, I'd ask more questions in respect of

your political staff and all of that. I'm just going to forgo that so we can get into the meat and—of your vision and your mandate and your direction for the department.

So, you know, I'm sure—I know that—I mean, we keep hearing, you know, that you're just new government, and of course, absolutely. So I'm not sure if you had a lot of time to work with your executive director. But you will soon find out how extraordinary she is. She is beyond extraordinary, beyond loving and beyond brilliant and capable. And I've had the really good fortune of working on a variety of different projects with her.

And one of them in particular—well, a couple in particular—in fact, we had travelled to New York for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women—I can't remember the year, now, but several years back. And we had the really good pleasure of meeting with a woman from the UN Women program. And so, at that time they had the women's safe cities project. And so Beth actually undertook bringing Winnipeg as, actually, the first North American city to ever participate in the United Nations' women's safe cities project. And so that's done some really good work. And, again, Beth was—took a really good lead on that.

In that, you know, that global discussion on women's right to be safe, right—no matter where you are, no matter what space you find yourself, women have the right to be safe. And, as I'm sure the minister knows, unfortunately, that's not the reality, right. And so, out of that discussion, as well, came this very—and it's a discussion that's been happening for many years across Canada. That, in the context of trying to create safety for women, that a huge piece that's been missing for many years is the engagement of men and boys, right.

So, you know, anybody that's raising boys knows what a critical—of critical importance it is to, you know, from very early on—and I'm raising two boys, and, you know, from as early on as they could, you know, giving them those teachings. Like, methodically and very strategically, on those teachings on how they're to treat women, how they're to think about women. As a mother, what my expectations of them. And so there's been this movement across the country. And so, you know, the Department of Status of Women partnered with Winnipeg Blue Bombers, which I'm sure you're well aware of, in, you know, not being a bystander, because we often have that. We see, you know,

abuse in a myriad of different forms, and nobody says or does anything, right.

The other piece that we did was an Aboriginal men's anti-violence campaign. And so I'd worked with Beth. I took a lead on that and, actually, that campaign—and I'm sure that Beth would—if you haven't already seen them—seen the posters that we developed—and I worked with a community group, as an advisory group, and we identified a diverse range and sample of indigenous men. And so we had, you know, a father of two daughters, a father of two sons, we had an elder, we had a youth. I can't remember who else we had, but they were extraordinary examples of men that are standing up and engaging their children, standing up against violence. And what I'll share with the minister is that, when we launched that, we launched it, you know, here, and we launched it in social media, that—those posters went all around the world.

And, in fact, I often share with people that the one poster of—and his name is Kevin Settee—he's just, like, he's an extraordinary youth. He's just phenomenal, and he's a phenomenal father now. Like, he's just extraordinary. His poster went everywhere, including as far as Papua New Guinea. So that work was extraordinary in that piece.

And so I'm wondering if the minister is looking at continuing with that engagement and what that's going to look like for the department.

* (10:30)

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you for that question and just as a note, I wanted to say I did see those posters when I visited the department the other day, and they were quite remarkable, and I salute the—all those that were involved in getting the posters around the world and creating this awareness.

And also I wanted to say we have more in common than I thought because I, too, am raising boys—or I should say I've raised two boys; my children are 27 and 22. And I do believe that it is the most single—it is the 'singest'—single biggest accomplishment of my life, that I raised these boys to be very sensitive men. And they are the most loving and devoted men to their partners, and that just—you know, if that's one—if that's the mark that I leave on this world, I would be satisfied with that because I know it's a challenge that all of us moms who are raising sons face: How do we teach our boys to be very sensitive in the world in which we live? Because one only has to read the newspaper to

know that Winnipeg has such a long way to go, that Manitoba has such a long way to go, and everywhere in the world.

But, you know, when we're focused on what we can do in this province to reduce those barriers and to prevent sexual assault, prevent domestic violence from happening. And there's just so much work to do that it's—you know, you look and you think, where does one even begin? And so to that end, I really, really commend the Status of Women division, and I second the comments on Beth's commitment and dedication and involvement in this role.

And in regards to the Break the Silence on Violence Against Women, the Bomber campaign, it is proven to be a very remarkable campaign, and they are looking to—in August of 2015, inspired by the work being done by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and other teams, the Canadian Football League announced a new policy to prevent violence against women, and this policy includes mandatory training for all players and staff in the CFL on violence against women. And I just think that the more we have men talking about this, the greater awareness will be had in the community so that we can all move toward a safer environment for women.

And, to that end, the Bombers have signified an intention to go to First Nations communities after their 2016 season, which I think will be quite remarkable for them to go up there and speak directly on this very issue. And I look forward to seeing how that is going to unfold. I think that will be very well received.

The Bombers are also engaged with the Bisons and the Winnipeg Rifles to reach out to more boys and men. And the student evaluations from this program shows that it is very, very well received, and I'd also like to note that when I had engaged with the Women's Advisory Council, they had indicated that this program was certainly one of their key priorities and they were very pleased with the outcomes. And so I'm happy that—to partner with the Women's Advisory Council and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on this very important and worthwhile initiative.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

Can the minister provide an update and a comment in respect of her vision for the safer cities initiative, the United Nations safer 'civities' initiative?

* (10:40)

Ms. Squires: I appreciate the question, and I'm happy to put a little—a few comments on the record regarding this very important initiative.

And my philosophy is is that when you really care about an issue you care about the results, and so to that end I'm really anxious to engage with this community and to find out the results that are coming out of this program.

And—but I also want to salute the organization and Ka Ni Kanichihk for taking a lead on this and being the first group to put forward a specific program that helps indigenous women in sexual assault and helping them overcome and live with the trauma that they have endured. And I think the member and I were in a conversation not too long ago about sexual assault and how it affects somebody. It's not something that I think anyone ever fully recovers from. When a woman is sexually assaulted there is a part of her that is changed forever, and I think that we certainly—it is our duty as a society to provide the supports and the help and the encouragement and breaking down some of those barriers so that these women don't feel that it is their fault that they were the—or that they were somehow or another complicit in their attack. And I think that when we break down some of those barriers, we will have more women going to the police, and we will have more women reaching out and providing—or seeking the help that they need.

And then it is our duty as government to ensure that those programs and services are in place that will help them achieve those direct results that they're needing, and those direct results, whether or not they're, you know, an opportunity to explore what had happened to them in a safe place, whether it's an opportunity or a forum for them to put on record what could have, maybe, prevented this from happening and how we can move forward, and looking at some of the specific avenues towards making our city a safer place to be.

I know right now what's very topical is the issue of transportation. We know that women are not feeling safe when they're getting in a taxicab or even getting on the bus. And this is—I know that there have been a lot of allegations, and specific to indigenous women there was certainly quite a number of voices expressed during that—during recent months, that indigenous women were feeling very vulnerable and afraid to take a taxi. And if you can't pick up the phone and call and get a safe ride home and leave wherever you're going and be—know—be safe when

you're en route to your destination, then I know that we still have a lot of work to do.

And so, to that end, I'm looking forward to meeting with the steering committee. They're having a meeting next week. And that is one of my key priorities, is to meet with this group and to hear from them their stories. I'm certainly the type of minister who, I learn about programs from reading about them a little bit, but nothing is comparable to actually meeting face to face with some of the people involved in the committee and in the organization, and reading briefing notes and learning about an initiative through—when we're in this building is it's is one thing—but there's nothing that replaces that face-to-face contact with the people that are involved in this program. So to that end I've made it a priority to attend the steering committee meeting next week so that I can learn more from this group about some of the outcomes they've achieved thus far and, in their own words, where they want to take this.

And I do believe that, as a new minister, the greatest thing that I can do and the greatest thing that I can offer women is an opportunity to listen and to engage with the stakeholders and consult with them and to go to them and say, by no means am I an expert on this particular area, by no means am I an expert in how we can make Winnipeg a safer city. And to go to the committee and say, you have been engaged in this project—now, I know that it's in its second year, or third year, and what, how is this—what are some of the impacts, and hear those stories from these women's perspectives.

So thank you for the question.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech with that—for that.

And I am really pleased to hear that you're going to be meeting with them. They're a phenomenal group of people. In fact, myself and the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) at one point sat on that committee at the very beginning stages, so.

So just not enough time in the day, eh?

I'm going to ask the minister, in respect of—and I know that she's mentioned it a couple of times now—meeting with stakeholders. Would the member be so kind as to provide me, for the next little while, of course not for the next four years, but for the next little while in respect of, you know, getting that greater understanding of the department, of the issues, of the—and formulating your vision and your direction and your mandate, would you be so kind as

to share with me the stakeholders that you have planned to meet with in the next little bit?

Ms. Squires: Just to clarify, specific to this department?

Ms. Fontaine: Specific to Status of Women.

All my questions, just so we don't have to go back and forth, will be strictly on Status of Women.

*(10:50)

Ms. Squires: Okay, thank you for the question.

And, first and foremost, I want to share a little bit about my meeting that I had a few weeks back with the Women's Advisory Council. Now, this council is a—it's a legislated committee. They've been around—not the particular members themselves—it's a 16-member council, and they have been a part of the Manitoba fabric, if you will, they have been in place since—for—going back at least 30 years. And their role is to assist government and to advise government on policies and programs that are specific to advancing the rights of women, whether it's helping women in the workplace succeed in non-traditional roles, reducing sexual violence, support for women who need the help of shelters.

And there are women—on this 16-member advisory council, there are women from all different regions in the province: a woman from, you know, The Pas, Thompson, Steinbach, Brandon, a couple from the city of Winnipeg. The makeup of this committee is very unique in the sense that there is a transgendered woman on here; there's several indigenous women; there are a few newcomers to Canada who have that very specific perspective on what it means to be a woman who is coming into a new country, perhaps even having language barriers and needing to succeed in society and succeed in the workplace given those disadvantages or opportunities to learn how to find work and to live in a new community. There's a woman on this committee that is—got a special expertise in helping women that have disabilities. And we know that women with disabilities are at a greater likelihood of experiencing violence and assault in her lifetime. And so I was really appreciative to meet this woman who has that keen expertise on the barriers that women with disabilities face.

There was a woman from—that worked in women's shelters and who told me a horrific story about a woman a few months back who had a—presented at a women's shelter who was unable to get

the service that she wanted, and I immediately wanted to find out exactly why is it that there's so few opportunities for a woman to take advantage of when she's fleeing a domestic situation where she's being abused and she's reaching out for help and why those doors were shut. And that is another area that I had noted that—and that this advisory council has noted as a concern.

I met recently with a woman—I'm not going to reveal her name for privacy—I think that women can feel and should feel safe when they come to my office to provide me with counsel and advice, that their privacy is protected. And so in that vein, I'm not going to reveal her name, but there's a specific indigenous woman who is a survivor of domestic violence, and she was in an abusive relationship for several years. And her partner was somewhat of a high-profile person. And she had trouble obtaining the necessary measures she needed to feel safe when looking at the specific situation. And it's been many years since her domestic—since she's been free of this relationship and been able to reflect on her experience. And so she shared that experience with me with some specific tools that we could do as a society that would have made it easier for her to get the support, get the restraining order, get the protection that she needed. And so I was very eager to hear her specific ideas and to see how we could apply it on a—you know, whether or not we needed to look at, you know, a specific regulation or a policy or make it an agenda item for the Women's Advisory Council to move forward on these initiatives. But I was certainly excited to meet with her and hear her thoughts and suggestions on a solution.

I'm meeting with the federation of women's labour, and I have—will be meeting with my federal counterparts—federal and provincial counterparts at our upcoming Status of Women ministerial meeting where we will be talking about issues that are affecting women across the country. And I have a meeting in the next few weeks with—

Madam Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave to finish?

Madam Chairperson: There is leave to finish? The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine)? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Squires: Thank you. I will try to speak a little more quickly so that I can finish my answer in the time frame.

So I'm meeting with a group who are interested in looking at the issue of reducing sexual violence on campus, both on campus and off-campus. It's one thing to keep women safe when they're directly at-on campus, but we know that there are a lot of barriers and risks associated with leaving campus. If you're taking night classes, which was my case, walking to your car at night presents some challenges. And we also know that a lot of the opportunities for sexual assault occur during off-hours and off-campus.

* (11:00)

So I'm meeting with several individuals who represent various groups involved in making our campuses safer in Manitoba. And I think I've covered—and I apologize for needing to review my notes, but as I said, I've been very engaged in this file. I've met with a lot of people and I've put out a lot of invitations to women's groups. I did say to the chair of the Women's Advisory Council that I would like her to help me prepare a list of all the women's groups in the city, so that I can go and visit with them throughout the summer. And, like I said before, I'm the type of person who learns best when I meet people face to face and hear their stories and find out what is working for them and what we can do to best serve them.

And so to that end, I have an ambitious agenda over the summer to go and meet with several of the women's groups in the city, whether it's shelters or resource centres so that I can learn about how I can best serve them.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for your answer.

So just so we can—you know, again, I'm respectfully trying to, you know, be very cognizant of the very limited time that we have together. So just that you know, I mean, I understand all of that stuff, so I don't—and respectfully, like, if we can just maybe skip all that narrative, I know that you probably want to get it on the record, but of course I'm fully aware of all of that stuff. And in fact, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council, I sat on it from 1999 to I think 2002, so I'm fully aware of the work that they do, so I do appreciate it; we just don't have a lot of time. And I'm also trying to give my—our member from Burrows some time as well.

So I do just want to note as well that I understand that, you know, you met with this one indigenous woman. I didn't hear any specific stakeholders from the indigenous community. So you know, I'm not going to ask the question again, but I—

and I suspect I know Beth's work, your executive director's work. I know that I'm sure she's probably advising which groups, including Nadia, who is just phenomenal. She's a phenomenal woman. So I'm sure that in there, they're probably providing advice and recommendations in respect of indigenous women's organizations to meet with in this process of gathering all that information, so—but I do want to stress the importance, obviously, and I'm sure I don't need to advise that of you.

So, again, reflecting our very limited time, I do want to get into some questions in respect of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and particularly, as you know, the national inquiry. So I know—and I'm sure that the minister knows already that—I understand there's been some initial dissemination of the national inquiry to this new government, including the commissioners, the exact names of the commissioners, the terms of reference. And I know that there's a little bit of back and forth going on in respect of—across the country in respect of some of those first initial responses to the terms of reference.

So, you know, your—the minister's new government is just at those beginning stages of trying to map out in that—navigate and negotiate those terms with the federal government. I do also know that there is not a heck of a lot in respect of specifically engaging and working with families in what's been shared thus far. So I just want to provide a little bit of background in respect of the work that we've done here in Manitoba in respect of working with families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and work that I'm extremely proud of.

And I've shared in the House a couple of times now, that if you were to ask any of the provinces and territories across the country, Manitoba is a lead on that work. The work that we've done, in fact, has been emulated across the country. In fact, I've worked with several Provinces in respect of helping them begin some of the work that we do here.

So I want—and Status of Women has had a minor role in respect of the dollars that were offered to these programs, however there was always a role, and Status of Women has been really good in providing some dollars when my budget was maybe too big and I didn't have enough. And Status of Women was always there to be able to provide some of those dollars.

So some of those dollars in the past have gone towards the Wiping Away the Tears gathering. So

I'm sure the minister must know, but I'll recap just a little bit, that the first Wiping Away the Tears gathering, which was specifically just for families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That first one was in June of, I believe, 2010. And it was in that opportunity—there was only a couple families that actually had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, the minister of Child and Family Services, the minister of Status of Women, and it was actually the first time that they had that opportunity that they could share that information.

And, by the time I was finished, we had actually hosted our sixth—a sixth Wiping Away the Tears, but we had actually invited families from across the country.

What we've been able to do in those years is solidify a connection between all the families. And so I want to know if you see that as valuable, and whether or not the department will be participating in some of those dollars to continue to fund that.

Ms. Squires: Well, first of all, I'd like to respectfully say that my intention in providing fulsome answers, especially to you—you have been outspoken about your desire to get information from ministers, and you've expressed frustration about not getting answers from various ministers. So my intention this morning is to be as fulsome as possible.

* (11:10)

And I would also like to respectfully remind the member that I certainly appreciate you putting on the record your perspective about, say, for example, Wiping Away the Tears. I already—I know about the program and, just like you had said to me, don't tell me about things I already know. I know it was important for you to say your role on this particular program, and you wanted to take an opportunity to use the full time allotted to you to share your experience and put your perspective on the record, so I would just ask for the same consideration back from the member.

In regards to the Wiping Away the Tears program, we have not seen a specific proposal that has come in this year, and I know that the event is annually held in the fall, and so I am anxiously awaiting a proposal because I do believe that the work that has undertaken in the past was very important. We are very committed to engaging and seeing that dialogue continue. I don't want to see any interruption in a service that has been—that has a track record of providing a much-needed service.

Having said that, again, I'm very disappointed that we haven't seen a proposal for that, and given the timelines I would just say that if one comes in it will be given an urgency that I would look over the proposal very quickly so that we wouldn't have an interruption. And this certainly has proven to be, you know, from what I've—what I've been able to ascertain in the last seven weeks since I took over this area, that it was certainly a worthwhile program, and I do believe that keeping that dialogue is important.

Ms. Fontaine: Just in respect of the proposal, I will actually touch base on that just to see where that is, because that proposal should've been in already, but I will—and I guess the proposal initially always went to Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and then we would look for dollars from different departments to kick in. So I will touch base with Angie Hutchinson from Ka Ni Kanichihk. She is the family co-ordinator, and so since I've left the position of special adviser she would be taking that over right now, so. In fact, when I'm out of here I will touch base with her to, hopefully, expedite and get the proposal in to both indigenous and Status of Women.

In respect of the national inquiry, I mean, as I'm sure the minister is well aware, you know, the execution of a national inquiry is complex. It is long, and it necessarily involves, you know, trust in partnership from provinces, territories and the federal government, alongside, in this particular case, families, in order for the national inquiry to be successful in respect of what its mandate is. And, you know, I'll go back just ever so quickly in respect of the—the first time that the call for a national inquiry actually made its way within the public sphere actually was in Winnipeg in actually 2007, and that was as a result of, and I shared this the other day, with the murder of Fonassa Bruyere. So Fonassa Bruyere is—was 17 years old. Her body was found late August. Fonassa was actually from my reserve, and I remember that at that time it was one of the first times that a group of us, many indigenous women stakeholders, started pressing for this national inquiry. So it's actually been a long time coming, as I'm sure the minister knows.

And why the families are so committed to the national inquiry is because, I'm—as I'm sure the minister knows, for those families that their loved one is missing there's nothing. Their loved one has not been brought home; they have no information on where their loved one is, and they have no closure; they have no justice.

For loved ones that their—for families that their loved ones are murdered, you know, the ones that have no justice, nobody's ever been—this is literally it; this is literally, in many cases, the only opportunity that these families are going to have for some semblance of justice and some semblance of closure, right?

So my question is: In the complexity of executing a national inquiry, which includes putting in legal frameworks to fully participate in the national inquiry, what is your department and your government going to commit to in respect of that?

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you for the question, and I am very encouraged that our federal government is deciding to make this a national inquiry and not just a federal inquiry and that they're looking for the provinces to play a role in this. And, as the member also knows, in terms of the legal framework, it—right now everything is in its early stages, and the real work has yet to come. And what I can assure the member is that I will be working closely with both of my Cabinet colleagues, and our government as a whole is looking, and we will be very engaged in working very closely with our counterparts on this issue and moving forward on this inquiry.

I will also—it's one of the major agenda items at the upcoming FPT meeting, and I will be having multiple conversations with the federal minister as well as all my provincial counterparts across the country in terms of how to assist this inquiry so that we can have those—have this inquiry meet all the objectives and to—most importantly, this inquiry is about providing those families that have no closure for those loved ones that have just gone missing so that they can have—that they could know that their country is mourning with them in that process.

* (11:20)

And I would also just like to reiterate that, like my other Cabinet colleagues, this is one of the most heartbreaking issues that our nation is facing, and what we can do to help the families of murdered and missing indigenous women is certainly—we are there to respond to their needs and their requests.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that. I'm really pleased to hear—and I really do believe that you do—or the minister does generally feel and understand—to the extent that we can, when it hasn't happened to us—the importance of this issue. So I'm very pleased with that.

In respect of, you know, engaging with families and supporting families and ensuring their full participation in the national inquiry, inevitably, there's going to be a request to the Provinces and territories to provide support for families. And that support looks like a variety of different things in how we execute that support, down from supporting families that are coming from the North—and we have lots of families from the North—which includes whether or not they choose to travel, so that—or drive—that's mileage, whether or not they need flights to come in, hotels, food.

For families that are in the city, you know, bus tickets, hotels if they need. And I can share with the minister, you know, the one thing that indigenous people all across the country have in common is that we always ensure that there's lots of food. And I know that that seems—in Beth's line because if the minister—if we had known each other and I had invited you to some of the events, you would know that I'm crazy about having too much food.

And I know that it seems—okay, she's talking about food. But, actually, in the lives of indigenous people that often go without food, to have enough food and to have food at an event actually alleviates a lot of the stress that the families go through. Now, you would think that that would be common sense. However, I would share with the minister that, in fact, during one of the pre-consultation meetings that we had here, of which I advised things that the families needed, believe it or not, they ran out of food. And it actually caused stress among families.

So food, the supports, supports in respect of elders and counsellors and spiritual advisers, these are some of the most intrinsic things that families are going to need to be able to fully participate in the national inquiry.

So my question is to the minister: What is this government going to do in respect of putting a plan and a strategy and more importantly, dollars, to be able to support families as we go through this really long process of a national inquiry?

Ms. Squires: I appreciate the question, and I agree that supporting the families as they're going through this very traumatic process is essential and that these families don't have this support. And something as basic as food. And, like you had mentioned, food is not—is more important than we think. It's got cultural ties. It makes people—it brings people together in ways that just, you know, really underlines the importance of having those basic needs met. And, by

offering someone—when someone comes into my home and I offer them a snack or a meal or a cup of coffee, that's me inviting them into my heart and into my home and into my life.

And I think that it is, certainly, our duty to support these families when they're coming to present and to be a part of the inquiry. Anything and everything that we can do to make them feel more comfortable and relaxed, so that they can just really experience—you know, the inquiry is going to be, also, I would imagine, a real spiritual and emotional journey. And we would hope that the families would walk away feeling a little bit better for the process.

And something came to mind when the member was talking, and I—there's an organization. They're called S.N.O.W. It's 'snafe'—safe night off streets—I'm sure you've come across this group—where they really put the word out into the community, and they look for contributions from all members of the community who want to support this night off the streets and so that these women who are sexually exploited can get together for a weekend a year and enjoy food and camaraderie and sisterhood and togetherness.

And so the community plays a huge role in supporting this. And I know that they just put out a call, and they had a specific list of things that they ask for each year, whether it's, you know, some pyjamas and some toiletry items for the women who will be coming to participate in the safe night off streets could—and, you know, some makeup and other accessories, toiletries, to ensure that they have a good weekend. And that goes a long way to changing the lives of these women and girls who are living on our streets and who are sexually exploited.

So, right off the top of my mind, I'm thinking couldn't we connect with these organizations—this organization in particular—who have such a successful model, and say: how can we get the entire community to come out and show their love and their support for the families of missing and murdered indigenous women, as they're participating in this process, and to borrow some of the best practices, because I do believe that we need a combination of both government and community support to really provide the outcomes that these families need. It can't just come from government, and it can't just come from community.

But we, certainly, do feel that it is—like, my opinion is that we need to support these families. And I can assure the member that I will be doing what I can, in my purview, as Minister responsible

for the Status of Women, to provide that hospitality for these families.

That is going to involve working with my other Cabinet colleagues that will be, you know—as you had mentioned earlier, this issue is so large, and it does cross over a lot of different barriers, and there's other Cabinet members that are going to be coming to the table with solutions and resources to support this inquiry. And I will also be sharing, with your permission, your advice at the FPT table when I'm meeting with the federal minister and my colleagues across the country on what we can do in our communities to support these families as the inquiry gets under way.

Mr. Jeff Wharton, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

* (11:30)

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

So this will just be my final comment so that I can give some time to the member from Burrows. So, for the purposes of the public record here, I'm—and I've done this with a couple of your colleagues, I just want to, you know, I've done this work for so long, and at the end of the day all that I care about and all that I want is what's best for the families that have truly become my family, and, really, if you have the blessing to work with our families, our MMIWG families, they become your family. And so all I care about is ensuring that our families are protected, that they're supported and they get what they need and they deserve from the national inquiry and from all the activities that we do. And so, in that spirit and for the purposes of our record here, you know, I offer to the minister, you know, my support, my expertise, my wisdom and my recommendations. More importantly, I offer to the minister the immediate access to hundreds of families in Manitoba and across the country in respect of executing the national inquiry.

And so I offer that to you in a spirit of helping our families. And, again, I close with thanking all of your beautiful staff, in particular, Beth, and I wish you the best, and I'm always here. Miigwech.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the member from St. Johns as well as the member from Flin Flon for granting me some time to speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus and ask a few questions. I'd also like to thank the minister for taking the time to answer the questions here during Estimates. I'll keep them short for the sake of time, and we'll touch on Sport Secretariat, the Arts Branch,

and women in trades. I'll start with Sport Secretariat, found on page 32 of the Estimates Legislative Review.

One of the main objectives for Sport Secretariat office is to increase opportunities for Manitobans to participate on local, national and in international levels. Why, during a year of the Olympics and leading up to Manitoba hosting the Canada Summer Games, is the government keeping funding the same?

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you very much for the question.

And let me just start off by saying congratulations to you for your success in your election. And I also just want to backtrack a little bit and offer my sincerest congratulations to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey). Yesterday I was remiss in offering that congratulation at the opening of our dialogue and I apologize. Call it new minister's nerves that had, you know, made for the lapse in my manners. So I apologize for that, but I am sincerely happy for you and want to offer you my sincerest congratulations, as well, in winning in your ridings.

And in regards to the member for Burrows's (Ms. Lamoureux) question, I am a little bit concerned, so clarify for me if I'm not—if we're not on the same page, but the funding has increased by \$500,000 this year in grant assistance. And that is to support and for us to fulfill our remaining commitment to the Canada Summer Games.

And I would also—I'd like to just clarify for the member that the administrative portion of the budget did not increase because the administrative costs are the same regardless. But we did support the games with an additional \$500,000, and that fulfills our \$11.1-million commitment to the games. Eight point—\$8 million is in operating and 3.1 is in capital.

And the member is certainly welcome to take a look at Hansard. We did have—I put all the information about the games on record yesterday. And I will leave it to you, if you'd like me to go over that again today, I'd certainly be willing to do that for the member. But in the interest of time, if you wanted to just refer back to Hansard from yesterday, that would be your choice as well. So thank you.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer, as well as the congratulatory remarks, and the same goes to her too.

I was actually thinking other expenditures specifically going towards the games that are happening here in the summer. I would imagine that a thing such as transportation would be a big expenditure. You can please clarify that if I'm incorrect.

And I will refer to Hansard regarding the Sport participation funds and grants.

The Acting Chairperson (Jeff Wharton): The member for Burrows.

Ms. Lamoureux: Just to clarify, I can make the question a bit simpler.

* (11:40)

If the grant assistance or the total grants—grant assistance is going to be covering transportation, that would answer my question.

Ms. Squires: Transportation for the athletes is covered by the federal government through its—the athletes are supported by the Canada Olympics Committee, Sport Canada and Own the Podium, so Manitoba is not picking up any of those travel costs associated with the athletes.

And to reiterate, the operating budget is \$27.2 million, 8.1 comes from the Government of Manitoba and 7.3 comes from the Government of Canada, 1.3 from the City of Winnipeg, and sponsorships are providing 7.—almost \$8 million, and other revenue is—other revenue sources is a little more than 2 and a half million dollars. So—but—again specifically relating to the travel costs of the athlete that is not—Manitoba is not responsible for those costs.

Ms. Lamoureux: I appreciate the answer.

I'm going to move on to the Arts branch found on page 37 of the Estimates. Funding is stagnant for eight of the nine Arts programs. Could the minister please explain the reasoning behind the freezing of the funding for the Arts, especially as it continues to grow here in Manitoba?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much for the question, and I really appreciate taking a question in regards to the arts. And my personal philosophy is that the arts really does identify us as a community, who we are as a collective society. The arts helps us establish our identity here at home in Manitoba and around the world.

And to that end, I'm so, so very proud of all the many artists and the organizations who help provide a platform and a venue to showcase our very, very talented artists in the province of Manitoba and to be providing with them opportunities to exhibit their work here at home and around the world. And I think they do a phenomenal job at that. And my goal is to—obviously, to see more artists have their work available for showcasing in Manitoba and around the world and to get Manitoba on the stage in all aspects around the world for the artists that we do—that do come from this province.

And so we have a huge legacy of talent in this province that deserves the promotion and real, sincere applause from all members of the community. And I am just very particularly delighted to have the responsibility as the minister to play a small role in ensuring that these artists get the recognition that they deserve. And we have had slight increases in the budget for assistance over the previous years. I mean, it went from \$3.8 million in 2013 in grant assistance to \$3.9 million—and I'm rounding off, but the member, if she wants to see the previous year's budget, I can provide her a copy of that. But it went from \$3.8 million to \$3.9 million to \$4 million this year, which is—it's the highest level that it's ever been.

And I would agree with the member that perhaps the increases are not as robust as we all would like to see in Manitoba. I think we would all like to have more money for a lot of initiatives. There are fiscal challenges, as the member's probably aware of, that also come into consideration. And our government inherited the single biggest deficit in the province's history. And it weighs heavily on our minds as we move forward in how do we move forward and provide the Manitobans with that fiscal responsibility. And Manitobans were very outspoken that they wanted us to get the fiscal house in order, that we cannot continue to have \$1-billion deficits and be faced with additional credit downgrades, and that Manitoba is worth fighting for and that we need to ensure that this province is back on track.

*(11:50)

And so our duty becomes one of correcting the course and making sure that we are getting our fiscal house in order and preserving those front-line jobs. We know that health care is needing a lot of resource and—resources and management so that we can reduce some of those wait times and ensure that

people are getting the services that they need when they need them.

And so, weighing all that out—and the arts community is—can be assured that they do, in me, have a very loud, vocal advocate for dollars for the artists. And what I have assured the artists that I've been in contact with since I've been appointed minister is that we're going to make sure that every dollar that we spend—and while it's only a \$4-million envelope, we need to make sure that every dollar has impact and every dollar is going towards its intended purposes and helping all those artists to provide—to get the support that they need so that they can, you know, continue with our goal of keeping Manitoba on the map as being home to some of the best artists across multiple platforms in the world.

So thank you for that question.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

I just have an announcement to make. This is the last day for one of our pages, Hilary Ransom. Hilary graduates from grade 12 with an average in the high 90s and notes that her favourite subject is math. Her outside interests involve all types of dance in which she instructs.

And I want to mention that Hilary intends on attending the University of Manitoba this fall in the Asper School of Business. She has been awarded a \$4,000-per-year scholarship for the next four years as well as a \$7,500 scholarship from Sunova Credit Union.

So—thank you for all that you have done for us and congratulations on your scholarships and we wish you all the best.

Floor Comment: Thank you so much.

Madam Chairperson: You're very welcome.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Yes, I think that we should put on the record she's from Lakeside, and she lives in the town of Stonewall.

Madam Chairperson: Excellent. Noted.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): It seems to me that the pages and helpers we've had around the building, given the comments about their high grade point averages, may be some of the smartest individuals in the Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Chairperson: Very good.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'd also like to congratulate Hilary, and those scholarships are remarkable. Take advantage of them.

I'd also like to thank the minister for her answer. And just in response to it, I can certainly appreciate you can't put money into every portfolio when trying to balance a budget. That's very fair and I understand that. With the growing arts, though, in Manitoba and with your pride within it, I'm sure you can appreciate that we do want to be able to invest in it further.

Under the nine grant assistance, there is a raise in the project support. For lack of better words, is that sort of being used as the kitchen sink so that project support can be distributed amongst the other grants? Could you please explain that a little more?

Ms. Squires: Would it be allowed to ask for a five-minute brief recess?

Madam Chairperson: Yes.

Is that—five minute—We will take a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 11:54 a.m.

The committee resumed at 12 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: The Committee of Supply will come to order.

We will take questions from the floor.

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much for the question, and thank you for your patience.

I would—I'm happy to share with the member a little bit of information about that \$100,000 commitment that shows up under project support. What that is is a grant that we provide to the government—we're partnered with the government of Nunavut to facilitate the continued celebration of Inuit culture at the Winnipeg Art Gallery by—and we—through this we contribute \$100,000 each year for five years for the storage, curation and exhibition of 9,000 pieces of artwork from the Nunavut collection. And, if the member hasn't had an opportunity to go and look at some of this work, it is by far—it is the most amazing collection in the world. It is the largest collection in the world. And it is just a very amazing collection that we're very proud to have in the province of Manitoba.

And this \$100,000 increase, it represents Manitoba's 2016-2017 contribution to our agreement,

and the agreement is in effect for five years, commencing 2015-16, until March 31st of 2020. And again, it's an invaluable opportunity for cross-cultural education, community building, and economic development. And a few weeks back, when I had an opportunity to tour through the Winnipeg Art Gallery and to look at some of the exhibition and some of the pieces that are being stored at the Winnipeg Art Gallery—and the director had shared with me a story that some—a lot of times, when people from the Inuit culture will come in and see their—the pieces, that it really just touches their soul in immeasurable ways in that it's a sense of who they are, and it's able to really solidify their lives and see the importance and the vitality of their culture and what they contribute to the Canadian mosaic.

And we're just very, very proud to be able to be showcasing this work as well as offering the Inuit community an opportunity to see their work on display, and really validate their history and their part in the Canadian cultural landscape.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Thank the member from Burrows for her questions and the minister for her responses.

So the \$100,000 that we were just talking about, all of that grant money is specific for the Inuit art collection. That's all that money is for, is that correct?

Ms. Squires: Yes.

Mr. Lindsey: Let's switch gears a little bit, here.

What can you tell me about the curling centre of excellence project?

* (12:10)

Ms. Squires: Thanks for the question about the international—the proposed international curling centre of excellence. And our government does plan to initiate a strategy to develop and establish an international curling centre of excellence in Manitoba.

This strategy builds on Manitoba's long-standing reputation as the curling capital of the world. Manitoba has been a leader in the sport for decades, whether it's producing world champions or Olympic gold medal winning rinks or developing some of the world's most respected coaches, ice technicians and officials. We can all agree that Manitoba is second to no one when it comes to the sport of curling.

The centre and its highly appropriate acronym, ICCE, will create an opportunity to bring together a wide spectrum of skills, expertise and passion for the sport through a collaborative partnership involving CurlManitoba, the Canadian Sport Centre Manitoba, Sport Manitoba, curl Canada and the World Curling Federation.

The international centre-curling centre of excellence should not necessarily require building an actual facility, as there are already several suitable curling facilities in Manitoba. Instead, the concept of a centre of excellence involves the sharing of many ideas, resources and skills behind a set of defined common goals and objectives. For instance, a high-performance junior development program could be happening at one club; at the same time, advanced ice-making workshops or a coaching symposium could be occurring at another club.

Very few facilities in Manitoba maintain ice on a year-round basis, and, to be a true centre of excellence, the international curling centre of excellence will need to function 12 months of the year. And some capital investment could be required at some point down the road to upgrade or enhance ice-making equipment at one or more of the facilities. And I'm happy to share with the member that we have—we are in the consultative phase of this process in that I have met with the secretariat staff and Sport Manitoba, and they've started a working group to talk about the next steps and working with CurlManitoba and the Canadian Sport Centre of Manitoba along with my staff in my office to start looking at the broader goal of this centre of excellence and how we can proceed.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for that, and I'm glad to hear that we're looking at inclusiveness and this—certainly, I have to agree with the minister that Manitoba has a long, strong, proud history of participation in curling and curling excellence. The community I come from has a long, proud history of curling as well, and my mother-in-law, for example, finally decided maybe she would quit curling when she was 90 years old. My wife curled for many years. Me, not so much, but.

So, looking at parts of Manitoba that also have a long, proud history of curling and may, at this particular point in time, be struggling for some economic benefit, would the minister or the government consider at least part of this ICCE program being expanded into a community such as Flin Flon because the economic benefit to something

like that could be large for a small community, that it bring people in for the training programs, for the technical parts? So, I mean, there's all kinds of spinoff industries.

So my question is, would the minister consider taking it outside the Perimeter and helping the North, Flin Flon in particular? That's my riding, so.

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much for that question and congratulations to your wife and your mother for their commitment to curling and for their successes in the sport. And by all means that this centre of excellence, we're looking at it being a portable model and like I said, it's not necessarily about a bricks and mortar centre. It's portable and its function is—while it's still—the design is still in its infancy, we are looking with a mind to moving into all different regions of the province.

And so, for example, we could bring it up to Flin Flon and where we could bring in a team of athletes, an international team for example, or an elite team could go up to Flin Flon for the weekend with the coaches and with the training and they could hold a training workshop or something like that when they were up there, and do other things with a mind for bringing some—you know, bringing that excitement up to your community as well as looking at things that would generate the economic impact that you spoke of.

And again, like I said, the entire program, the development is in its infancy, but I appreciate the question. And as we're moving forward in creating this model of this centre of excellence, and in looking how we're going to service all of Manitoba, I do like the ability for it to be a portable model that we can move from community to community and it would be great to bring it up to Flin Flon and—so that your community and your constituents could benefit from it as well.

And I apologize—I wasn't certain if you were coming back or not, but you'd asked me a very important question yesterday about how we're distributing sports programming throughout the province and particularly in our northern and remote regions, and I did provide quite a fulsome answer that you're certainly welcome to go and look at in Hansard.

And for the sake of time I won't repeat all of that, but I did want to just highlight that we do have this—there is what's called a bilateral sport support program that reduces barriers for children and youth

from Aboriginal and newcomer populations to participate in sport, and it's a key foundation for increasing levels of physical activity in inner-city ethnocultural and Aboriginal populations.

And then I listed in Hansard about 15 or 20 northern communities and remote communities that have benefitted from this program. And I also talked about the Power Smart Manitoba Games with an access—with a key focus in terms of providing support to regional teams and programs and just reducing those barriers for all of our children throughout the province and helping them find ways to participate in sport.

* (12:20)

And also there's the Calm Air sport series, and I don't think I read that one into Hansard, but it is—it focuses on sports popular in northern communities. And right now there were about 60 to 70 kids involved, with 15 to 20 coaches and officials receiving training in a camp-like environment. And each camp was held in a different community with a sport specific to their community.

And, again, much like the centre of—the curling centre of excellence, this model being very portable and taking this up to the community so that it can, you know, be mentoring coaches up there, as well as involving the children.

And I think what I said earlier is that infrastructure alone can't deliver the programs that we want or provide the impact that we want. If we have a curling centre or if we build an ice rink for youth in a remote community, but there's not the coaches there and the mentors to get the kids out on the ice, it may not have the greatest impact that we want.

So that is—it's a two-part process, in that we want to help develop the infrastructure, and we want to help develop the leadership in these communities for sport.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

And yes, I will go through Hansard to review the answer. I had received a message that you were answering my question. Unfortunately, I was tied up at another meeting, but I appreciate the fact that you enlightened me that you did answer.

So just before I leave the curling centre, you said that you've consulted with CurlManitoba and Sport Manitoba.

Is there anyone else that you have consulted with? And will you be consulting with some of the northern communities that may wish to participate in this?

Ms. Squires: I should clarify that we really haven't started the consultative phase. What we're doing right now is we're working at establishing the framework. So when I say I've met with Sport Manitoba and CurlManitoba, that's more or less just getting with an eye to get the framework established. And once we do have the framework established, then we will begin a broader consultation with the communities, and especially, and yes, we will be ensuring that we receive public input from our northern friends.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that. I'm sure the people in Flin Flon look forward to hearing from you on that and look forward to participating in it.

Guess we'll just go somewhere else now, very briefly. Talking about being able to participate, the town of Leaf Rapids has a sports arena, an ice arena, that they can no longer afford to operate.

Is there any thought or would there be any thought from the minister or your department towards helping them fund the operation of that, looking at the fact that it's their only real centre in the town for activity to keep kids occupied? The bricks and mortar are already there. They just need funding to keep it running or to start it running again.

Just an additional note on that same question, I believe Lynn Lake is probably in a similar situation.

Ms. Squires: Just on a point of clarification, are you suggesting that Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids, they are needing resources for operating, or for capital?

Mr. Lindsey: Operating. No doubt, at some point in time, they'll need some capital upgrades as well, but I believe right now it's operating funds they need.

Ms. Squires: I thank the member for that question.

And I feel really bad for the kids in Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake if they've got this facility that's not able to—that they're not able to enjoy because of a deficit in their operating funds, and—but, to that, I have to share with the member that that is not—our department doesn't provide funds for operations. That, you would have to ask the Indigenous and Municipal Relations minister, and it would be under her department that that funding would be provided.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that, and I will have to pursue that issue with her.

The Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage has a dream, I guess, of expanding a hockey program so that kids that come to Cranberry may come specifically for hockey scholarships, similar to a program that operates in Saskatchewan. Recognizing that Frontier Collegiate has kids presently coming from about 30 northern communities, would it be this minister's area that would provide capital money for them to upgrade the existing Cranberry Portage Arena, or potentially find an alternative? Because I think, right now, they've put together a proposal to upgrade the existing Cranberry arena so that they could use it.

Ms. Squires: Just another clarification. Have they already put forward their proposal, or are they in the process of putting together their proposal?

Mr. Lindsey: I believe they may have already put their proposal in, but I would have to clarify that for sure because they had—the last time I was speaking with the superintendent there they had several proposals, and the arena was only one of the ones that they were looking at, so.

* (12:30)

Ms. Squires: Again, I will have to ask my—ask the member to go to my colleague in Indigenous and Municipal Relations for that. Unless it—if the arena's attached to a school, or if it's on a school yard, then you could also perhaps talk to the Education Minister. But, otherwise, I do believe all the capital upgrades would come from municipal and—Indigenous and Municipal Relations.

Mr. Lindsey: So the sports secretariat—or, the sports component of your department doesn't fund capital and also doesn't fund operating of sports facilities. Is that correct?

Ms. Squires: Thank you for the question, and, yes, Sport Manitoba and our department is not responsible for capital with the exception of the Canada Games when we had an opportunity to partner with the Government of Canada and the City of Winnipeg to bring in \$6 million from those respective envelopes of money to help build the Sport for Life Centre, which will be a community—you know, available for the community for youth and all Manitobans who are engaged in sport.

So, typically, my department does not have funds for capital and, in terms of the sport delivery,

all the programs are delivered through Sport Manitoba. And they are—their mandate is to ensure the amateur sport delivery system in the province with, you know, with direct delivery of sports programs through the department.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that. So we'll have to pursue some of that with someone else which, I'm sure, we'll do over the course of time.

Just a few standard-type of questions that we've been trying to ask most of the ministers. In your new role as the minister, could you tell us who all you've been meeting with and who you've been consulting with?

Ms. Squires: For clarification, did you want to have a fulsome explanation of all the people that I've been meeting with for all the five areas that I'm responsible for?

Mr. Lindsey: Perhaps maybe the minister could just submit that list as opposed to reading it all out now. But, yes, at some point in time we would like to see that.

* (12:40)

Ms. Squires: I thank you for the patience in waiting for me to refresh my memory of all the groups that I've met with so far, and all the groups that I'm planning to meet with.

And I also just want to put on the record that we are breaking next week for the summer, and so since the moment I've been appointed minister, I have been very restricted in terms of being able to leave the city of Winnipeg. And I do have on my schedule for next week—I will be touring the bilingual service centres, for example, in rural Manitoba, and I'm visiting three rural communities. That's on my agenda for the immediate—next few weeks. But I do certainly plan to broaden my—you know, and get to meet other stakeholders throughout the province, and I do realize that my department has got far-reaching impacts throughout all of Manitoba. And I'm certainly not a Winnipeg-specific—it's not a Winnipeg-specific initiative. Arts, culture, sports, heritage, that is essential in all four corners of our province, so I'm very much looking forward to engaging with a lot of the groups outside of the city of Winnipeg, and as soon as the House allows, I will be on the road and doing an ambitious tour outside of the city of Winnipeg to talk with groups in relation to my department.

Having said that, some of the groups that I've met with since I've been appointed minister include—just most recently I attended the ACTRA Manitoba chapter—their AGM. ACTRA is the union responsible for actors and actresses. I've met with la Société franco-manitobaine and Centrallia, met with the Host Society for the Canada Games, the India Association of Manitoba, the Nigerian congress of Manitoba. I've met with several board chairs and CEOs from my—that fall under the structure of Sport, Culture and Heritage, Status of Women and Francophone Affairs.

And I also just wanted to note that I won't, for the sake of time, reiterate the stakeholders that I've met with in relation to Status of Women, because in my earlier meeting with the critic for Status of Women, I had listed an extensive listing of stakeholder groups that I met with. So, to that end, I've also met with, like I said, several of the board chairs and CEOs that are, you know, responsible for—that are involved in the organization. I've attended—I've met with the Winnipeg Art Gallery stakeholders and—to talk about some of their initiatives, the Manitoba Museum; the Host Society for the games.

There's a—under the Multiculturalism Secretariat, there was an inter-group dialogue, is what they were called. I attended their inter-group dialogue facilitator training, the graduation. This was a group of a dozen people that were taught in terms of—they were newcomers to the province of Manitoba, and they received—this particular group received a grant from my department on—to facilitate a workshop and participate in a workshop on how to really use language to reduce some of those barriers as it pertains to, you know, racism. And, when we're bringing in different—a lot of different communities into our province, how we can relate in ways that are going to remove those barriers that are otherwise sometimes inherent or shouldn't be inherent but sometimes are.

So this group was specifically tasked with educating themselves, and then educating people in their workplace on how to spot some of those signals to—you know, having people put up their backs and feeling like there's a bit of a language barrier or race—some connotations that aren't there and how to eliminate that. And they had their graduation just the other day. So I met with them, was able to learn a little bit about them and the work that they've done and will be undertaking in the near future.

* (12:50)

I have met with the Congress of Black Women—or planning to meet with them a little bit more in terms of some of their workshops. And, again, like I said, I've got an ambitious summer tour schedule, and I'd be happy to provide the member with an update in—after—when the summer is over.

Mr. Lindsey: I appreciate that, and I appreciate the fact that you're planning to get out and see the province and talk to people all over. I would certainly take this opportunity to invite you to my riding of Flin Flon. They have a very active arts and culture group of people or—going on there. Certainly, Culture Days in the fall; I think Flin Flon is probably one of the biggest participants in that whole thing. So I'd certainly invite you to come North and participate in Culture Days. I know they'd be quite happy to see you there.

I would also invite you to come to some of the more northern communities that don't normally get a lot of attention from people in the south. And I appreciate the fact that you're planning to get out to rural communities, and certainly they're important, but I think it would do you well and be helpful to you in carrying out your mandate to come to places like Brochet or South Indian Lake. I mean, there's so many small Aboriginal communities that there's so much talent there that how do we get that out of their community and give them the tools to really—to shine when it comes to some of the arts and cultural stuff? So I'd invite you to make sure you include in your meetings and tours and collaborations some of those really northern communities.

One of the things you touched on is you'd met with some people about newcomers, and one of the questions I have is, has there been any thought about introducing sport that comes with some of our immigrants that are different than what we would normally see as traditional sports in this province that may help them feel more included as well and certainly broaden our horizons to different opportunities? So has there been any thought to doing that?

Ms. Squires: Thank you for the invitation to visit Flin Flon, and Flin Flon is on my agenda for the immediate future.

And the question that you'd asked was a very good question in terms of how we can expand the horizon of sport in Manitoba to reflect some of the newcomers to our province. And one of the things that I'm most excited about is that we now have multiculturalism and Francophone Affairs housed

in the same department of Sport, so there's an opportunity for some greater synergies with that as we go forward.

And, to that end, I'll give two examples right now of where Sport and multiculturalism has come together to provide a new—to bring a new sport to Manitoba. And one is the—kabaddi, and I would ask, perhaps, the member for Maples to provide a little bit of clarity, if he will, or maybe a physical demonstration of what this looks like, because I'm told that it is a mixture of wrestling and red rover. But it is a sport that is very—that there are many engaged and active participants in the province of Manitoba. Five thousand people came out for the last event, and it is an area where we're very proud to be providing some support to that.

And as well, through the Canada-Manitoba agreement on French language funding, we do provide assistance and—for the implementation of programming and servicing for winter skating sessions targeting French-speaking new immigrants.

So those are two examples of where we've got some synergies between multiculturalism and Sport, and I would just like to offer that, if there are any other programs or newcomers to Manitoba that would be interested in looking at bringing a new sport to Manitoba, that we're certainly welcome to looking at those programs.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that response. And I don't think I'll ask my friend from The Maples to demonstrate, not for me, anyway.

And I appreciate the fact that you are considering expanding. And certainly, with so many things under your department now, it may give you the opportunity to integrate the cultural, the sports aspects and go from there, so I appreciate that for sure.

Just on a different trail, if you will, how many vacant positions do you currently have in your department?

Ms. Squires: For clarification, you're looking for vacancies in all areas of my department, or, for the interest of time, would you be willing to exclude Status of Women because that was covered in—with the previous critic, or do you want me to reiterate what I'd said regarding the positions in Status of Women?

Mr. Lindsey: No, that's fine. If you've answered that question for the Status of Women, we can leave that

out of this discussion and just address your other departments.

* (13:00)

Ms. Squires: Okay, thank you for that question, and my department does have a staff complement, a full-time staff equivalent of 271.75 positions, and right now there are 61.09 vacant positions. Based on the reorganization of the department, it's almost impossible to give you a comparable, say, to what it was last year versus this year because the department structure has changed significantly. But what I can tell the member that it's been stable since April and that there haven't been any significant staffing movements since April.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

Is there any plan to allow that vacancy rate to increase?

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you for that question, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all the staff that works in my department, and while I'm just getting to know a lot of these folks that work in the department, what I can say with certainty so far is that they are definitely hard-working, dedicated individuals who come to work every day with a desire to serve Manitoba. And we're all—our province is better for the collective efforts of the staff that I have been working with and the ones that I have been getting to know, and I'm very grateful for the work that they do.

There is certainly no plan in place to allow the vacancy rate to increase, and what we are doing, though, is as—if a position were to become vacant, like any business would do or any good governance model would suggest, is to do a review and see where are the needs in the department and what we need to do, taking a quick review before we were to refill the position. But there's certainly no plan to allow that vacancy rate to increase.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I guess that's really the same thing. I appreciate the fact that while you don't have a hard and fast plan to increase the vacancy rate, you're going to review any position that becomes open, so that vacancy rate may very well go up.

Is there any plan to fill any of the existing vacancies?

Ms. Squires: Thank you for the question.

And the short answer is yes.

And we do have some recruitment currently under way, for example, in the library and archives, we are—there is a competition that's open right now.

And what we're doing is taking a look, in terms of the programming, you know, when a position is necessary to fulfill our programming requirements, we will be moving forward on recruitment and open competition.

And there's just always, I would like to just put on the record that there's a delicate balance in terms of we want to maintain our grants program so that we continue to support all the areas in which our grants are supporting and so keeping that funding commitment at the—you know—at the same level, while looking at the staffing.

And so we're just—it's a delicate balance. And we're trying to achieve that balance.

Mr. Lindsey: I appreciate that.

How many of these vacancies were a result of the election, that civil servants were laid off directly as a result of that?

* (13:10)

Ms. Squires: I can assure the member that there have been no civil servants that have been laid off in my department, and we, in fact, just received the authority to extend the term employees until the end of this year from June to December.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

Could you provide us with the names of who your technical officers and political staff are, along with a detail of what their duties are and their salaries, and are there orders-in-council for them?

Madam Chairperson: The member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Lindsey: Sorry. And are there orders-in-council available for all of them?

Ms. Squires: So just to clarify, you want the names and the positions and the salaries of all the technical appointments in my office as well as whether or not there's an order-in-council?

Mr. Lindsey: All the technical officers and political staff.

Ms. Squires: Yes, I'm happy to share with the member that there are two appointments in my office and there are orders-in-council on both of them.

May 12th, 2016 is the first date of the first order-in-council, and that's for Meghan Chorney.

She's—was appointed to the position as special assistant within the classification of special assistant to the minister with a salary range of \$67,993 to \$81,270 per year and where applicable, a long-service step to \$82,896. So that's the first technical appointment in my office. And, again, like I said, May 12th is the date of the OIC for that.

And the second appointment is Carrie Werschler, who was appointed to the position of executive assistant, within the classification of executive assistant to the minister, with the salary range of \$56,002 to \$66,877 per year and, where applicable, a long-service step to \$68,220. And this was an order-in-council dated May 25th, for the member's record.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that. So that's a broad range of salaries. Are they at the upper, lower, mid?

Ms. Squires: Well, these two appointments are—they—the services that they provide are priceless.

They are—they were started off at the lower range of—on the salary scale in—you know, to be reflective of our government's overall commitment to shrinking the size of government and really trying to get our fiscal house in order, we started these two employees off at the lower end of the range.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

So the two people that were hired under the order-in-council were started off at the lower range of the salary. So the same rules didn't apply to the minister as applied to the people she hired, then, I take it, as the minister didn't start off at a lower range of salary but actually started off at a higher range of salary.

Is that correct?

Ms. Squires: As the member quite very well may know, the minister doesn't have—doesn't set her salary. And if the member is advocating for—that members of the Legislature and that ministers set their salaries, I'd ask him to clarify that.

Mr. Lindsey: I just point out to the minister that previous ministers had a lower salary based on being in deficit, where the current government is as well. And I understand that the legalities technically allow the higher salary, although perhaps the morality suggested that something different might have been done.

Moving along from that, do you have any communications or issues management staff?

* (13:20)

Ms. Squires: I can let the member know that we do not have any community and stakeholder relations staff or issues management staff from my—in my department.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm sorry; I didn't catch the first part of that.

Ms. Squires: I do not have any community and stakeholder relations personnel, formerly called Cabinet Communications or Cab com personnel paid for by my department, nor do I have any issues management personnel paid for by my department.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

French service plans—are they all current and up to date under your Francophone Affairs Department?

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much for the question, and these French language service plans are—they're in constant evolution and we know that it was a strong party for the previous administration to have these French language services plans in legislation, and it was a strong commitment from our government as well; hence, the need for the legislation that is going to committee next week and hopefully will be in place in the province very soon.

Having said that, a lot of the departments are based on the restructuring of government. They are revising their French language services plans, and that work is ongoing and being undertaken right now. And we do—you know, I can say that there are some of the RHAs and CFSA authorities that are working to establish those French language service plans and it has been a multi-year strategy to get these plans in place. And while it is—it is an evolution, and we are going to be encouraging and supporting all departments and agencies to have their French language service plans in place as quickly as possible.

We do recognize that with the reorganization and the restructuring of government that departments need to put some of those revisions in their plans.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank the minister for that.

The Manitoba Museum, there was previous commitments made by the previous government to spend—I believe the number was \$10 million for some upgrade. Is this government committed to doing that as well?

Ms. Squires: I thank the member for the question.

And the Manitoba Museum is a provincial asset and the province's largest heritage centre with a strong and meaningful relationship with all Manitobans. Investment in cultural infrastructure are essential to sustain and maximize the growth of our creative economy and to enhance the quality of life and well-being of our people and to fortify the cultural cornerstones of our tourism potential.

Having said that, Budget 2016 did confirm that all previous initiatives will be reviewed to address the return on investment and their social benefit, and Manitoba has an opportunity to support several potential and highly worthwhile cultural projects including the Manitoba Museum's Bringing Our Stories Forward project. And I have been meeting with—I've met with folks at Manitoba Museum and be learning more about the exciting opportunities from the Manitoba Museum in the coming weeks and months and working with the staff and the organization to develop viable options.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

Just tidying up a few loose ends, if you will, here at the moment.

Is there any plans, or are you looking at privatizing any portion of your portfolio?

Ms. Squires: No.

Mr. Lindsey: Good answer. Unfortunately, that's not the last answer.

You're, I'm assuming, planning to do these value-for-money audits that the government has talked about for your department as well. Will these audits and reviews be—the results of these audits and reviews, will they be publicly available, and, if so, whereabouts will the public be able to access?

* (13:30)

Ms. Squires: Thanks for that question, and the Department of Finance is leading that review. And, after doing a scan of the room and not being able to locate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) in the room to answer that question, I would have to ask the member to defer that question to that department.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that answer. I just assumed, I guess, that any audits that took place in your department you would have a hand in. But if that's all being handled by the Finance Department we'll certainly direct those questions, if we haven't already. I'm sure that other people that have been in—

with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) probably asked that question of him already, so I appreciate that.

One of the stated goals of the government is the most improved province. How will your department play into that, and what goals or measurement metrics are you using to be able to show that your department has contributed to making Manitoba the most improved province?

Ms. Squires: Thank you very much for that question.

And, you know, I believe that if you care about an issue, you care about the results. And as work is just under way right now in our department to develop the specific outcomes that we're going to look at, and the performance measures in our department. And looking at how these measures can be quantified and reviewed and, when we're setting the targets, having 'achievable' along the way that we can determine whether or not we've met them. And I know that this is also a discussion. The work is beginning at the deputy's table, as well. And they are looking for best practices and outcomes as well, and I'm—I have the very good fortune of having the deputy auditor general as my deputy in the department, and she's got a lot of experience in looking at best practices and performance review and developing recommendations for government in meeting those targets.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that.

So, as you develop your 'measurables' and all of that, will you table your progress reports quarterly in the House?

Ms. Squires: Thank you for that suggestion, and we're still in the process of developing all those metrics. But I appreciate you putting that out there and—for advisement.

Mr. Lindsey: I certainly appreciate the minister's brevity of answers at the end here.

And certainly, I—in my opinion, at least, one of the ways that we can make sure that things are moving along and everybody's achieving their goals is by making sure that information is available so that the more people that know about it, the more accountable everybody will be. And we can all move forward, then, and we can all work towards making sure that Manitoba is progressing and becoming the greatest province—it already is.

I mean, we've already done a lot of work to—with the previous government to make sure that job growth and in all the rest of that was No. 1, economic growth was No. 1, so I look forward to seeing the minister's plans and 'measurables' going forward on how the province will continue to grow and expand, particularly as it relates to some of the northern communities and their ability to participate in things that the rest of us take for granted, recognizing the distances and the travel restrictions, if you will, that are placed on a lot of those communities.

So I look forward to seeing what the minister comes up with for 'measurables', in particular for communities in the North. And, while I've taken the opportunity to invite the minister to Flin Flon, I would certainly invite her to visit some of the really remote communities not just in my riding, but in all of the North to really get a better sense and understanding of the communities and the people because, as I started my campaign and travelling around talking to people in those communities, just the nicest people you'd ever want to meet in your life. And really, all of us need to figure out how to make things available so that they can participate in the future. And does the minister have any final comments on how she hopes to include people from the northern communities in?

Ms. Squires: Well, thank you very much for that question, and I know in the past, a lot of people have said to me that the Estimates process, it feels like being in a bit of a hot seat. But, after spending the last day and a half in this seat, I can say that it has been such an enlightening experience for me and I've really enjoyed the dialogue that we've had. And I really appreciate the comments and the perspective that you've brought, and the other critics as well.

* (13:40)

I think that it's essential for me, as the minister representing such a diverse group of people, and my portfolio really does span—it touches everybody in this province under the banner of Sport, Culture, Heritage, Status of Women and Francophone Affairs. And it is a real honour for me to be in this position. And I've always said that the best thing that I can do, and the most worthwhile moments that I've spent since I began this role, has been listening to other people and engaging with other people.

And you know, for example, I've learned so much in the last day about your community and the people that you represent and your constituents. And

that's what we're all elected to do here in this Legislature, apart from our ministerial roles, if you will, we are all here representing our very unique communities. And the more I get to know you and the more that I get to know the other members from the constituencies around this province, the better equipped I will be to know about the issues that are in your community and the better equipped that I will be to serve the community, because my role is really about service.

And so any ongoing suggestions that you have on how I can facilitate serving your community, I'm all ears.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply because the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired.

Our rule 76(3) provides, in part, that not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of the business of Supply.

Further, our rule 76(5) provides that when time has expired, the 'Chairpershon' shall forthwith put all remaining questions without debate, amendments or adjournment.

I therefore going to—I am therefore going to call in sequence the resolutions on the following matter: Sport, Culture and Heritage.

I would remind members that these questions may not be debated, amended or adjourned, according to the rules of the House.

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,994,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$52,193,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Sport, Culture and Heritage Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,202,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$73,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$205,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255.

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

Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (10:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk): 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 Education and Training.

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

Okay, before we get—we continue, I just want to acknowledge that Kieran Smith, it is his last day as a page here, and Kieran is a student at Miles Mac collegiate, and a graduate of the 30—from grade 12. Kieran has a grade point average of 95. Kieran will be attending the U of Ottawa, taking political science—six-year course—and law. Kieran will also be employed as a page for the House of Commons in the fall.

Congratulations.

Kieran, who is—will go into environmental law, and he's also interested in diplomacy—or public office. Kieran enjoys sports, badminton, cross-country running, water polo, myriad of other sports. Kieran enjoyed listening to the insights into all the debates, and inspires to continue with public service in the future.

Congratulations, Kieran. All the best.

Okay, the honourable Minister of Education and Training, can you introduce your staff, please?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): With me this morning I have Deputy Minister Bramwell Strain; Claude Fortier, chief financial officer; and I'm going to butcher this one, so—Ximena Munoz—am I getting close?—okay, Fairness Commissioner; and Ben Rempel, ADM of immigration, with me today.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, and I'll get the opposition critic to introduce his staff. And I believe it's going to be the honourable member for Maples.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): We have here Mr. Stephen Spence.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Saran: Last time, in discussion yesterday, being done over here by our critic, member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinev), I was attentively listening to the discussion about the international students. And sometimes those international students also apply for Provincial Nominee Program, and how sometimes those international students can take away our supports over here in the Provincial Nominee Program, and why we are not getting full advantage of that.

I am really concerned about that because international students normally have to have a lower English requirement in Ontario and BC; when it comes to our institutions, they have to have a higher English requirement. That's why most students from the foreign countries, they go to Ontario; they go to BC. And that's my concern. We are not getting full advantage of recruiting international students to our institutions.

And also what happens normally, international students, they come from Ontario, they come from BC, they come and stay over here, work for whatever the requirement is—I think one year—then they apply for immigration. Then they go back to their—those provinces. So in that way, we give them support and they become immigrants; they go back to the original provinces. I would ask the minister what he's going to do: (1) we can lower the English requirement in the upper institutions; (2) perhaps we should not

allow these students who come in the other provinces to apply for immigration over here because we are losing our spots.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question. I know he's always been a strong proponent on the immigration issue. And certainly we've heard some comments about the student situation. I know I have certainly talked to people that expressed concern about it as well. And so we've had a bit of a look at it.

In terms of the English standard, really, the English standard that we apply is the same that's applied in every province across Canada. It's a national standard that's used. Any change to that, of course, would have to be negotiated with the federal government. But, you know, we're all supposed to be at the same standard. If there's any difference, it would be in sort of local measurement, I suppose, would be the—and sometimes, that's more perception than reality. And, certainly, I've not heard a lot, myself, in regards to that. I've heard more about getting access to the English tests before the—before immigration in some countries in the world being a bit of a problem than anything else. And that clearly is a bit of a problem because some people actually have to leave their home country to even get access to the test.

* (10:10)

In terms of students themselves, well, basically, if they come here to Manitoba they have to work for six months before they can apply. And they must have a long—have a job offer on the table. Sometimes, I suppose, that may be easier for students to get, as they're in the education system and have a range of access, I guess, to business because of that and, of course, are in the process of being educated in a Manitoba institution. That might be easier for them to get than new immigrants, I suspect, and that certainly could be an issue in—or perceived as an issue where they have an advantage. Our retention rate, though, seems to be in line with other provinces. We're retaining about 82 per cent of the students that use the PNP program, and that's kind of in the same ballpark as most other provinces. It does vary from year to year, of course.

So, though, we're certainly always open to advice and discussion, we think that the program has not been showing an undue bias in regards to students, and we'll continue to monitor that. I think it's very important that this be a level playing field as much as possible for everyone that comes into the province.

The PNP program is a really important program, from our point of view. We've certainly had the opportunity in the past, as a province, to benefit, maybe a little bit out of proportion with other provinces because we, you know, we have pretty good number that we're allowed to bring in, and there have been times in the past that other provinces have not used their total amount of spaces available, that we've been able to benefit from that. We're always eyeing that possibility as something that we might want to be able to do or hope to be able to do in the future, but it's not always available. And, now, other provinces are kind of waking up to the reality that Provincial Nominee Program is a really good program, and so everybody seems to be trying to take full advantage of their quotas on Provincial Nominee Program. So the opportunities to get other provinces' benefits seem to have slipped away a little bit.

This year, of course, we're seeing quite an influx of refugees, and that is certainly putting the system to a test. The first batch are—pretty much been here for a month or two, now, and are working their way through the process. And, if the federal government is going to come anywhere near the number that they were talking about bringing in, we'll have to expect, in the next few months, another influx of refugees. And we'll have to be prepared to deal with that.

So, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Saran: I thank the minister for the answer.

And one thing I would like to really differentiate: Sure we understand that we have to have a standard of English and have to negotiate with the federal government. I understand that. But when it comes to—for admission to the universities or institutions, the Red River College, it's on—it's their discretion. Because it's their discretion, their standard is higher than the Ontario institutions, than the BC institutions. We are not attracting that many students to our institutions, and in that way we are losing some income, I would say, some income. Because, at one time, I was talking to one administrator in the Red River College, and she told that if we bring one student, it means we create one more spot for the student, although the perception is that those students are taking away spaces for the local students. So, if that's the case, we can create one extra space, then we should take full advantage of that recruitment of students, and we should convince the—our institutions: lower the English requirement standard.

If we lower the English requirement standard, sure, in some profession, it has to be up to the par—which they can take two-, three-month term refresher course when they come over here. And, in some of the trades, we don't need that much standards. Say, if somebody comes as a mechanic and he may not require as much English level as compared to somebody come from—for Ph.D. education.

So I would say we should look into that. I know the immigration side—the PNP side, does not have that much control on that, but Education side, I would urge the minister to discuss with the institutions, and we should take full advantage of the international students that come over here. And No. 1, they will become potential immigrants; No. 2, we will be bringing some funds, so why we don't take advantage when other provinces take that advantage?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, there are some institutions that do, in fact, have a higher standard, especially those—for those particular areas where there is a lot of interaction with the public. I think the member actually showed some understanding of that particular need. But there are probably trades and certain careers, post-secondary, that—where the interaction with the public doesn't require quite—maybe quite as the level, especially in the technical areas that you might have to have otherwise.

So that is something that we have not historically discussed because it's the institutions themselves that sets—set that standard, but we can—I mean, we have a long series of meetings set up with most post-secondary institutions following session here, so it's something that we can mention with those that may, in fact, have a different standard.

It might not be quite that simple, though, in terms of bringing in additional people. When your class size is already full, the existing class size, if you're going to bring in any more, you almost have to bring in enough more to justify putting another educator in place, so it becomes a kind of a critical mass issue. One or two, possibly, but 10, you know, do you have enough extra to justify bringing in the extra educators and making extra lab time available.

That said, I mean, it's a good argument, especially if you have additional capacity in terms of lab or shop space that could be used at a different time. It certainly might make economic sense for the post-secondary institution, whatever its nature, to take advantage of that. So, I mean, we are going to

be talking with the post-secondary institutions about international students so that this can be a particular point that we bring forward to have a discussion with them.

I know that many of them do use post-secondary—or many of the post-secondaries do use international students as a source of revenue and we've certainly heard it said. In fact, we were talking yesterday about where we rate nationally in terms of the cost of tuition for international students and we're, I think, third lowest across the country, so we should be fairly attractive in regard of bringing in international students.

* (10:20)

So we'll make a point of adding that to the agenda when we sit down with the post-secondaries to see what their intentions are. And—but I think the member probably appreciates the fact that it's not always just add one or two. It may be a question of we have to add enough and then we have to hire additional teachers, and do we have space to do that is always an issue, so. Thank you.

Mr. Saran: I thank the minister for the answer.

I am—although I am not really a fan of privatization, but in this situation, perhaps some other institutions can jump in, and private institutions, perhaps they can create those spaces, and in that way we can attract more students. And maybe that is something to look into—and possibility to create more businesses. And I suggest that that could be done.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question, and certainly the issue of private schools bringing in additional international students—in the K-to-12 system, that is certainly something that's an option with private schools that exist there. They kind of have their own control over how many they can bring in, and I suspect that it's probably related to capacity, and how much they charge for that privilege is something that they have quite a bit of control over. There are some—doesn't seem like there are large numbers that way. That may be something that some of them want to think about. Certainly, we know that in some of the French schools, for instance, there—we would think there could be an additional demand, but we haven't really seen it yet. Something that we probably need to talk to them about to see if there's any opportunities in regards to that.

There is—in the post-secondaries, there is a federal standard, a quality assurance standard for the school that comes into play, so many of the private, for-profits education institutions in the province are not approved under that so that they don't qualify as a place—and that's a federal standard that's in place. Most of our public institutions do qualify. MITT is one that has actually been fairly active in this area, bringing in more international students, and I think that that's a business model that they intend to pursue a little bit more, as they kind of have been expanding in terms of their ability to offer additional—especially technical services, and they also have high school within their domain. I think it's just 11 and 12, isn't it, that they have within their domain.

And so, for foreign students, that might be a pretty nice fit because they can come in and have a year or two to get their English in good shape and then go into a technical background and be in good position in terms of applying for immigration, and I think that's something that many foreign families may see as a very attractive alternative for students and their family members. So they do have some options in regard to that.

But the quality assurance standard that is in place is a federal standard, so we certainly have to be aware of that, and I know the institutions have to be very much aware of that, and I imagine there's a certification process that they must comply to, and it's something that they're all looking at. So, for some of the high-demand areas or the high-revenue areas like engineering and medical training, it is—I mean, none of that's in private hands in any way, so the best they could do related to that is bring a student in to one of the private K to 12s for a year or two and then be in a good position to apply to them, but they would be same as any other immigrant or any other Manitoban; they would simply have to apply and hope that they may—manage to meet the qualifications.

I'm sure the member knows that both of those institutions have many applications and it's a very competitive process to get into there, and probably, you know, certainly if you're a new immigrant and are struggling with English, it would be a very tough hurdle to get over to make qualifications for that, which is why many of them, I think, are starting to come into the country for a year or two before they apply to those institutions.

So thank you.

Mr. Saran: Now, relating to the Provincial Nominee Program, we used to have very good feedback in the past, and because possibly changing the government and merging some departments—I don't know how it happened—and we, so to speak, we don't have an immigration minister separate, and so, two, three ministries has been merged into one. Maybe that's the problem. And we used to get very good feedback from the department, but now we are not getting back. Simply, people come to the MLA's office, especially immigrant MLAs' offices because immigrant MLAs, they have more knowledge about the immigration and they trust them.

I came as a visitor. I applied for immigration. My case got rejected, then I appealed, then I got a work permit, moved to Manitoba. Then, there are not that many East Indians over here. Then people used to come from my [*inaudible*] school, and they knew I'm here. They used to come over here, a visitor. I used to help them to fill out their application, to guide them, free of charge; I was not a consultant or anything

And so people start trusting when—even when I was working in the Government Services in the evening, some people were sitting—will be sitting at my house and bring out the documents, helped to fill out their forms. And I was so much busy once I became an MLA. At that time, I trained my CA to fill out the forms.

* (10:30)

So we used to fill out the forms, but then the workload was so much, we were not able to keep it up. So then we say, yes, we will guide you, but we will check your forms before you send in, but we are not going to fill it out. And then there came the—that online process, which is too much responsibility of something asked by the department, and we don't respond back through them, so then we stopped that. We just start guiding.

So, because of that kind of relationship with the immigrant community at large, not only The Maples constituency, it's all over Winnipeg and sometimes all over Manitoba, people who would come to every constituency. So they trust us. They want us to help them out.

When their applications are waiting for two and a half years and they're not getting any answer, and they come to us and we put an inquiry and we are not hearing anything anymore—so in a way, that trust they have in us, they're losing that trust.

And the preservices they are getting—they are not getting that preservice anymore. I think, in a way, we were helping the department and not anything doing against the department. And we want a better response at this point—even, I don't think we have a contact, proper contact, whom to contact, any protocol, how to go through.

Before it used to be, perhaps you can put your inquiry to—through the minister's office; hence, they will send to the department. Then they will send back, and it will come to the MLA's office. Or they will directly contact the applicant. But that's not happening anymore. People are really frustrated over there.

I understand there are so many applications and there's so much workload, but this is worth it to have an extra employee. And I will—so I think we must have to do something about that.

What—our minister's going to do about that?

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

And I know he's—over the years he's worked very hard on behalf of new immigrants, and I'm sure he's helped a lot of people through the process. I know almost every MLA sees at least some of those. We certainly saw a number in our local offices as well, and we all try and help them through the process.

There is, actually, online a place to check the status of your application now so that—that is probably the best way for people to keep up to date on their application, and the vast majority of these do go through the system without a lot of difficulty, but we do still have online—or on—in the process some are that in excess of two years old, which are—is certainly a long time.

The problem with a lot of them is actually getting offshore information. We have to check the documentation, as the member knows, and some countries are pretty good in terms of responding with information in a very timely manner, others are very, very slow, and that is certainly part of the process that is causing a little bit of grief.

I think the member knows that we get tons of applications, and that's an endorsement of Manitoba, I think. Certainly, we're viewed very favourably and it's nice to have a lot of applications under the PNP program and we certainly are endeavouring to deal with them in as timely a manner as we can, but getting lots of applications adds to the problem in terms of how we deal with them. They can actually

go in person, as well as checking them online, to the office at 213 Notre Dame Avenue, and they get 20 or 30 a day, usually, people that are coming in to check on that and to see where they're at in the process.

But probably the biggest issue is checking their qualifications that they have listed on them; that is probably one of the greatest difficulties. There has been, in the past, some problems with information on the applications that was not accurate, and we're obliged to check that. We do have a quota in the province, as the member knows, and so we want to make sure that we get the people that are being open and honest with us. But there are, of course, privacy issues as well that do come into play related to this, and those privacy issues occur here in Manitoba, but they also occur in other jurisdictions and sometimes they're part of the problem, getting access to the data, can require additional signatures and release forms that can slow down processes quite a bit.

Bureaucracy has its place and is absolutely essential we—that we need to handle this very—I mean it's a very important issue. We're basically facilitating a new immigrant to become a Canadian, but we want to be sure that the new immigrant has provided us with very accurate information on their qualifications. It's a long queue and we don't want someone to try and take advantage of the—by moving up the list by stating something that is not necessarily not accurate, but maybe an enhancement of what is in place actually in terms of their qualifications.

I think the member probably appreciates that and knows that we want to get the best people we can and the best opportunity for those people here to come in Manitoba. So we're working very hard on this, and I would encourage him to have a long look at the online method to make sure that he's familiar with that. I know that that was something that we only recently started using in our own office. We weren't aware of it early in the process, and it is a very useful tool so people can see where they're at. But, you know, people always want to know how their application is going and move it as quickly as possible through the system, and I understand that.

*(10:40)

Mr. Saran: I thank the minister for the answer.

I understand that. I certainly understand there was complications and I understand about parts of documentation and the—and some situations. And—but my point is that when somebody have not heard for two and a half years, they think maybe their

application lost. Maybe some inquiry came back; they did not receive it. Maybe we are missing somewhere. And that's why they want to have personal checks as compared to look at the computer, okay, you are in process or not in process. And so that's one problem because they want some—to get some kind of search [*inaudible*]

In the beginning, what used to happen, they will sign the paper document, release authority to the MLA to get that inquiry—that's what we still do—and then they will get either a department or call the MLA or the department will call them directly. But, normally, even calling them directly—oh, we are in the process or we are checking the document. That should be sufficient to satisfy their inquiry.

And I think we should have that kind of system, and—but further than that, I would like to ask the minister: Are we trying to increase every quota? We have been now 5,000 spots for a long time, and I think we have some MPs from our province who are very in favour of increasing quotas. Perhaps they should help us as well. And I know when we are in opposition it's very easy to criticize the government, but when in government—and then people realize how much difficult it is. So they have to work hard. And I think I will also urge our minister to ask the other MPs, help them out. We want to increase the quota.

The other question I would like to go, that's about minimum wages. When immigrants come over here, they're most likely to get a job on minimum wages. And our government has not increased that minimum wage, first time in many years. And every year we used to increase that minimum wage, and that was helping immigrants a little bit, getting extra money. If we have increased to, say, 50 cents per hour, so in 40 per week, a person will be making \$20 extra. In 52 weeks, it will be making \$1,040 extra. Both family members will be \$2,080 extra. So that amount, when they are renting apartments, what will help. That will reduce the amount of Rent Assist. Actually, the government will benefit from it.

So I think it's very important that minimum wages are kept increasing every year so that people on minimum wages, especially immigrants, also new entrants to the workforce, so they can benefit from that. And also the government will benefit from that too.

So why we are hesitant to—not to increase minimum wage, which will help the immigrants?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question, and I'll, maybe, try and break this into two pieces. And I don't know whether we'll have time to deal with it all in one. So we'll see what happens here.

In terms of the increased quota, there is negotiation, actually, that we'll be entering into in the coming year with the federal minister on the quotas. What they, basically, have done in the past is set a number for all of Canada and then divide it up based on a formula that's been in place for a few years. And we can certainly put forward our arguments.

We're—you know, we've always been in a position where we've tried to make full use of the quota. I think we're one of the few provinces that does it on a really regular basis. And we've also, in the past, been able to take advantage of some additional, unused quota from other provinces. And, as we talked about earlier, that doesn't happen as often as it used to. Other provinces have woken up to the benefits of immigration and are attempting to make full use of it. But this year might be just a little different because of the number of refugees that are coming into the country. So we're positioning ourselves to be—to do what is necessary if additional quota comes available. That's usually later in the year—October or November—before that becomes clear.

I certainly can assure the member that we'll be watching very carefully and make our intentions known. I have a meeting coming up before too long with Minister McCallum on some other issues and I'll certainly take advantage of that to bring this issue forward and let him—also let him know that we're very interested in increasing our quota moving into the the future. Something that we've—I think the message has been there for a while, but we'll certainly make sure that it's put forward.

I know that the member has, for many years, been able to make good use of the system, and we will—in terms of checking on behalf of new immigrants and its constituents, or whether they were beyond his constituency—we'll certainly endeavour to make that system work as well as possible so that the MLAs are able to check through the office to see where things were at.

You know the routine, as do I. Release forms must be—must accompany the inquiry, and I know that there have been times in the past when that

didn't happen. I'm not saying that the member was guilty of that, but I know that not every MLA is familiar with the process as, obviously, you are. And, so, it's important that that message get passed around, and I know that we'll have to do something like that with our own—on our own side of the House, because we have a lot of new people, and you have a lot of new people, as well. So everybody's got to learn the system.

In the area of minimum wage, I mean, there's more than one way to put more money on the kitchen table. And I know that the member opposite and the government he represented for a number of years were very set on minimum wage was the way to do that.

*(10:50)

There are a couple things with that I'd like to mention. I mean, we can certainly try to improve the take-home amount by increasing personal deductions and looking at indexing as ways to make sure that additional money stays in their hands. What we're supposed to be doing with provincial nominee programs, though, is bringing in skilled workers, and so the issue of having to enter the workplace all the time at minimum wage—we talked a little bit about this yesterday, and I certainly would be happy to talk about it more, but we're looking at a number of the sectors where often new immigrants do enter the workplace and that would be service providers, in particular, ECEs, or early childhood educators in helping with that, and also with teaching assistants. We're looking at them kind of separate and we think that minimum wage is probably not the right place for them to be. They are—have a skill set and we're looking for ways to kind of separate that from minimum wage earners to some degree, and we're certainly committed to that examination.

We looked at it, I mean, during the election campaign—the Disability Matters lobby was very vocal and they made their point that, for them in particular, and I know that that's an area where a lot of new immigrants do actually find their first jobs, and—but then often don't stay there very long.

Now I'm out of time, but if the member wants to look a little further into that, then maybe I can get him to repeat that part of the question.

Mr. Saran: Yes, no, I understand that minimum wage is not the only way to go about it, but the minimum wage is the main factor which immediately affects the new immigrants and also

new international students, but I think maybe we have to do things a little differently. As soon as an immigrant comes and either they start doing these service jobs or they have a licence—cab licence or they have a truck licence, because immediately they can get—and they cannot get anything if some engineer came over here, he may not be able to immediately get that engineer job, but he will get a licence for driving cab.

So what happened in that situation, the country—once he has started driving truck, he may lose his intention or enthusiasm to become engineer. He may start to be satisfied with driving truck. What happens to a country lost in that situation? The country who trained them, they spent money; he left that country; he came to this country, and we did not use their skill properly.

How we should do it, the way I think, we should immediately, after two weeks, give them all the information within two weeks, but after two weeks send them, set up the [*inaudible*], send them in the proper profession environment where the employee can have that engineer not properly—employer should pay. Maybe Province can pay minimum wages for four months, and once he is in the environment, he knows the workplace; he knows the culture of the workplace. Then he will find his own way and he will be acquainted with his profession. That's where we're losing, I think, and I hope we should do something like that.

What is the minister's opinion?

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

What he's touching on here is actually some of the reason we changed the departmental structure. We moved Immigration in, because a lot of the issues that new immigrants have are around their qualifications. We have the office of the fairness commissioner as part of our department, as well. Plus we have access to all of the training, all within one department. So we believe that there's an advantage to do—in that. And we're already seeing some signs of that with the refugee situation, because we're able to put them—connect them with some of the training much more readily, and, in fact, even some of the workplace opportunities, much more quickly than I think would have happened otherwise. So, certainly, we believe that the structure we have changed to may actually help to deal with what the member has put forward.

We do have in place—and it's been there since 2012, so it was there at least part of the time with the previous administration—Manitoba Start, which very much tries to do what the member talked about, is within a couple of weeks, meet with all of the new immigrants to go through with them what they need in terms of getting their qualifications recognized here in Manitoba. There are, as the member knows, a lot of professions out there, and we have a lot of professional organizations that are responsible for making sure that the qualifications are recognized. We do still have, of course, the issue of maintaining public safety, so that everything has to be—we have to make sure that they're equivalent to what we're offering here now.

But one of the more innovative areas that we're looking at, and, in fact, just in the last couple of weeks, I've met with a number of the regulators through the office of the competition—or no, sorry, fairness—yes, my mistake, I'm still thinking about some of my previous stuff—in through the office of fairness, we're actually working on ways where time in the workplace can be evaluated and recognized.

* (11:00)

So it won't be just your historical training, but if you can get into the workplace a little bit here and we can actually do a proper evaluation of your skill level and perhaps reduce the amount of times or the number of times that recommend for new immigrants that they go back into retraining. Sometimes people can do with their hands or with their heads things that they can't necessarily show on paper, and that can—sometimes that's related to their, you know, the change in languages. They're good technically but they can't communicate, and certainly we're looking for ways to make sure that we're not holding that against them, that we recognize that.

They're—the member mentioned, you know, ending up in non-target occupations. We certainly want to make sure that people have every opportunity to get into their occupation. That's why we brought them here, in terms of the skills that we thought they had based on the application, and we have to be sure that we verify those skill levels. But I think we all lose, as the member has said, not—the individual loses, we as a province lose, and I'm sure the country that trained them feels that they didn't get their money's worth either in terms of—if they don't end up working in their target career.

That said, I know that there is a lot of demand out there for some other skills, whether it be in the

cabs or I know a number of people in the transport business that are very actively pursuing drivers for transports. That's an area that we have an ongoing shortage of workers in. Can be very attractive to people, and you do get a lot of repurposing; people find that they don't mind that business, and they're making good money. In fact, they can make very good money if they want to make—spend the time driving, and there is an almost endless demand for that. So, certainly, that's one that actually draws a number of people away. I've talked to a number of truck drivers who had quite a lot of training for truck drivers, I can tell you.

But we certainly agree, and we're looking for ways to make that work as quickly as possible. We're also looking at opportunities in mentorship, which might help get people through the system and back into their career of choice as quickly as possible. I think we can absolutely agree that we both lose if we don't do that.

Mr. Saran: Yes, thanks to the minister for that answer, and mainly I think I understand about the safety situation, about recognition. I think the department, they're trying their best to do it. I appreciate that.

My main concern is that if those people don't know about the working culture over here immediately, they will lose their urge to go in that trade. So to me, it's immediately after two weeks, let them—I used to work with Government Services. I used to always ask them—even engineer came over here. Let him work in the same department. He may be working as a trades helper; that's not the problem. So if he's not—his qualification has not been recognized, at least he will know the environment and he will know what he—talk to other people; he will know what he's supposed to do and to upgrade his skills.

I know immediately to get that job is not possible, but to be in that work environment, that's a necessity. And sometimes an employer may not need those people vacancy-wise, but if we provide minimum wages and they work over there, in that way, it won't cost the employer anything. And I know there will be other issues about the union; they will say, you are taking somebody else's spot. Possibly, maybe we can pass some legislation or regulations. One person at a time will be working. If I'm a mentor, other person is a—who is a new person on the job, either I will be working physically or that person will be working physically. So in that way

nobody will take somebody's job away. So we can discuss with the union. I actually discussed that with—one time with the—one union person; said, nobody came to us; we have no problem with that.

And I think we may be—I have so many questions, I don't know how much time I will get. And the other thing I am not, I'm not a fan of EOI because EOI, expression of interest, forces people on hold. And also there is some drawbacks. If a person is a Ph.D., he will have more marks for education, and if a person is a mechanic, he may not get that many marks. So his total number will be lower and the Ph.D.'s total number will be higher. Therefore, we—actually, the way I feel, we need more people who can go and work physically and work in the trades. And on the other hand, perhaps we are pushing our born children over here by bringing highly educated immigrants. We need people who are tradespeople who can fill up those positions which—normally our children doesn't want to fill those positions.

So I think—one thing I think we need there: adjustment. And hopefully, something, EOI could be looked—I know it's—always, I am told that it is a—we negotiated with the federal government. And that's why we have that program. But I don't think that's real; I don't believe in that. I think we gave them this system. That's what we want, to cut the number of the applicants. But what happens, the applicants who are waiting for a long time, they are put behind, and the new applicants are allowed to apply. So, in that way, I think people are becoming frustrated. The way the system was before, before this giving of five of the—either the five-point or 14 marks; before their system came, the previous system was a good system and keeping the number down. And perhaps something could have done—improved on that system. Still, we can improve on that system.

And so I would like to say, EOI is frustrating people, putting people on hold. Other thing: We are not asking nurses and nursing teachers to apply. How many schools in other countries, they open because of the hope they will be able to immigrate? How many people took up those courses over there?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. I know he feels very strongly about this whole process.

He mentioned the mentorship thing. We certainly are pursuing how we might make the mentorship thing work a little better, and the trades in mind probably are, you know, an area where we can make the most improvement by that, so I take his advice on that. We're working on that and hope to make that system work a little bit better.

* (11:10)

And I mentioned earlier that we are also recognizing experience in the work place and hoping to put something in place so that we can actually do an evaluation. And that's a discussion that we're actually having with the different regulators, right now, as to how we might be able to do that and move that—move people more quickly.

Certainly understand people's frustration. They come here with a skill set; they want to get using that skill set as quickly as possible. With some of the trades, if you don't stay active in those skill sets, you lose those skills reasonably quickly, and, certainly, some of the regulated professions there are some rules around that. So it's certainly important that they get back into the workplace as quickly as possible.

In regards to expressions of interest, in some ways it is a bit of a frustration, I'm sure, for many of the people, but it's also a way for us to manage the expectations of people. If we went first-come, first-served, we get waiting lists that are even longer than the ones we have now. With expression of interest, we have approximately 13,000 people in the pool now, against the fact that we can bring in 5,000. So we're able to manage and notify those that are able to apply. We deal with those, the 5,000, and try and work them through the system. And I know I brought an update to the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux) the other day in terms of the numbers, where we were in the processing, and, if I remember it correctly, we were at about 3,200 in the process right now, which is a ways to go, but we hope to be able to get through them in a timely manner. As we mentioned earlier, we wanted to be positioned in case some additional numbers became available later in the year.

But, with the expressions of interest, we're able to pick out the skills trades that we think we need, and that's certainly based on consultations with the workplace. Try and make sure that we get the right people, that we have positions for them, that we make the best use of the skill sets that are out there. And then we're actually able to notify those that are not selected, that they—there won't be an opportunity

for them this year; they can look at other opportunities and they can also reapply. The expressions of interest, basically, expire every year so that they are able to apply again if they want to.

And I know it's frustrating for the member, and I'm sure it's very frustrating for the individuals involved. It's great that Manitoba's considered to be such a desirable province to come to, but with the quota system in place and the number of applicants that we have, we have to try and be fair to everyone. So just dealing with it on a first-come, first-served would create some tremendous backlogs that—and, perhaps, not lead to us getting the skill set that we want in the province here.

So we're trying to work with what's out there. You know, the member, I'm sure, appreciates that many of the immigrants come in and they, to some degree, compete in a workplace with a lot of new entrants. And they can be Manitobans or from other provinces. So there is a bit of a balancing act here that we need to keep in place so that we—we need to provide opportunities for others as well as the immigrants, but we need to keep in mind that, when they do come here, we need to get them into the workplace as quickly as is possible.

Mr. Saran: Yes, I think it's also EOI cause some financial burden on the applicants.

When applicants—they apply for it—most probably, they go to the consultants. They—for example, they may have paid 10,000 to up to 1,500–15,000 rupees or whatever, Filipino pesos, and—but they just applied. They don't know whether their trade is—will be required or not. Number 1, if we have a list of only we need these trades, that list will be there. Perhaps, they won't put their application in.

And, on the other hand—so they have to pay twice. First, they paid for EOI application; then they will pay, if they are asked, okay, you apply for it, they paid again, or, if their one year has passed, they have to reapply in EOI, they have to pay again because many people are not confident to apply themselves to fill out an application themselves, although it—we think it will be very easy. So that's caused some problems on that side.

The other thing, like totally blocking one section—nurses and teachers were very popular professions to come over here, only thing—keep it continue, but raise the English requirement, because teachers need enough skill in English, nurses need

enough skill; otherwise, they may not—give a wrong injection.

So we know that if we raise the standard for the professionals, English standard, but keep the normal for the trades, we will be able to reduce the numbers.

And also we—there already backlog of the applications. Tell those professionals, okay, you have five months or four months to either increase your language skill, either write it again, or we will close your application. That was to start when we were to have past, that was the proper solution at that time. And this will be the proper solution at this time to reduce the number of the applications.

But around that—I would like to touch other issue. The issue is insensitivity about religious work requirement. We are judging people on the basis of whatever the standard qualification for Christian priests, but we are ignoring the reality of, for example, Sikh priests. They don't go to school. They are trained within the Gurdwaras. They put so much time, they learn over there, and they don't have that great value, therefore they won't get their 12 points, they will get only zero points. And they don't have those degrees, which degrees will be the other priests will have. So we are judging them on the same level.

On the other hand, they speak Punjabi and the Holy Book is written in Punjabi, and they are very good in explaining that why they have to have higher standard of English over there, sure, you need some communication, and they're not that dumb, some of them have gone—some back to school or they will learn some.

And so I think that's a requirement—I know the department will and the minister will tell us that that's a federal requirement. But, when we are negotiating, we have to make them understand that religious insensitivity is not right and make sure these people can come under our Provincial Nominee Program.

And also I think there was some on the issue made, like, they came as a visitor, but still they can work in the Gurdwaras and in the churches. And they're not under work permits, therefore we cannot take them.

So I don't—I—these are excuses or hurdles should be eliminated so—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member's time is up.

* (11:20)

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his questions, because there were a number of questions in there, and we will try and deal with them in the time that we have available.

In regards to the fee, I mean, we certainly endeavour to make the system work without having to use consultants. That is always at the discretion of the individual. And I know that very often they are used because individuals don't feel real comfortable in English. That may indicate that they have some issues with English, and that is certainly something that we know we have a measure of. And we don't—we're not always in a position where we know what trades and skills we need ahead of time. We're in consultation all the time on that. So in terms of telling people ahead of time which ones should be applying, I'm not sure that we would be able to provide them with enough information to make that too valuable. I mean, we can certainly—I think you can probably sit down and list the occupations that you know are in demand here in Manitoba right now and probably be as accurate as we would be as a department in terms of predicting which ones are the high-demand ones.

But I certainly have a lot of sympathy for those that use consultants and having to pay multiple times because they apply—have to apply again. Certainly, you know, anything that we can do to try and make that system work as well as it can, but the system is really designed to have no fee and to be of a type of application that individuals themselves should be able to do if they have a good 'sill'—skill set. So we're trying to try and avoid that.

The issue of recognizing trades as against professions, which is something we're attempting to try and deal with by recognizing their abilities and chances to do something in the workplace where they can get recognized for what they can do as compared to the problem of just coming into the country with a piece of paper that says that they're able to do something and then finding out that maybe it doesn't get recognized here, the paper itself doesn't get recognized here, but yet the individual involved may well be very skilled. We want to get around the barrier of the paper itself being an issue and see what they can do and recognize that particular skill set and try and get them back in the workplace and at an appropriate level, make sure that public safety is, of course, dealt with in regards to that too.

But there's no advantage to a government of any type, federal or provincial, in terms of delaying those

that have the right skill sets in the workplace. Part of the problem is we just simply have so many people that want to come to Manitoba; that's a good thing, and I'm sure that the member appreciates that.

The issue of religious workers is a little more complicated. They very often come into this country on a visitor visa where they're allowed to do certain things, but the minute they apply under Provincial Nominee Program, they're often applying as skilled workers and then trying to get an evaluation of those skills is sort of like coming in under one set of rules and then, suddenly, changing to another. And maybe they don't score quite as well under the other set of rules as they did as visitors. And so it makes it very complicated, in terms of getting proper recognition for those. I know that many of the religious workers often have other skills besides why they're here, and that makes them very—in some cases, very desirable, in the PNP program. But it's perhaps the issue of recognizing what you can do with your hands, the skill that you have, will work in their favour as well. You know, it's not designed specifically for that, but, certainly, they're—they would have access to it as well.

That one's a pretty complicated issue. We do know that we're getting quite a number of people in that area, and so we are constantly evaluating how we can best do this and recognize people's actual skills and get them back into the workplace as quickly as possible.

Mr. Saran: Yes, I think—I thank the minister for that answer. And I think priesthood is a skill itself. If a waiter comes over here, we don't expect him to have many other skills; he has waiter skills.

A priest comes over here, we don't expect him to have other skills, because priesthood is itself a skill. It's a matter of if a Christian priest comes over here, his qualifications are visible and appreciable. If the Sikh priest comes over here, his qualifications are not appreciative. So that's the issue.

This is not the only issue of skill; it's also issue of putting some religion on this place, some religion on that place, or putting on the sensitivity about these—those religious procedures and giving them that kind of freedom so they can bring their people in.

I understand if a priest comes that is a visitor and he can preach in the—those outfits. But it's just a matter of saying the visitor—a matter of saying he's

on a work permit. But, at the same thing, why we cannot interchange in those situations?

Oh, I think that's a very important issue in the Sikh community, and they are having a very tough time to attract a priest, because when people come over here, they leave their families over there. They cannot bring—the visitor only can bring them when they are permanent.

So I think that's one issue I would keep continuing to discuss, even privately, with the minister and with the department. And I would argue, to the department and to the minister, this is a very sensitive issue that should be dealt with and should be talked to federal government.

Another issue, which may be more education side: There are some new sports, and those new sports, No. 1, this should be also recognized in the schools. And they should be added to the—with the other games and sports like soccer, football. Similarly, we have many others of them—sports. One of the most famous is kabaddi, in the East Indian community, and, if that becomes part of the school system, then the students from different places, they might start playing it. And so that's something to think about that.

* (11:30)

I know there is some funds available for a new sport. I would like to know how much funds we have for the new sport and how we can integrate those sports in the Manitoba school system.

And, at the same time—well, I will ask that next question.

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

I'll break this into two pieces and talk a little bit further about the skill set required for the religious-trained—PNP people are, well, they come as visitors and then apply once they're here. We know that we've had applications from roughly 119 of them. We've been able to find ways to approve all but 14, and those were—really, the issue was their ability to handle English. So we're certainly able to accommodate the vast majority of them.

Part of this is the way the federal government deals with these types of applications. They have—we have to have the ability to communicate in English as one of the processes, and so that can be a bit of a barrier. We have brought this issue up with the federal government that, perhaps, they need to look at a different methodology, not just for us but for all

applicants to Canada. To look at that, they're—we, certainly, don't discriminate based on any particular religion at all. And so there are certainly other sectors that have some similar applications.

But the member's right. I mean, we certainly recognize some religious degrees as—you know, because there's paperwork around them. Where, in the case of Sikhs and a few other religions, there is simply no paperwork around it. It's all on-the-job training, if you want to put it that way, which is hard to get recognition for. So we'll look for opportunities to find some way to do that.

We'll certainly have to bring that forward. We're trying to find a little bit more information on the—well, maybe we've got it—on the sports issue. We—certainly, I mean, the school divisions themselves have quite a bit of discretion in regards to that. I know that a number of school divisions have very active cricket programs, which, you know, 10 years ago, to say that would be a big sport here in Winnipeg would have raised a few eyebrows. Now it—clearly a very big sport and very engaged. We do fund, of course, phys. ed programs, and if the school system—the school division, sorry, wants to pick some new or different sports in that, then we would certainly—we would fund those. And, if there's equipment involved, it would be, you know, at the discretion of the school division.

So I'd suggest to the member that probably the best way to get some of these more engaged is to approach school divisions that have an interest, have a number of people in their school division that would have an interest in this particular sport and suggest that this is something new and different that they might want to try and bring it into Manitoba. You know, just because we have a tradition in hockey and a certain type of football, doesn't mean that that's the only options available. Certainly, we're keen to expand our horizons.

We have a very, very mixed community out there now and so sports that are of interest to new immigrants, something that I think most school divisions are extremely friendly to. You know, soccer has—which was—used to be a very minor sport amongst young people, now, clearly, the biggest single thing out there, and has really, literally hundreds of players at different age groups involved. And, you know, we're seeing facilities built—indoor facilities built to accommodate the increasing interest in that. So, you know, I think that there's potential for some different sports. This is one—the one the

member has mentioned isn't one that I'm familiar with, so, certainly, I'm keen to learn a little bit more about it.

I'd be happy to sit down with the member and talk a little further about the issue of visitors and with the skill set on religious workers. We will have meetings coming up with the federal government, and we will have some opportunities to put forward some suggestions, so maybe we can work out something that we can carry forward, and I look for his advice on that.

Mr. Saran: Thank the minister for his—those comments. It's kind of encouraging. And, also, I think when direction comes from the top or direction comes in common, go to all these schools, they will be more receptive as compared to individual schools. You will talk to this school, they might say yes, but another school won't have that program, then they won't have anybody to compete—other team to compete. If that comes from the top, perhaps that will become easier and, maybe, they're not aware of that, once they become aware of that, they will start doing it.

And there is another which I noticed the premier of BC, and the BC government, they are going in that direction. That direction is language—teaching language. They are teaching English, short, meaning the language, and now French is also taught at some point; I'm not that much aware of that. But they are going to have a third language which will be an optional language. Somebody may pick up Tagalog; somebody may even pick up Punjabi; somebody may pick up Hindi, or do whatever, there's a demand.

So those languages, they should be in the school system. Like, when I was in school, grade 1, you will start Punjabi because that is the main language from that province. Grade 3, international—national language, Hindi. You will start Hindi. And in grade 6, you will start English. So, in that way, that wasn't—there was no option; that was compulsory. But in our system, maybe we can do English and French, they could be compulsory, whatever their status is; I don't know that much, but that's there.

* (11:40)

But providing at a lower level, not at the higher level, at a lower level, grade 5, grade 6, other optional languages, they must have to take another language. It doesn't matter which language they take. So that will help for—to increase our skill and ability

to deal the other countries when those kids are grown up they will—might be ambassadors, they might be business people. So that will help us.

So I will suggest to that and I hope the minister will be acceptable to that.

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

And there again I'll try and break it into two pieces and answer the two parts separately.

First in regards to the athletics, if there is interest even in individual schools that can be brought forward through the school division. There is a Manitoba High School Athletics Association that can help put together leagues if there's a particular sport. So perhaps in conjunction with them, if there is interest enough in a particular school, that can be brought forward.

And there's quite a range of sports out there now. We've seen some actual—some reintroduction of some sports, fast pitches has recently come back into the high school process, and I know that my own kids are playing high school—or were playing high school ringette, which didn't—wasn't there a few years ago, so there is some traditions that are re-emerging.

But we're certainly open in regards to that if there's enough demand to put something together and the High School Athletics Association can work with the individual schools and the individual phys. ed. programs to try and make that work.

Regards to language, it's an interesting question because we have a lot of programs out there now: two First Nations programs, both of which are immersion programs; we also have Spanish; we have Jewish schools, and some of these are getting into the private school realm; we do have private schools that teach Punjabi that we fund. So, certainly, there's some options in regards to there. Of course, traditional English and French and French immersion schools. We also have a couple of schools out there that are teaching German, and we also have a school that has a Ukrainian program. So we're a pretty multinational education system already.

But, on top of that, if someone has ability in a particular language, they're able to challenge, and we would put together a testing process so that they would actually get credits for knowing that. And we certainly have been very open in regards to that at the high school level; in particular, they can challenge for credits. And we also take into account some different activities such as the cadet programs,

for instance, where they get—can get credits in high school for the activities that they have undertaken and the skill sets that they've acquired through that. Music is another one beyond the school. Certainly, the Royal Conservatory grades have a credit system as well. So we've been pretty open in regards to other skills sets, and languages certainly would fall into that category.

The private school system continues to evolve in terms of other skill sets that might be recognized, and I think that we're probably not done in that process of evolution in terms of other skills. Certainly, I appreciate the member's point that even some exposure to other languages can be very useful in—after school in the business world. I had opportunity to travel on trade missions on behalf of the Province back in the '90s, and certainly I wish I'd known more languages than I have exposure to. There's certainly places in the world where English is some use, but other languages would be far greater of use, and certainly you become—you come to appreciate those that have abilities with multiple languages. They certainly have a great value, not only to themselves here in what they know, but to help with other—for others in the business world. I hope that answers some of his question.

Mr. Saran: Yes, I appreciate the minister's comments.

I understand there's many optional situations where they can take Punjabi or other languages and even in time, if a number of students are available, sometimes that's available. But if that becomes a part of the compulsory curriculum, more like, as I said, there's Punjabi, then Hindi, then English that was compulsory, you have no choice, so you are learning other languages. Over here, maybe we can make compulsory you have to take a third language; doesn't matter which language you take. That should be part of the main curriculum, not after school some other time around the optional level.

But, further than that, I would go to, there are other situations like our part of—some incidents are part of our history. And those are not from the major culture, but those are caused by the major culture, and, for example, Komagata Maru incident. That was part of the history that happened on Canadian soil and happened on one group who is now immigrant over here, and that's not in the history. Similarly, Japanese incident or Chinese incident, those were—happened in Canada. And those are not part of the history, and sure I—last time when I talked to our

minister and we were able to make it optional, but optional, it's up to the teacher whether he pick up or choose or not. Those histories should be compulsory subjects, compulsory within the curriculum of history, and students should be learning about that, so we don't make the same mistakes in the future.

At one time, I was also able to—I was trying to convince—I was not able to convince—perhaps we should have some courses on the—comparative courses on the cultures. Supposed—in The Maples, the Filipino community, there's the East Indian community. At least if there is some kind of comparative study of cultures, my—our children, who born over here, they will know where their parents come from and, at least, they will appreciate that and they will be able to co-relate.

So that's my—another suggestion, but my main suggestion, at this time, is entering Komagata Maru Japanese incident or other incidents who happened in this country, that should be part of—that should not be ignored and should not be eliminated.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question. Certainly, raises lots of interesting issues.

We have, through the high school system, a total of about 30 credits, of which 17 are compulsories and the other 13 are optionals; that's to graduate. Up until grade 11, Canadian history is mandatory, compulsory. We are, actually, because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports, certainly looking at changing some of the content in regards to that.

The member makes an excellent point. I know that there was an apology for the incident, the—excuse my language here, but Komagata Maru incident, and I suspect that it'll be one that, hopefully, gets incorporated into that system, in the compulsory component. And I know that there's already a mention in there of the Japanese and some of the German internments that occurred during the Second World War.

I think it's very important that today's kids learn from the mistakes that we made in the past so that they will not repeat them. And so, certainly, we will make sure that we try and get as much as is possible incorporated into that. It may be called Canadian history, and it certainly reflects Canada's past actions, but certainly it includes a lot of interactions with other governments and other cultures. And it's also very important that Canadian history is changed to recommend—to recognize what

has come forth from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And we know that it's—that we're a lead on that, and that's one of the things that has been flagged as needing to be changed. So we're certainly in process on a number of those issues.

That said, the social studies courses that are offered in earlier years often can contain some elements of these particular incidents. We know that that's really very much at the discretion of the teacher involved, and so some may focus on it more than others, based on their own particular interests—whether it's their background or whether it's representative of the community that they're teaching. And I hope that they do, in fact, adjust their social studies courses to be relevant to the students that they have. I think that's important to get engagement, frankly, with their student population, and we certainly encourage that.

So we'll make, you know, make everyone aware that there's some opportunities in regards to that.

Did also want to just—as an—finish up on the issue of sports. We do provide a little over \$200,000 a year to different—oh, this is for, sorry—this is for Aboriginal and international languages—little over \$200,000 a year for after-school language training, which includes Aboriginal and international languages, and that's at the options of the school divisions to pick that up. And—so that's funding that is available specific to that. So, perhaps, we'll see more action in regards to that.

That's in the public school system. As was mentioned earlier, in the private school system there are some—and we partially fund that, of course, as the member knows. There are some schools, now, offering more extensive training in regards to that. And when it comes to other languages, we are certainly prepared to be very open and inclusive. We recognize that the nature of Manitoba and how it's quite different, and we want to be as inclusive a government and a province as is possible.

But we do appreciate the fact that we probably need to look at some curriculum changes, in particular, on Canadian history, to make sure that we include any and all incidents that occurred that have a cultural bent to them, so that everybody understands what has happened in the past.

Mr. Saran: Okay, I thank the minister on those answers he gave to me, and appears as somewhat encouraging, and being opposition, I should not admit it, but I admit that they're encouraging. I hope

to keep continue to talk to the minister. Also, I appreciate the department's staff help in this matter and, hopefully, I will—we also talking to them, and I thank everybody. Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I understand that the minister is the chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

So, with that in mind, would the minister be able to tell us who the other members of that committee are?

* (12:00)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, before you get going, I will just get you to introduce your staff that have joined you in the Chamber today.

Mr. Wishart: I have just been joined by Dr. Rob Santos, who is assistant deputy minister and associate secretary to the Healthy Child Committee, and Jan Forster, who is a ADM in the workforce—field for us. So thank them for joining us here.

As to the membership of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, it is a six-minister committee, of which I am chair, which includes the Minister of Families, Minister Fielding; minister of Aboriginal and municipal relations, Minister Clarke; Minister of Justice, Stefanson; and the minister of culture—

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me, minister. I just want to let you know that we're supposed to refer to people to their constituency or their portfolio.

Go ahead.

Mr. Wishart: —take the names off—the minister of culture and heritage, and I think that should be everybody, right?

Consider this, and I'd like to enhance on this a little bit, I consider this a very important committee of Cabinet. As I've referenced in some other discussions, the smaller Cabinet size encourages us to work together quite a bit and, actually, makes it almost something you have to do to get everything done. And we look for opportunities in regards to this. We know that there are a number of areas that we're going to be touching on, through Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, that are very important to Manitoba's future. And so we look for a number of opportunities.

We're planning on having a meeting very shortly, but, as the member probably appreciates, there's limited time while the House is sitting. So we're certainly looking to try and get a little bit of

this stuff behind us before we begin our next project, if we might very well put it that way.

Mr. Kinew: So just—I wasn't as quick with my pen as I might have liked there; I only got five of them down. I got Education, Families, indigenous and municipal, Justice, culture and heritage. I believe I'm missing one there.

Could the—[interjection] Health. Okay, thanks. I hear Health from across the aisle.

And am I right in understanding, so this committee has not met yet? It hasn't had a chance to sit down yet?

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

We haven't had a formal meeting, as we sort of, as a subcommittee of Cabinet, sat down and said, this is who it will be and this is what the area is around, and discussed a few parameters, but not a formal, recorded meeting yet, no.

Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Kinew: As chair, what agenda will the minister set for this committee?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome.

Now, to the member's question, certainly, initially—I mean, there'll be some of the things that I know that we'd touch on in the future—but prevention in terms of anything that might happen to children in the process so that they're ready for the school system is certainly a high priority from our perspective.

Of course, the issue of prevention in CFS is something that falls within the realm of Families. So though the—we'll certainly be talking about that because they're a part of the committee and we'll continue to develop that. The whole issue of lifelong literacy and getting kids ready for the school system will certainly be something that's included in that.

One of the big issues that we will be bringing forward and discussing, and I suspect every one of those departments will have a lot of input in this, is the whole issue of mental health, which we think is one that has been underserved. And we were—we're looking for opportunities to make improvements in that regard. And as has been indicated, our government is planning on bringing forward a fairly robust mental health strategy approach on that.

The other thing that this Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet has been able to do in the past,

and we hope to continue doing that, is evaluate the programs that are out there as to how they work, how they're working. And I know it's been very interesting looking at some of the evaluations that have already been done. Certainly indicate that there are some pathways forward that we would like to take advantage of, that work for the children and improve their expectations dramatically. And I think that's really what this is all about is to improve the expectations for children, to work within all of the government systems—you know, we will continue to work together and try and find and identify those opportunities, pursue them in a co-ordinated fashion between the different departments of government. That's the intent of the committee. And look for better outcomes. Education will be just one of those outcomes. There are certainly outcomes for Department of Families, Department of Justice, Health Department, Culture and Heritage. You know, all can stand to benefit from a co-ordinated sort of cross-departmental approach because many of the things that you do actually have benefits in multiple areas.

So that's probably our initial agenda, if you want to put it that way, and would certainly move forward from there.

Mr. Kinew: So picking up the line on mental health, I see that there's an increase to the budget for the Child and Youth Mental Health Strategy, and there's an explanatory note there saying that it's to facilitate the annualization of that mental health strategy. Can the minister just explain what is meant and what actually goes into the annualization of that and, you know, what are the costs? I see it's an increase of about \$1.1 million, so if we could get some insight as to what that is going to cover.

* (12:10)

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

And, as to what it includes, I mean, it's fairly wide-ranging. It includes right from parents-and-babies approach, right through the school system to complex-needs kids that, well, can be all the way through to the school system.

This is—was an initiative that started last year, there was about \$2 million put into it last year in the setup process. There was need for additional funding this year and that's what that 1.1 is, and then we'll move forward from there with regular annual funding once things are initialized. It creates a sort of a special group to work with extremely high-needs

kids out of NorWest community co-op, I think it is, yes, and the size of this particular unit appears to be in the five- or six-individual range.

Funding for that also does come from other departments as well, which would obviously include Health, so we're certainly looking for trying to take an integrated approach on mental health right out the gate here that makes sure that we—we're trying to provide services over a fairly wide range. I suspect over time we will focus on the areas that—where the needs are measured to be the greatest. The first group that we're beginning to work with are 15 extremely high-needs kids in the system, and that'll be the initial focus.

Mr. Kinew: When the minister talks about the initial 15 in the system, can he clarify, does that mean through the school system or is that from the Health system? Which system are those young people coming into interaction with the program through?

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

The 15 that we're talking about actually have been identified from a number of different sources. Part of it is from Education, of course; part from Health and part from Justice, have all worked together to identify these high-needs individuals. I suspect that they have been flagged in all—in multiple parts of the system and that we're simply trying to work co-operatively to help these individuals begin to move forward and navigate the system, more focused on getting better results than anything else, and certainly we're trying to help the individuals.

Mental health, you know, is such a complex problem; certainly anywhere that we can approach and be effective in the system, whether it's done through Education because we have the contact or whether it's done through Health because they have the contact, we just need to get the approach co-ordinated. I think the member understands that in the past it was often passed from one department to the other a little too much and solutions weren't really attempted. We're hopeful and we have certainly seen some data to suggest that this type of approach might begin to deal with the problem. I know it's a small start, but it's at least a start.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you Mr. Chair.

When the program shifts over to the regular annual funding, is it expected to be in the same range as it is this year or would it revert back to the lower amount closer to 2 million? I guess basically, is the 3.1 this year kind of like a one-time bump or is that

like what the maintenance cost to continue delivering this program will be?

Mr. Wishart: The 3.1 will become a kind of a baseline for that.

We will have—of course—to have discussions with other departments as to funding. The costs of a mental health strategy is going to be, I suspect, well beyond that when we look at all the departments involved. But we're just beginning on that process. Because of our position as chair, we get to do some of the lead development work on this, and I think that that's really what has happened up until now. And we'll certainly be looking to other departments as we move forward.

That's the purpose of the Committee of Cabinet, and we'll work together as well as we can. I'm certainly feeling that there's a very strong willingness across multiple departments to try and deal with some mental health issues that haven't really—and I don't know whether to blame structure or willingness or whatever—haven't really been dealt with as robustly as I think Manitobans want to see them dealt with.

I know during the election campaign, and I'm sure the member heard it as well, there were a lot of households that mentioned the issue of, we don't—we're not dealing with mental health very well in this province. Canada as a whole, frankly, doesn't have a great history in regards to that, but Manitoba in particular certainly seems to have accumulated some issues that we want to try and deal with. And it—and I was surprised, actually, at how many doors it came forward—that people brought forward the issue of we need to have a strategy to deal with mental health issues in this province that's more robust and more predictable, and a little more preventative than reactive, which is where we have been up until now.

Mr. Kinew: I would agree with the minister's characterization of this being a doorstep issue, for sure.

In fact, in addition to that, I was talking to a group of teachers and admins from Seven Oaks School Division recently, and they highlighted this as one of their top concerns, additional resources for mental health supports in schools and the ability to service more of the students that they're working with. So I think that increased resources in this area makes sense, and something that we should be looking at.

I guess, with respect to those conversations, you know—and I realize that consultation is a very broad term, but who has the minister been dealing with in terms of designing this strategy, and who has he been hearing from? Is it teachers? Is it, you know, superintendents of school boards? You know, if he could give us some insight as to who is being tapped to help inform the design of this program.

* (12:20)

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. I know he has an interest in this area, and—as do I. And I'll give the previous government credit where credit's due. They had begun a consultation process that was fairly broad, and we'll certainly continue to do that.

Parents and youth in particular and a surprising amount of leadership from the youth themselves on this issue, that I think they recognize the problem and associated long-term impacts of it.

Professionals in the field, of course, will be consulted, and the schools and the school boards themselves, parent-teacher associations, will be all part of this process.

I think the member may recognize that the protecting children act that we introduced the other day, though, you know, is somewhat independent of this, is also going to have some impact on this. If he's familiar with the work that has been done in the Sheldon Kennedy centres in Alberta, the early intervention and very quick reaction that these centres provide, and it's a wraparound from multiple departments, have been very effective, and certainly their example. In fact, Sheldon mentioned the other day, Sheldon Kennedy, that they now have seven satellite facilities opened to work with their main centre.

The main centre was dealing with a couple of hundred individuals a month. With the satellites, they expect to put that number up towards the thousands, which is kind of scary when you look at the size of the need.

We know that we have a significant need here in Manitoba as well. Our numbers, you know, from a number of other fronts indicate so, and so we're looking for opportunities to, once we get the act in place, to expand here in Manitoba, too, and I suspect that the approach that we are taking here in Manitoba that, so far, has been co-ordinated through Snowflake Place which existed, but this is beyond the mandate that they had before, will grow in size and actually

become a bit of a player in this whole process in helping us identify the high-risk youth, the high-needs youth and co-ordinate some of the responses between the various government departments, so—and perhaps it'll be a part of this whole process in the education system as well.

Very often we hear from—and I've heard from teachers and administrators as well, that they identify kids but they're really not sure what to do with them, where to fit them into the system, so we're hopeful that we'll find a clear path forward, whether they become part of this particular group or whether we can deal with them other ways through the system.

It has long-term impacts that are very positive, not only for the individual but also for the education system. It reduces the number of high-needs kids that are in—special needs kids that are in the system, but it's so much more about the individual child and the outcomes for the individual child. We can't forget that we must focus on the benefit for the individual child.

Mr. Kinew: So, earlier the minister had referred to a robust mental health strategy of the new government, so can you explain if there are additional pieces to that strategy, or is this it, you know, for lack of a better way of phrasing it? Are we talking about, you know, in this line item, the new strategy, or are there additional pieces that the minister can provide us some information on and, you know, where we'd find those?

Mr. Wishart: And I thank the member for the question and his continued interest in this area. This is certainly one of the initial parts of the overall strategy, but this will not be the complete strategy. The goal really is to evolve into a complete multi-age strategy. Certainly, the earlier we deal with mental health issues, the better the results in the long term. But I'm certainly very aware that Health in particular has some initiatives and particularly around seniors, actually, because that's another point in time where you see dramatic change. And, historically, we've seen some issues develop in individuals in that 30-year-old range, too, psychiatric issues often. But there's quite a school of thought that wants to trace those back to the early years. So, whether or not it's—we're dealing with effects when we're focused on that group, that'll only be something we discover with time. And I suspect any really good strategy will simply continue to evolve over time.

But it is not just for youth. It is certainly intended to be available through all age sectors.

But youth is a really good place to start, and I'm actually very pleased to be part of that process. As we both mentioned, it's an issue that Manitobans are identifying as something that we need to do additional work on. So we will continue to pursue that.

Mr. Kinew: I believe that in part of the reorganization of the department that there—one of the DMs left. I'm not sure if it was a retirement or what. But I believe it was the DM for the former Children and Youth Opportunities Department. Can the minister explain, now that that position doesn't exist anymore, who will be taking up that workload and where that would fall under the new departmental organization?

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

In regards to who will be responsible to replace that particular position, my poor overworked deputy minister is the one that will inherit those responsibilities.

You know, we—when we restructured the department and amalgamated departments, we were looking for synergies. We've found some already, and we believe that the ability to work within a department what used to be cross-departmental issues is certainly going to lead to some efficiencies in terms of getting the job done. It's not always about the money. Sometimes it's about getting things done and certainly helping the children involved, in this case, or the individuals involved. But the committee of—Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, of course, is sort of an extension of that so that we can reach across a number of departments and try and be more co-ordinated.

The deputies meet as well. So I certainly think that some of the work will occur at that level. And that's a good thing. Co-ordination in government is one of the big challenges these days. Even though when we've gone to electronic communications from various—from all of us, pretty much, we thought that that would make things work better. I'm not entirely sure that it has been the solution that many people hoped it would be, just like it hasn't been the solution to paper. You know, we still probably kill more trees now than we did before because we can print it quicker.

And, you know, it's a question of actually sometimes sitting down and getting to know each other and the relationships, and this is a—now a more focused group. And I think that we'll see

not only some financial savings, I guess, but also some improvements in efficiencies and better communications within the department in our case and with other departments at the committee level.

* (12:30)

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to ask about the office of the Fairness Commissioner, a few questions. There was a mention here of the qualifications, recognition, supports and bridge programming project. That has been completed, so I'm wondering if the minister can provide the committee with an update as to what the results were and what recommendations may have come out of that project.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. We actually touched on this a little earlier with the member from The Maples. We talked a little bit about it too. Office of the Fairness Commissioner, in terms of the report, the real goal of the report and the principal recommendations are around making it easier for immigrants to have their qualifications recognized. So there's a couple things to that. Certainly, we recommended some changes to some of the professional organizations, put a little more information out there on their websites, so that immigrants would be better prepared and understand what it is that they expect in terms of the qualifications. Some pre-qualification too, before applications came in, is something that we're looking for.

We talked a little earlier with the other member, but regarding the numbers that we're getting, we get a number of applicants that far exceeds our ability to bring them in, simply because of the quota system that's in place for PNP. So, we're trying to make the system work as well as possible, and we're—actually had a meeting the other day with the office of fairness and a number of the regulators, trying to deal with some of the issues in terms of where we can make the system work better, try and be as efficient as possible, try and do a little cross-communications, because there is some overlap.

But, really, it's all about making it easier for the immigrants either to know that they should qualify here in Manitoba before they apply, or that once they do apply in Manitoba, that this is the process forward that they'll have to follow in terms of getting through the system and getting back into the workplace as quickly as possible. It's a loss to everybody if an immigrant comes to Manitoba and they are not able to get back to work quickly, a loss to us as Manitobans, loss to them as individuals and in some

cases, if they can't get back into the marketplace quickly—into work quickly, then of course that gets more difficult for them and more training in—is required, especially in some particular professions. But it's also a loss to the country that they come from and the money that's been invested in them in terms of training all the way through the system.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So I don't think anybody gains out of that. That's why the office of fairness is there, and we're certainly looking for every opportunity to make it work as well as possible and people understand, and to make sure that people know ahead of time when they apply what the expectations of their qualifications are. I know, as a critic on the other side, I, frankly, used the office of fairness pretty often, and I found them very, very valuable, and so there's certainly room for improvement always. We will endeavour to do that.

Mr. Kinew: Did the report have any recommendations regarding the Assiniboine Community College's internationally educated LPN program?

Mr. Wishart: Regarding the ACC and the international education, we're working with the federal government on this one. They have a bit of a pilot project around that as well. And so we're trying to move forward. There's been some backlogs in getting certified, particularly at the free internationally educated nurses.

Nursing programs in different countries don't have quite—don't quite align with our standards, or depending on how big you look at things, we maybe don't align with the international standards because we have the LPN and the RN programs, and that doesn't occur in many other places. So we're looking at a competency test and developing a 'competent' test based on work experience and your education to make sure that we can fit you—the new immigrants, in particular, can be fitted into the right level. Of course, bottom line for this is, of course, the issue of public's protection. We want to be sure that people are qualified. But, as I mentioned earlier, we also want to be sure that people get back into the workplace as quickly possible, and there is significant backlog and in some aspects of the system as it exists now, so a competency test that can place you correctly in the RN, LPN range of skills and then offer you a pass forward is something that we're working co-operatively to try and develop. And that is something that will, hopefully, be the net

results of the discussions and the pilot work that we're doing with the federal government right now.

* (12:40)

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister tell us whether there's any increase or change to the prenatal benefit?

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

The prenatal benefit moving forward in this year will remain exactly the same.

I would also like to request a five-minute break from the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: The break has been granted.

Oh, no. Would there be—is it the will of the committee to have at least a 10-minute break?
[Agreed]

The committee recessed at 12:41 p.m.

The committee resumed at 12:51 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll continue with questioning.

And I will call the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), to continue.

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister tell us whether there's any changes to the positive parent program?

Mr. Wishart: As the member knows, that is a program that is really zero to 12 years of age, is what our target has been, and has received very positive response. And there is no change to the financing of that. Our commitment remains the same.

However, they are looking at piloting, I guess would be the terminology, or attempting to develop a teen-related positive piloting—positive parents program, which, as a parent of teenagers, I can certainly sympathize with. And perhaps it will—you know, when kids come into the world, they're a real bundle of joy and a pleasure to have around, but they sure should come with manuals, because no two kids are ever the same.

Mr. Kinew: Is there a timeline for that pilot program and any money set aside in this year's budget for it?

Mr. Wishart: We're finding money within our existing budget. And it's really just in the development stage here now. It'll be at least a year away. But we're certainly at this point looking for the different partners that might want to be involved

in that program to make it more effective. So it's certainly in the early part of development. And we are sort of funding it with internal dollars at this point in time.

When it's ready to go, then we'll have to go to Treasury Board, as the usual routine is and see whether we can secure funding for it.

Mr. Kinew: And is there any changes to the—or, are there any changes, rather, to the Families First program?

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

This program, actually, was initiated way back in 1998, Families First program, and has been very successful across the province. It's a prevention program with home visitors, and certainly has been very successful in terms of preventing interventions. So it has certainly been a factor in reducing the number of kids that were involved in the child welfare system. Clearly, we are not where we need to be on that one, because we still have way too many kids involved in child welfare. But it's also prevented some injuries, so it takes some pressure off the health system.

Working with public health and public health nurses and home visitors has been a very positive process. It is funded the same as in previous years, so it should continue forward.

Mr. Kinew: What is the minister's strategy with respect to serving the needs of people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and any, sort of, related services that might be needed there?

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

This actually related a little bit back to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, because this is a co-ordinated approach across multiple departments. Really, the focus has been on prevention, intervention and the research around it to make sure that we fully understand, and getting numbers around some of this has been, historically, very difficult, and we're starting, finally, to get some co-ordinated approach to this that actually helps us monitor this. And understanding the problem is the first step in finding solutions.

* (13:00)

Going back to 1998, again, there was an initiative called InSight, which was a mentoring program where mothers that had a issue with fetal alcohol births are working with young mothers to

help prevent further problems with fetal alcohol syndrome. And it has been fairly successful. So this is certainly something that we're continuing to follow up and—but beyond that, there's actually been some initiatives across Canada, particularly western Canada, and as co-chair of the Education ministers' initiative across Canada, I'm involved in that, though I have not had a chance, obviously, to interact too much with my colleagues on that. But I'm really looking forward to that opportunity.

I think this is one of those places where we can learn from each other a lot and from other provinces. It's not just a Manitoba problem; it is a problem worldwide. So there's certainly examples that we hope we can learn from and perhaps put in place here in Manitoba. So we're going to continue working very closely here in Manitoba with the programs that exist and try and get some engagement nationally and internationally as well.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to return to some of the stuff we were just beginning to discuss yesterday about early childhood education. So I'd just like to first ask what is the plan to educate more—or to train more early childhood educators in Manitoba?

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

One of the benefits that we're seeing already, I guess, by changing the structure of the department, is that we're much more connected between the education system and the workplace, having trades and training as part of our whole portfolio. So that's giving us some opportunities, and we're exploring how that might work.

Of course, the big focus that we're working on here that we—that will generate the greater need for early childhood educators is, of course, the opportunity to do home-based daycares, which generate jobs but they also generate an opportunity in terms of self-employment, but they also provide a much-needed service in the community, of course. We know we have a significant waiting list, over 12,000 in terms of kids that are waiting for daycare.

So we'll—we're continuing to work with the colleges—three colleges that do the training to try and increase the number of seats, but we're also working with the high school system to—we hope to be able to introduce into the high school opportunities to get their first year of education at the high school level, which would work very well, I think, in the whole system in terms of—so that some of the people can

come right out of high school and immediately be in sort of the second year of the training program.

We have seen there's always a certain amount of loss between first and second year, and so we lose capacity in the system, if you want to look at it that way, between first and second year. So, having the first year at high school level, they would be right into the second year. That wouldn't be less of an issue, in fact, probably wouldn't lose very many at all. And so that alone will increase capacity in the system. We know with the number of kids that we need to get into child-care facilities that we need a significant number of ECEs. And even with the existing not-for-profit system out there, really, the new hires with that, we find that only about 20 or 25 per cent of them actually have their ECE designation, so a lot of that is done sort of in process now. They're going to school while they're working and part of the process, so we need to make sure that we have quite significant capacity in the system, need to grow that capacity to meet the demand that is clearly out there.

Mr. Kinew: I'm curious to know how close we are to seeing this ability to do the first year of the ECE training in the high school.

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

In terms of developing this at the high school level, the first year, and then getting recognition sort of parallel systems, it would—I mean, we're certainly at the early stages of that. We're hoping to be running pilot for the '16-17 year if everything continues as well as it has been received. And so that would not be widely available, but there would be some spots available in the province, probably in the city of Winnipeg here initially. So we'll continue working on that. I think it's probably a really good idea. I suspect the member might concur on that.

One of the other initiatives that we're actually looking at as well, there's often internationally certified teachers that come to the province here as immigrants and aren't certified under our teacher system. That's also a possibility that, up until now, we've gone back through the education system and they've had to retrain to meet our standard. We may be able to move some of them directly over to become ECEs as well, and that might also contribute to our capacity.

* (13:10)

And the member probably is aware we've had quite substantial interest from some of the new

immigrant groups in terms of home-based daycares, and so that might work very well with a number of the new immigrants if we can follow-up on that and make that part of the system work as well.

Mr. Kinew: And can the minister tell us how many additional ECE spaces will be added in the three colleges this year?

Mr. Wishart: And I thank the member for the question. We're in discussions right now with the post-secondary institutions. We can't really give the member a hard number. We can just say that we are very confident we'll be able to get additional spaces and we are looking for other options as well. Like I said, we know that there's a huge demand out there. Spaces have to be created, of course, in child-care facilities, but you can't do one without the other. It's one of these chicken-and-egg arguments that are forever out there. We know that we need additional spaces but we also know we need additional people.

There are actually quite a few people that have been in the industry at one time or another and have made alternative choices and, depending on demand, we may be able to encourage a few of those people to come back into the system as well. And, like I said, the internationally educated teachers that may be able to fill that particular role, it's one of the cruel ironies, I guess, or inequities in the system, that if you actually have a child-care facility in a school right now, you need ECs for that because the teachers themselves don't qualify. They're okay when the kid's six years old to deal with the child, but when they're, you know, in early childhood and it's a child-care facility, they're not qualified under our system, so it is one of the cruel ironies, inequities, confusing points, I think.

And as we look forward in the future I know that one of the clear messages I got at doors was parents want their child-care facilities either closely associated with the school or down the block, seem to be the two choices that were most popular, and I know that we'll, as a government, we're going to be looking at both of those options.

Mr. Kinew: I guess a related program, I think it's under Division scolaire franco-manitobaine that they had a full-time nursery program.

Could the minister give us an update on the status and the supports for that program this year?

Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Wishart: DSFM offers a full-time nursery program in one school—one school only—the

Gabrielle Roy. And now, as the member knows, a number of school divisions also offer full-time nursery school programming based on their school division and how they move forward, and the need for it varies in different areas. It is a point of discussion in many school divisions these days and often with the parents involved regarding that. But right now DSFM really only offers it in the one-time school, and we're trying to find a number but we know that it's not a large group; it appears to be about 15 students, at least that's the maximum we have down here, we don't have current—a current enrolment number that I can find. So not a big program at this point but available.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, can the minister give us some details of the new report card initiative that was referred to in the mandate letter, you know, tell us, you know, what that's all about? And also if there's an impact on this year's budget?

* (13:20)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Wishart: I never know who I'm going to find there these days.

I thank the member for the question.

We are, certainly, in the early stages of this process. I know the mandate letter made reference to it. So seven weeks in, we've actually had a surprising number of conversations around this already, including some with Manitoba Teachers' Society in regards to this, because, of course, empowering the teachers was one of the remarks brought forward.

What we're looking for, in any changes that are done, and we know that the report card that we're dealing with is relatively new and still actually in the process of being accepted in—as a good way forward in all the school—all the various school divisions. But we're looking to try and make—as much clarity and transparency as possible so that teachers, administrators and parents, actually, all understand what's there in the report card.

I think it's particularly important that we do this in light of the fact that we have a number of special-needs kids in the system and making sure that there's good evaluations for them as well. It actually plays to some degree into we've always had report card data available, provincially, for the high school level, but it's now something that we hope to be able to accumulate for the K-to-8 system, from the report cards, so we'll have a little more clarity. And I know that I've talked earlier, and I know the

member had shown some interest in this as well, that we feel that we actually do lose many of the kids that drop out of high school. We lose them in the K-to-8 system.

So, perhaps, a little more thorough evaluation and an ability to track the individual student a little better will show us where problems develop earlier and allow us the opportunities to take steps for intervention, in terms of providing them additional resources, a little more targeted basis and, hopefully, that will lead us to better results throughout the system and keeping more kids in the system longer, not having to drop out and then come back as adult ed, which is not a bad thing, of course, to have them come back as adult ed. But, if we can keep them in the system all along so that we actually have a more K-to-12 tracking of the individual student, which I think is very valuable.

There's actually other data that suggest that if we do a good job in the early years, we have less special needs, actually, later on in the system. And that's—that, too, is valuable in many regards, because that is a resource that is always tough to find enough of. And so we—if we can track and target a little more effectively, I think that that will be positive all around.

So we can use—we hope to be able to make changes in the report card so that it becomes a much more useful tool, not only for the parent and the teacher and the administrator, locally, but also for the department in terms of tracking how that individual student is doing and making sure that we can intervene, on a timely manner, and not really wait till we're in crisis situation before we do that.

Mr. Kinew: Are the changes to the report cards expected to have any impact on the number of students with individual education plans?

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

We hope, I mean, we don't see that it will increase the number—or decrease the number in any significant way, but we do hope that the information in terms of evaluating them will be of a better quality. And one thing's for sure, that we'll be able to include that information in our province-wide reports a little better than the system does right now.

Individual education plans like that are a good initiative. They're often designed for the individual child. Right now, we have a tough time getting a good measure on them, and so that this might, we believe, anyway, improve that reporting, and

certainly that part of the information will now be incorporated in the ongoing reporting that I talked about earlier.

We very much want to focus on trying track children in the system, especially in the early years, because, as I said earlier, we're very much convinced that we lose them before they get to grade 9 to a significant degree. And so we need to identify when something goes astray, and it can be as much as, you know, a little conflict in the home during one year. And that leads to better results to get behind—or poorer results, sorry—and they get behind and no one makes the effort to help catch them up. And that can get you behind, and it just sort of snowballs from there.

So we're hopeful that we're going to be able to individualize the education system much better.

Mr. Kinew: On a related point, I notice that the proposed protecting children act—I believe, is the title of it—would apply to children with individual education plans.

I'm wondering: Why is it necessary to have the provisions of that bill apply to kids with IEP?

Mr. Wishart: In regards to the protecting children act, one of the messages that we had been getting from teachers and administrators was they needed a methodology to bring forward concerns, now, whether or not that's going to play in a significant way to the individual education plans.

But there have been cases where teachers have brought forward concerns on behaviour of individual students that is generated maybe by an individual trauma at home or pressures in the community or traumatic events that are generated by family members or someone the child knows.

I think the member knows that most of those early years' traumas, I think it's almost 80 per cent, if I remember correctly, are perpetrated by someone that that child knows in the system. And teachers often have expressed to us that they see a difference in the child; they're not entirely sure why that is. So they need an option in terms of reporting that, look in that's a little short of, you know, calling in child welfare and taking the—doing the whole gamut.

That's one of the points in terms of sharing information that I think, frankly, the protecting children act will prove to be—I know that there's always concerns about privacy, both for the child and for the family of the child. And the fact that we're

moving across a number of departments raises a lot of people's concern.

* (13:30)

We asked a lot of questions around this in Alberta and how it's been working there, and it's certainly been working very well in terms of dealing with issues.

I think if the member stops and has a really good look at the protecting child act, that he will be very pleased with that initial move, and that dealing with trauma for each individual child helps each one move, you know, move forward more quickly, deal with the problems.

In terms of, you know, whether it'll have a significant impact on the individual education plans, one of the things that we have seen in the past with Child and Family Services child-welfare system is that kids that are engaged in that system have a great deal of difficulty staying in the school system. They get moved very often. There's been some public discussion about the number of times. And every time they move, it's a question of getting back into the school system.

We tried to track, and I did ask, in the previous government, I asked the minister of Family Services frequently whether they were able to track how many, you know, whether these kids in CFS were actually getting to school. And they don't track that. We were never able to access it from the school system. But I can tell you, by talking to the kids, some of them said that in two- or three-year periods they rarely went to school. So, certainly, that's not a good result for anybody.

So, if we can work together with the education system to make sure that that doesn't happen, that that's a positive all around. And the outcomes for kids in CFS, as the member knows, is it was very disappointing with, I think, 32 per cent of them graduating high school. That's—those kind of numbers aren't something that any of us want to support. So we're looking for tools to help keep everybody in the system going to school and moving forward. And we will certainly attempt to do that.

Mr. Kinew: I'd suggest, then, if the focus really is on kids in care, that perhaps the bill should only have kids in care as the purview, and that it may not be necessary to include children with individualized education plans, because if the goal is to respond to the needs of kids involved with the CFS system, then they are dealt with under another provision within

that act. So just a point to leave parked on the record, I guess.

I'd respond to another part of the minister's statement, there. I believe there was some proposed changes to the public school administration act that were proposed previously to respond to a report that had been commissioned on kids in care and their educational outcomes. The proposed bill, I believe, had some money for transportation attached to it, the idea being that one of the challenges that kids in CFS face is when they're put into a new placement, whether with a foster parent or with a family, that one of the barriers to staying in the same school is that they may be moving out of the catchment area and that the family needs maybe—the new family, rather, needs some transportation assistance to be able to make sure that the child stays in the same environment they were in previously.

So I'd like to ask, I understand that those changes to the act are probably off the table; however, is the budget for the transportation funds to assist kids in care to stay in the same schools, is that still on the books for this year?

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

And regarding the CFS kids in care task force, it was certainly one of the recommendations to take steps to work with the education system to make sure that the kids were in care. There wasn't really a separate bill regarding that particular issue. I think what the member might be thinking of is the customary care bill that was brought forward, which was, I think, Bill 20, if I remember correctly, didn't move forward.

But we are continuing to work in that vein. We're trying to work with the Department of Families to make sure that the need that the member has talked about in terms of kids that get moved from one school division to another can be dealt with. We don't have a specific budget related to that, but we do have individuals assigned to try and help co-ordinate that. When it comes to transporting from one school division to the other, there's always issues and—as to who pays for the transportation, and that is something that needs to be worked out between the different concerns involved whether that would be Families or whether that would be Education or whether that would be the school division and themselves.

But we're certainly looking to try and minimize the impact on that. You know, kids in care already

have a pretty tough row to hoe in life and we certainly want to do whatever we can to make it work as well as possible to keep them in the school system. I made reference earlier to the very poor success rate for kids in care that's—especially when you consider the number of kids in care in this province, that's not a number that bodes very well for their future.

I know I've talked to individuals that have been successful in CFS and, you know, extensions of care, and how far the extensions of care need to go to meet their needs, too, is another point that needs to be discussed at some point in the future. But we're certainly working—trying to work in a positive way with the Department of Families to make sure that we can keep these kids in the system.

Mr. Kinew: Now that I think of it, I think it might have been a follow-up recommendation in the Auditor General's reports. So, anyways, maybe we can follow up on that transportation budget at a later point.

So this—here's a question that might take us to the end of our time here. There's a capital assets, you know, appropriation No. 10, there's declines in both the amortization expenses and interest expenses this year. Can the minister explain what those—which projects will be impacted by those reductions and amortization expenses and interest expenses?

* (13:40)

Mr. Wishart: Thank the member for the question.

And this one is a bit of an odd situation. It really doesn't have anything to do with capital assets in terms of physical buildings or anything like that. What we're doing here is actually writing down the amount of dollars as has been invested in the student aid program, the computer program, the one that was supposed to be delivered to the previous government for a very—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I'm interrupting proceedings, as the total time allowed for Estimates consideration has now expired.

Subrule 7.3 provides that not more than 100 hours shall be allowed for the consideration of business of Supply.

Further, subrule 76.5 provides that when time has expired, the Chairperson shall put all remaining questions without debate and amendment or adjournment.

I am therefore going to call in sequence the 11 remaining resolutions for Education and Training.

I would remind members that, according to the rules of the House, these questions may not be debated.

Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,582,000 for Education and Training, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26,373,000 for Education and Training, School Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,730,000 for Education and Training, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$335,361,000 for Education and Training, Education and School Tax Credits, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,353,507,000 for Education and Training, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$759,766,000 for Education and Training, Advanced and Adult Learning, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$120,177,000 for Education and Training,

Workforce Training and Immigration Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$47,220,000 for Education and Training, Children and Youth Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$78,117,000 for Education and Training, Capital Funding, for fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$935,000 for Education and Training, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.11: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,173,000 for the Education and Training, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes our consideration for the Estimates in this section of Committee of Supply meeting for the—in the Chamber.

I would like to thank the ministers, the critics and the honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

House Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk): The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), on House business.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please see if there's leave of the House to not see the clock until I make a change to a committee announcement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not to see the clock to make a change to the committee announcement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, and thank the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

First, could you canvass the House for leave for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to sit concurrently with the House on Monday, June 27th.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to sit concurrently with the House on Monday, June 27th? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House.

I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting on Monday, June 27, will meet at 3 p.m., rather than 9 a.m., as was previously announced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting on Monday, June 27th, will be to meet at 3 p.m., rather than 9 a.m., as previously announced.

The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please see if there's leave of the House to not see the clock to allow me to table a document?

And could you also ask if there's leave for me to table a revised concurrence list for Monday to replace the one that I tabled yesterday?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave of the House not to see the clock to allow the Opposition House Leader to table a document? *[Agreed]*

Is there also leave for the Opposition House Leader to table a revised concurrent list on—for Monday to replace the one tabled yesterday? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Maloway: I'm pleased to table a revised list of ministers to be questioned in concurrence when the Committee of Supply meets on Monday, June 27th. These ministers will be questioned sequentially.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you all—thank you to all members of the to—of their co-operation this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 1:49, in accordance to the sessional order passed on June 21st, 2016, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 24, 2016

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