

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** I'm tabling a response to a written question about the honourable—from the member from Assiniboia.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

#### Condolences for Toronto Van Attack Victims

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier):** I rise to express the sadness and shock that all Manitobans feel today as we contemplate the senseless tragedy that occurred yesterday in Toronto.

There are many unanswered questions, and we will all learn more in the coming days about the circumstances and motivation behind this heinous and cowardly act. Our thoughts today are with all of those affected by this terrible incident in what is one of the worst such attacks in the history of Toronto.

I want to thank the first responders who demonstrated incredible courage and resolve in coming to the aid of the injured. I also want to thank the medical professionals throughout Toronto and especially those caring for victims at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, North York General Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital, who have done and will continue to do everything they can to help the injured. And I want to thank the Toronto Police Service, who conducted themselves with professionalism, with courage and dedication in the face of this horrific attack.

By now, many of us have seen the video of the brave Toronto police officer who arrested the

suspect, managing an extremely dangerous situation with confidence and courage. The actions of this officer no doubt saved lives and prevented further injuries.

Yonge Street is a free and vibrant street brimming with life, like countless streets in cities across this great country of ours. This tragedy is a reminder to us all that we must remain forever vigilant to ensure the safety and also the freedom of the citizens who go about their lives on those streets.

Madam Speaker, I know that all members of this House and all Manitobans join me in sending our thoughts and prayers to the victims and their grieving, heartbroken loved ones today.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave of the House to observe a moment of silence once my colleagues have finished their statements.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Today our hearts and minds are with Toronto. We send our condolences to the friends and families of the 10 individuals who lost their lives yesterday and the 13 who were injured by the attack.

I ask for healing to all those affected and I pray for a good and speedy recovery for everyone who was injured. This was a tragic event and there is no justification for the murder of innocents.

We all have a connection to Toronto. It's perhaps the unofficial capital of our country. Like many Manitobans, I have friends and relatives in the GTA and my first thoughts yesterday were about them. I found out one of those friends was in the immediate vicinity of the incident, and though we later found out that they were okay, it really helped to underscore the severity of the loss of everyone else who was affected yesterday.

Now, not everyone who was hurt in the attack has been identified, but we can be sure that they were all loved, that they all had family, friends and relatives who will mourn them, that they had dreams and aspirations, things that they wanted to accomplish with their time here on earth. And that has been taken from not just them, but it's been taken from all of us. It's really sad beyond words.

Yet, in the midst of this horror yesterday, we saw glimmers of our country's strength. In that

Toronto police officer, we saw the discipline, the calmness, the resoluteness that signifies our people in uniform, but also the strength of our country's character. In the first responders, we saw the selflessness and, indeed, were reminded once again that health care is an act of love. And maybe there was even a little cosmic justice in seeing the Leafs pick up a victory on a day that their city had suffered so much.

We must all stand together to ensure that the best of us wins out in these times of loss, but I say, Madam Speaker, today we are all Toronto strong.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** It's times like this that we as Canadians show the world who we are.

I have been personally blessed to carry seven lives; six made it to childbirth. My tiny O-Chi Chak went straight into my grandparents' arms. No matter your child's age, each is a treasured person.

A heinous act was committed in Toronto. Ten precious lives were lost and 15 people injured. Those poor mothers, my heart goes out to them. Whole families and communities will never be the same.

That outpouring of support for the families and victims reminds us that we as Canadians are not alone in our grief.

We saw the pictures of countless people who rushed in to help the victims. The video of the officer who faced down the suspect and arrested him peacefully—I want that kind of cop on my streets, cops like our band constables, whose instincts are never to take another life.

We thank the hospital staff, the police, the paramedics, firefighters, all the people who came to help and those who help with the healing. I'd like to thank that cop who didn't shoot.

Today, we send our thoughts and prayers to the families and communities affected by this tragedy, and we must all work together to ensure a signal to the world: that tolerance that we as Canadians are known for.

We must all signal that we will love and respect each other in this difficult time.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

Please rise.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Recognizing Emergency Operators and Dispatchers

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Madam Speaker, whenever any of us encounters an emergency, whether it be a fire, a police incident or a health situation, we intuitively dial 911 confident that the appropriate services will be dispatched, and we witnessed that first-hand as we watched the tragic events in Toronto unfold yesterday.

Of course, when that police officer, firefighter or paramedic arrives and does their job to the best of their ability, in many instances resulting in saved lives, we often thank them. We will tell our family and friends about how the firefighters got the blaze under control and saved the house, how the RCMP apprehended the suspect or how the paramedic stabilized the patient.

We speak of them as heroes, and rightly so. However, we too often overlook a key part of that chain of communication professionals that led to the successful outcome: the emergency call takers and dispatchers who each and every day ensure the health and safety of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, April 8th to 14th was national public safety telecommunications week. We honour the commitment and professionalism of our 911 emergency operators and dispatchers and recognize the very important service they provide to public safety and health in their communities.

Citizens and visitors to our province, as well as emergency service personnel, including paramedics, police, firefighters and community first responders, trust and rely on the professionalism of telecommunication operators to help them during emergencies. These professionals manage hundreds of thousands of calls for help every year during times of distress and emergency situations that can be extreme, and they do this with the utmost grace, care and compassion.

All public safety telecommunications officers deserve recognition for what they do each and every day.

\* (13:40)

So, Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to rise and join me in belatedly recognizing and celebrating the important work of our telecommunications staff during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

We're joined today by Eric Glass of the Manitoba Paramedic Association.

Thank you.

#### **Good Neighbours Active Living Centre**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** For almost 25 years Good Neighbours Active Living Centre has been a vital part of our community, providing important support and social opportunities for seniors throughout northeast Winnipeg in order to stay healthy, active and connected to their community.

For only \$1 per class, members of Good Neighbours have access to a variety of presentations, workshops, fitness and educational classes, as well as outings that create a true social hub that is essential to keeping bodies and minds active and healthy.

The non-profit recreational centre also offers a casual gathering place at the volunteer-run HobNobs Café and bookstore, which provide social opportunities to meet new and old friends alike, helping positively influence seniors' quality of life.

Just as important as the recreation, the centre provides important services such as health consultations, foot care and counselling. They also ensure seniors are kept busy with their Home Maintenance Program. Seniors interested in earning supplement income are connected with others who need services such as lawn care, helping both of them maintain their independence.

Overall, the centre relies on more than 250 current volunteers to maintain its operations, and the work of these dedicated volunteers and board members has ensured the centre's growth and success.

Good Neighbours members also host three community teas a year, with their delicious fancy sandwiches and dainties being well known by many members of this House. They are a great opportunity for residents, businesses and government representatives to come together and engage with seniors to learn more about the vital services the centre provides.

On May 3rd I look forward to attending this year's annual fundraising dinner, which will be an anniversary celebration of 25 years of enhancing lives of seniors and connecting our community.

I ask that all members of this House join me in congratulating and thanking Good Neighbours Active Living Centre on 25 great years of serving seniors in northeast Winnipeg and to wish them all the best as they look forward to the next 25 and beyond.

#### **Colonel Andy Cook**

**Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James):** It is my honour today to pay tribute to Colonel Andy Cook, commander of 17 Wing in Winnipeg.

Since becoming an MLA I've had the privilege of spending a significant amount of time with the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces and their commander.

Colonel Cook is a veteran of the Afghan conflict and was deployed three times to theatre, twice as a C-130 tactical aircraft commander. He flew missions to insert Dutch troops into forward operating locations. His third deployment was as a commanding officer to support a hub in the United Arab Emirates. Other flying tours included—excuse me—assignment to an air-to-air refuelling pilot; team co-ordinator of the RCAF Snowbirds; commanding officer of 437 Squadron on the Airbus 310, transporting such dignitaries as the Prince of Wales, Duke of Cambridge, Governor General and our Prime Minister.

Colonel Cook's fondness for Winnipeg and the men and women he commands has created an unprecedented environment for co-operation and communication with this government and the City of Winnipeg.

Recently, Colonel Cook represented the Canadian Armed Forces with the federal Minister of National Defence and Treaty 1 First Nations chiefs in the ceremonies charting the future of the Kapyong Barracks site.

On behalf of myself and the Manitoba military envoy, the member from St. Norbert, it is an honour to rise here today and wish a fond farewell to 17 Wing Winnipeg commander, Colonel Andy Cook, as he and his lovely wife Tracy prepare to move to Ottawa.

Please join me in wishing Colonel Cook and his wife Tracy well in their Ottawa posting.

### Women in Politics

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Today I rise in excitement as it marks a major milestone in Manitoba's political history. This Thursday marks the 30th anniversary since a great role model of mine, the Honourable Sharon Carstairs, formed official opposition. This is exceptionally noteworthy because she was the first female leader of any opposition party in Canadian history.

Manitobans know that we need women in politics, and Ms. Carstairs is one of the many women who debated in these Chambers and broke down barriers for women. Look how much has changed, and look how much we should be grateful for. Today I have the honour of standing in this Chamber with 14 strong, courageous, dedicated female MLAs, and we are a force to be reckoned with.

Women in politics still have many barriers to break down. We still have to fight the good fight, because even in 2018, we face remarkable levels of inequality. But if we continue to rally, continue to speak up and, most of all, continue to stand together, we will continue to accomplish great things.

In closing, I would like to take this moment to recognize the Honourable Sharon Carstairs, a pioneer in women's politics. I look forward to celebrating her this Thursday as we kick off our St. Boniface by-election.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Steinbach Pistons

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome to the Manitoba Legislature today members of the 2017-2018 Manitoba Junior Hockey League champion Steinbach Pistons. And they brought along with them a special guest, the Turnbull Cup.

After another incredible regular season finishing tops in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, the Pistons were a dominant force in the playoffs, defeating the Swan Valley Stampede, the Winnipeg Blues and in the finals, the Virden Oil Capitals.

Canadians across our country have united in our hearts with junior hockey players since the tragedy involving the Humboldt Broncos. The Pistons will go on to play the champions of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, which will be decided tonight, for the ANAVET Cup. That series will no

doubt bring with it a new level of emotion added to all the emotion that's been experienced so far.

And I want to pay a special tribute to all of the coaches and the staff who've walked alongside these young players, not only in the past few days, but especially the past few days. Paul Dyck, the coach of the Pistons, is an example of one of those mentors. Drafted by the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1991, Paul is not just a hockey leader as the coach and general manager of the Pistons, he's a leader in life for the young players on the Pistons. He knows his role isn't just to produce good hockey players, but also to produce good citizens and community leaders, and we are proud to call Paul one of Steinbach's own.

Madam Speaker, as the Steinbach Pistons go on to compete against the Saskatchewan champions, we of course cheer for our hometown team and for our home province, but we will also remember that there are things that are bigger than the game and they are greater than ourselves.

And all of us in the Legislature want the Pistons to know, along with every junior hockey player in Manitoba and Canada, that we are cheering them on, not just as players, but as the fine young people that they are.

Go Pistons, go.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today from the Steinbach Pistons Junior A Hockey Club: Paul Dyck, Graham Pollock, Braden Purtill, Darby Gula, Will Koop, Mark Taraschuk, Drew Worrada, Bradley Schoonbaert, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature and thank you for bringing the cup.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Changes to Health-Care Services Impact on Emergency Departments

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, I hope you're saying those same words to the Jets in a few weeks' time.

\* (13:50)

Pressure is growing on the emergency room at St. Boniface and the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts are making it worse. You know, we're hearing stories of patients not getting the care that they need. Their families are worried. You know, we're hearing reports of nurses being forced to work so much, so much overtime—front-line workers, they're being stressed; they're still confused.

We heard yesterday that some 14 per cent at Concordia and 19 per cent of nursing positions are vacant at Seven Oaks. So it seems that the Premier really is in a rush to close those emergency rooms, keeping those nursing positions empty.

If the Premier does proceed with that misguided plan it's going to throw St. Boniface's ER into chaos.

Will the Premier instead stop with his misguided plan to close the emergency rooms and instead invest in real health care for Manitoba families?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, Madam Speaker, the only one who is confused is the Leader of the Official Opposition.

In fact, there is a record level of investment in health care this year than there ever was under the NDP. More than a half a billion dollars more is being invested into health care in Manitoba than under the former government.

In fact, the changes that are happening within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority already proving results. Not only do we have less people waiting to get into personal-care homes than ever before under the NDP, but wait times are going down by 17 per cent since the transformation began.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the numbers show that wait times are actually increasing since this Premier started closing emergency rooms and urgent-care centres—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Again, the wait times are up since October. October is when they started closing the Misericordia urgent care and the ER at Victoria General.

Now, when we saw a massive lineup of ambulances at St. Boniface Hospital, the Premier blamed the flu. When there was a massive increase of mandatory overtime at the same hospital with

nurses, the Premier again blamed the flu. When the wait times increased across the city at emergency rooms since they started their closures, again, the Premier blamed the flu.

But patients and nurses have a different diagnosis. They say that the cause is this misguided plan to close emergency departments in Winnipeg. The damage being done will take a generation to repair.

Instead, will the Premier back off his plan to close emergency departments all across Winnipeg?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, when he's looking at that wait-times chart he clearly has it upside down. Because what—if he would look at it objectively and the way it's been presented, the wait times have been going down since the transformation. There's a year-over-year decrease of 17 per cent in wait times in emergency rooms in Winnipeg.

Now, when it comes to the challenges that are—happen in our emergency rooms over the last many years, record long wait times, some of the longest wait times in all of Canada, people were waiting a hundredth of thousands of hours collectively in Winnipeg to get care.

We don't blame the flu; we don't blame the staff. For that, we blame the NDP, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier is in such a rush to close emergency rooms here in Winnipeg that he forgets that he can make the situation worse, and that is what's happening; that's what the numbers say, in spite of the protestations of the Minister of Health.

Again, the experts have told them to back off this plan, the plan to close Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency rooms, yet the number of nursing positions vacant seem to suggest that they're proceeding full steam ahead with this plan that's not only going to affect Concordia and Seven Oaks and the communities that they serve, but it's also going to have a huge impact on St. Boniface Hospital. Again, all those tens of thousands of emergency room patients are going to be diverted to St. Boniface Hospital, and the resources at St. Boniface are not going to be enough to accommodate that influx. It is going only to add to the confusion; it's going to add to the chaos in the system.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) instead back off and cancel his plan to close emergency departments in Winnipeg?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The Leader of the Opposition can defend the status quo all that he wants, but what he is defending is the system that produced the worst wait times in all of Canada, Madam Speaker. Nowhere in Canada did people wait longer than they did in Winnipeg. That's the status—or that's the system that he wants to keep going. He doesn't want to change that.

He ignores the fact that there are investments happening at the Grace emergency room. I had a wonderful tour of the newly expanded Grace ER yesterday. They—open about a month. It'll serve Winnipeg and others well, I believe.

There are also new investments going into St. Boniface. The tender was awarded, I believe, just a little while ago, on the new expansion that's happening at the St. Boniface ER. Those are investments that he voted against.

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

#### **Bureau de l'éducation française Assistant Deputy Minister Position**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Merci, Madame la Présidente. J'ai eu le grand plaisir ce weekend dernier d'aller à une rencontre, une réunion pour l'éducation—pour l'avenir de l'éducation française ici au Manitoba. C'était très inspirant de regarder la passion des parents, puis des enseignants qui étaient présents là-bas.

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last weekend, I had the great pleasure of attending a meeting, a forum on education—on the future of French language education here in Manitoba. It was very inspiring to see the passion of the parents and teachers who participated in the event.*

#### **English**

But it was also a difficult meeting, Madam Speaker. The Premier and his ministers last year decided without warning to eliminate the position of the assistant deputy minister in charge of Bureau de l'éducation française. That is going to have a huge impact on French education from now and going forward into the future in our province. It affects not

only the Francophone community, but it also affects French immersion in our province.

Will the Premier reverse his cut to French language education and instead restore the ADM position for Bureau de l'éducation française?

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

I certainly was privileged to be there on Saturday as part of the consultation process we're having with the Franco-Manitoban community, one of many consultations we have had with them in the last few months, looking to expand the services that we're offering in French here in Manitoba, not only from the traditional K-to-12 system, but to include more opportunities in trades and training, and also in the post-secondary system. I don't know why the member is always against progress.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I don't think many members of the Franco-Manitoban community will find it reassuring that the minister calls eliminating the position of the person who advocates for the future of their community is progress. Now, I know that, because everyone who was present at this meeting on the weekend said it was a bad move to eliminate the ADM position for BEF.

Also, Canadian Parents for French, they consulted a survey amongst their membership and do you know what the result was, Madam Speaker? One hundred per cent of the survey respondents said it was a mistake to eliminate the ADM position for BEF. Thought of in another way, it means zero per cent of Parents for French are on board with this government's plans.

Will the Premier instead reverse this cut to French language education and restore the ADM position for Bureau de l'éducation française?

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

We're certainly working constructively with the French community and consulting with them on the needs of the French community. It's results that actually count in—when it comes to education, and French immersion has been a growth area for the Department of Education, and we're looking for opportunities for those same students past the K-to-12 system. I think the member should get on board with that.



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

### Education System Funding Student-Teacher Ratios

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, we can see the results of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) plan for education. Enrolment is going up and yet support in real dollars is going down, Madam Speaker. We know that the Premier's de facto cuts to education funding are costing school divisions millions, and the impact is that the ratio between students to teachers is going up.

Show me one parent in Manitoba who wants their child to have less one-on-one time with their teacher. It can't be done, Madam Speaker. There are no—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —parents who want their child to have less one-on-one time with a teacher. Again, the FRAME report numbers back this up. They say the ratio of students to teachers is going up and it's a direct result of this government's real-dollar cut to education funding in Manitoba.

Will the Premier instead reverse his planned cuts in this year's budget and commit to real investments that will keep class sizes down for elementary school students?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on what's been happening in education here in Manitoba.

\* (14:00)

When the previous government was in place, we went from No. 5 in Canada to dead last in terms of outcomes on literacy and numeracy. I'm pretty sure Manitoba parents are not happy with those kind of results. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

The honourable Minister of Education—the honourable member for Concordia.

### Education System Class Size Concerns

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Parents have been very clear with this government. They've been telling us they want more one-on-one time for their children with the teachers. And that's not just good—

that's not just common sense, that's also a proven strategy to improve outcomes. When a child has more one-on-one time with a well-trained and well-supported teacher, small class sizes can make a real difference. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Unfortunately, after three consecutive Conservative budgets, enrolment is increasing but the funding isn't keeping up. The results are that class sizes are getting bigger.

Why is this Pallister government increasing class sizes for our young students?

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

We have certainly worked with the education leadership in this province to make sure that more flexibility has been given to them to address the needs in their class size—or in their classes when it comes to literacy and numeracy.

As I reflected on in my previous question, we are not happy with the outcomes that have been in place with the previous government. We look for opportunities to improve, which is why we had a province-wide consultation in January on literacy and numeracy, and we are looking forward to bringing forward some recommendations to get Manitoba students better results.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, the numbers don't lie. There's 3,900 more children in Manitoba schools since 2015-16, and yet the Pallister government's funding for education isn't keeping up with that growing enrolment, let alone with the rate of inflation. And the results are obvious to everyone, maybe except this government. School divisions across this province are making those tough choices to cut teaching positions, and the class sizes are going up.

Why is this Pallister government increasing class sizes for our young students?

**Mr. Wishart:** I—certainly entertained a little bit by the member's line of questioning. He wants to talk about class size and that seems to be his only focus, and, frankly, Manitoba—the teachers and students and parents are interested in results. And we haven't seen any improvements in results.

And when he wants to talk about class sizes, certainly building seven schools will increase the number of classes.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Class sizes make a difference and this minister knows that. And how do I know he knows that? Because it was his government, when they were in opposition, said that small class sizes can improve educational outcomes for young students. They went around in the election and talked about the importance of the small class size initiative. Then, when they get into power, what do they do? They cut positions for teachers. They cut positions for educational assistants. They cut positions for support staff. They're putting more and more pressures on our school divisions—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —and giving no new resources. It's clear, Madam Speaker, that education is not the priority of this government.

When will they stand up and stand up for the small class sizes throughout this province?

**Madam Speaker:** I am having increasing difficulty hearing, and I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, that when somebody is on their feet that all members listen intently to the questions and answers so that we can ensure that that person is properly heard.

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

We certainly do prioritize education here in Manitoba. That is why we are spending \$50 million more on education in Manitoba than the previous government ever did. So, Madam Speaker, we're interested in not only getting better results for Manitoba students, but a better outcome for Manitoba students. And we are looking at how we can work together across the whole education system to get Manitoba students better opportunities now and in the future.

#### **Addiction Treatment Services Request to Release VIRGO Report**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba's deepening addictions crisis is hurting thousands of families. These families come from all walks of life, from every corner of the province. We share the frustration and fear of watching their loved

ones become addicted to drugs like meth and opioids, with no new treatment options available for them.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said he won't make investments and he said that's because not as many people are dying here yet as in British Columbia.

Will the Minister of Health release the VIRGO report today and do something to take action on addictions?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** You know, Madam Speaker, I'd like to think my friend from Minto is better than the question that he just asked. All of us have been touched by addictions in some way. All of us know that that we need to continue to work to provide treatment options for those who are dealing with addictions in our community.

There's been additional resources provided to the Health Sciences Centre. There's been additional resources provided to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. There's been new treatment opened up in Thompson. Madam Speaker, there's been new front-line treatment when it comes to opiates that's provided.

So a number of different things have been done. There'll be more things that'll be done coming out of the VIRGO report. I hope that my friend from Minto won't try to make politics, which is what—with a very difficult situation, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, it was the Premier who said, this isn't Granville; we've not had the incidences of tragic overdoses. I—once again the Premier's own words appear to be a great problem for this minister and the other members of that caucus.

Every day more and more Manitobans are becoming addicted to methamphetamine and opioids. A provincial budget has now come and gone without any new initiatives, and there's no evidence of any use of a single dollar of the new federal money for treatment of addictions and mental health. And the only excuse this minister gave yesterday is he can't seem to get his expert on a plane to come here for media availability.

Manitoba families want solutions.

Will this minister release the VIRGO report today?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, Suboxone is being used a front-line treatment; wasn't done previously. There is new resources available in HSC that weren't there before. There's new resources available with AFM that weren't there before. There's a new facility in Thompson that wasn't there before.

We will have the expert who wrote the VIRGO report come to speak to the report, and we'll release it. I know that's a difficult issue for the member to deal with because they didn't release reports when they were in government.

We're looking at it, the department is, the recommendations now. We will have Dr. Rush come and speak to it, and we will take action on the report, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, Hansard is a wonderful thing, and yesterday this minister stood in his place and said he couldn't release the VIRGO report because he couldn't get his expert here.

This minister is going to hide until the very last day of session before he releases this report and he knows, because he doesn't want to be accountable to answer questions about his government's failure to take any measures over the past two years to deal with the growing tide of meth and opioid addictions in the province of Manitoba.

Members of his caucus may not take it seriously, but we do.

Will this minister release the VIRGO report today and allow us to chart a path to deal with a very serious issue in this province?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, as much as I like the member for Minto, if he thinks that the only way government or I'm held accountable are by the questions that he raises in the House, he gives himself far too much credit.

We are working all the time, Madam Speaker, to look at different ways to help those who are dealing with addictions. That's why we listened to them when they said they wanted Suboxone as a front-line treatment. That's why there were additional resources added at HSC, at AFM and in Thompson. There are more things that we're going to do.

He can review Hansard. As I said yesterday in Hansard, the department is looking at the recommendations coming from the VIRGO report. It will be released. It'll be released before the end of session, and he can ask all the questions he wants, but I'm driven to make the situation better, not to listen to the questions by the member for Minto.

\* (14:10)

### **Need for Child-Care Spaces Request for Government Investment**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** February reports show that nearly 10,000 children need child care within the next three months. Ten thousand families are facing the end of their parental leave without a plan in place. For families without grandparents or friends or family to help them, this could mean more time off of work or possibly losing their job.

In the face of this emergency, this minister has committed less than 300 spaces for the whole province this year. This is not a solution.

Will the minister immediately start building spaces for these families?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Our government recently made a historical investment with the federal government, over \$47 million of new money for child care. We think it's extremely important to work with the federal government, work with communities to develop child-care spaces and that's exactly what we're doing.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** If the Province would only match those dollars it'd make a huge difference in this province.

For more than a year the minister failed to announce new child-care spaces for families. When he finally did, barely 2 per cent of this 17,000-person wait list. Without affordable child care young parents can be faced with hard choices. One parent may have to give up their job, which will put them in poverty, meaning less income to bring home. For single mothers it could be nearly impossible.

Will the minister support our families and commit to getting them the child-care spaces that are needed?

**Mr. Fielding:** Our government is investing more money in child care than any time in the province's history. That's important investments. We recently

made a commitment over 1,200 new spaces that could be created, 20 new community and school-based projects that are out there. We think that's an important investment. We encourage the NDP to get on board so we can fix the mess that was left by them.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Speaker, 300 spaces this year is not going to make a difference for 17,000 parents waiting on that list. The minister is missing an opportunity to promote Manitoba—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —and encourage young families to settle down right here in our province. With some of the most affordable daycare rates in the country, our province was attracting new parents to the province of Manitoba, but now these parents can't even get a spot. They have to start looking at other provinces where rates are higher, but there are less spots available because of this minister's inaction.

Will he make child care a priority before it's too late?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, our government has made child care a priority. We put our money where our mouth is: over \$47 million of more investments in the child-care sector.

We know what the NDP did when they were in government. They took an ideological approach to child care where they reduced number of home-based spots by over 29 per cent. That is completely unacceptable.

I think if you ask people within the Chamber, in terms of their approaches, we know that over 20 projects were there. If you ask the member from Riding Mountain, he'll say that there's been important investments in child care. I think if you ask the member from St. James, he'll tell you there's been important investments in Assiniboine.

These are the—these are some of the projects, these are some of the investments that we will continue to make as government to fix the broken system that was left by the NDP.

### **Health-Care Services Federal Funding**

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Day after day this government blames everyone but themselves for their decisions. This NDPC team blames the federal

government for cutting health-care funding. It was the feds; it was the Harper government in 2007 that fundamentally changed health funding in Canada to a per capita basis, ignoring the extra costs that a province like Manitoba faces because of people living in northern and rural areas as well as in poverty.

Was the Premier (Mr. Pallister) fighting for his Manitoba team then? No. As an MP he voted for that change.

Will the Premier admit to not standing up for Manitobans in 2007?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** I do appreciate the member raising the inadequate funding from the federal government.

She will know, I'm sure, she'll remember that it was the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, during the election campaign, the federal election campaign, who campaigned—he sent a letter to all the premiers and said if I'm elected as Prime Minister, one of the first things I'm going to do is to convene all the premiers from across Canada together to talk about how we can properly fund health care in Canada. We're going to have a real discussion right across Canada.

We're still waiting for that meeting. It never happened. If she wants to blame Stephen Harper for the promise of Justin Trudeau, she's got a long way to go on that discussion, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** As Manitoba Liberals we are very pleased that the feds have increased funding to Manitoba to about \$434 million now in the last three years.

Does the Premier remember when the Harper Conservatives decided to cut the funding formula to provinces from 6 per cent to 3 per cent? The Premier and his NDPC team would have Manitobans believe that this was our current government—Liberal government that made this change, but it was the Premier's former caucus colleague Jim Flaherty.

Can the Premier set the record straight: Will he admit he now wants to reverse all these federal health-care cuts he supported and voted for?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

That member should remember that the Parliamentary Budget Officer just released a report a number of weeks ago saying exactly that the federal government will have increasing fiscal capacity to address the real gap in health care that they are not addressing. Now, the Parliamentary Budget Officer takes the side of Manitoba and says the federal government could be doing more. Instead, the federal government has chosen to do less.

That member, if she asks these questions, should pay attention to facts like that and others and make sure she has her facts straight.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** Madam Speaker, as a caucus we did meet with the Finance Minister and we told him that we believe that the federal government should play a strong role in funding health care. Since the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has a reputation for not partaking in meetings, perhaps he does not want to meet with our provincial Finance Minister either.

My staff put together a chart of total federal funding that I will table. It's nicely colour-coded for those members: under the federal Liberals, funding goes up; and Conservatives—and under Conservatives, it flatlines.

Is the—if the Premier is opposed to a smaller role for the federal government in health care, why did he vote for it in 2007?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, that member should understand how the health-care transfers are calculated. She understands that that health-care transfer is done on the basis of a three-year rolling average of nominal federal GDP and she knows that this year the GDP is higher. She also knows that every economist in the Western world is saying that all jurisdictions should get ready for slower growth, which means with it will come less of a transfer to Manitoba and less of a transfer to the other provinces.

If that member really wants to advocate for more secure health care in Manitoba, she will begin by contacting, getting on the phone with her federal partners and advocating for a squarer deal for all the jurisdictions and replace the \$2.2 billion that the feds cut to health care.

### **Municipal Governments Workplace Harassment Policies**

**Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert):** Our PC government has recognized there is much more work to be done when it comes to protecting employees in the workplace. After years of inaction—years, Madam Speaker—from the previous NDP government, our government has taken swift action to address inappropriate behaviour and harassment in the workplace by bringing in the no-wrong-door approach.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations inform the House what measures are being taken at the municipal level?

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I'd like to thank the member from St. Norbert for that question.

Our PC government has been very clear: all employees, Madam Speaker, have the right to a respectful workplace. We have taken considerable steps in reducing workplace harassment and we will build on this important initiative. Our government is reviewing The Municipal Act to identify opportunities to strengthen municipalities' ability to enforce violations in their codes of conduct and their culture of concealment. We will be hosting round tables across the province with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Municipal Administrators' Association this June and September to ensure that we can gather information for potential new legislative changes.

\* (14:20)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Government Air Services Request for Proposal Costs**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I asked the minister yesterday, who had received the RFP to privatize government air services, and the minister would not say who. We know the minister has trouble answering questions regarding awarding of contracts, but this should be pretty straightforward. It should be easy to name which company will privatize an essential health-care service Manitobans rely on.

Who has the minister awarded his RFP for privatization to?

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

The member seems to be asking an essential question about whether governments should be focused on trying to get better value for taxpayer dollars. The answer I would have to that member is: absolutely. And that is why this government is engaged in taking a look at the government's overall operations and saying, where are the opportunities to be able to do better with taxpayer dollars? That government never paid attention to those kind of priorities. It will be the focus of this government.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** The Minister of Finance can make up whatever questions he wants while this government refuses to answer the questions that are asked.

We know the RFP to privatize government air services has been awarded. We wanted to know if it was awarded to a Manitoba company, but the minister is refusing to be open with Manitobans, and the minister isn't telling rural and northern Manitobans how much money they are wasting on this exercise.

I asked yesterday and got no answer, so today I will ask again: How much money is the government spending on its RFP?

**Mr. Friesen:** So, Madam Speaker, let us clearly understand that that member just said that when a government goes to a tendered process in a request-for-proposal manner or a quotation-based estimate proposal, he's saying that is a waste of money. Remember that that government is the one that the Auditor General's office cited for the inappropriate use of sole-source contracts, untendered contracts. It was a—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:**—litany of errors and, Madam Speaker, our government will continue to get better value for taxpayer dollars and a commitment to RFPs is part of that commitment.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** Once again this government is refusing to answer simple questions.

Time and money wasted on an expression of interest, time and money wasted on an RFP process, all the while the government has starved Lifeflight of training dollars, delayed needed investments. Lives are at risk when Lifeflight is called. Water bombers

need to be there when there—an emergency. These are essential services that must be delivered by the public, not sold off to the highest bidder.

When will they shelve their plan to privatize Lifeflight?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member is conflicted. He says that these services must be delivered by the public, but he clearly understands that other NDP governments in Canada take a different approach. Some use government air services; some use a hybrid; some use private sector.

What is important is the provision of services that will be adequate and sufficient for the communities and the individuals and the publics that they serve.

However, let us understand that the member's basic question is completely inappropriate. I could not comment on an RFP process if it wasn't—if it was not concluded, and he should not be asking such a question and he should know better.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

#### **International Students Health-Care Coverage**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan):** The Pallister government is undermining post-secondary institutions. Their cuts to programs for international students are going to make things worse. International students contribute over \$400 million a year to our economy and help keep tuition affordable for domestic students. The minister doesn't see those benefits and he has cut health-care coverage for international students.

Why is the minister making it harder for Manitoba to attract international students?

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

We certainly want to work with post-secondary institutions and even some of the K-to-12 that have international students as part of the system. That's why we have worked with the—or the association representing institutions that work with international students across the province of Manitoba, and we are working with them very constructively to make sure that there are programs in place to make sure that no international student comes to Manitoba and does not have access to health coverage.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Logan, on a final—or, sorry, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Marcelino:** The minister's International Education website, as well as the many pages of promotional materials available there, still maintain that international students are eligible for Manitoba health coverage. It's concerning that the government may be misleading potential students. But worse yet, it is that, because their promotional material is out of date, the Pallister government has not—is not being honest with prospective international students.

I wish to table just one of the many pages in their website that could potentially mislead thousands of international students.

Why is—there's still—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Wishart:** We have worked with the Council for International Education here in Manitoba to make sure that they are aware and all of their member associations are aware of this pending change in health-care coverage in Manitoba. We're very pleased to work with this group in a very constructive manner, and we want Manitoba—the number of international students that—to—that come to Manitoba to increase in the future, as it has this past year and in the past. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** I would ask for everybody's co-operation, and I would ask the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) to please—I have stood in this House a number of times already in the last couple of days and there continues to be heckling even after I am asking for everybody's co-operation. And I don't think that's a very good example that we're showing to everybody that watches this on a daily basis, so I would urge everybody to please co-operate.

The honourable member for Logan, on a final supplementary.

**Ms. Marcelino:** International students are now applying and considering their options for the fall. These decisions are being made now, yet the promotional material and the minister's website are no longer accurate. Health coverage will not be available.

Our concern is that potential students are being misled, but even more concerning is the potential that the minister is not promoting Manitoba at all.

Why is the minister undermining international education in Manitoba?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question, and as I said in my previous answer, we're working very constructively with the association representing post-secondary institutions that attempt to attract international students to Manitoba, and we will be pleased to continue working with them in the future.

We're also the government that put in a program for Provincial Nominee Program, a special stream for Manitoba students, after we cleaned up the mess that they had left.

### **Film and Production Tax Credit Formation of Working Group**

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale):** Budget 2018 is putting Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. Our PC government is investing in priorities that support a sustainable financial future across the province.

Yesterday, there was an announcement regarding an important sector here in the province: the film and video industry.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage inform the House on this important development and budget commitment?

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Well, I'd like to thank the member for that excellent question.

And back in—when we introduced the Budget 2018, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) indicated that we were going to be forming a working group, a working group made up of industry experts to talk about the Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit.

The film industry is just booming out here. It's an industry that's very excited about participating in this working group and we know that we're going to listen to them. They're going to evaluate the effectiveness and the outcomes of the tax credit, including the factors, which include return on investment, and we'll work together to ensure that the credit maximizes the industry's potential.

We're always looking for ways to innovate and improve our tax credits and this is one of them, Madam Speaker. We're going to listen to the industry experts—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

I have a statement for the House. Oh, the time for oral questions has expired.

### Speaker's Statement

**Madam Speaker:** I have a statement for the House. It's a statement of clarification for the House.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, April 17th, 2018, when the Deputy Speaker was putting the question on second reading of Bill 18, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children), an independent member requested that the motion pass on division. At the time, the Chair indicated that the member would require the support of three other members to have the vote recorded as carried on division.

Rule 14(10) indicates any member with the support of three other members may request a recorded division, but this rule does not apply to requests for a vote to be recorded as being carried or defeated on division. The Votes and Proceedings for April 17th, 2018, have been revised to reflect the fact that Bill 18 passed on division.

My apologies for any confusion this may have created in the House and I thank all honourable members for their attention to this matter.

### PETITIONS

#### University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

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

These are the reasons for this petition: Students—

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Swan:** —including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during a post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition is signed by Hirra Piracha, Grace McMorris, Jaden Perron and many other Manitobans.

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

#### Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

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

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



our collective daughter and a symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Sanjan Pangan [*phonetic*], Andrew Kaminsky, Ian Laren and many other Manitobans.

#### Medical Laboratory Services

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislature.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive 'practices' where it has changed

the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged some medical offices for collection services.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Signed by Emmanuel Traloon, Bernard DesAutels, Arthur Smyth and many others.

### **University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety**

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

\* (14:40)

And the reasons for this petition are as follows:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution that is located downtown which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

### **Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry**

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

*(Continued)*

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):** Would you call Committee of Supply?

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

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY  
(Concurrent Sections)**

**FINANCE**

\* (14:50)

**The Acting Chairperson (Greg Nesbitt):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of Estimates for the Department of Finance.

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

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Just indicating again, I was in the middle of an answer yesterday to the member for Concordia, so if he doesn't mind, I'll just conclude that answer.

And I will say, for the record again, that I am joined at the table with Deputy Minister Jim Hrichishen; the secretary to Treasury Board, Paul Beauregard; Bruce Gray, who is the assistant deputy minister for—I always say—want to say capital planning, but it's actually Fiscal Management and Capital Planning; and then Inga Rannard, who is our Provincial Comptroller's office senior financial officer.

Yesterday, when the member and I were discussing when the time ran out, the member was suggesting that he was concerned about the possible lack of accountability or oversight that could occur in the appropriation 26.2 or 3 or 4 because he said it was a large number and, therefore, the government lacked oversight.

That is not correct, and I want to be clear with the member that financial controls remain in effect for all expenditures. There is, of course, the government Manual of Administration that clearly spells out how amounts are expended and the process—the formal process by which amounts are authorized for expenditure. And, of course, they are done so through the use of our broad appropriations. And those appropriations are assembled and brought within the context of a budget.

There's also internal service adjustment amounts that are held centrally and then are identified and allocated. But let that member clearly

understand that the spending of those amounts that are held centrally as the year starts—that still requires both approval by Treasury Board and Cabinet ratification. That also means that there would be an order-in-council attached after the Cabinet decision. That would, of course, be made public.

But, further to that, there would also, of course, be the—that the decision would be subject to scrutiny and audit by the Auditor General of this province. And, of course, that expenditure would be reported back in the context of the release of the annual public accounts, which must be done by the end of September.

So, if the member's concern is somehow that he fears that appropriate controls wouldn't be in place, he has no need to fear. This government takes very seriously its need for accountability, especially after years of the former government's lack of accountability.

I would point to structures that that former government did put in place, things like the Manitoba East Side Road Authority that did not have to use the conventional approaches to do the normal kind of procurement practices. It kind of gave a special dispensation to this area, important area, of infrastructure. We have, of course, noticed that. We've recognized it, clearly identified to Manitobans that they were not adequately protected in this case, and that is why we folded the operation of ESRA back into Infrastructure to take advantage of the competencies there and to be able to plan better and to make decisions in accordance with conventional understandings of how procurement practices should take place.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** The point remains that the minister has budgeted, certainly budgeted for this amount, \$100 million for the legalization of cannabis in Manitoba. That is clearly stated in his budget. I did ask him to provide more detailed numbers on if, in fact, it's \$100 million or \$90 million or \$110 million, but the increase in that budget line has been \$100 million, and he refuses to give any kind of indication exactly how that number was arrived at. And, you know, I take him at his word that he's going to come back and he's going to announce very loudly how that money is being spent, \$100 million, and tell the people of Manitoba in some other form, I guess, how they can expect that money to be spent, but it's my guess that, in fact, that's not the plan.

The plan isn't to spend \$100 million for the legalization of cannabis because that number is—well, I would invite the minister to correct me—but it's not based on any real figures that we've seen from any other jurisdiction, any other place in the world that's undertaken this and of course doesn't include anything on the revenue side. So to say that the Treasury of the Manitoba government is going to be hit with a \$100-million bill to implement the legalization of cannabis remains ridiculous, and the minister has yet to correct me on that fact and has yet to give any kind of indication of how he arrived at that number.

So, you know, here we are, starting where we left off, I guess, last time, and I think there'll be a lot of opportunity to circle back and talk more about that issue and hopefully get some more—I really was actually quite excited that the minister might come back with a hard number for us when he wanted to start off back on this topic. But, alas, that's not where we are.

What I did want to ask the minister was about the new assessment tool that the minister talked about—not yesterday, the time before—when we were in Estimates, and he talked about a new assessment tool that was being used for capital spending. I'm wondering if the minister can talk a little bit more about that, what that assessment tool looks like.

**Mr. Friesen:** I will provide an answer to the member's question on that. Before I do, though, I would like to—because he did preamble by referring specifically to the internal service adjustment one more time, so I would like to be clear in that.

Yesterday, when we did adjourn, two members on that side were laughing when I talked about the need to appropriately draw a circle around the challenge and the threat of legacy and expiring IT systems, IT and ICT systems within government, and saying it's appropriate at this point in time, it's appropriate to print up the ISA amount in this year, in part—let's be clear—in part, due to a complete societal shift to the legalization of cannabis; in part, because of the need for transformation within the civil service after years and years of a—insufficient—commitment to transitioning to modern ways of working and modern opportunities; it is appropriate to print up the internal service adjustment in respect of the challenges pertaining to carbon tax that we may not yet know of and it is appropriate to print it up because of the risk, the emerging risk in our world of cybersecurity.

\* (15:00)

But even beyond just the simple cybersecurity reasons, legacy IT systems and the advancement of the Windows 10 issue, which is not a Manitoba issue; this is a global issue whereby sovereign and sub-sovereign governments all across the world are dealing with one software platform and having to transition now. Microsoft has made it clear that they will discontinue support for Windows 7 operating system by January 2020. They will not release security updates for Windows 7 after this date. That will make any computer running Windows 7 susceptible to cyberattacks. There is no reasonable assumption that old systems will run on the new platform.

Now, the member can laugh at that assertion, but I can tell him that I have spoken to CEOs for international banks, I have spoken to CEOs for global companies, I have spoken to CEOs and CIOs and CFOs of major Canadian corporations and they all say the same thing. When I asked the question, what is the No. 1 issue that keeps them up at night, they say cybersecurity and IT-ICT threats. It is happening right now, and I can tell that member that the assessment that our government has come to is: after two years of government there has been insufficient—under the NDP—planning and maintenance and replacement of business application systems. The previous government could have gotten ahead of this challenge by appropriately identifying this challenge and then working in a concrete way, taking incremental steps towards addressing that goal.

We've talked about the real challenge now facing things like maintenance deferral on buildings owned by government, by departments, things like, you know, some of the assets for which I'm responsible under Accommodation Services Division and Central Services. But here again, this same failure to address challenge rears its ugly head, and we see now that we have a huge challenge that we are facing in regard to business application systems. I noticed that it was only two years ago that the WannaCry was launched on a global scale. I noticed that one of the areas most compromised was the health systems of the UK government, who responded by spending hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars to be able to plug those holes and fill those gaps that had been left open.

So the member can say that there's nothing to see here. He can laugh when we state it, but I tell him, if

he is laughing, indeed, at the government who's—explains these things, he's laughing at bank CEOs, major Canadian companies and global entities who are all facing the same challenge. Governments who are responsible will take appropriate measures to address these things. This is a responsible government that is taking appropriate measures to address these real and emerging threats to the continuity of our business systems and our IT-ICT system.

I will be after the break happy to answer his other question about transformation and new frameworks we're using for decision-making.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, Mr. Chair, it's unbelievable to me that the minister would launch back into this defence of his increase of 300 per cent in this line item when, you know, I just ask him, can he put—give me an example, maybe when the Province transferred from Windows Vista to Windows 7, or from XP Professional to Vista, or from Windows NT to Windows XP, that we—that the government would've written \$100 million into this line item. This is obviously not what this money is going towards in its entirety; the minister's been clear about that.

And so, when I ask for him to give me just some indication, some additional information that we can work with, to give us some indication of where this extra money that has been budgeted for and yet not allocated to specific departments, where that money could go, he has no answer.

I heard him now mention today the carbon tax. So I'd—maybe I'll just pick up on that. Be very clear, Minister, if I could ask the—through the Chair, be very clear, how much of this \$100 million in this budget line item 26.4 is going to be used for carbon tax initiatives?

**Mr. Friesen:** So I do want to respond to the member's incorrect claim. He's actually incorrect when he states that this transition being made globally now to Windows 10 should be no less difficult than transitions in the past. I'll get to that in a second, but let us clearly understand here: I've stated why it is that government is appropriately dealing with the size of certain societal challenges coming our way.

He's saying, be very clear. I can provide this commitment to the member: We will be very clear. We will be very open, we will be very accountable through the release of the Public Accounts that I

remind him came weeks earlier this last year than under the NDP, that almost waited, invariably, to the very last day to drop it on the desk. The Auditor General took exception to the NDP's slow reporting, and I can still recall the chapter—and I'm thinking here it was about 2015 when the Auditor General said that the NDP took too long compared to other jurisdictions to actually get those statements consolidated and out the door.

Now, that is not a reflection on Treasury Board Secretariat. We have only now come to understand the true complexity of trying to assemble and combine all of those 180-some reporting entities and to be able to report them out the door to Manitobans. But we are taking pains, along with civil servants, to understand what can we do in terms of this software. The line of sight, the better reporting processes—and I'd be happy to talk with the member about, you know, public sector accounting standard rules and how we can actually sharpen our thinking and get better results to Manitobans.

So, when the member claims to want that better accountability, I give him the assurance it will be there under this new government. But let us clearly understand, we've made the case for why it is appropriate at this time to be giving government the ability to appropriately respond.

At the same time, I could point that member to a history of actual results by the NDP with variances in budgets that exceeded this ISA by far. For instance, if I look back at the fiscal year 2015-2016, the NDP government started the year planning for a \$441-million core government deficit. And the year finished with an \$865-million core government deficit. And if the member quarrels with the focus on core reporting, I'll report to him that in the same year, the budget to actual on summary was 422 versus 847 million dollars.

No wonder bond-rating agencies said that they had lost confidence in the previous government's results.

Now, if the member quarrels and says, oh, yes, but that is the year that we finished out and we were focused on the election, let's go back instead another number of years. And let's look at fiscal year 2014-2015, where the NDP stated on a core basis that they would finish in a deficit of \$324 million but actually finished with a \$635-million miss.

Now that member suggests today that he is uncomfortable with the idea of a budget-to-actual

variance. And I would agree with him. I'm uncomfortable when I look back at the former NDP. I can understand his discomfort. Who would be comfortable with the NDP coming in the year previous to that and missing their planned budget by \$150 million, or the year before that, missing it by \$185 million, or the year before that in 2011 missing their budget by \$496 million? It's outrageous, Mr. Chair, and so I can understand the member's outrage, and I share it.

However, I would say this. He claims that the transition from XP to Windows 7 should have been no more difficult and no more costly to navigate than this one. That transition, I remind him, was significantly less complex than the transition now to Windows 10. That is known internationally; it's known globally. XP to Windows 7 was a 32-bit to 32-bit transition. The age of applications at that time were much new newer between XP and 7. That resulted in more applications being compatible. Windows 10 is 64-bit only. There is no backwards compatibility. I remind that gentleman that we have hundreds of legacy systems that may not stand up on this new platform, and it has new security protocols that may prevent our systems altogether from working.

He asks: Why do we give ourselves more room at this time to accommodate security risks? Because it's necessary.

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Wiebe:** So the minister believes that—well, I guess he's just laid it out for us that he's parking \$200 million-plus because he's planning on overshooting his budget in a whole number of different ways. Okay. Why don't we talk about what those ways are? That's kind of what we're doing here in the Estimates process.

He's talked about the carbon tax. Is that what we can expect to find under the 26.4? Is that implementation of the carbon tax, and can he detail how the carbon tax will cost Manitobans an extra \$100 million? Or is it his assessment that it's purely Windows 10? I mean, this is what he wants to stick on, so cybersecurity and Windows 10 is \$100 million. Or is it the legalization of cannabis that's going to cost \$100 million?

The point being here, Mr. Chair, that, you know, the minister can talk all he wants about previous budgets and about missing the mark. When he's putting that money in up front—and he's admitting

he's going to miss the mark—he's admitting here that he's already spending \$200 million extra of Manitobans' money without any kind of breakdown or indication of where that money is going to go. And I would imagine that at the end of this fiscal year, if he hasn't spent all that money, he'll say, look, oh, look. We found all these extra savings. Well, he can do that right now. He can just spell that out for Manitobans. Or he can tell us how many police officers he's hiring for this amount of money. He can tell us how many additional roadside checks there's going to be. How many copies of Windows 10 is he buying?

I mean, any indication, any breakdown, any number. Like, just—if we could just start the answer to the next question with a number instead of political spin and political spin and political spin, I think the people of Manitoba would feel a lot better about their Finance Minister and his grasp of this huge amount of money that he's written into his budget with no accountability whatsoever.

So I just ask any number at all. How much is it going to cost for the upgrade of, in his estimation—he—you know what, he could—I back up. He could even start with the tools that he used and where the estimate of this amount of money came from. Give us any indication. He talks about other organizations facing these issues. He talks about other jurisdictions facing these issues. Which jurisdictions did he look at? Which companies is he basing his numbers on? How many systems do we have that need to be upgraded in Manitoba?

And, if he doesn't know, then the point stands that \$100 million of Manitobans' money is being put into this fund of which the minister has no answer of where it's supposed to go. And I think that every Manitoban would be very concerned that he can't give—that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) can't give the people of Manitoba a number when we're talking about \$200 million, which, you know, I think—you know, I said this yesterday. Two hundred million dollars may not seem like a lot to the Minister of Finance, and I don't necessarily blame him for that, but if he could come back to the real world for a second and realize just how much money that is, how much that could be invested in our education system, our health-care system, how much Manitobans are begging for this government to spend that on the front-line services they said that they would protect, maybe he'll understand just how important this issue is to them.

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, the member should be cautious before he begins to sermonize about the value of money because that member clearly understands not only did the previous government blow the wad, but, under the NDP—and we were over this yesterday. I would be happy for that member to direct this conversation more to a comprehensive discovery of debt-service costs relative to fiscal year for 10 years past.

That member knows that for years—and if he had Treasury Division experts at this table, they would tell him that for years in the Province's borrowing program, there was the ability to swap out higher priced debt for lower priced debt to catch that wave of descending central rates of borrowing. And indeed, governments did—not just Manitoba, but others as well. And even then the government was able to sustain a greater capital investment.

Now, when we came to government, we clearly saw there was no five-year plan for a capital investment. There were years in—just before the 2011 election and just before the 2016 election, when the capital investment stuck out like a sore thumb—increases by 30 per cent and 28 per cent in those years. Not on the basis of evidence, but desire on the part of a tired government to get re-elected.

That resulted in a debt-service cost now.

Our government warned—our opposition party, when we were there, warned them. The Auditor General warned, the bond rating agencies warned, the Parliamentary Budget Officer warned that governments that did not attend to an understanding that interest rates would eventually rise, would be left with increasing service costs for the debt they had taken on. And we are there now.

So, while the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) sermonizes, and talks about amounts that cannot go to front-line investment, I remind him—and I'm picking this number here by estimate—I believe the difference from only 2015 to now 2018 is in excess of \$170 million that is simply going for increased debt-service cost.

I was at a function on Saturday night, and a gentleman in the room came up to me and said, you're the Finance Minister, is not the fact that we've had two 25-basis point change increases affecting our borrowing program? And I said, you know, it's a question that is asked too infrequently by Manitobans and the answer to your question is yes. And then he said how much, and I was able to paint—

to point to this over \$170 million in the space of three fiscal years. Imagine how many more teachers, imagine how many more schools, imagine how many linear kilometres more of surfacing we could do for highways, because the NDP did not keep their eye on the sustainability of the system.

Now to the members point, how much would it cost? Thirty-eight million dollars is the first estimate that Microsoft provided to the Province of Manitoba simply in respect of this challenge. And, if you know anything about those companies, when they do business with provincial governments, they're pretty sophisticated when they work out amounts. We struggle to gain the level of sophistication to be able to engage with them. That is no reflection on civil servants. I know Canadian companies who are marshalling 20 times what we do on these project costs, who indicate the same concern about the level of sophistication on the side of international, global companies like Microsoft.

Let that member understand the cost figured globally for the WannaCry cyber attack was over \$4 billion. And how was that attack perpetrated on the UK? Through legacy systems and software that had not been migrated to a new platform.

He's wrong. An ISA is a contingency amount. The reason I cannot tell him how much IT ICT cost goes to department of Agriculture, and how much to Health, and how much to Sustainable Development, and how much to Finance, is because it is indeterminate at this point. We can locate an amount, and it is appropriate to do so. And we can allocate that amount with control and accountability.

But for him to claim it's actually reckless to do so? No. He is reckless to suggest we should not do so.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Wow, Mr. Chair, we're getting somewhere. It's only taken two days, this is exciting. Thirty eight million dollars accounted for. Now we've got 62 to go, let's see what we can do here.

Transformational capital—so the minister talked about carbon tax. How much of this hundred million dollars of contingency is being allocated for carbon—the implementation of the carbon tax?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm happy to keep having a conversation with the member on page 119 of the budget, and Internal Service Adjustments 26.2. I want to remind the member, first, that internal

service adjustment is not a licence to print money. Now, it may have been in the past. I do want to clearly reference something that I've seen at the Treasury Board table—and while we would not, of course, disclose the activities of what happens at the Treasury Board meetings—even so, I would say to him, that member knows the tired and well-worn path of departments, under the NDP, back to the Treasury Board's table to vote for additional authority to spend supplemental Estimates of expenditure and an additional amount to be expended.

That member knows, because we've seen those numbers and I'm sure that member has seen those numbers, and I know that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) has seen those numbers, because that would have meant additional time at the Treasury Board table taken away from already very, very rigorous agendas, focused, then, at the end of an expenditure year on, oh, oh, we didn't make the budget that we planned and now we have to vote new authority. Now that's not for new program areas. It's for existing program areas whereby the department had exceeded its parameter authority to spend.

Now, I would like to give that member cause for optimism. I would like to let him know that in this year the government actually voted an amount that was the lowest additional—by any government in the last 30 years—of expenditure appropriations. So that should give him good cause to understand that the internal service adjustment on page 119 of those Estimates of expenditure is not a licence to print money. It comes with all the controls that are built into our system, all the controls that are outlined and articulated in the government's own GMA, the government manual of administration.

He understands, clearly, that we're talking about contingencies. I've pointed very specifically to some of the contingencies we must allow for, as well as what we said is a necessity to transform our workforce, the work they do, the culture in which they do that work. That work was announced, in part, by Mr. Fred Meier who is the Clerk of the Executive Council. I always have to be careful because sometimes I call him the clerk of the Legislature and that not's correct. But Mr. Meier was clear in his press event of almost two months ago that this work will be extensive and it will involve engagement by Manitoba civil servants. And it will be, we think, effective in creating new frameworks in which the government workers can

do their work, to come to work each day, feel like they're making a difference, get plugged in. The government of Manitoba has been successful in getting talent in the door. The government needs to be equally successful in being able to help that talent develop, find out who those change-makers are, those agents of change, and then giving them the tools and the framework so that they don't leave our employment, because these employees are obviously sought after by private sector, but they stay around and make good contributions.

I wanted—I—also explain to that member who is asking for additional information that, along with that initial estimate of Microsoft comes the knowledge that we have over 275 server-based systems over 300 desktop-based systems. That's not workspaces; those are systems that will not work on Windows 10. That's coming at us now.

It's not as if government can take a pass on the Windows issue. That Windows 10 issue is live and it faces all jurisdictions, and I ask him to do his homework and look at other jurisdictions and see if he can't find comment in the press from other jurisdictions pointing to the same challenge. Private sector, public sector alike, we are all grappling with the same. We cannot afford to do a like-for-like replacement of our existing information systems. It would cost over \$100 million for us to do that. The member should take note of that. That is another number that he can write down on his page.

So we must work smarter, and it is exactly the work that we intend to do. And the ISA allows us certain flexibility to address these challenges.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, just when I thought we were getting somewhere, we get no further answers from this minister. And, in fact, he starts off by confusing the issue.

Now, we're talking about 26.4. That's where the upgrade to Microsoft Windows 10 that the minister said—that's the line that we're talking about. Just want to confirm that. Want to confirm we're actually talking about 26.4, not 26.2.

I also want to go back and just ask—for I think a third time—about the carbon tax, which the minister answered in his first answer to my question. So it was the minister's own words here. He brought this up. He mentioned that the carbon tax was going to cost something out of that hundred million dollars.

We have \$62 million on the table that we—that's still not accounted for. And from—what I



understand is this government's own budget lists something like \$140—four—hundred and forty million dollars in revenue coming in for the carbon tax. So am I to take it that the minister believes that the implementation of the carbon tax is going to cost that entire \$140 million plus an additional \$62 million? A total of \$200 million is the cost to the Manitoba taxpayer for the implementation of the carbon tax? A carbon tax which, I might had, has no additional green incentives, has no additional money for Winnipeg Transit, has no additional money for the electrification of vehicles in Manitoba, has no additional money for any other green initiatives. But the minister is now saying it's going to cost \$200 million to implement.

Or—I'd invite the minister, clear the air. Tell us. Break it down. He was able to give us a specific amount. It took two days, but we got a specific amount: \$38 million. I'm very happy to hear that the minister was as forthright as he could be on that and gave us a very specific number: \$38 million.

Sixty-two million dollars, which maybe the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) doesn't think is a big deal, but I can tell you the people of Manitoba think \$62 million of their taxpayers' money is a big deal. So they want to know where it's going to.

They want accountability. They want the minister to be up front and clear and come forward in this committee and stand up tall and say this is where we think the money is going to.

Now, I take it—the minister's point that he may not spend all of this money. Great. Fantastic. Save that money for health care. Save that money for education. Spend it on the things that Manitobans are begging this government to spend it on. But at least tell us where that money is going to.

Another member at the table says that maybe it should go to improve democracy in Manitoba. Fantastic. Tell us: How much of that \$62 million is going to improve democracy in this province? How much is going to the carbon tax? How much is going to anything?

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) surely can give us a number. He's got some smart people at the table. They've got a lot of numbers in front of them. Maybe they can just share those numbers with us.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Friesen:** Here's a number for the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe): 5.3. He should write that number down.

Five-point-three is, in percentage, the representation of the ISA increase to the total amount of capital spending. So it's an excellent transition to a discussion about capital spending. Under the NDP, capital spending increased by 400 per cent, and I can tell you that in the province of Manitoba, up to and including 2005-2006, the capital investment—what was called the strategic investment per year—inclusive of things like highway expenditure, and new schools, and new health-care centres, and personal-care homes, all—affordable housing—all these very important investments.

It continued and you could see a correlation, you could see a connecting between the size of that investment and the growth of Manitoba's economy. You could see that as the GDP increased, so also over time—incrementally—did the strategic investment in all of these things.

Clearly understanding, of course, that we make this investment not through cash dollars but on an amortization schedule. We pay for assets over time in accordance with public sector accounting standard rules. Amortization schedules are clearly set out. A bridge takes longer to pay than a personal-care home; a personal-care home takes longer to pay than a software licence or a—or some kind of capital expense for a new server or some expense like that.

But what happens thereafter, what happens after 2005-2006, it defies explanation, because what starts to happen is there's a departure between the growth of the Manitoba economy and the capital expenditure by the former NDP government. It fails to see a correlation between the increase to the size of the economy, even when our economy was growing in better times by 3 per cent and 3.2 and 3.3 per cent. And spending far eclipsed any kind of inflationary factor.

It's why now we have built in—and like I said as well, important to take note that conspicuously, the largest increases occurred right in 2011 and 2016. Now I can't think of what was happening in this province in 2011 and 2016—oh, I do recall. They were elections, Mr. Chair, and so over time—I think when the member feigns this indignation about this appropriate internal service adjustment clearly explained by the ability that the government will have to respond to real societal shifts, things like cannabis legalization, the need for transformation,

the transforming of our IT-ITC systems driven by the Windows 10 new platform.

We know that where the NDP got little to show for that inflated capital expenditure, this is 5 per cent. So if the member wants to be indignant, let him show that same indignation for a capital expenditure over the course of 10 years, that is something like ground control to Major Tom. Departure from the ground, straight into the atmosphere.

And when we took government we looked around to say so what was the strategic thinking about a five-year capital plan? And we realized—we checked on the tables, under the tables, in the filing cabinets—there was no plan, Mr. Chair. There was no plan.

There was no sense in which ground control could call Major Tom and plot a flight path back to sustainability, some connective tissue between the growth of the economy and the growth of the capital expenditure. And we must do so, because what I clearly explained in my previous answer about debt service charge is what we are laden with.

That member feigned indignation now that somehow Manitobans weren't getting value for money. It's exactly why I would draw him to a conversation around how we are getting value for money: evidence-based decision-making, how we are doing a better job from the ground up in the Estimates process of holding departments and ministers responsible for the performance of their budget in the space of the year, how we are reporting better to Manitobans on the savings we have found and where we found them. He can't argue with the approach and so he argues on other things, but I'd like to invite him back to that conversation.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well again, no numbers from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). He talks about evidence, decision making, but can't give us any evidence of where this money is apparently going to go, and he talks about election years.

Well, let's talk about election years, because we can look back and we can see what those enabling appropriations, the exact line that we're talking about in the budget, what those amounts were. And so let's look back: in 2003, \$96.7 million, that was an election year, I believe; '99, 2003, yes, my math checks out—2007—it was a good year. You know, I think the previous government increased its share of the seats in this Legislature and I believe that our friend from Wolseley was one of those members. In

2007, when we also increased our share of the members in this Legislature, we had a hundred and seven million dollars—point three million dollars allocated for enabling appropriations in the line that we're discussing today. In 2011, when we also increased the number of members in this Chamber, it was \$62.8 million.

Fast forward to this year, to this specific year, out of all other years, this year \$383.5 million. And just to contrast for the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) because he seems especially interested in this: last year, \$55.7 million—that was his government; 2016, \$55.9 million. So this money was never allocated to this line previously, and we can go back a decade, we can go back to the '90s if the member would like when it was only \$41.2 million in 1999. We can talk about that.

And what did we do in this one single budget year—and I don't see the budget books in front of the member for Emerson so he might be confused. But I'll point him to 26.4, 26.2 and 26.3 where we have an additional—an additional—this is on top of what was spent last year—an additional 282 per cent, a rise from \$74 million to \$283 million all in budget lines that this minister for some unbelievable reason can't simply give this committee some indication of where that money is going.

Now, we have actually tracked down \$38 million of this money. It's going to upgrade to Windows 10, and that's part of the money that we've gotten out of the minister. So we're \$38 million out of \$300 million. So we've got a ways to go and, you know, again, I just hope that the minister will start the next answer by just giving us a number.

He gave us some numbers on how much—how many servers, desktops, how many servers are in the province, important information. I'm glad that the minister's provided that. We'll go back, we'll crunch those numbers, that's helpful. But we're still a little bit short. So if the minister can just help us out here.

And, again, that's not including the revenues. Because he won't tell us what the revenues are going to be for the legalization of cannabis in this province. He won't tell us what revenues for the carbon tax so that we know by his own government's estimations \$140 million. So the number keeps going up here and yet we have no clear answer from this minister. I give him one more chance to just give us some indication of where this money is going for.

**Mr. Friesen:** I've got a number of numbers that the member for Concordia can write down. The first one actually, though, can't give him a number because it's even before page 1. If the member had actually looked at the appropriations, other appropriations—appropriations information, it explains clearly that enabling appropriations is a collection of service headings. It exists to provide expenditure authority for programs that are delivered by departments or other government units where it is desirable to know the total amount allocated to the program, or where the allocation is not known at the time of the printing of the Estimates. And these programs are not interrelated.

\*(15:40)

On the subject of Windows 10, when he says, well, why don't you tell me where it's being spent, he clearly must understand that it is not possible, prior to the actual transition to this new platform, to know dollar for dollar which department will spend what money, and yet we know that there is exposure across the span and breadth of government. Those 275 servers, those 300 different desktop applications, all have a certain degree of impact. And so that is why, at this point in time, we must hold this in a contingency.

I will give the member another number. The other number is 67 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 67 per cent represents, in the Department of Infrastructure, what amortization and interest has now come to be as an expression of that total government's—department's budget. It means that if you ended the Department of Infrastructure today—and I will remind the member that that is not a policy statement—the NDP so badly hamstrung the Department of Infrastructure that if it ceased to operate today, 67 per cent of the total amount of infrastructure would keep on spending is just the expression of amortization and interest over time.

The second—the next number I give to the member is 15, as in page 15 of the budget and budget papers, but that page of the budget and budget papers shows cost drivers' previous capital investments. I stated before that since 2004-05, the level of strategic investment, and I use the term very loosely in this regard because it didn't go up strategically, but I indicated that it went up by a dramatic level.

Let's use a number because the member's asking for a number. In 2004-05, that strategic capital expenditure was \$400 million. In the space of just

10 fiscals—maybe 11, the number had quadrupled to \$1.6 billion.

Now, would we then say that was because the GDP of Manitoba had quadrupled in the same space of time? Of course, it had not. Manitoba's had some good growth. The Canadian government has had some good growth. We watch these numbers. I remind him that these same smart people that he refers to at the table watch these economic reports.

We've seen what happened in the last 10 years. We understand the challenge, perhaps, of these next two or five or longer, and then, clearly, those cycles that—we're in the long end of a cycle right now, and I reminded him yesterday that the International Monetary Fund deputy economist warned just last week that prudent governments will get ready because they cannot pretend that they will ride a wave that will just go out in perpetuity. There could be a correction coming.

We understand that our federal government has taken some action to cool housing markets in Toronto and in Vancouver. The federal government has said perhaps future measures could be taken if more evidence is produced that there's a need to do so.

All these things represent challenge. Let that member understand that there is no straight shot to a quadrupling of the strategic investment for capital by the previous government, and now the investment.

Would Manitobans say today that their roads are fantastic because of the expenditure the NDP made? No. That's why our government takes a value-for-money-based approach to decision-making. He spoke an hour ago about the need to focus this conversation this afternoon on this preposterous hypothesis, he says, that we're using, that evidence should guide decision-making. Well, if evidence is not driving it, what drove it for the NDP? Emotion? Personality? Ego? What drove that expenditure?

We are creating a framework that we can demonstrate to all Manitobans will have value, not just now but in the future. We should be able to demonstrate what's the best mile of road to pave. We should be able to demonstrate by evidence what's the most important school to build. We should be able to demonstrate by evidence where is the most appropriate personal care home investment to make, and we should have to demonstrate it to Manitobans and we plan to do so. I cannot imagine what

expenditure controls were in place back then, but clearly, it wasn't much.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** And thanks to the minister and staff for being here today.

Just a quick question off the top about the conservation trust, if I could. By my reading—I think it's on page 7 of the Enabling Appropriations book—it's listed at the \$102-million mark. Has that money been expended and sent over to The Winnipeg Foundation yet?

**Mr. Friesen:** Yes, the member is referring to 26.3 in the Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations. The short answer to his question is not yet but, of course, he knows that the commitment is there and will be done.

The transaction that the member's referring to is that one-time irrevocable transfer to The Winnipeg Foundation to invest and then oversee a \$102-million conservation trust that will be put to work not by The Winnipeg Foundation, but by the Manitoba habitat and heritage corporation. So, essentially, if he considers this divide two ways: a divide first, a hard divide, between the government of Manitoba and The Winnipeg Foundation, a one-way street by which the government makes that one-time gift or that one-time amount not able to be retracted; and then the other divide between the activities of the foundation, which will be, of course, to oversee and manage wisely that amount.

I would remind the member it is one of the largest amounts ever received by The Winnipeg Foundation. And, of course, he and I—we don't always find broad points of agreement, but we would agree, probably largely, that The Winnipeg Foundation has been a huge success story for our province within over a hundred-year landscape of making incredible contributions across our province.

And then, of course, the other divide being between the foundation to manage and the Manitoba habitat and heritage corporation to be, essentially, the arbitrator, the—that entity that will receive applications, adjudicate them, make awards. That's being done, of course, on a participatory basis with private sector and non-profit partners, and that money will go to work immediately. So that 102 amount will be transferred over, and we are very proud, as a government, to be making that trust-fund allocation in a way that will continue to provide value to all Manitobans.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** When will the government be sending the cheque for \$102 million?

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Friesen:** So that member knows that this government works speedily. He will understand that Budget 2018 was one of the earliest budgets, actually, brought in this province in a number of years. He will understand that this is a government that's getting results. I actually note that the budget's title is Keeping Our Promises and Real Progress for Manitobans. And so if his concern is somehow that we wouldn't keep our promise, I assure him that the \$102-million amount will be transferred to The Winnipeg Foundation. He has to understand there is a high degree of formality for an arrangement of this. I can assure him that we are fully engaged with The Winnipeg Foundation. There are agreements that have to be signed. I believe we are 23 days into the new fiscal year, and so we will be happy to report at a future date. I imagine there will probably be some sort of public facing activity as well when we actually have that communications event. I imagine it'll be well attended, and I'm sure that The Winnipeg Foundation and the Manitoba habitat and heritage corporation will also be in attendance for that date.

So there's technical detail to this. We are not behind by any standard. We are 23 days into the fiscal year. This is a major part of Budget 2018. And, like the other promises that we've made in Budget 2018, we intend, of course, to keep this one.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, on the theme of speed, Mr. Chair, my understanding is the government will be providing this \$102 million to then be invested, and the government will not, of course, have any returns on that investment to then use through the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation to do work on climate change or any other environment-related activity until after the money's been invested, after the cheque has been delivered.

So, if speed is of the essence, I—let me ask it this way: When does the government anticipate first getting a return from its \$102 million? When will the money first be available to implement green- or climate-related projects in Manitoba under this approach?

**Mr. Friesen:** So the member for Wolseley could've asked that question in a different way, and I'm a little bit disappointed that he didn't because I've been waiting for someone to do it. The question

should have been: Why \$102 million? Why not \$100 million?

So the government had this foresight. It's why we decided on an amount of \$102 million. And that \$2 million that is seen there, contained in that amount, allows us to not have to wait for a return on an investment strategy in one year. See, in a year's time, when The Winnipeg Foundation reports to its public through its annual report on how it's done a year hence, it will see how that \$102 million or \$100 million has been invested and we'll see a return on that investment.

I notice as well, I went and reviewed a number of the past years' reports by The Winnipeg Foundation, and I would say that the foundation continues to get good returns in markets. I know it has a very careful and a very stable investment strategy. It takes very seriously its obligations in respect of all those amounts it is in possession of and which amounts it oversees. But this amount allows us to actually make awards this year, and in so doing, the fund amount should not fall below \$100 million. We get out the door, we're able to make in-year \$2 million, approximately—these are estimates—of good investments this year and not have to wait a year hence.

I would also suggest to the member, then, there's good reason to believe that the return the next year could be in excess of \$2 million, which would mean even more opportunity to make those good investments on behalf of all Manitobans. I would clarify for the member as well, though, so he clearly understands, that the government will be responsible to set parameters. The government will be responsible, with a group that we'll task with this responsibility, to develop a framework for decision-making, and then it will entrust the Manitoba heritage and habitat corporation to be able to adjudicate applications in accordance with and reflecting against those stated criteria.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So if I understand the minister correctly, they are—

**An Honourable Member:** Good luck with that.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes. I'm doing my best here.

They are providing \$100 million to The Winnipeg Foundation for an investment in this fiscal year. The additional \$2 million is not going to be invested by The Winnipeg Foundation. It will be available for grants in this current year. That is, I think, what the minister just said. Perhaps I'll just

pause there and allow him to confirm that I understood correctly.

**Mr. Friesen:** So let me explain to the member what the mechanics of this would look like. There will be a date by which The Winnipeg Foundation and the government of Manitoba will agree that all the requisite agreements have been scrutinized, they've been signed, they reflect the spirit and the intent of the agreement. And when those signatures are on the page, at that point in time there will be a transaction by which \$102 million goes to Winnipeg Foundation.

And then, I would imagine it could be a day, it could be the same day, it could be weeks, and then that amount—another amount, a \$2 million amount will be relayed or forwarded to the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation. And that will give that independent, non-profit entity the ability to then make awards in respect of this year, instead of having to wait one other year.

It was important to get started on this. I think it showed intent. It showed the government's intention to get the ball rolling, and so I hope that gives the member the certainty that he was seeking.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I thank the minister for that clarification, and I guess the last thing I would just say on this front, and we've touched on this a little bit in our previous back-and-forth on it, the government, if I am correct—well, I mean, let me phrase this as a question now, the—am I correct in understanding that the government gave no direction to The Winnipeg Foundation that any of the money it will be sending there was to be invested in so-called ethical funds or green funds?

That this is just going to be a cheque sent to The Winnipeg Foundation to be invested without any direction from the government, so as to avoid the perhaps embarrassing scenario where so-called green money from the government is being used to build something that destroys wilderness, or something that pollutes the atmosphere. Radical concept, I know.

**Mr. Friesen:** So this conversation reminds me of a question period exchange from about—and I'm guessing here—perhaps six weeks ago, where the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) opined that it was probably a mistake to give these monies to The Winnipeg Foundation, because central government could have hung on to it—could have hung on to it—

and Manitobans could have just trusted the government.

Now the member understands that there is real intent in our government's approach on this: No. 1, to make a significant investment in green in our province, not just today but in perpetuity; No. 2, to work in partnership with third-party entities. In this case, a community foundation with more than 100 years of credibility and integrity, and with an entity with a proven track record on getting competitive returns on the investments that they do because of their—those amounts that have been bequeathed to them.

\* (16:00)

So let the an—member understand, no, our government is not looking to print up amounts and hold it back, as he suggested. He seemed to suggest one day in question period it was a mistake to trust The Winnipeg Foundation. We don't reflect on The Winnipeg Foundation. I think that their track record speaks for itself. We will not tell them what their investment strategy should be. These are competent and caring people at the executive management level, in the investment level and also at the board level. And I would not reflect on them.

We've chosen a partner that I have not heard a single Manitoban give a detracting comment of. Seems to me, only the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) seems to question the decision to entrust these amounts to The Winnipeg Foundation for investment.

Now, if I was to look back at the previous year and see what that rate of return by The Winnipeg Foundation was, I note that they hold 3,500 funds since 1921. I notice that they have close to \$800 million in fees, and they are generating a return in the last five years in excess of 10 per cent and they're generating a return on the last 10 years in excess of 7.1 per cent.

And we understand that with that size of a—I shouldn't say bequeathment because I'm not sure bequeathment is a word, and Hansard will notice. With that size of a fund—now I've made them print the word twice—with that size of a fund there will be opportunities whereby that investment group can, with competence and with strategy, invest in classes and opportunities, still mitigating against risk but getting a return that would not be possible at one tenth of that size of endowment.

So if the member wants to reflect and say that somehow this is a gamble, I would suggest that a return of 10.94 per cent on five years and a return of 7.1 per cent on 10 years does not represent a gamble. The last year I noticed the rate of return was 7.67 per cent. Now, imagine what that would mean in perpetuity on \$100 million. That's \$7 million a year available for investment in quality projects, but not just \$7 million, because this amount—the member's being careful not to state, but he understands because I know he's read it—he understands it's collaborative. And while that government didn't emphasize approaches on collaboration, we do. We work with partners. This money will actually release amounts in the private sector to be able to partner with government on an evidence-based approach. We will have to be accountable for the investments we make. We will have to be accountable for the decisions of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation and they will be accountable, and we welcome that accountability.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, for this current fiscal year, what is the amount budgeted for the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund listed on page 3 in the reconciliation statement? So what's the amount listed for the SDIF this year and what's it going to be used for?

**Mr. Friesen:** I would suggest to the member that when he talks about the reconciliation statements, he's talking—there's some transfers stated there, including, of course, an appropriation regarding the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund. That amount of \$3.5 million would probably be an amount that he could pursue more appropriately in the Committee of Supply for Sustainable Development.

I would remind that member that I was always instructed by the Finance minister when I was the critic. I remember when Jennifer Howard was the minister, she was always very quick to educate me when I was straying beyond the borders of what would be appropriate for the Committee of Supply for Finance. And I can even recall exchanges in which she told me it was inappropriate in these proceedings to look at the budget, because we should only be looking at the Committee of Supply. And she said, nevertheless, I will be flexible and allow that question.

So I think I've been quite magnanimous to date in terms of responding to the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) questions that strayed beyond the Committee of Supply

printed Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for Finance. But clearly—I think here I would suggest to the member that the member of—or, the Minister for Sustainable Development would only be too happy to engage with him on a very thorough discussion of how those amounts will be invested.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Understood, but on page 12 of his own Enabling Appropriations document, it does indicate—and I'll give him a—page 12, if he wants to take a moment to find it, we can go through it together. *[interjection]*

The enabling appropriations. This one.

So under Sustainable Development, it's listed as 944,000. And then there's an enabling appropriations of 3,000,556, which is exactly the same number which appears on the aforementioned page 3. So it does appear to be in Enabling Appropriations, under his jurisdiction.

So I just want to make sure that he knows what's in his government's department budget. And maybe he can tell me what that money is going to be used for.

**Mr. Friesen:** So first a note about the actual Estimates of expenditure.

Now, I know the member's not new to the Legislature, so he'll understand when I remind him, but he understands that he's largely talking about the work of—making apples to apples, that's done by the comptroller's office. We have activities that are taken by government, and we have appropriations within which the authority is granted to spend. And then from year to year, we know—of course—that across the broad span of government, those activities can be relocated. They can be restated.

I remember last summer when there were announcements made about ministers taking new portfolios and some shifts in terms of portfolio responsibilities. Those changes necessitated the comptroller's office, the Treasury Board Secretariat, working hard to understand and ascertain what moves. And then there needs to be visibility. This is making sure that things are visible in plain sight.

And so this is about presentation, so he sees clearly here that there is reference to amounts, both in this case to Sustainable Development and also enabling appropriations that shows here's what you saw last time, and now we must show where that will go to. It's why we talk about restated budgets.

Sometimes we see restated amounts. And I know I've been caught in that same thing, too, as a newer legislator being in the building and looking at variances between what I saw as the number stated as the budget—but now the number at public accounts stated the budget was different. And it was done not to be non-transparent, but to understand that changes had to be made—and retroactively, they needed to be stated in accordance with accounting standards.

\* (16:10)

However, I would remind the member that this afternoon, when House leaders agreed, that the Committee of Supply that was called was Manitoba Finance. Now he's referring to the other appropriations and enabling appropriations. I'm—I would be willing to take this on notice, and then when this is called for discussion, perhaps we can have a fuller conversation at that time when the House leaders agree to call the Committee of Supply for Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** That would be fine, of course.

Another question: How much of the \$66 million in federal money for climate initiatives has arrived, and which department Estimates books will that be showing up in? Does that come to Finance first and then go to Sustainable Development?

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the member for the question. Now, again, I could suggest that the question would be better asked in Sustainable Development, but of course, you know, he understands that amounts received by the federal government would be received in Finance, so I'm happy to take a crack at this and tell him.

So, of course, at this point in time, no amounts have been received by the federal government. The member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), of course, is referring to the fact that the federal government has said—for those provinces that signed the framework agreement on a carbon-pricing mechanism and stood one up in their province in accordance with the stated deadline—that there would be some amounts that flow to them. We—the Province of Manitoba is not in receipt of those amounts. I understand that the work is ongoing to get to the bottom line in terms of all the signatures and all the agreements in place. So that means that the mechanics are still being determined in respect of that payment and how that payment would be made to the Province of Manitoba.

And it may be cost matched as well. There's certain unknowns on this. So it may be that this is not just amounts that flow to the government of Manitoba without stipulation—could be additional stipulations. There could be requirements for cost matching as opposed to coming to Manitoba as simply a straight revenue source. So there are plenty of unknowns here, so I would advise the member to exhibit sufficient caution in respect—I welcome the question, but we, too, are very, very anxious to know what the federal government will come back with and say on the bottom line in respect of this indicated amount.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** What's the timeline for the federal money in terms of how much is going to arrive when, and which years?

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, this is an interesting question because I think that I could probably ask the member the same question. Why doesn't the member tell the government the answer to that question? Let's understand that this is one of the designated bills that the NDP has indicated as one of their five designated bills allowed by the rules of this Legislature. The NDP party, the official opposition, has said, we will not support the carbon plan that the government of Manitoba is bringing.

Now, let's understand that our made-in-Manitoba green and climate plan is a plan that we said is better for the economy, better for the environment. We take an evidence-based approach and we believe that the federal government will be in a place in a year or two that they recognize, we believe they'll come back to us and say, oh, now we get it. Now we understand why the 'incrementality' of the increases that are described by the federal government's approach would be less sufficient to actually shape behaviour of consumers in households, or behaviour of business or industry.

Nevertheless, let's understand that the member for Wolseley is asking for a defined date, a fixed date by which we would know we would be in receipt of federal government monies that would come contingent on the signing of the carbon tax framework agreement, while at the same time the same member is part of an opposition team that says we will give no certainty to Manitobans as to when the legislation could be passed in this provincial Legislature.

So on the one hand, he won't stand up for what is a better approach even in the wake of the failure to provide progress under the NDP for 10, 15 years.

There was no carbon plan and expert after expert said there was no plan, there was no forward planning. There was no plan that made sense. At one point, they articulated the idea that would have the implication of removing every car and truck from the roads in Manitoba, and they hadn't realized the implication of the actual, well, plan or equivalent that was being put forward. Members of their caucus signed the lead-manifesto, basically saying there should be no mineral exploration. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) gets up every day in question period and talks about the desire for a better investment after years and years of NDP neglect on mineral exploration. And he says, when will this government stand up for forestry and mineral exploration, and we're doing it. And the member for Flin Flon, I think, will understand over time how significant the efforts of this government are in respect of his claims and how significant the profits of this government will be in respect of his stated concerns.

I share his concerns. We've seen the numbers year after year: the falling off of exploration by international companies in respect of looking for the new mineral deposits. We've clearly understood—from companies like Vale and others that if you are not exploring 10 to 20 years in front, you cannot have the necessary time to smooth over the transition as one ore deposit becomes depleted. You must be forward planning to get to the next one. We saw Manitoba fall as a jurisdiction desirable for the purposes of mining from No. 1 in the world to somewhere under Botswana at number 45, I believe, at one point five years again—ago.

Now, I can tell you the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade came back not too long ago from the mining conference in Toronto where he said that the sheer optimism of international mining companies right now for Manitoba is very strong. They're saying we can do this thing for the sake of northerners, for the sake of Indigenous groups. We know how to engage in better conversations now. And they're very, very optimistic about the framework that we're describing.

But the member himself is saying tell me the definite date by which the carbon tax—money will come from Ottawa. At the same time he says you can have no satisfaction. We will give you no date by which we will provide support for this made in Manitoba plan which is better for the environment and better for the economy. That, Mr. Chair, I would say is hypocrisy.



**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, we started with my question on federal revenues to fight climate change and we ended up talking about mining in Botswana. So let me try again. That was a securitise route to no particular answer.

The minister also claimed that the feds were collecting carbon tax money. They aren't. This particular pot of money is new money from the federal government. The federal government has not brought in its own carbon tax on any province. They have mandated that the provinces have to take action and sign the Pan-Canadian agreement which his colleague, the Minister for Sustainable Development has already done.

So I'm not quite sure what set him off a little bit there, that was certainly not my intent. So let me just calmly ask again, the federal government has agreed to provide \$66 million—based on the media reports that I've seen—to Manitoba in order to fight climate change. And this is in return for Manitoba having signed onto the Pan-Canadian agreement on the same topic.

\* (16:20)

So all I'm asking for is a timeline of when those federal dollars will arrive in Manitoba. Is it over a five-year period with an even amount of money arriving each year? Is it a smaller amount in year one and a larger amount in year five? That's all I'm asking. If he wants to take us back to Botswana, I suppose I can't stop him, but that'll be up to the minister.

**Mr. Friesen:** You know, I will remind the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) I'm not the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires). I can tell him there are some considerable responsibilities that do get located in my office, among which are central service of Finance, Civil Service Commission and Treasury Board chair, but I'm not the member for Sustainable Development.

I can tell him I will not sit in this committee of Finance and hypothesize on what I believe that the federal minister of the environment and her Cabinet is thinking about the parameters of the program that they have broadly described to those provinces who signed the framework agreement on carbon pricing.

I don't know what they're thinking in respect of this additional investment they say they will make in jurisdictions. We do not know the parameters of those programs; we do not know if they will require

participatory dollars from Manitoba; we do not know if they will constrain programs.

I think about the way—in the past, the federal government has moved away from a more adequate and appropriate funding of health care and then said but we are going to tag on a few things on the side. Now, this goes back even 10 years ago. I can remember when even under the federal Conservative Party and even before that, when Paul Martin was the federal minister of Finance. And at that point, when Health ministers and Finance ministers came together and they said, well, okay, we will hold the Canada Health Transfer at this amount but we will provide incentive for jurisdictions to bring down the hip and knee times if they can meet certain metrics and meet certain thresholds. And they did so.

Well, in this same way, I say to the member for Wolseley: I will not hypothesize on what may or may not be in that agreement. So we are watching carefully, we are working carefully. I know that the Minister of Sustainable Development will have senior staff who—is engaging with the federal government. I know that the intergovernmental relations office, here, located in the priorities and planning division—located in the Finance Department will be also engaging with their federal counterparts on this and other issues. And we will be guiding that process carefully and standing up for Manitoba interests, but I don't want to turn this into a guessing game, and especially for a Finance Minister who's just been claiming, rightly so, that we take an evidence-based approach. We'll wait to see that agreement and then we will examine it to see that it will provide good value to Manitobans.

I would say though, to the member, when he claimed—he said, well, the Finance Minister federally doesn't have a carbon-pricing mechanism. Well, he does. He does as a backstop mechanism. The federal government has been clear that a backstop mechanism will be put in place. That backstop is described in Budget 2018—the federal budget, whereby they say for any jurisdiction who says no—I think that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) had said at one point, and I think he's repeated it outside this Chamber, if you say no, you get Trudeau. It's why our government took the approach that said, we will do a year's worth of heavy lifting, engagement with sector groups, engagement with individuals, with families and households and industry and business. We will look outside our jurisdiction. We will look outside of Canada. We will look at evidence. We will build a plan that works but that recognizes, rightly,

what Manitoba's particular circumstances are. That's far better, I would suggest, for Manitobans. And that's what we've done.

But that member clearly knows the federal backstop goes something like this: \$10 of carbon pricing on liquid and solid fuels and otherwise per year on an incremental five-year basis puts us at \$50 per ton based on carbon, regardless of your carbon profile by jurisdiction and with no certainty as to what happens next. Our plan gives certainty. Our plan will work better for the economy and for the environment.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If the minister has not actually received a timeline from the federal government on how the \$66 million will be provided, that's all he needed to say. I was just asking if there was a timeline and, if so, what it was. So we can, I think, leave that where it is.

Moving on to the Green Fund of \$40 million, which also appears in the books for this minister, can he just give me a breakdown on what that is made up of? Where does that \$40 million come from?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member refers to appropriation 26.3 of the Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations. I will allow him to ask that question at such a time when the House leaders of our—both of our parties agree to hear those Estimates of expenditure.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So my understanding is enabling appropriations has formed a little bit of the topic of conversation so far in this session, but now when I ask about the \$40-million Green Fund, the door comes down in terms of the dialogue. Would the minister care to explain why he has answered some questions about enabling appropriations and is now refusing the answer these ones?

**Mr. Friesen:** I will suggest to the member, as I did five years ago when I—five minutes ago when I got his consent that when the House leaders call those enabling appropriations, I'd be happy to talk about this. I believe I've been—given a lot of latitude to the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and others who have asked questions this afternoon, but the member is, I know, the critic for Sustainable Development, and he will—and I find that his questions are appropriately addressed on the subject of the green plan and other sustainable development topics.

And while I have, you know, a certain sense of those issues, broadly speaking, and, of course, all the members of the Treasury Board have some

familiarity with these issues because these issues have, of course, come through the Estimates process, the member is looking for answers that really are best provided by the Minister for Sustainable Development. So while I'm not giving any edict, I'm looking for his co-operation in this.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Okay. Fair enough.

Just back to the federal scene, then, the minister had, I believe correctly, noted that there could be a matching requirement from the federal government. We don't know yet. His department has not been made aware of any of that. If a matching requirement for that \$66 million is required, where would Manitoba's matching dollars appear in the budget document? Can he direct me to the department and/or line item where that has been planned for?

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Friesen:** First of all, I want to disabuse the member of Wolseley of any suggestion that Manitoba would somehow be in receipt of \$66 million of money each year for the next five years. So, I'm—[interjection]—yes, okay, so I'm seeing a nod. So the member understands that \$66 million is not per year; he's talking about an amount that would be divided over a period of five years. And of course, you know, this Finance Minister would never suggest that that amount is immaterial, but let's be clear about that.

The second thing is the member is again trying to draw me into speculation. I will not be drawn into speculation.

He's asking a bigger question, and there is a bigger question that I can see my way clear to answering for him. He's saying essentially, what does a government do when it is faced with in-year pressures of expenditure? And that is an appropriate question.

We faced that question even as a new government, and that member will know that it hit this government with great force when we became aware that because of the federal government's unadvisable forays into tinkering with The Income Tax Act in respect of small corporations last year, and Manitobans who are listening in, the four or five of them who are listening in on these proceedings—or maybe the many Manitobans who are later on in perpetuity looking back at the record of this dialogue we're having this afternoon, they will remember these issues pertaining to the division of income by small corporations, the use—appropriately—of passive

income within a corporation. And Minister Bill Morneau, federally, had said, well, we're going to make changes.

Now, people planned their taxes as a result. People were apprehensive about what the federal government was or was not doing. The federal minister seemed to not know always what—or what he was not doing. I think he did not plan for the backlash that he received. I think he planned that somehow by ventilating these things in the summertime, he could somehow sidestep the reaction of Canadians.

He did not manage to sidestep that very visceral reaction of Canadians.

But as a result of this, as we saw the sun setting on the previous fiscal year, Canadians planned their taxes. They planned their taxes, and they saw that with the spectre of something coming, that they could not fully understand and their accountants did not have the time to fully describe to them, nor did their accountants have the full details, they planned their taxes. They distributed income.

As a consequence of that unadvised policy activity, Manitoba, as well as Ontario, as well as BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Quebec, all of us found ourselves in a place where we were hemorrhaging money against a budgeted amount under personal income tax.

Now, personal income tax in this province is a very significant part of our revenue. And that member knows that the most recent update we were able to provide to Manitobans in the third quarter report, is that we are on track to receive an amount less than the budget by \$262 million. That is probably largely—if not directly—attributable to those actions of the federal government.

What is our response? A Manitoba reporter asked me, does this mean everything is in question? Does it mean that the PST cut is in question? Does it mean that you won't be able to do the tax cuts to Manitobans that you have promised because this is too high of a tax jurisdiction under the NDP for years and years and years? There's—and there's broad recognition of that by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and others.

We must manage, and we will manage, because we told Manitobans there has to be better management of the Province's finances. It's why we are on track to underspend our planned budget.

We are reducing the deficit by more than the \$840 million budgeted a year ago. We are on track to clock in at a deficit of two hundred and—\$726 million, and we are more than \$300 million ahead of schedule budget to budget. These things matter.

The member asks, what will happen if you do not receive that revenue from the federal government in time? We don't know if we will be in receipt of that money. We don't know if it will come with strings attached. We don't know what those strings could be, but one thing is certain: Manitobans must have confidence that their government, that said they will manage better, will manage better.

And that's exactly why we wrote in the—on the front of our budget that we are keeping our promises and making real progress for Manitobans.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, we didn't quite get to Botswana on that one, but we travelled a little bit from the original.

**An Honourable Member:** I can get there.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I was waiting for that. You know, the shortest line between two points and all. But yes, not quite sure what to do with that.

The minister did mention income tax, and it reminded me of a research request that I would like to make of him and his department. I'll preface this by saying that I don't need this information any time super soon, even during the summer would be fine, but I would be interested to know the—just to have a breakdown of the value, in today's dollars, of all the tax cuts that our previous government brought in, compared to the value, in today's dollars, of all the tax increases that occurred during our time in office.

So, if the minister is willing to take that under advisement, and if his staff can send me that breakdown of each item's value in today's dollars, I'd appreciate it.

**Mr. Friesen:** So what the member is inviting is a rehashing of all the NDP tax increases. I would be happy to go down that road with him. I'll just cite a few in specific.

I was elected in 2011. I was elected to the Legislature at that same time I believe that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) was elected, also in 2011—no, he may have been here on a by-election before that time. He was here previous to me.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Friesen:** No, he was elected in 2011. At some point in time, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) was elected. He was elected. Unless I hear otherwise, he was elected.

I remember, in 2012, the surprise, the great shock—not only by myself as a new member, because I remember what the pledges of the NDP government had been in the election: no new taxes. It went something like this: Read my lips. No new taxes. And when they brought their budget in 2012, I believe that Stan Struthers was then the Finance minister, their budget included a widening of the retail sales tax, a complete expansion of the retail sales tax to areas of the economy that it had never touched before, things like employee benefits at work, home insurance policies, esthetician services, haircuts over a threshold of \$50.

Now, that was in addition, at that time, I remember, as well, a new Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation vehicle registration fee of \$35 per vehicle. It doesn't sound like much, but you start to add that up, it's a huge hit on the economy. Never mind, the—it could have been a \$35 charge on MPI and 2.5 cent per litre increase at the pump, or it could have been a 3.5 cent per litre increase and a 25 registration cost.

\* (16:40)

In any case, what I do know is this: those changes taken together took \$230 million in one foul swoop out of the pockets of Manitobans—unsuspecting Manitobans. But wait; it got better—or actually worse, because a year later the NDP raised the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Now, in 2013 dollars that meant somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$280 million. It could have been \$285 million, and I'll look for guidance if I need it on that. But what I can tell you that—now, in equivalent dollars in this year, in 2018, what is taken in as a result is far in excess of that—or I should say even when the NDP was out of power. So, when we commit as a government to reverse the 8 per cent to 7 per cent, Manitobans will get a fairer deal in taxation.

Why have we made that commitment? Because the tax shouldn't have been raised. Why did we make the commitment? Because Manitobans have the highest tax burden west of Quebec, arguably one of the highest burdens in all of Canada. The Chambers of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, anti-poverty groups all say

there are fairer ways to deal with populations. And this previous government took simplistic measures. They pushed up the cost of government; they took their eye off the ball on expenditure management, and when there was a shortfall they raised taxes. We take a different view.

So, if the member invites a longer conversation about all the taxes that the NDP raised, let's say between 1999 and 2016, I would welcome the conversation. I don't think it would be the best use of this Committee of Supply's time.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Will the minister then—I didn't quite hear a straight answer there. I had asked for a breakdown in today's dollars of the value of all of the tax cuts and reductions brought in by the previous administration. Is he willing to commit that, you know, his staff, at their time, at their leisure—I don't need it immediately—but that they will provide that to me?

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm looking across this room and I see probably 10 senior civil servants. We're talking about deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers. I see assistant deputy ministers here, areas of corporate services, Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, Treasury Division, taxation, fiscal research. I see—I—you know, BTT and essential service. I'm simply not willing to take the time of this Committee of Supply to engage in an activity that the member's inviting whereby we would describe back to that member their record which is on the public record. So if the member has forgotten his record, I think they've got a website and he could look it up. I believe that the Committee of Supply for Finance could have its time more appropriately used than the invitation to go down the road that the member has suggested.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So back to the challenge the minister highlighted previously whereby the federal government could—though I'm not aware of any indication that they are going to do this—but whereby the federal government could, in the minister's mind, require the provincial government to match money coming from Ottawa for climate-change initiatives. Given that possible scenario, can he at least tell me which department would be receiving the funds from the federal government and which government—or which government department at his level of government would be the one providing the matching funds? Is that going to be Finance? Is that going to be Sustainable Development? Or is it going to be somebody else?

**Mr. Friesen:** General revenue.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And last question, speaking of general revenue, when the carbon tax does come into effect later this year, is that where revenue from the carbon tax is going? Does it end up in general revenue as well?

**Mr. Friesen:** General revenue. *[interjection]*

**The Acting Chairperson (Greg Nesbitt):** The honourable member for Wolseley.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Oh, sorry. Last question from me today, and just let me say in advance of this, I want to thank the minister and his staff for their help with my inquiries today. I will do my best to be back during the aforementioned—to be mentioned date for Enabling Appropriations. I will pass the mighty book back to my colleague. But what amount is budgeted for revenue from the carbon tax to go into general revenues for the current fiscal year?

**Mr. Friesen:** The member could actually look either at page 10 of the Estimates of expenditure and revenue for that number, or he could actually look under—on page 137 under Taxation where under Other Taxes, carbon tax is the first column. Now that member understands that the number used for the revenue estimate there by government was based on a certain number of months, understanding that the federal government had required an implementation of September the 1st for the collection of the carbon tax. Then the government had made an estimate of revenue based on that number of months in the '18-19—sorry, the 2018-2019 fiscal year to—for the collection of that tax.

However, the member clearly understands that the biggest variable now against that estimate of revenue is his own party's actions. Now we've said that we have a made-in-Manitoba solution on carbon pricing that works better for the environment and better for the economy. However, that member and his party has designated the carbon tax implementation legislation. They've named this as a bill that will not be passed at third reading by the June rise date of this Legislature. They have indicated that it will return to the Legislature in the fall for further debate.

The member has asked questions this afternoon about what Manitoba would do with the revenue. I hope that all members at this committee table today clearly understand the conflict between the line of questioning taken by the member, rubbing his hands together and saying, what are you going to do with

the revenue, at the same time as which—at which his party blockades the legislation by which the carbon mechanism could be implemented. He himself stands between that budgeted number and what reality might actually present later.

\* (16:50)

Now, to anticipate his next question, I believe—*[interjection]* Yes, it's dangerous to anticipate that member's next question. However, he may want to then ask and say, well, minister, what would your government do were it faced with a significant variance between what it budgeted for revenue as a result of a carbon tax and what was actually realized, and to that hypothetical question by the member, were it to be asked, I would say we would manage, because our commitment to Manitobans is to manage.

We said we had to fix the finances and that meant all sorts of things that we've discussed this afternoon at some length. It meant a breaking down of the pre-Estimates process down into its component parts and then building it back up again. It meant accelerating our work. I don't know when, under the NDP, the Estimates process started, but I can tell you when the one budget is delivered the next process starts, and some of the architects of this work sit in this very room today; some very, very significant expertise, tremendous commitment, stick-to-itiveness, and a love for this province. And, actually, that describes all these senior managers and senior executives here serving their province in this room, and I'm humbled and honoured to have the opportunity to work with them, but that work is ongoing.

But our party also said there were other methods by which we had to get better value. We had to hold government to account for the monies it collected. We had to take the view that revenue generation was not the problem. It was expenditure management. My first meeting with Standard & Poor's bond-rating agencies, I remember we were now no more than 10 minutes into the meeting and one of the senior analysts on our file said: Manitoba has never had a revenue problem. You seem to have good own-source revenues and federal transfers. The problem is expenditure management.

Mr. Chair, we intend to get that better value. We will manage. We must hit our targets. Why? Because we told Manitobans we'd hit our targets and we told Manitobans we would keep our promises and we intend to do so.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Can I please confirm with the minister that he's on the same page as his colleague who indicated that there would be in the order of \$60 million less coming to the government from the carbon tax due to the potential delay in its implementation from September 1 to December 1. It was his colleague, the Minister for Sustainable Development, who was quoted in, I believe, multiple media sources as saying the difference would be in that range.

**Mr. Friesen:** So the member for Wolseley is reaching a really interesting intersection between House procedure and revenue generation through the construction of a carbon-pricing mechanism.

The fact is that only the member seems to know what the resolve is by the NDP party to stand between Manitobans and a carbon-pricing mechanism which is better for the economy and better for the environment and takes into account the particularity of what makes Manitoba Manitoba—huge tracts of boreal forest, the degree to which a modern agriculture practice is sequestered, carbon in the soils, vast bodies of water that have that same ability but not, albeit, to the same effect or extent. But, clearly, let us not lose track of what can only be seen as a phenomenal investment by Manitoba Hydro. It's a huge investment in green. We have a 97-98 per cent renewable energy source hydro provider. We have had that for years in this province.

Now, we have to take some particular cautions at this point in time because the NDP endangered that same utility and we must walk it back to sustainability, and walk it back, we will.

We have legislation that provides for a better framework for interactions between executive government and the utility. We have clear instructions how the legislation will allow the Minister for Crown Services to give directions and give directives and give instruction, give mandate. And so we are clearly just in the sustainability of the higher entity.

But let's understand that the member's asking what happens to the revenue. Well, there is no revenue if the NDP doesn't allow for the bill to be passed. So, for the amount of months that the NDP will stand in the way of this bill being passed, there will be no revenue. So he has the answer to his own question, because by House procedure his party could still decide to turn back from this particular decision they've undertaken. I'm sure there's a mechanism by which they could declare a different

bill to hold and allow this bill to pass and then to not obstruct that process. And in that case the budgetary amount that we've articulated for the carbon price would be accurate. And, if not, he could simply see that that amount is based on, in the budget, probably eight months of—seven months of revenue and he can do an annualized version based on that amount.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The government has also indicated for large emitters under its climate plan that there will be, in essence, a cap-in-trade system set up based on an output measure which the government has not defined. In other jurisdictions where cap in trade exists, of course, the permits allowing an industry to emit a ton of carbon costs money, and those permits are issued by the government and the government earns revenue from the issuance of those permits to emit carbon. Is the government contemplating any such sale of carbon pollution permits? Are you anticipating any revenue coming from that in the current fiscal year?

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the member for the question, and, once again, there will be a level of detail that he will be able to get in discussions with the Minister of Sustainable Development when those Estimates of expenditure are undertaken.

But in the mean time, if I refer him to page E6 of the budget and budget papers, and he sees there our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, and he sees that there's that reference there to OBPS, that output-based pricing system entity. So he's—the member is asking for how the work is going to interact with large emitters in the province of Manitoba and to accommodate them under the carbon tax, in what form are they scoped in to carbon pricing? In what way do they make a contribution? And, obviously, these are the challenges that all jurisdictions must face in respect of a carbon pricing mechanism when it comes to large emitters. Now, I would also say, when, in the case of Manitoba, you're almost designing a list of want. I mean, we don't have many that fall into this category of large emitters. However, on that page he clearly sees that until 2019 all entities that are to be included in the government—by the government in the OBPS, the output-based pricing system, will receive an exemption or a refund from the carbon tax on all their emissions from fuels consumed on site in process emissions. The work is ongoing. To dialogue with these—

**The Acting Chairperson (Greg Nesbitt):** Order.

The hour being 5 o'clock p.m., committee rise.

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (16:00)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I understand that the father of one of our colleagues had recently passed. And so I just wanted to put on the record my condolences for the family of our colleague from Radisson, as well as for the others, I guess, who are grieving today. We did acknowledge our compatriots in Toronto, but I understand that there's a—this other case. So I'd just offer those words and just put that on the record. I don't know if the—perhaps the Premier would like to add anything else to that.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I thank the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) for that and appreciate it. Also want to thank the NDP House leader for accommodating our desire to be in support of the family today. I appreciate that as well. It was very kind.

It was a—I'll just say a beautiful tribute to our colleague's dad today, and our colleague did an admirable job of giving us insights into his father and his life and was—it was—which is a very challenging job for a person to do. And it was—I know it was a source of comfort and strength to our friend's family and to him personally that we were able to—some of his colleagues were able to be there. So, again, thank you for that, through you, Mr. Chair. That was very kind.

**Mr. Kinew:** Thanks, again, Mr. Chair.

Today, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner sent out a series of recommendations. I believe it was sent to all of our colleagues in different parties. There's a number of recommendations in this report. Well, I guess there's a series of findings. But terms of what comes next and how do you carry this report forward, there's a series of recommendations. They apply broadly.

I think the main focus is to expand the scope of the conflict-of-interest legislation and to expand the power of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

They would include things such as setting out a higher standard for Cabinet ministers, including the First Minister.

They would also, I believe, grant the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the ability to investigate matters where there is a real or perceived conflict and the move to such a standard, I think, would put us—as the Province of Manitoba—would put us into line with the other Canadian jurisdictions. I believe that the other conflict of interest commissioners have the ability to investigate.

And then I think that there's also—I think, a number of recommendations that just deal with, you know, here is what the scope of what might be considered conflict and changing the definition of who a person's relatives are that would have to be disclosed. Such things as that.

So there's a number of recommendations in there. I guess just to begin, I'd like to know whether the Premier has had time to review this report and if he might offer—if so, if he might offer his reaction to it.

**Mr. Pallister:** First of all, I'm reviewing it as we speak, but I should mention that this is something we had commissioned. This is something that our government had stated as a— that we wanted to make sure we knew. And the findings of Mr. Schnoor have reinforced it, that Manitoba has the oldest and arguably the weakest conflict-of-interest legislation in Canada. So that's existed for some time and of course—and he does comment in the executive summary on some of the areas where the act has anomalies and deficiencies.

One of those was in the well-publicized declaration of vacation property piece, which the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) had a lot of fun with, and when I made the information available, he accused me of hiding things, which was, of course, not true. I actually disclosed over and above the requirements of the act. That's actually been reinforced in this document on page 46, and in it the actual recommendation is that the principal residence of the member and real property that the member or the member's family uses for recreational purposes should not be required to be disclosed as an asset.

So I was actually exceeding the requirements, not only that are recommended, but that were in existence prior to the time when I listed my properties and was pilloried by the member for Minto for that for a long time. So I feel somewhat

vindicated by the fact that I made that information freely available, though it was not a requirement.

That being said, the larger issues here are the ones that we're looking forward to embracing, and I would say to the member that I think it will certainly be something that we'll be pursuing with a view to including members of all parties in the discussion because it does affect all parties, obviously. And so mechanisms that can be developed—I'll be open to suggestions, but mechanisms that can be developed that allow members, including independent members, to have input and to have an opportunity for input into the framing of this improvement are something I'm very open to and our government's very open to.

I think it's important not only for the appearance of better ethical behaviour but for protection against misunderstandings or false accusations as a consequence of confusion in the—excuse me—in the future so that no member has to be falsely accused of wrongdoing as a consequence of the confusion around the rules. So this is why we wrote through our House leader on April 24th and recommended a modernization report be done for Manitoba's conflict of interest rules, for our legislation. We asked that that work be undertaken and we're very excited to pursue action on the basis of the recommendations that Mr. Schnoor has tabled today.

\*(16:10)

**Mr. Kinew:** There are a number of recommendations in the report. One of them says—and, again, this is part of a, I guess, a broader move towards creating a higher standard for Cabinet ministers and the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—but one of them recommends that Cabinet ministers not be allowed to engage in outside business activities while they're a member of the Executive Council. I think Mr. Schnoor in his recommendations—he does specify that there could be potentially an exemption in certain cases, but broadly speaking that the role would be that Cabinet ministers not be allowed to have outside jobs, sources of income, things like that.

I think it's similar to a rule that exists at the federal level that basically, because of the decision-making powers, the ability to influence, you know, things in the broader economy and in the broader world, that there's a limitation on Cabinet minister's ability to have jobs outside of their government job and some limitation on the ability for them to have, you know, other sources of income.

So I'm wondering what the Premier thinks of this recommendation. Does the Premier agree with the principle behind it that, you know, members of Cabinet should be very limited as to the kind of the outside sources of income they can have and employment activities they can carry out?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I think the idea of the report, as much as I've only had the chance to review parts of it at this point, is to give clarity around the rules and to make sure they're defensible, to make sure that conflicts of interest perceived or real don't exist. What the member's proposing I'm not sure is actually echoed in the recommendations because I have not had the chance to review them.

But I know that for many years under the previous government, there were no such rules and that the previous government allowed the situation to deteriorate to the point where we are now labelled in this recommendation as having the worst set of rules in the country.

I would also point out to the member that, you know, on issues of broad application, people having assets outside of their political life is not unheard of. We've had a history in this province of people who, for example, farmed and who weren't forced to sell their farm or put it in an imaginary blind trust in order to represent people here. As long as there was an issue where—as long as they recused themselves, that was the practice, from deliberation, that was well accepted. So, if somebody has a store that sells meat and an issue comes up that discusses the rules around meat, they'd have to recuse themselves from that discussion. But to suggest that they would have to excuse themselves from the asset or its management is, I don't think, what the gist of what I'm reading in the executive summary is suggesting.

That being said, I think the important thing is to allow for discussion to take place involving members of all political parties and independents, so that we arrive at recommendations and legislation ultimately that has had the input of all affected members, whether they are from one party or another. And that way we'll get perspectives from people who come from a variety of backgrounds, and I think that's appropriate.

For example, I don't know what it says here about book royalties; that's relevant to the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). Maybe he'll have special views on whether they should be excluded or people shouldn't be allowed to write books while they're elected officials. I don't know. But, you



know, I think these are fair questions to ask, and I think they're questions that need to be discussed.

Back to the exoneration of the member for Fort Whyte, I'll just say that—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order. Are you allowed to refer to yourself in the third person?

**Mr. Pallister:** As the member for—I have no choice. It says here on page 21, it says there is no need to disclose the value of assets and liabilities. It is their existence that provides the information needed by voters. Anything more would be an unnecessary invasion of privacy. It goes on to say, furthermore, some assets or liabilities do not generally create a reasonable possibility of a conflict of interest, and they should be excluded from disclosure. Examples include da, da, da, da, da, it goes on.

And it says, recommendation 34 says, on page 21, members should not be required to disclose assets and liabilities with little likelihood of giving rise to a conflict of interest. These could include real property that the member or the member's family uses for recreational purposes.

I'm speaking clearly so that members of the media who reported on this for about five months maybe report that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wasn't in violation of any ethical conduct code of any kind, despite the repeated accusations of the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) over a period of months, which, of course, anyone who cares about their reputation would strongly resent. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Kinew:** Just like to note for the record that there was a booming system that just drove by in a car, and can see—you know we're getting closer to summer in Winnipeg when you hear the bass rumbling—come rumbling down the street like that. *[interjection]* I was—that was—I couldn't tell you the artist, but I could tell you that I think that was some rap music we just heard through the window of this open committee room. Future generations will puzzle as they try to decode the meaning of that last sentence there.

I was scanning through this. I didn't see exoneration anywhere, but I guess the, you know, First Minister is free to put his own spin or his own interpretation on, you know, the report itself. And, you know, the report that was tabled today only goes up to page 52, so I don't know about page 79.

Anyway, I think the principle that I was getting at was, you know, the question that I wanted to focus

on, more so than the specific recommendation—again, bearing in mind that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) hasn't had a chance to necessarily review each recommendation and formulate an opinion individually, just the broader issue—this would mean a change to existing practice here in Manitoba. Currently, there's no restriction on activities that a member carries out so long as there is not a conflict and so long as they're disclosed when they're relevant.

So I guess the question, again, is about the principle and whether the Premier agrees with it that there should be greater limitations or just a heightened scrutiny for Cabinet ministers. But, based on what I heard from the Premier's answer, it seems as though, you know, he thinks maybe we should not be implementing the recommendation exactly as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has spelled out in the report that he forwarded to everyone today. So that's an indication, I guess, of where the government may head on these recommendations; may entertain them but perhaps not implement each and every one of them.

So, just looking at that broader issue, you know, is the Premier going to entertain that idea, though, that there be a heightened standard of scrutiny for members of Executive Council? So, for Cabinet ministers and the Premier, that there be an enhanced set of rules within the rules, if you will. Because currently right now, it's basically the case that there's conflict-of-interest rules and they apply to all members of the Legislative Assembly. However, I think that what a few of these recommendations are saying is that there should be an enhanced standard for the members of the Executive Council.

And so I'd ask: Does the Premier agree with that idea, notwithstanding any specific recommendation, but just the broader notion of putting in a higher standard for Cabinet ministers?

**Mr. Pallister:** First of all, I've got to correct the member on his misinterpretation of my earlier comments. And just for clarity, he asked me—he—I'm not disagreeing with the comments made by Mr. Schnoor, I'm disagreeing with his interpretation of them. He made the comment earlier that Mr. Schnoor was saying that members of Cabinet wouldn't be able to have business interests. That's not what Mr. Schnoor says in his report. He says that unless the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has a chance to go over it and authorize it, that a minister would not be allowed to engage in employment and

own a business and things like that. It's very different.

So I think the member needs to know that and know that I'm not—

**An Honourable Member:** Acknowledge exemption.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Pallister:** Right, yes—no, but the member is saying I disagree with that. I don't. I disagree with his interpretation of it. He's said that—he's said absolutely that Cabinet ministers can't have business interests. That's not what the report says. It says they can, but they have to declare them with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and then have their ownership approved by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. That's the recommendation on the report. It doesn't say that they're—all Cabinet ministers are disallowed from having business interests. So I'm just asking the member's indulgence in reflecting on his assertion because his assertion's not accurate.

Obviously, we wouldn't have commissioned this work if we didn't believe it was important to improve the ethical standards in respect of behaviour of all members and to improve the understanding of those rules. That's what we're after. So, clearly, I think that that is the goal here, and the goal should be, I think, one that's shared by all members. That's why I've already intimated to the member that I would expect, through some mechanism—yet to be determined, but through some mechanism—all MLAs should have the opportunity to provide input. I mean, that's because it affects all members of the Legislative Assembly now and in the future. And, in terms of the declarations, yes, obviously, I appreciate the fact that there is a comment here specific to the situation that I came up against when I overdeclared, despite the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner that I did not have to, on my vacation property, and listed it, was pilloried for it by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

The fact remains that I did not have to do that. That is exactly what this report says. The fact also is that he is recommending that in future, no MLA has to list a vacation property because there's no reason to believe there'd be a conflict of interest as a consequence of, say, you know, Greg Selinger and his family having ownership in one or two or three cottages.

So it's not an issue that I think affects all members, but it is an illustration of how important it is to not allow confusion around the rules to cause a

situation that maligns any of us who are in elected office unjustifiably. That was what happened to myself and my family. I wouldn't want it to happen to anyone else here, and that's why we pursued—that's part of the reason we pursued a better interpretation and understanding of these rules, because we knew that there were—there was a strong lack of clarity around a number of issues. Certainly, that advice, which I sought verbally from previous ethics commissioners as well as this gentleman, we sought officially a few months ago, and now we have the advice, and I'm looking forward to all colleagues, whatever party or if they're independents as well, having an opportunity to have input into how we frame this going forward so we can be the most improved province in Canada in respect of our ethical rules, our accountability rules.

I think there's no reason to aim low on this. We should aim higher.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I believe the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) personal situation is different than the one he described because what the Conflict of Interest Commissioner contemplated is a vacation property or some sort of secondary home that's used for recreational purposes. However, I believe that the Premier's home in another country is held within a corporation. And I think that that is the reason why it be—would be required to be disclosed, because members are supposed to disclose their interests in corporations.

And so, again, I think his situation is likely different than some of the other cases that he referred to there, again, because the ownership structure of his real property is that it is held within a corporation, and there is a requirement to disclose interests in corporations that are above a certain amount. I believe, but I'm open to being corrected, that it's \$500 of what you have to disclose on.

And, again, I think the Premier errs in suggesting that the letter that the House leader wrote to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has now returned to the Legislature with a series of recommendations on improving the conflict-of-interest laws here in Manitoba is in some way a reflection on the Premier's own challenges with filling out the conflict-of-interest form in the past. Again, every member of the Legislative Assembly can go to the conflict of interest—indeed, we're required to meet with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to inform the process by which we fill out our conflict-of-

interest forms. As part of those conversations, or at any time, really, a member is free to get a written opinion of the advice from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

So the Premier (Mr. Pallister), if he wanted to, you know, address this issue or put it to rest, should seek a letter, a written opinion, from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner could just set out in black and white whether or not he agrees with the Premier's rationale, and I think that that would speak to the issue more clearly and give more confidence to people about this issue, rather than the Premier's own interpretation of this report, which I think is really meant to speak to the need to update the conflict-of-interest laws in the province and is not meant to be a reflection on the Premier's own situation, I don't think.

And, again, just to return to another point, the way that the recommendations are worded is that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner says that ministers should be prohibited, again, so that they would be barred from having things like outside jobs, having outside businesses, owning stock of a private corporation, private company, or being a board member unless it was directly related to your work as an MLA.

So, again, I think it's clear that the way that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has framed the recommendation is that the default should be that there'd be no outside sources of income, jobs, et cetera, and then only upon approval, perhaps in exceptional cases, that Cabinet ministers be allowed to do so.

So, again, I understand the Premier is coming to these reports—or these recommendations in the report lately, and so perhaps needs a bit of time to familiarize himself with them. But I would just put these comments on the record to, you know, correct him that some of these issues are in fact described pretty accurately here in the report.

One of the other, I think, recommendations that really stands out to me is that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner recommends—and he's done so in writing previous to this report. He—I believe he authored a document last year that made the same recommendation—that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner also be given the power to investigate situations where there may be a real or perceived conflict involving a member. And, as I outlined earlier, this is the standard in other jurisdictions, that

the other conflict of interest commissioners can make investigations and—rather than just provide advice.

And so, to me, it makes sense. Again, this whole exercise, I believe, is towards giving greater confidence for Manitobans in their government, and so I'd ask whether the Premier agrees with the recommendation to give the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the power to investigate.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, first, we're not here to debate this. We're here, I think, also to put accurate information on the record, so I've got to correct the member yet again.

He's wrong in two interpretations. One, no member is required, when disclosing items, to get a written opinion authorizing that they can. I went above the requirements communicated to me verbally by two ethics officers—or accountability officers and disclosed properties which were not required. That's been verified in this report. The recommendations are clear from the member. There is no need to disclose the value of assets, liabilities, unnecessary invasion of privacy. It's all on page 21. Some assets and liabilities do not generally create a reasonable possibility of a conflict of interest and should be excluded from disclosure. It goes on to list recreational properties. It's plain as day, and it's right on page 21 of the report, so the member's wrong in his assertion on that.

Secondly, he continues to assert that there would be a prohibition or implies there'd be some prohibition for members of any party or independent members to have business assets of some kind held privately. That's not what it says here. It simply says a member can disclose—a member should be allowed to engage in an activity, including carrying on a business or engaging in the management of a business directly or indirectly. If they disclose all material facts to the Commissioner and the Commissioner is satisfied, the activity will not create a conflict between the private interest and the public duty.

\* (16:30)

**An Honourable Member:** That's pretty much what I said.

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes, well, I'm saying it, so it's clearer because I think the implication the member's making is that somehow it's a bad thing if people have business assets, and that's not true. Even though—I'm not sure; I believe there's—the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has business assets in the NDP, and

probably—I don't know what number—probably 20 of the Conservative MLAs may have some business interest, a farm, a shop or a part ownership in something with their wife or partner. This—I wouldn't want it to be misrepresented there was anything wrong with that. What is, would be wrong would be to not disclose that.

And I think that's really what the point of this is, to make sure the members of the media, members of the general public are not finding out later about things in the background of a member or ownership of assets that members may have that they should have found out earlier. And, you know, I think that's really the fundamental issue.

But I can tell from the member's tone, generally, that he's supportive of the idea that we put forward of improving this legislation, and I'll look forward to making sure that he and his colleagues, and all our colleagues, have the opportunity to participate in the process of making sure that that happens because it has been a long time in coming, it needed to be done for a long time and was not, and it will get done now.

**Mr. Kinew:** Thanks again, Mr. Chair. So, again, I support the standard that—or, I support the idea that there be a higher standard for Cabinet ministers given their enhanced ability to influence public policy, funding and decision making. I also support the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's recommendation that all members of treasury board, even those that are, you know, not referred to as ministers by title, also, for the purposes of The Conflict of Interest Act, be treated as ministers, you know, for these purposes.

But, again, the write-up that the Premier is referring to to talk about his vacation home—or, his recreational home, I guess, is more accurate, to use the language of the report here—it would, if he owned that directly as an individual perhaps be excluded. However, it's my understanding that he owns it; he owns the corporation, which, in turn, owns the real estate and the home. And so, as a result currently, because there is a corporation there and presumably, he owns the shares to that corporation, there's a requirement to disclose. And even if these recommendations are implemented, that after that, the Premier would still be required to disclose the assets, meaning the corporation.

I'd note that it's interesting that the Premier decided to disclose it on an additional piece of paper, in addition to his conflict-of-interest form. Maybe the Premier thought that his owning that property did

create a conflict. I'm not sure what the motivation was, I don't know if the Premier has ever explained. But I do note that it is interesting that he did so.

Again the question was about the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's ability to investigate. This is something that on the surface seems to be a good idea, I don't know if there's other ways of looking at this, whether the Premier can share. Again, whether or not he supports giving the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the power to investigate.

To me it seems like it would make sense because while it's important for members of the Legislative Assembly to have advice on how to, you know, deal with conflicts of interest and to fill out their forms and all that; it also seems like it would be important for there to be an independent office or officer who can investigate these situations and, you know, come back with an independent assessment.

Again, I recognize that sometimes these conversations take on a partisan alliance. But an independent officer, like the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, should be able to settle those questions by and large and say one way or the other, you know, whether there is a real issue here or not a real issue.

Again, a written opinion can be requested by any member; Conflict of Interest Commissioner is independent, so getting a written opinion in the form of a letter, I think, would be a step in the same direction. But assuming we are going to make changes here at some point, I think that granting the Commissioner the ability to investigate would be a good move and would take that step even further.

So, again, I'd ask the Premier whether he supports the idea of giving the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the ability to investigate.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, page 21, if the member would choose to read it objectively, would answer his entreaties in respect of my disclosure, I was advised by two consecutive ethics officials that there was no need to disclose recreation property, whether personally held or corporately held when the sole shareholder of the company has already been declared. And so I felt that I should disclose them anyway and went, on a separate sheet of paper, because there's no reason to put it on a sheet of paper where there's no category. But I additionally offered that information.

It says on page 21, there is no need to disclose the value of assets and liabilities; it is their existence

that provides the information needed by voters. So that's why the information was disclosed by me because I felt the existence of the asset was a good idea. However, the report goes on to say, anything more would be an unnecessary invasion of privacy, something the member might respectfully consider in his deliberations after this session.

Furthermore, it says some assets or liabilities do not generally create a reasonable possibility of a conflict of interest. If the member is suggesting that I could potentially have been in a conflict of interest at any time, in any way, shape, or form, as a consequence of having invested after 20-plus years of savings in a piece of property in Costa Rica, he needs to make that allegation clear. Clearly, the ethics commissioner's recommendations say that there's no way that there's any perceived conflict of interest in owning a property someplace else. So that's what he says in the report on page 21.

The member continues to follow a line of questioning and repeat the arguments made by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) ad hominem, but it says—again, furthermore—some assets or liabilities do not generally create a reasonable possibility of a conflict of interest and should be excluded from disclosure, and then lists recreational properties.

So I don't know how much clearer it could be. I think the other issue, though, that we need to take a look at is disclosure by candidates of data and facts. When they make that disclosure, should it be made available to the public? This is an issue of some interest, I think, that Manitobans have expressed concerns about, and it is an issue that we also need to take a serious look at.

**Mr. Kinew:** I guess potentially owning a recreational property could become a conflict if it started to interfere with the duties that you carry out in your elected office and if, for example, a whole lot of your time was being consumed with issues related to that recreational property.

So, potentially, I think that, you know, there should be a disclosure and that again, you know, it strikes me as odd that if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) thinks about this thing so much, why doesn't he just ask for a written opinion from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? It would put the issue to rest.

Again, you know, the Premier is interpreting the recommendations in a way more overreaching fashion. Like, I'm looking at the—

**An Honourable Member:** Do you have to read it first?

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, no. I've read the recommendations, and as much as the Premier would like this to be a vindication, that's not what it is. This is a series of recommendations from an independent officer tasked with improving the act, and he's delivered a non-partisan series of recommendations that don't weigh in on the Premier's personal situation one way or the other.

Again, there's no findings in this report.

The Premier, if he wanted a finding, could ask for a written opinion from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And that would be—just for clarity, that would be a direct letter from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to the member from Fort Whyte that would spell out the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's view on the matter.

**An Honourable Member:** Where?

**Mr. Kinew:** Again—yes, well, certainly not a legal expert, but do try to think about these things in a fair and just way, I guess. *[interjection]* Yes and again, you know, I had my own conversations with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I floated the idea of an additional voluntary disclosure onto my conflict-of-interest form, and you know, the Commissioner basically laughed at me. Said, you know—I think he understood what I was getting at, but I think, you know, where we arrived at was that it's not necessary; it should be disclosed in the, you know, assets—corporate assets that you own. That same section there.

\* (16:40)

So, again, we're going down a rabbit hole of the Premier's own creation. He's wanting to talk about his real property and claim this is a vindication. But, again, question is about the recommendations, trying to get a feel for what the Premier thinks. And again, I mean, question was about does the Premier agree with the recommendation that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be given the ability to investigate.

Premier, if he is, you know, very concerned about the appearance of—or I guess the public perception is a better way to say—the public perception of his property in Costa Rica, it seems like he should support giving the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the ability to investigate, if only because then the Commissioner could investigate

and then he would really be able to provide the sort of vindication that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) seeks.

But, again, this is not what the report is today; it just gives a recommendation, one of which is provide the ability to investigate. So again, I'd ask the Premier, you know, it's—you know, in a straightforward way, does he support giving the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the ability to investigate?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm just—clarify that the preoccupation with the property in Costa Rica is certainly not my own, and the member, I think, says more about his concerns than mine. In respect of time there, he knows exactly how many days I was there last year, and he doesn't want to reference it because he knows it doesn't score him any political points to do so. He knows exactly the amount of time I spent there, and he knows my preoccupation is here and, most certainly, will remain so.

But, of course, there is also the added issue, and it is clear on page 21 of the report and on page 13, exactly what I have said, so I won't belabour the point. And it is also clear that we're acting on something the previous administration, in 17 years, failed to act on. And we'll do that co-operatively and with other parties having a chance to participate. So those have all been made clear.

What hasn't been made clear is the rules that should be required of all candidates in elections, in terms of disclosure of past actions. And, when those are made clear to a political organization, what are the rules? And that would be in the best interests of everyone to know, regardless of political party, political stripe of any kind, we should be sure that there is not any cover-up of any information germane to Manitobans in the decision-making process around who they vote for, should not be allowed. That would be my view, and certainly I would, as I've said previously, suggest that we have all political parties involved in a discussion around how we make sure that disclosure of past activities, criminal or not, is made clear so that voters have the opportunity to know if political parties are allowed to garner that information and not disclose it. That's a concern.

And it may have been the case, it may not have been the case, that would require some investigative work, in past election, but it cannot be allowed to continue. It is important that the ethical malaise be cleaned up, and that isn't solely germane to the issues raised here by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner in his report. But it is important in the electoral

process that Manitobans have the ability to be confident that they're getting the accurate information not after they vote, but before they make the decision on who they vote for.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I'd note for you, Mr. Chair, that the Premier declined to answer whether or not he supports giving the Conflict of Interest Commissioner the ability to investigate real or perceived cases of conflict of interests. On at least three occasions just this afternoon, was asked the question several times and declined to answer.

Again, I think it's a good idea. It should, you know, it should be undertaken because it would bring us into line with what the other provinces are doing, create a similar standard. But, again, it would help settle some of these questions that the Premier has been, you know, raising at this committee.

One of the other recommendations on the issue—and this is one that I kind of have been, you know, puzzled by, watching other politicians, not necessarily ones in this House, but maybe in Ottawa—is regarding the issue of sponsored travel. So I think there was some reports in the media a few weeks back about members of Parliament who've gone on different trips in which their travel has been paid for.

There are recommendations here. Just to summarize neatly, I think the recommendation is that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is basically saying that sponsored trips should be treated similar to a gift. So, again, a gift currently would have to be disclosed if it's over \$250. In other parts of the recommendations, you know, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner says those rules should be revisited as well. But notwithstanding that, basically, I think the recommendation is that if a member in the future were to go on a trip that was paid for, that that should be disclosed on someone's conflict-of-interest form.

And I'm not sure whether the Premier himself has, you know, maybe gone on trips like that when he was a Member of Parliament. It seems to be more of a practice at the federal level than at the provincial level. But I do think it's an interesting issue. I do wonder whether it's one that the Premier might like to follow up on.

And so I'd ask: Does the Premier think this is an important issue that should be pursued as the conflict of interest act is updated? Should there be a requirement to disclose sponsored travel by members of the Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Pallister:** So, just to help the member, I'll explain it again, but he has to understand it himself. I can only explain it so many times. I'm open to having all members of this Legislature be part of a process to discuss how we strengthen and improve these accountability rules. Therefore, it would be imprudent of me to presume outcomes and to answer his specific questions about things that I would want to recommend personally because I do respect the fact that we need to allow our caucus members, his colleagues, mine and others, to be part of that process. So I don't wish to prejudge the outcome of what perhaps an all-party mechanism might recommend.

And I'm trying to clarify for the member so he understands. I'm not at all reluctant to answer his questions as he is reluctant to answer mine about disclosure of candidates' records in terms of advance prior to elections. There seems to be a repetition here of a bit of a cover-up thing. We can't see a report on harassment that's been privately commissioned by the member, despite his earlier commitments to do so, because it's just not available. And now we're not sure if he supports the idea of political parties being able to hide information that might hurt the electoral fortunes of their candidates prior to elections.

I don't think that's right. That one I'll prejudge. I don't think any Manitoban out there who's got any objectivity is going to support the idea that political parties should be able to cover up information on their background that they've researched on their candidates just because it's going to hurt that political party to have that information out in the public view. If a candidate's going to run for public office, they've got to put their record out there. And that, to me, just makes—full disclosure makes good sense. It protects the candidate from subsequent accusations they tried to cover something up. That's important. And I think it also protects the general public so they know what they're voting for, because, as Greg Selinger liked to say, the best way to judge an animal—or future behaviour is by examining past behaviour. So that's what he says.

I—you know, there's lots of things this committee is going to be able to look at. They could look at people taking tickets to Jets games. I mean, they could look at a lot of things. I mean, some of the behaviours that have been exhibited in the past by certain members—member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), many others. Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), you know, quite a ticket consumer. Didn't declare any of that. These are problems, right?

They make all members look bad, and so let's have some rules around them and some clarity. I think that's a great idea.

I think it's also important to understand that we are really making progress on this harassment thing, but we'd like to have all-party support and involvement in it to see if we can't make that progress go forward together, side by side. So we have acted on measures to do that already, and there's more work that needs to be done, and covering up information is not one way to help. It's a way to not help, quite frankly.

So instituting a no-wrong-door approach for political staff, really important. I'm not sure, and the member's welcome to share with the committee what kind of progress has been made in the NDP caucus on making sure that all staff understand that is the case there. I really don't know. But that's the process we've instituted with the government caucus.

\* (16:50)

Some employees in government employment, including political staff, have felt very reluctant in the past. Perhaps, like the member, they prioritize not harming the electoral fortunes of their candidates, but I prioritize a safer workplace and a system that is open and fully discloses the data and information that people need to make proper decisions when they take a little pencil and decide in the little booth who they're going to vote for. They should be respected and treated with fairness and justice when it comes to getting access to honest information, not have it hidden from them until after the election. That wouldn't be right for the same reason, because we recognize that some employees have been fearful that we have brought forward this no-wrong-door approach for political staff as one of five measures we announced in February.

And I'll—I would like to go further on this just to clarify for the member how important I think this is for him—and, more importantly, for political staff—to have the kinds of protections that I think we would all want for our children and grandchildren in a workplace.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I would like to take a moment to remind members to—you know—respect everybody else's—while somebody has the floor, that participation and clapping, I don't believe, is allowed. So I'd like to let the members know that.

The honourable leader—oh, Leader of the Opposition—Official Opposition.

**Mr. Kinew:** Again, the Legislature is open for any member to debate a piece of, you know, a bill that would come before it.

So, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) could get a bill drafted, bring it forward, and all the members would be able to debate it. I recognize that, you know, the members of his caucus—probably not free to debate it as they see fit. I know the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) may defer from the Premier on issues like Bill 8. I know that there may be other challenges that I'm not aware of.

But, again, the Premier could bring forward the conflict of interest legislation very quickly. He promised to do so in 2016. We are a few years after that, now. So, again, the Premier is behind on his timeline that he previously outlined. So I think that we should be having the discussion today. We should be, you know, talking about some of these issues. The Premier should spell out how he feels about things like sponsor travel, things like the ability of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to investigate, the broader question of whether there should be a higher standard for members of Cabinet as opposed to other members of the Legislative Assembly.

I think these are fair questions. These are questions that the Premier could answer and should answer, really. I'm sure he's got a view on these matters and I'd be curious to hear them. Not necessarily prepared to agree in advance of hearing those views, but would very much like to hear them and give them due consideration.

I think that one of the other parts of this report and the series of recommendations that come with it that sort of, you know, stand out to me is that there be a broader definition of, you know, of conflict of interest under a proposed act, or changes to the act. I think that, as far as I understand it, it wouldn't just be about remuneration. If we were to implement the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's recommendations here, it would also look at, you know, relationships, it would also look at other forms of interest that may factor into a decision-making process that the, you know, respective member would have to consider while filling out their forms. So, again, I think that's an interesting issue for us to consider.

There's also another issue, and I think it's reflected in a few different recommendations. And it has to do with, you know, what the penalty would be if somebody were to violate the conflict of interest rules. I think that right now it's basically, you

know, you could lose your seat, potentially. But the Conflict of Interest Commissioner spells out a number of other options here—fines of different amounts that could potentially be brought into place and other sorts of sanctions.

So I'd be curious to know what the Premier thinks about that, if the Premier is supportive of specifying in law what the potential punishments could be for those who violate various parts of the conflict-of-interest law.

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes, before I answer that, I just—I think it would also be interesting to know the member is—seems to not like the idea of an all-party committee, so I'd invite him to clarify if that is the case—doesn't think that this is something that would suit that mechanism, he can say so. I'm interested in hearing his perspectives on that. I'd be interested in hearing his perspectives on what penalties should be.

I'll summarize some of the recommendations here in the report, but—also on non-disclosure—when candidates don't disclose information before an election and then it comes to light after, that might be something also that should be subject to some type of penalty, some type of consequence for the candidate, certainly. That's a possibility for the—if a political party covers it up and the candidate knows about it, the candidate's probably also somewhat, you know, guilty of a cover-up in terms of the information not getting out, and there should be consequences for that, probably, too.

That—I'd be interested in the member's perspectives on what those penalties should be in the event that something like that was to happen, because that would be pertinent to the discussion. I mean, that's a conflict of interest in a sense too. It's not a pecuniary thing, but if—it is, too, I guess. Really, it is a pecuniary thing because the member's elected to a position, they're paid for that position as an MLA, they got elected without information being disclosed. So, really, they gained their position, in a sense, on false pretenses. Like, that might need to have some penalty associated with it, something that would make sure that the consequences of that decision to make that information disappear for a time prior to an election was wrong. That would be an important thing to consider.

To try to prevent that from happening in future, though, is, I think, the larger purpose for which such an investigation discussion by all members of the House might—it might bear fruit, you know, might be a useful thing to discuss so we don't have this happen



again and no member has to be put in a position of having to be accused of not obeying the rules because there are none. The fact remains that there should be consequences.

So what the Conflict of Interest Commissioner says here in recommendation 40 is that, where a member fails to file a disclosure statement by a required date, fails to meet with the Commissioner, the Commissioner should advise the member of steps he or she will take, not filed—page 24. At the end of 30 days, the Commissioner should advise the Speaker and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the member's failure, whereupon the member should be suspended from office without pay. Now, that's the penalty that he's talking about here.

And then, of course, the—if the member thereafter complies, the Commissioner should advise the Speaker and the clerk of the executive assembly, whereupon the member's suspension should end. If the member has not complied with the required action by the end of the session during which the suspension took place, the member's seat should be declared vacant. So, that's pretty significant as a penalty, but that's just the reference to where a member fails to file a disclosure statement that those consequences would exist.

So, again, here, these are pretty serious consequences if one fails to disclose a conflict-of-interest statement—a disclosure statement. And of course that—there should be like penalties, of course, if candidates fail to disclose relevant information prior to an election, cover it up in any way. We'd have to have a look at that and, I think, should all have a look at that because it will protect all of us effectively, going forward, of accusations of wrongdoing.

It also goes on to say, in recommendation 41 on page 24, that where a member's failed to file a supplementary statement within the required 30 days of a change, the Commissioner should be empowered to impose an administrative monetary penalty not exceeding \$5,000 if, in the opinion of the Commissioner, it's in the public interest to do so.

In determining whether to impose the penalty and the amount, the Commissioner should consider the objective of encouraging compliance—well, again, I go back to this. Disclosing records to a political party and then having a political party cover that up before an election, and only it comes out after the election, that's sort of along the line of where you need to take a look at whether compliance should be

encouraged in some manner. There needs to be some mechanism for ensuring that full disclosure is made.

It also goes into: the Commissioner should consider the member's history, if any, of prior breaches of his or her obligations under the act, so there's that issue of previous behaviour and how important is that in terms of conduct being measured.

And then any other factors that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, are relevant—so that kind of leaves the door open of the Commissioner making—

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

### HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

\* (14:50)

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

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

Okay, I'll get the minister to introduce his staff that he has here today.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Yes, Mr. Chairperson. We have with us again today the Deputy Minister of Health, Karen Herd, and the department's captain of finance, Dan Skwarchuk.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Mr. Chairperson, as is the practice, I'll give the minister the chance to put on the record any undertakings that he may now be able to answer from earlier days.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I've nothing for the member.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, at the end of the day yesterday I had asked about the access for people in St. Theresa Point to the Ombudsman with regard to health issues.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the member for following up on that question yesterday.

The Ombudsman, as he knows, is there to serve all Manitobans. The Manitoba Ombudsman

accepts and investigates four broad areas of complaint about provincial government departments, and agencies, and municipalities, including government administration, fairness of actions—of decisions—that's under The Ombudsman Act. The government wrongdoing, which is under the public interest disclosure—the whistleblower act; access information and privacy, which is under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and access to personal health and privacy, which is under PHIA, The Personal Health Information Act. In addition to government complaints about personal health information and privacy can also be made about trustees of personal health information, including health professionals, health-care facilities and health-care service agencies.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister for his reply. Several days ago, I had asked what was the minister's and his department's approach to the issue of radon, which is believed to be the second highest cause of lung cancer in Manitoba.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member will likely know that over the last many years, there has been, I think, the ability to purchase radon testing kits. There's been public education both in terms of information, I think, that's been put out by government but also, certainly, information that's been put out by the media as well. I'm not sure if—what more specifics he's looking for.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, the—clearly, with the fact that many homes in Manitoba have been found to have high levels of radon, it would seem that preventing lung cancer by lowering exposure to radon would be a smart thing to do. I had just wondered whether the minister had any programs to do that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** No, I appreciate the member's line of questioning here. Again, it's been a topic of public discussion for a number of years in Manitoba. Certainly, our public health officers and those in particular who have experience in environmental health would provide information throughout the province. Of course, we do know that there is a larger level of radon in Manitoba than in other areas. So, you know, our public health officers would provide that information to—for example, I think the member raised the issue of schools. And so that is raised with individual school divisions and their officials, and they would take the action that they deem necessary.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, British Columbia, for a number of years, has taken the approach that treatment of

HIV/AIDS is prevention, because current treatment is able to drastically lower the viral load so that people are no longer infectious. We have a considerable number of Manitobans with AIDS who can't afford the treatment. And it has been recommended for a number of years that the treatment for HIV/AIDS be covered completely so that—by the Manitoba Health in order to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Manitoba. In contrast to BC, where the—there's been a dramatic reduction in HIV/AIDS, the incidence has been relatively stable in Manitoba. Is the minister going to take any action on this?

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Goertzen:** So the member raises an important issue when it comes to HIV. He's right, I believe, that the rates in Manitoba have remained relatively stable. Of course, we'd always like to see improvements on that.

One of the things that was recently announced, though I don't know that it got a lot of, sort of, public attention, but the—an agreement—bilateral agreement for information sharing with the federal government—the member—I want to disavow him of any idea that I don't give credit where credit is due when it comes to the federal government. We worked together to sign an information-sharing agreement with the federal government in terms of it's called the Panorama program and that's to ensure that information is properly shared, which can have an impact on communicable diseases in the province.

So what was happening prior to the agreement—of course, we're still in the implementation of it—is that the health information for those who were, for example, living off-reserve, wasn't always available to those who were working on-reserve and vice versa. So we wanted to ensure that—for vaccines, as an example, if you got a vaccine off-reserve or in a non-federal jurisdiction, that that information would be available in the federal jurisdiction, on-reserve, and likewise if you got a vaccination on-reserve that if you were going outside the—into the reserve system, that that information would be provided as well off-reserve so to make the information flow between those two jurisdictions. Previously, that information wasn't shared.

So there was good work done by department officials over the last couple of years in terms of negotiating the agreement so that we could share that information. It's not unlike the information-sharing agreement that we would have with the RHAs, the

regional health authorities, to ensure that there is information, that it flows between the RHAs for Manitobans who are accessing care. And now the similar agreement is in place so that those who are on-reserve or off-reserve are—can have that information shared so that when we're dealing with issues like communicable diseases, there's much better information. So, good news, recent news, and I'm pleased to provide that to the committee.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister.

I have been approached by, and have been working with, a number of individuals who have a—quite a severe latex allergy, latex being an airborne allergen as well as contact allergen. These individuals have problems in being in buildings where, for example, latex cleaning gloves are used. And in our Legislative Assembly, under a former minister of Health, a change was made so that the cleaning gloves used in this Legislative Building are no longer latex but they're other gloves, and this made it possible for people with a latex allergy to visit in the Legislative Building, whereas before it was not possible.

I wonder if, you know, in view of the fact that this is a significant factor, in view of the fact that hospitals in other jurisdictions have made their hospitals latex safe and part of that is moving away from the use of latex gloves for cleaning, whether the minister would consider making a change in hospitals in Manitoba so that the gloves used for cleaning purposes would not be latex anymore.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the member for raising that question, and I'll give him credit, it's not one that's come specifically to my attention previously. My understanding from officials is that within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority there has been a policy in place for about the last year and half or so that minimizes the use of latex to the greatest extent possible.

Officials advise that it's impossible to entirely eliminate latex, but that there is a policy in place at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to minimize occupational risks associated with latex exposure amongst staff that are sensitized.

So it involves not only the minimization of the use of those products, but also staff, doing an assessment of staff to determine and then have them provide the information in terms of what sensitivities they have to those products.

So I understand that that's in place, that policy within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. I'd have to do a scan to see if it's a similar situation in the other regional health authorities.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I thank the minister for that comment.

One of the issues that has, I have raised many, many times, and members of his party raised when they were in opposition was the putting in place of a dedicated stroke unit. And I wonder what the—if the minister could give an update on where we are on that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I had the opportunity to visit the Foothills hospital in Calgary in October as part of the Health minister meetings that were happening in that province at that time, and toured their stroke unit. I know they have two in—at least two in Alberta, but they provided me the opportunity to tour the stroke unit at Foothills in Calgary and it was certainly educational and reaffirmed the value of a stroke unit.

At this point, from my understanding is there's been a significant work done in terms of the desired location for a stroke unit. Clearly, the understanding is it would be located on the Health Sciences Centre campus as the primary trauma centre for the province. Officials within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have identified—after looking at a number of different potential sites on the HSC campus, they've identified the current Women's Hospital is their desirable site for the location.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister met, you know, not long ago with a group of people who had walked from St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, and Garden Hill, and I wonder if the minister has any update in terms of what he might be able to do in terms of helping people in those communities who have got a meth crisis in the community.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the member for helping arrange that meeting. I know we didn't have a lot of time to meet because we recessed this session essentially for 10 minutes to be able to meet with the walkers. But it was certainly an emotional 10 minutes for me, as I imagine it probably was for them. And the understanding that I got from that meeting is that among other things that they were looking for more education on the community. So we had contacted the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba who had indicated they would be willing to do an information session in the community on methamphetamines, so our officials are just checking

to see what the status of that is. But there was a commitment made by the Addictions Foundation to do that, so I'm sure that it's being worked out in the time frame that works for them.

\*(15:10)

I know there was a desire as well for sniffer dogs, I think, is the right term for those dogs who are trained in detecting drugs—probably not just methamphetamine, maybe not unlike you'd see at airports, and I think they wanted it at the airport in the community. That would be a question I think that would be best directed in the Estimates of Justice. We don't employ, I don't believe—and if we do, I've never met them—I don't believe we employ sniffer dogs in the department.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, there in Winnipeg with the meth epidemic, there seem to be some issues.

First of all, the police refer to the fact that the intoxicated persons act does not include meth. It includes alcohol and it's not sure that it will apply to people with meth.

And second, that there is not a clear place, right? We've talked about a detoxification centre for people with meth psychosis, but that has been a problem for people to be able to get into treatment for meth psychosis, and I wonder if the minister could provide an update on these issues.

**Mr. Goertzen:** On the issue of the intoxicated persons act, we're just checking to see which department that act actually falls under. There's not certainty among officials that that is a Health act. It likely would fall under Justice but we'll get confirmation on that.

But if the member's looking to speed this along and get to the Justice Estimates, he's got my support in that.

You know, on the issue of meth and the treatment of it, I—this is obviously an important topic, and I'm happy to put some further thoughts on the record about it. My friend from Minto, eager to see the VIRGO report, which I understand—and I give him no criticism of that; it will be released relatively shortly.

Member may not believe me in that, but he can look at past history. I won't refer back to his own past history as the Attorney General, but certainly in my time as Minister of Health, we released the Peachey Report for the public to see. We released the wait times task force report for the public to

see. The vast majority of the health sustainability KPMG report has been released, and the remainder of it will be released, I believe, by the end of May. And we've committed to release the VIRGO report, and we will.

So member may not like it, and certainly, every time we release a report, there's a degree of criticism and scrutiny, which is acceptable and in fact welcome in a public democracy—the kind that we have—but it will be released.

But when it comes to the treatment of methamphetamine, you know, I think that every jurisdiction is dealing with a certain degree of challenges here, though in other jurisdictions like maybe British Columbia, there is more concern on opiates.

You know, we've had some officials—discussions with the federal government in particular when it comes to some of the funding that they've made announcements for treatments around drug treatment. We'd like that to not be limited to opiates but to be extended to methamphetamine as well. I'm sure the member would be willing to have that discussion with any contacts that he has in the federal government.

When we look at the different options—you know, we've provided some options at HSC; we've provided some drug treatment options in Thompson. There's been additional resources put into AFM, particularly the women's beds available. There's been some partnering with private organizations like Tamarack as well, I believe.

And I think we need to build an addictions system that is more flexible.

So, certainly, the vast majority, or a good part, of the treatment that's provided now is provided by government. And there's great people doing good work in that system, but I find that it—in my view, it's a—it can be an inflexible system. It doesn't respond to—as quickly as we need it to respond at times to the different realities that we're facing.

The discussion of whether it's methamphetamine today or opiates—I mean, it was only 12 months ago that the former Health critic wanted a provincial emergency called on opiates, and I'm sure, you know, there are those who would like a provincial emergency called on methamphetamine. I mean, the reality is, in the drug situation, it changes relatively quickly and we don't have the flexibility to change along with it as quickly as I would like to see.

So I think that coming out of the VIRGO release, which the members will see, will speak more about that. But I think there is a bigger role for the Province to essentially ensure that there are standards in place, that those standards are being audited to, but that there's more commissioning when it comes to the service delivery of drug treatments. That's being done in many leading jurisdictions across Canada and in the United States, and it allows for a more flexible system. So, certainly, that's something that I believe is important and that we'd look towards.

When I toured the Grace Hospital yesterday and their new emergency room, which will open in about a month or so, there's a recognition of those dealing not just with meth issues but other issues, and so there are secured areas within the emergency room to help those who are dealing with certain issues. And so that is something that is important as well.

If I had more time I'd go on in some of the other thoughts that I have regarding some of the things that need to change in addictions. I can confirm for the member that the intoxicated persons act is under the Department of Justice, which probably the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) knew and was just waiting for me to confirm it.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** The minister was discussing accreditation. Is Manitoba Health involved in the accreditation of addiction facilities?

**Mr. Goertzen:** No.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The answer is no—no, that Manitoba Health—or how about its funding partners or organizations that Manitoba Health funds? Who is setting the standards? Are there standards or are there not standards? And what government role is there in setting the standards, if there are standards?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, it's a good question, and one that has kept me up at night more recently, looking at how the system in Manitoba is designed when it comes to addictions. So right now the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, which is essentially the arm's-length organization in the province that provides most of the addictions treatment as it relates to government, they get accredited by the national accreditation process, which they're not required to, I don't believe, but they choose to get accredited through that process. And the other addictions treatment facilities in Manitoba, which may or may not have a relationship with government, they can also choose to get accredited through that process,

but it's not the Department of Health that provides that accreditation or sets those standards, it's a national accreditation standard called Accreditation Canada.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Is Manitoba Health involved with 146 Magnus Ave.?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, do you have something to add to the question?

**Mr. Fletcher:** Yes. I just make the observation that this is taking a lot of time. I don't know if that goes against the time of Supply or not, but—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes, it does.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Okay, well it—then it seems to be taking an unreasonable amount of time to get the answers.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It's really hard to determine when—which is reasonable and you know, it's up to the information that's given to the minister from his staff, so the—he's getting the information on a timely manner.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So you know, I sometimes have sympathy for the member's frustration on this and other things. I was a critic in this place for many years. I hope not to go back to being a critic anytime—I was going to say any time soon, but really, any time. But the—yes, sometimes it takes a little bit longer to get answers from officials than the member might like and—but we're trying to get the answers. He might not like the quality of the answers and that's fine; he doesn't have to like the quality of the answers, but the time that it takes is the time that it takes.

I'm not—I can assure the member I'm not sitting here playing solitaire on my phone to kill time. We're halfway through the Estimates process. I've long ago given up any effort to try to kill time. I'm happy to go the distance now with the member for Minto and anybody else here when it comes to the Estimates time that we have.

The facility that the member's referring to, I believe, is the River Point Centre and that's an Addictions Foundation of Manitoba facility, so they would be accredited by Accreditation Canada and then I believe that there are other government agencies that are in that facility as well, which is called River Point Centre.

**Mr. Fletcher:** I expect the minister to have his file completely memorized. The—I'm sure he does; he just holds back sometimes.

The old Shriners' hospital, 633 Wellington, it's still owned by the WRHA, I understand?

**Mr. Goertzen:** My understanding is that the property is owned by the provincial government, not by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

**Mr. Fletcher:** So it's owned by the Province of Manitoba, and—which is essentially, for all intents and purposes, the WRHA's property.

If the province wanted it to be—it has been a hospital for a century, so it would not be unreasonable for a Manitoba regional health authority to look at that facility for some of its other operations or perhaps even Manitoba Housing.

Has the repurposing of 633 Wellington—the old Shriners' hospital—being investigated by WRHA or is it in their plan for addictions in—to deal with addictions in Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I don't know that there are investigators in the WRHA skulking around properties. The property is not owned by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. The registered owner is the Province of Manitoba, so I guess if the WRHA was investigating the property, they're doing it without my knowledge. But I may not have knowledge of if either, because it's not owned by the Department of Health.

So the registered owner is the Province of Manitoba. I'm not aware that the WRHA is looking to acquire the property. They've certainly not indicated to me that they're looking to acquire the property, nor do I know who else might be interested in acquiring the property. I'm not in the real estate business yet.

**Mr. Fletcher:** This is the larger issue. We've established that the—that a property that has been—that is beautiful, by the way—is owned by the Province, yet the Province goes out and compels the City to sell another property in St. James for a dollar, which is worth millions, when the Province already owns land and a building that would meet its stated needs.

The minister says that he's not responsible for addictions, or is he—or is the Province responsible for addictions? It's not clear. Well, what is clear is there's no plan—no plan—and that there are no standards. What assurance do any of these facilities

provide the public that the public interest is maintained, from everything from making sure that people get the treatment they need to the safety of the communities around the facilities, and everything in between?

And what is the minister doing to prevent these prescription drugs from getting on the market in the first place?

**Mr. Goertzen:** There's a lot of questions wrapped up into that one issue. I recognize it's not a veiled comment in any way, nor do I think the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) is trying to make veiled. He has an issue, a concern with the Bruce Oake centre, the proposed Bruce Oake centre. I've tilled this ground with the member previously. I'm more than willing to till it again for as long as he wants to keep the plow on the field—and I'm not a farmer by the way, but I've served with enough farmers over the years, I've sort of picked up the language.

And we can have that discussion for a long time. The facility that he's—or the property that he's speaking about isn't owned by the Department of Health, nor is it owned by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. In terms of the plan and the issue of standards, I think me and the member might not be that far away in terms of some of our concerns there.

I do have some views that we should be looking at a system that is—provides the department more of a role in terms of determining standards, commissioning out services and auditing to those standards, as exist in many other provinces and many other states.

I think that that would make our system more flexible. It would allow us to respond to issues more quickly than we have now, and so the system that we've inherited and the addictions system, I don't think, is meeting the needs that it needs to meet right now—not that there aren't good people working in the system, there are, but I also have concerns of the structure.

Some of that'll be spoken about in the VIRGO report. Some of it won't, but I know when I've been to other jurisdictions where the government essentially sets the standard for addictions facilities to be licensed and commissions out services, I see greater flexibility in those systems than I do in the Province right now.

So do I think the system could change? I do. I think I've outlined to the member some of the vision

that I have for a system that is different than what we have now, and that's more flexible. And I think when—but when he asks, you know, what assurances do people have when it comes to AFM these—that the treatment is meeting the standards that it needs to be met, there is an accreditation process through Accreditation Canada that they have gone through.

If he's asking questions, you know, about other facilities that aren't tied into government in terms of funding, and perhaps he's headed towards the issue of the Bruce Oake Foundation again, they've not asked for any funding from my department, nor have they received any funding from my department. So we don't have an accreditation role with them.

\* (15:30)

Now, in the future, if we went to a more of a commissioning model when it comes to addiction services in Manitoba, they may have a role. And if that would be the case at that time, we—you know, we wouldn't go to that model until we had standards put in place, and they would be—they would then be held to those standards like anybody else who was commissioning when it came to addiction services. But that's down the road a bit. That's not the model that I've inherited or that we've inherited as a government. But I clearly think that we need an addictions system that's more flexible, that can be more adaptable to the needs as they occur. And I don't think government has to run it all.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The member states he's not a farmer, and I believe him. I assume he doesn't have any first-hand knowledge with fertilizer, though you would never know it from that answer.

The fact is there is no accreditation; there is no plan. And yes, I'm—the concern is that a lot of effort is being put into a very laudable cause, but—while at the same time not maximizing the resources that already exist. There are assets like 633 Wellington that the Province owns. But rather than looking at that or even considering it, it forces the City to sell for a dollar another piece of land so that—the member's a part of the government, and the obvious solution to that problem had always been there. And it wouldn't have caused all the other challenges.

So that's the problem, Minister. It's not so much what the goals are; it's that the goals are never going to be achieved with this ad hoc approach. The issue of accreditation is problematic. The model that the Bruce Oake Foundation has stated that they are following is a place called Fresh Start in Calgary.

The Free Press reported that that Fresh Start in Calgary actually was defunded because the treatment program wasn't evidence based.

Now one would expect that Health would have a concern about a program making health claims that are not evidence based and that have been defunded and discredited in the scientific community and/or by government. So I ask the member to think about that.

Now Manitoba Housing is the lead on the project and it—the Manitoba Housing project on the green space and recreational land on an urban waterway is very concerning, especially when we now know—and it's been confirmed and reconfirmed—that the Health department has no involvement. The efficacy and the health claims do not match the test in another province. There are huge questions about the business plan and other things in the area, including safety of the residents. This is not a lock-down facility or anything like that.

My issue is on behalf of the people of St. James and everyone else who wants to deal with the challenges of addiction. And that is we need to have a good plan that maximizes the resources that exist in the province, including facilities that are already zoned for addiction. The Shriners hospital, it's already zoned for a hospital. It's owned by the Province.

So why is Manitoba Housing going to put a—spend or encourage another entity to spend \$14 million for a facility where they can probably for a seventh of that rehabilitate the one that the Province already has and meet the mission statement and the business plan of the organization in the first place? This hasn't been well thought out.

Minister, where's the plan?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So, if we're going to stick on the theme of manure, we're going to have to cut through some here, and this issue for the member is not about a plan. In the almost two years—and I have great respect for the member, so he knows what's coming next in terms of my comments—in the two years that he's been in this Chamber, up until—except for the last few weeks, he's not raised an issue about an addictions plan. When the Bruce Oake centre was proposed, he didn't raise an issue with how the treatment was going to be delivered. He has one issue and one issue only, and his only issue is the location. He doesn't want it in that location. That's his issue.

As a government, as the Minister of Health, and I have great respect for the minister of family services, we have a bigger picture that we need to look at other than the one issue that the member has a concern with. There is a plan that's been developed and there are other thoughts around that plan as well in terms of providing flexibility. I've put that on the record for the member opposite. I've been open and transparent in terms of how I'd like to see the system evolve when it comes to addictions in Manitoba, because I do believe within the resources that we currently have we can do better with that.

But the member shouldn't try to convince those of us who are in the Chamber here today that his issue is much broader than the one issue about location. He started off on the issue of location, he's developed his whole campaign around the issue of location, and now he's trying to perhaps glom on some other things to it because maybe it wasn't as successful as he had hoped in terms of that particular campaign.

Now, we can have disagreements of the location. The member will have people who he wants to represent who are concerned about the location. There'll be many other members who believe that Scott Oake and his family are not only motivated by the right thing but are looking to do the right thing in terms of helping those people with addictions. So the member shouldn't try to persuade anybody here that this is about a broader plan, that it's about the type of treatment that may or not be produced or provided at the Bruce Oake centre. He has one issue at play here and one issue only, and that is the issue of location.

And we can have a dispute about that, he can put it—he may suggest we put it beside IKEA, or that Scott Oake puts it beside IKEA. He may want to move it to Steinbach; he might want to move it, you know, to the racetrack. I don't know where he wants to move it, but he's only fixated on one issue, and that is he doesn't want it in that particular location.

We need to look at a broader perspective. We need to look at a variety of different things. There is a plan that's been developed. It will be released and there'll be more discussions of it, and I'm happy for the member to propose 10,000 other locations if he'd like as well.

As for me, I hope that Scott Oake and his family are successful in helping people and in developing something that will help people, and I hope someday the member opposite will meet some people who have been helped by the treatment of a future

Scott Oake foundation and he—maybe he can celebrate that success with us as well.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Fletcher:** Very quickly, the issue of an addictions centre, it's difficult to be involved when it's a secret, when nobody's consulted, nobody—the deal is done before it can go through any kind of transparent process. And this whole exercise has really been an—educational for me, because before, I was focused on axing the carbon tax—terrible public policy. I was focused on improving Manitoba Hydro, not creating new Crown corporations, wasting money, including money that could go to help people with addictions. I was looking for a Hydro inquiry and working hard on organ donation, conflict-of-interest legislation. I wish the minister would have raised organ donation before I—way before I had to introduce that bill.

So, there are lots of things that the government could improve upon, and I've provided lots of helpful suggestions over the two years, and my helpful suggestion on addictions is to maximize the resources that are available, have an accredited program, and focus on the issues of addiction and the precursors.

I notice the minister had nothing to say about the prescriptions of opioids and—you know, because that affects the taxpayer and the people who do legitimately need these prescriptions. What is the minister doing? There's a big—there are many issues here, and the Vimy site is definitely the wrong place to put this addiction centre, and the minister is part of a government who is putting this Manitoba Housing project in an inappropriate place when there are much better, more appropriate places. I wish he would focus on that.

And the member from Kirkfield Park should know better right from his time as city council and should never have allowed that facility to slip through his fingers.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of addictions exists. Still haven't got an answer why the shrines hospital wasn't looked at or what the larger plan is.

Thank you.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, there's been a variety of different things raised by the member. You know, he talks about the old hospital. I think if he looks at old media reports, he'll know there are riverbank stabilization issues there. Maybe he wants the new



addictions facility to slip into the river or something with the unstable stabilization. But it goes to the fact that this really isn't about a more suitable location as the member might say. It's just that he doesn't like the current location. He doesn't like where it's being proposed, and that's it. That's his issue on this.

Now, he proposes to say that this was somehow done in the dark of night. I don't follow city hall proceedings all that closely, but for the little that I follow city hall proceedings, I saw copious amounts of media reports on this. I think it was the subject of a public debate at City Hall. The—not only were the lights were on, I think it was done in broad daylight. And people came, and they made presentations there, and there were these great big lights on things that looked like TV cameras, and it showed up on this square thing that looked like a TV at night, and then it showed up on this paper that looked conspicuously like a newspaper the next day. And there were all sorts of commentaries on social media about it, and there's been lots of debate about it in forums not unlike the Legislature. And, of course, he's brought it up in terms of the Estimates committee.

There aren't that many public policy issues, maybe other than the transformation of the health-care system over the last three months, that have gotten as much media attention as the proposed Scott Oake foundation, so if that's the member's definition of secrecy, then we have a very different definition of secrecy. This has played out in a very public forum; there's been lots of discussion. At the end of the day, the member doesn't like the proposed location. He's tried to find a variety of different reasons to try to suggest that the Scott Oake foundation—sorry—the Bruce Oake Foundation will fail. And I hope they don't.

I genuinely and sincerely hope that Scott Oake and his family do well in terms of their fundraising. I hope that they're successful in providing a treatment facility that's going to help many Manitobans. I hope that they turn people's lives around in terms of helping people battle addiction.

And I understand the member doesn't like the location; that's fine, you know, he can—that's—he's representing a segment of people who don't like the location, and he's doing his job as an elected representative. But there are also other representatives in this Chamber, many others, who understand that we need successful people—or sorry, people who—to bring forward successful projects when it comes to dealing with addictions. And I look

forward to the project being a success and turning lives around.

And, hopefully, me and the member while we will remain friends even though we have a disagreement on this issue, perhaps we'll meet somebody who benefits from the Bruce Oake Foundation in the future, and we can celebrate in that success.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I undertook with my time to try and stay outside of the Perimeter Highway, so I'm going to have a number of questions about health care outside of Winnipeg.

The first is a general question. We know that a number of communities are concerned about the future of their health-care services, and we understand that the government will be coming forward to announce the future of rural hospitals and rural health care. When does the minister expect to be in a position to make that announcement?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I don't think the time frame has changed from what I've publicly said before. Shared Health began the work of looking at health-care delivery in rural Manitoba, recognizing there are tremendous challenges with the almost 20 facilities that had been closed by the NDP government. Even those—they were called temporary closures; some of them had been temporarily closed for 15 to 20 years in some cases. So there was not only challenges, but there is risk involved with that great many temporary closures.

The concern about health care in rural Manitoba is very different than it is in Winnipeg where lots of the discussion revolves around ER wait times and, when you get the emergency room, how long are you going to wait? The discussion in rural Manitoba is when you get to the emergency room, is it actually going to be open, and, if it's open, what can they actually do for you? So it's a very different sort of discussion.

We task Shared Health with the job of looking at it and coming forward with a plan. My understanding was that they were going to be providing a plan in late spring or early summer, and I've not heard that that time expectation has changed from Shared Health.

**Mr. Swan:** Or after the Legislature rises in early June?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, it would be before or after the Legislature rises.

**Mr. Swan:** Can the minister give any better detail on that other than late spring or early summer? What date are we looking at?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I've not been provided a date from Shared Health. I don't intend to rush their work artificially. We've told them to bring forward a plan when they had the best plan available, and they said that that would be late spring or early summer.

**Mr. Swan:** Obviously, the minister must know there's a lot of concern in rural Manitoba over what may be contained in the announcement. For example, we've got the member from Interlake who actually thinks his hospitals are going to be fine, but it'll be hospitals in the other part of the province that'll be closed. His quote was: I think our hospitals, in the Interlake area, are spread out a fairly significant distance. There's other areas of Manitoba where there's hospitals within, and I'm kind of guessing a mileage here, but within seven miles maybe of each other.

So are you going to give the member for Interlake (Mr. Johnson) and the people in the Interlake some satisfaction that it will be other parts of the province who have their hospitals closed, or what can we expect when that unspecified day comes around?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I don't want to leave the member with the impression that people in rural Manitoba have been satisfied with their health care up until two years ago. I mean, there was great angst over the last two decades as emergency room after emergency room closed. I could start listing off the communities, if he would like, in terms all of the temporary closures that happened under the NDP.

But there's been tremendous anxiety, not just whether or not an emergency room is open but whether or not they had the capacity to actually provide something akin to emergency service. And I think that that's as big a problem as anything: is that we have places that are called emergency rooms, but, if you'd go there, they wouldn't actually be able to deal with the emergency that you'd expect they'd be able to deal with. And that's as large a problem as anything in rural Manitoba.

\* (15:50)

So Shared Health is doing the work in terms of looking at the services, and they're actually doing an

inventory of what these emergency rooms can do, which is something that hadn't been done before.

The NDP kind of turned a blind eye and said, well, we're going to put a big emergency room sign on it and just hope they can do something that's akin to an emergency. Now they're actually, I understand, going to these facilities and saying you know, hey, what is it that you can actually do when somebody is here? Can you do certain testing? Are you able to provide certain kinds of treatment? And I think that's an important part of building a plan.

**Mr. Swan:** So, if that's the process that Shared Health is undertaking, is the minister then undertaking that if they do find that a particular emergency room has the equipment and can do a number of procedures, that that emergency room will be used to that full capacity?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, what I'm saying is that the NDP over the last 17 years they were in government, allowed rural health care to disintegrate to such a point that they weren't even sure themselves what could be done in emergency rooms. There were communities that were confused. They didn't know when their ERs would actually be opened. They didn't know what could be provided when those emergency rooms were open.

It's one of the reasons why the Toews report so strongly—Toews report which was commissioned under the NDP in 2013—why it so strongly recommended that there be a robust emergency service with ambulances—in Westman in particular but not just in Westman—is because there wasn't a reliance on the general emergency room system.

So you needed to ensure that there was a strong and robust paramedic response services. One of the reasons I think why, you know, the investments in paramedics last year and 60 this year is—you know, Eric Glass referred to it as the single largest commitment the Province has ever made in the history of the province to paramedic service. I think that that's significant.

So the member is trying to leave the impression that somehow over the last 17 years, people who were in rural Manitoba were satisfied with their health care. He may have been too focused on the issues in Justice in his time as Justice minister, or too focused on other things after that, but I can assure him that there has been no great level of satisfaction in rural Manitoba over the last many years as a result

of the many closures that were happening under the NDP.

**Mr. Swan:** The minister has put on the record, then, that there's going to be an inventory shared of what equipment, what capacity is in each emergency room. Is the minister planning to share that information with the communities that are very concerned about where things are going to go?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well my goodness, Mr. Chairperson. We're now to the point where the member opposite seems to think that there's something wrong with finding out what our emergency rooms can actually do. I mean, this speaks to the issue over the last 17 years where the NDP had complete blinders on when it came to rural Manitoba. It was a don't-ask-don't-tell policy because they didn't want to ask anybody what was going on in rural Manitoba because then you'd actually have to explain it. And that certainly wasn't working in the context of rural Manitoba.

Yes, just like the regional health authorities, I would expect, would do a consistent checking in with their various facilities in terms of the different resources allocations they have and what's working well and what's not working well, that's certainly true for Shared Health, that they're going to do an assessment in rural Manitoba to find out what are the kinds of things that these rural emergency rooms are actually doing. What are they performing, what are they performing well, and what are they not performing?

If the member opposite seems to feel that we shouldn't do that assessment, that we should just cross our fingers and hope it all goes well in terms of providing care in rural emergency rooms, that might explain to a large degree why we're in the situation that we're in from what we inherited from the previous government.

**Mr. Swan:** I don't know if it was the questions of the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) that got the minister so charged up, but let me just ask the question again because it's based on something that the minister said in his answer that I'm entitled to pursue.

The minister has put on the record that Shared Health is going to be performing what he's described as an inventory of capacity in emergency rooms. The question I asked the minister is whether Shared Health or the minister is going to share that

information with the communities in which those emergency rooms are located.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I think that the communities would probably have a better understanding of—than the member might give them credit for in terms of what can be done in certain facilities and what isn't being done well in certain facilities.

If you were to talk to many of the communities—for example, if you were to go to Reston, they would know that their facility—their emergency room—was suspended under the NDP. If you were to go to Erickson, they would know that the NDP suspended their emergency room. If you were going to go to Rosburn, they would know that the NDP suspended their emergency room. If you were to travel to Wawanesa, those residents of that fine community would know that the NDP suspended their emergency room services. If you get in a car and travel to Birtle, they would know that the NDP suspended their ER services. If you were to take a trip to Shoal Lake, they would know that the NDP suspended their emergency room services. A short trip to Baldur would inform you that the NDP suspended the ER services there when they were in government. A scenic ride to McCreary and talking to those residents, you would know that the NDP suspended their services. Certainly, the fine people of Winnipegosis would know that the NDP suspended their emergency room services. Having lunch in Teulon with those fine folks would be informational for the member, because they would tell him that the emergency room department was suspended by the NDP.

A short drive to Emerson near the border—the member could go for a—could go to the Pizza Ranch if he wanted to in Grand Forks after that, but in Emerson they would tell you that the emergency room had been suspended by the NDP government. If you were to travel to Pembina Manitou—also a very scenic area of the province—and talk to residents, they would know that the ER was suspended by the NDP. Over in Gladstone—and you could see the iconic Happy Rock there—they would tell you that the NDP had suspended the ER services there.

**An Honourable Member:** Not so happy anymore.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In MacGregor—yes, the Rock might not be as happy. In MacGregor, they would tell you that the NDP suspended their ER services. And, if he went to Vita, he could come through Steinbach. I'd be happy to host the member for coffee on his way to

Vita. They would say that the NDP suspended their ER services.

So I think that the residents of these communities have a very good understanding of what isn't available in their communities because of the NDP.

**Mr. Swan:** So I'll take that as an answer that the minister is not going to share that information with communities, who will be left in the dark as to why more of their facilities are being closed.

What I will do, though, is turn to the EMS question, which I think the minister wants to talk about. And I think we should have a good discussion about EMS in Manitoba. We agree that there are changes that are going on, and there are certainly opportunities to improve how emergency medical services are delivered in Manitoba.

The review which the minister's already talked about resulted in a recommended province-wide response time standard of not more than 30 minutes for 90 per cent of the population, 90 per cent of the time. Does the minister agree that that continues to be the recommended province-wide response time?

**Mr. Goertzen:** There's nothing that's been—that has changed or that has been done to change those targets. So we continue to work towards meeting the targets for response.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that.

And the Manitoba Health website says that in 2015-2016, 95.52 per cent of calls south of the 53rd parallel met the standard during daytime hours, and 94.67 per cent during nighttime hours.

Does the Department of Health have the—have those statistics for the 2016-2017 fiscal year?

**Mr. Goertzen:** While we don't have them immediately available, we can provide them within the time frame that's required in the Estimates process.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that undertaking. And I presume by the time that that is ready, we can probably also have the information for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, which would have wrapped up just a couple of weeks ago. Could I get that undertaking as well?

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Not knowing exactly what the lag time is between the end of the fiscal year and the

requirement to report back under this Estimates process, but if we do have the information available within the allocated time of the Estimates response time, we will provide it.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that. And I think we agree that the changes are intended to change the way services are delivered, because in some communities, ambulance services are being provided by individuals who might be part-time, who might have—be forced to be called out, who may, in fact, have a lengthy period of callout, during which time they're responsible to attend to calls and the intention is to replace that system with a system of full-time employees who will then staff ambulances 24-7. Is that—can we agree that that's where the system is going?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, that certainly is the premise of the Toews report and why we hired a good number of full-time paramedics last year and committed to 60 this year, is to have regional centres where full-time paramedics would be located.

But you know, I think the distinction is sometimes people feel that those regional centres are like fire stations in Winnipeg where the fire truck is sitting in there and they're waiting for the call. The way the system works in terms of active deployment or predictive deployment under the ambulance system out of the 911 centre in Brandon and the fine folks who do great work there, the ambulances—well, you know, you might have a paramedic going to that regional centre, getting uniformed up and getting into their ambulance. They would then be deployed to a position where they would be most likely to receive a call and be able to respond in the targeted response time.

So it's not like a fire station where you necessarily have people who are sitting in a station waiting for a call; this is a station where the ambulances are—where the paramedics come to, get into the ambulances, and then go where the predictive model says they're most likely to receive a call from.

**Mr. Swan:** And is it correct that the paramedics and others who operate the ambulances, they are employed by the regional health authority and not by Manitoba Health, correct?

**Mr. Goertzen:** That is certainly the current state where those paramedics are employed by the individual regional health authorities in which they're located.

But I understand that Shared Health is actively looking at whether or not there's a better model. So for example, whether or not having a—them under the employment of an entity like Shared Health would provide better co-ordination.

**Mr. Swan:** I'd ask the minister to contact the authorities, and if he can let me know the number of paramedics that are currently employed—or, if we can pick a date, let's say April 1st because that seems to have a good ring to it—the number of paramedics that are actually employed by each of the rural health authorities, that would be appreciated.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, we can provide that information within the prescribed Estimates time.

**Mr. Swan:** And then just to make sure we're all speaking the same language, there are different types of paramedics and then there are some individuals who aren't necessarily considered paramedics who currently staff ambulances. There are primary-care paramedics, there's advanced-care paramedics. In Manitoba, there's also intermediate-care paramedics. And there's another category of licensed emergency medical responders.

So, let me ask a number of questions, and if the minister needs to consult with the authorities and get me answers, that's fine.

Does the minister see that emergency medical responders will continue to have a role as we move to full-time paramedics in Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes.

**Mr. Swan:** All right. So, as I understand it, emergency medical responders are, to put it one way, they provide advanced first aid, so they might be the first person on the scene, and their job would be to stabilize the patient until the paramedics arrive. Is that an oversimplification? Is there a better way to describe it?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, I think that that's a fair general description of it, recognizing that those who are attending the scene as described by the member may not always opt to call an ambulance, but that's a general—generally that is a fair description, officials say.

**Mr. Swan:** To build on the undertaking that was given a few minutes ago, could the minister ask each of the rural health authorities and advise how many emergency medical responders they employ as of April 1st?

**Mr. Goertzen:** We can certainly ask with the caveat that not all of the EMRs are employed by RHAs. Some of them might be employed by individual municipal services, municipalities.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay, I appreciate that. And just to sort of finish that thought, is it correct that there are still some—there's still some ambulances that are operated by municipalities, and it would be the goal of the department and the Health authorities to bring those into the larger system?

**Mr. Goertzen:** That's probably too much of a generalization, recognizing that there are some First Nations communities that might maintain their own service and large municipalities that might have different service models.

**Mr. Swan:** But, aside from First Nations communities, is it the intention that those remaining municipal ambulances, the goal is to move those into part of a—whether it's considered a health authority fleet or the provincial fleet of ambulances?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, my understanding is in Brandon, Thompson, it's been some matter of dispute. Winnipeg have their own sort of municipal ambulances. It's not our intention to take those over.

**Mr. Swan:** All right. I thank the minister for that, and we'll have a discussion about Winnipeg likely tomorrow, which won't be a surprise to the minister.

I understand that to operate an ambulance 24-7, it requires approximately eight full-time paramedics. Is that fair?

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Goertzen:** It's in the interests of time; I think we can provide an answer to the member probably tomorrow.

**Mr. Swan:** That's fair. I appreciate that.

So, as we move ahead, the intention, then, is to take the existing way that many paramedic positions are currently filled, which is individuals who work their shift but then they're expected to be on call, sometimes for a number of days in a row. I think we can all agree that that's not the best way to run a system. So the intention, then, is to convert those individuals into full-time positions and do away with the necessity of paying call time.

So I appreciate that's why, when additional investments are made, that can have a different fiscal impact on different areas. For example, Interlake-Eastman has a higher amount of its

paramedics working on call and call-back shifts. So I just want the minister to agree that the change is going to look different in different parts of the province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, the principle is, coming out of the 2013 Toews report, is to move away from an on-call model to full-time paramedics for a lot of different reasons. I mean, you know, we've—I've heard of the scenario where you had on-call paramedics, you know, getting in their vehicle and literally driving past the scene of an accident so they could drive to their ambulance, and then get to the ambulance and come back.

And so, you know, that's one scenario. But it's true that the principle of moving away from an on-call model to a full-time responsive model is general in its application, but I recognize that, you know, changes that are happening in different regions may have different implications. But the principle remains the same.

**Mr. Swan:** So, for example, I'm looking at the press release that the minister and the government issued, back in June 2017, talking about some investments in paramedic staffing positions as part of the implementation of the review. So, for example, Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority was said to be receiving \$307,000 for four positions in Arborg and four positions in Ashern.

So I presume what would happen is that there would be four individuals hired on a full-time basis for Arborg and four people hired on a full-time basis in Ashern and at the same time the individuals who had been working before, their positions, I presume, would be deleted, or those individuals would be rolled into these new positions. Is that correct?

**Mr. Goertzen:** That, I think, is essentially the right premise, although operationally it might work out to be different, so you might have somebody understand who is working part time in a region and it might not just be that their position converts to full time and they then become full time because it may be that person was working part time in different places, and so you might have had one person working part time in a variety of different places and so it's not necessarily a straight conversion from one position to one person moving from part time to full time, because they may have been sharing positions in different areas.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that and I appreciate it's not the Department of Health that's

making those individual staffing decisions, but is it the minister's understanding that anybody who is currently working as a paramedic, whether it's in a full-time position or part time position, they will be considered eligible, then, when a changeover is made and there are additional funds being provided for full-time positions that those individuals will be able to apply for those positions?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Recognizing, as I think the member pointed out at the beginning of his question, that those hiring decisions are really being made by the individual employers, which are the regional health authorities. I assume there's a general correctness to his premise, except that there'll probably be some requirements under collective agreements for seniority and that sort of thing.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay. That's fair, and the reason I'm asking the question is because I think we can agree that moving to—moving away from having paramedics on call for several nights in a row, and as the minister says, and we agree, driving by an accident site to get to a place where they can then hop in the ambulance and come back, is not the best way to work as well. The point is that if everything else is equal, the system will require more paramedics, in fact a lot more paramedics than are currently employed. Is that agreed?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think that that is correct, which is why we're looking to hire 60 new ones, or at least 60 FTEs in this fiscal year, the allocation of which the member will hear more about in relatively short order.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, on the government website there's kind of an interactive map and you can see where the new—where ambulances will now be located and where they were before. Is that the final decision of this government or is there still—as the minister is now suggesting there's going to be an announcement that's going to make this very clear to communities?

**Mr. Goertzen:** No, I was just suggesting that the new paramedic positions, which were contained in the budget, the allocation of those EFTs will be announced relatively shortly.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Swan:** Right. I thank the minister for that.

Does the department have any expectations as to how many of these new positions will be primary-care paramedics, advanced-care paramedics or intermediate-care paramedics?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Certainly, in the upcoming tranche of 60, I understand that they're all allocated as PCPs, primary-care paramedics.

**Mr. Swan:** I understand there's a disparity between paramedics in the city of Winnipeg and outside of the city of Winnipeg, and most—not all—but most paramedics working outside of the city are primary-care paramedics, so it's the department's plan to continue that. Is that fair?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, that's on the—this initial tranche of new hires. I know Shared Health is doing work on the scope of practice on a number of professions. It's looking at, you know, how does Manitoba compare to other provinces when it comes to, you know, scope of practice of pharmacists and the scope of practice of, you know, nurse practitioners and scope of practice of paramedics. And so there'll be an undertaking to do a mapping of, you know, what are the different scopes of practices now and where could some of those be perhaps expanded or changed to meet needs in different parts of the province.

So, I know, in terms of the wait times task force, we did have representation, Dr. John Ross from Nova Scotia, I believe, who has some experience with using paramedics to do more work in communities, more than just responding to calls, so doing more primary-care work. So I think that that's the kind of analysis that's going to be done under Shared Health as it looks at a province-wide perspective and where can we better align scopes of practice to meet the needs where there are gaps in certain parts of the province.

So, in this tranche, yes, there are PCPs, but I wouldn't want to preclude ACPs being used in the future or presuppose that paramedics might not be used in a different way in communities in the future as well.

**Mr. Swan:** All right, I thank the minister for that.

And the intention, I think it's safe to say, is to use the existing ambulance fleet in a more effective way. So, just to confirm that the announcements of additional paramedics does not include any expansion of the ambulance fleet in Manitoba.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I think that the member would have to wait for the announcement on that one.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay, but since the minister became the minister two years ago, there haven't been any additions to the ambulance fleet in Manitoba.

**Mr. Goertzen:** We believe that there has been both some net increase of ambulances and then certainly some new ambulances that replaced older ambulances that wouldn't be a net new to the fleet but would have replaced older ambulances.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay. So can the minister then undertake, say, in the last fiscal year, how many new ambulances were purchased?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So, we'll undertake—because I think the member mentioned since I've become minister—we'll look over the last two years to see if there's been a net increase of ambulances and also new ambulances replacing old ambulances.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I thank the minister for that. That will be helpful.

Now, is—we've talked a lot about the plan to change over the way that EMS services are provided. We've talked about southern Manitoba. Is there any difference north of the 53rd parallel? Is the northern health authority approaching this in a different way, or are they expected to move in the same direction?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Certainly, northern Manitoba is unique in a number of different ways, not the least of which is there are ambulance services provided on reserve that aren't run by the Province. There are municipal fleets, which isn't distinct to northern Manitoba, but I think Thompson, for example, would have a municipal ambulance fleet.

We don't have any intention of taking those over, but there's often discussions happening with the department whether or not there can be better service provided or whether or not there's a willingness to engage in discussions in providing that service either on reserve or in municipalities. But that would be in co-operation with those jurisdictions.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that. Now, is the new MRI up and operating at Dauphin general hospital yet?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I don't believe it's operating yet, but I think that the process is well under way, and I want to congratulate the MLA for Dauphin, the tremendous advocate that he is for his community. All the MLAs on this side—I can't speak for members of other caucuses—not to suggest they aren't advocates; I just don't see the advocacy in the same way—but certainly those MLAs in the Progressive Conservative caucus are tremendous advocates in every way for their communities, whether that's in a caucus setting or in another setting, and certainly, the

member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) is not second to any when it comes to the great advocacy that he does.

Now, I know we had to dispel some of the myths and rumours that were perpetuated—probably not by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan); it might have been by his predecessor—that there was an MRI that was somehow built and was on a ship criss-crossing the Atlantic Ocean, going between London and Halifax or something like that, and it was making multiple trips around the globe.

There had not been an MRI built at that time for Dauphin because there hadn't been the authority to move forward with it. That authority has been provided now, so it's not operational yet, but we look forward to it being operational in Dauphin. I know the member for Dauphin will be there to celebrate with his community. If I have the opportunity to be there, I'd love to be as well, but I know that the member for Dauphin will certainly be there to celebrate with his community, as he should, for the great advocacy work that he's done on this and many other things in Dauphin and the region.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I'm wondering, then, why a substantial down payment was made for the MRI more than two years ago and we still don't have the MRI operating in Dauphin.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, the member will know that there was a process of assessment on a variety of different capital projects when we came to government.

You know, I don't want to bemoan the fact, but prior to leaving government, NDP MLAs—and there was many more of them then than there are now—but scattered around the province, making commitments to hither and yon in every community, not excluding the community of Steinbach, but I'll use that as an example, where we had literally a Cabinet minister, a former Cabinet minister under the NDP government call up a municipal official in the region that I represent and say, I'm coming to make an announcement in your community later this afternoon, and can you meet me at the municipal office so we can have the announcement?

\*(16:30)

And so the—that former Cabinet minister arrived at the municipal office in the area that I represent, and they had a letter with them, a letter that committed millions of dollars for a particular facility within my region.

Now, that letter was written by—or was signed by this minister, but the funding wasn't from that particular ministry. So it was a letter written by a minister committing funds out of a different ministry, which already seemed strange to me, so I called those that I could within government to see what was going on here. And they said, well, yes, the—that minister really doesn't have any authority to allocate funds out of that fund and, worse yet, the fund that the minister was committing the funds from hadn't been established yet. It had been a fund that was promised in a previous Throne Speech related to some cultural programs. It had been committed to in the Throne Speech, but because the government had never got around to getting an actual budget at that point they hadn't actually budgeted any money.

And so, when I dugged a little—when I dug a little further—not digged—when I dug a little further, I realized that it couldn't have gone through Treasury Board, because the fund didn't exist, which meant, of course, that it couldn't have gone through Cabinet.

So, in the one scenario, and I know this was echoed in many other places in Manitoba, we had a former minister of the Crown go to a community, with a letter committing funds that weren't from their department out of a fund that didn't exist, so it had no money in it. It should never have been approved by Treasury Board and never been approved by Cabinet. And that is the reason, among many other reasons, why the government had to pause to see what was going on here with all the various promises that it made by the former government before they left office.

**Mr. Swan:** Right, so because the Minister of Justice—or of Health is such a good sleuth, can he tell us, then, when will the MRI actually be operating in the Dauphin general hospital?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I—sorry for the delay, there's so many construction projects happening in Health, it's hard to get them all sorted out. And that's true in Dauphin as well with, you know—new emergency room that started construction last year and a variety of things that are happening around the province.

So there has been the authority to go ahead with the construction of the MRI at this point, and so I understand that the company that's involved with the development of it is under way in terms of that process. And it will be operational as soon as possible.



**Mr. Swan:** Well, is that next month? Is that next year? Is that after the 2020 election?

When does the minister expect that'll be?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Certainly be one of those.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I don't think the people in Dauphin, including the MLA for Dauphin, are going to be very happy with that answer.

Certainly, the minister—who we've had to press now for two years on this issue—can give some better idea of when the people in the Parkland can expect to have that MRI up and running.

Can the minister try again?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm sure that it will be before the next election, as the member references. I'm sure it'll be well before that.

The process is under way in terms of its construction and I know that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) will be very enthusiastic when he's involved with the opening of the MRI. I know he knows that the new emergency room in his community is going to be a great benefit for the region.

Certainly the good folks of Dauphin—as is true in many parts of Manitoba—are appreciative of both the financial situation that exists in the province and the need to ensure that we're using dollars properly and in a sustainable way, but also appreciative of the fact that they're going to have additional health equipment and capital that had never existed under the former NDP government.

**Mr. Swan:** Will the employees who have already been trained to operate the MRI need to be retrained because of the delay?

**Mr. Goertzen:** While I didn't hear the question, the member will repeat it.

I know—I'm advised that the emergency room is expected to open in August of 2019 in Dauphin. So I look forward to—well, I don't know what my position will be, but I know the MLA will still be the MLA for Dauphin in August of 2019. And I'll join him one way or the other at that.

**Mr. Swan:** I didn't expect the minister to get so fatalistic in the course of questions this afternoon.

The question is: Will the employees at Dauphin general hospital who've already been trained to operate the MRI, will they now need to be retrained because of the delay?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I know the Prairie Mountain regional health authority will work to ensure that those staff are appropriately trained for whenever the equipment arrives, as the regional health authorities do with staffing in every other instance, as well.

**Mr. Swan:** All right, I'd love to spend more time on that, but we've got lots of province to cover.

\* (16:40)

So the minister will probably agree that there are few facilities that created as many questions in this House as the Tabor Home in Morden. Going back to the days of Peter George Dyck, and then the current member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), we had lots of questions.

Construction of a new Tabor Home was then undertaken, and we know that the new Tabor Home opened in September, and we know that because the Premier (Mr. Pallister) actually made an attendance in Morden on September 28, 2017, to open the 100-bed facility, which is larger than the older 60-bed facility.

Could the minister please undertake to let us know how many of those beds are actually open right now?

**Mr. Goertzen:** We'll have to connect with the regional health authority and provide the member that information in the time allocated under the Estimates rules.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, it'd be helpful, because we've received information that, in fact, approximately 30 beds at the Tabor Home—which Conservatives have been calling for over the past many years—30 beds have been left empty by the health authority, which is actually requiring people in central health to remain in emergency room—rather, long-term care facilities when they want to move into Tabor Home.

So I hope the minister can look into that and give us an answer sooner rather than later, because this is a matter of concern. It would be a matter of disappointment for folks who had the Premier come out to open a home if it's not indeed being used to its capacity.

**Mr. Goertzen:** My understanding from officials is that's a staging issue, and that the regional health authority has made the determination that they want to populate the new spaces in a staged manner so that it's done not just in an orderly way, but in particularly in a safe way, and that it was their—from what I understand from officials—that is their

decision to do it that way, so that it's done safely, which I'm—regardless if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was at the opening of the event or not, we'd want it to be done safely.

**Mr. Swan:** Well that may be, but it has been four days short of seven months since the facility opened, so I will be interested, then, to get the minister's answer as to how many beds are currently open, and I'll ask him then to also ask the authority when they expect all 100 beds of Tabor Home will be open for residents.

**Mr. Goertzen:** It is a good time to put on the record the great advocacy work that was done, certainly by the current MLA for Morden-Winkler, but also by Peter George Dyck, who I know all of us who had the great fortune to serve with Peter—and I not only got to serve with him as an MLA, but I was an intern when he was first elected in 1995—have nothing but great admiration for Peter, for his wife Irene, for the entire family.

You know, you meet a lot of people in politics, both as a staff person and as an elected official, and they all leave their mark on you in some way, but I would say in particular Peter George was one of those people that, you know, you go, you know, I wish I got to know him better and maybe for longer in this environment before he chose not to run again. But a gracious man, a godly man, someone who very much had great compassion for his community, who cared about his community and I—and is still a great contributor to his community long after he left politics. But more so, I think, to his family, where I know him and Irene would often—his kids were doing mission work, I believe, in various places in North America, and they would go and join them so they could be nearby, and I know he's been enjoying his grandkids.

And so I appreciate the member giving me that opportunity to put on some quick reflections about a great Manitoban, a great parliamentarian and somebody who I was very honoured to both serve with in an elected capacity but also serve as a staff person.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, certainly, we enjoyed working with Peter George Dyck, and for the minister's own sake, I hope he'll have an answer—those beds will be open soon because I expect that Peter George will have a few words for the minister if there isn't a plan to open all 100 of those beds in the near future.

Could the minister give a status update on the personal-care-home project at Lac du Bonnet?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So the member will know that there were several sod-turning ceremonies under the former NDP government. When it came to the Lac du Bonnet project, I think that they had four sod-turning ceremonies and managed to move four shovels of dirt in about seven or eight years. So I don't know all the different challenges that existed under the former government and why they continued to make not just commitments, but actually had ceremonies where the government hummers would be loaded up with MLAs and it went out to the field in Lac du Bonnet with a big sign and a picture and took out those golden ceremonial shovels and shovelled the dirt, and they got back in the hummers and drove back to Winnipeg, only to repeat that again and again without any results.

The member should know that there were three personal-care homes that were approved to move forward after we formed government, both the Interlake regional health authority, and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority underwent an EOI or an RFP process to look at other beds or other facilities that were interested in building personal-care homes under the mandate that I've been provided, which is that government will provide up to or around \$133,000 in funding per bed, and those expressions of interest, I believe, have come back and are being evaluated.

**Mr. Swan:** So does that include the PCH in Lac du Bonnet?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Just to go back to the topic of the Tabor Home, because we can never mention Tabor Home enough in the Legislature, my understanding is that at the end of March, 80 beds were filled in the region. The region expects to have all of the beds full by the end of May. So the member can land the black helicopter that's been circling above his head, and there's no conspiracy at play; it was just an issue of safety, is my understanding.

**Mr. Swan:** And the PCH in Lac du Bonnet?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, as I indicated, there were a number of expressions of interest that came as a result of the process from both the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Interlake regional health authority. I wouldn't be at liberty to disclose if there were or weren't submissions from different communities. The member will know that that process is one that should be guarded carefully. He,

in particular, having seen the Tiger Dam fiasco, and I know he spoke about that in his time in government, would know that I need to be careful on that information.

**Mr. Swan:** So how many personal-care-home beds has the minister opened since he became minister?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Member will remember that during the election campaign, there was a commitment to 1,200 new personal-care-home beds over eight years with the mandate that I was provided that those beds would be funded at or about \$133,000 per bed. There were three different projects that were announced, one in Winnipeg, one in Carman, one in Steinbach, which, incidentally, I don't think had seen a new personal-care-home bed, a net new personal-care-home bed, since the early 1970s, despite the fact the community has probably more than doubled in size since that time. And so those projects are in different stages of development, and we are looking at the EOLs or the submissions that came from the proposals out of the Interlake and Winnipeg with the intention of making a determination of which projects would be moving forward in the future.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Swan:** So the three projects the minister's able to talk about right now are Winnipeg, which I presume is the Bridgwater project, and then one in Carman and one in Steinbach. But none of those have—there have been no new PCH beds open at either of those three projects, have there?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, he would know that, in his term of government, I think the fastest project—I'm going a little bit off my head here, so if you'll forgive me if I'm off by a couple of months—but I think the quickest project that was on a PCH level that was done from announcement to opening was the Niverville project, which was, I think, over two years but under three. So, if he's measuring speed by the fastest that the NDP could do, I would say we're not going to be far off.

**Mr. Swan:** No, I'm measuring the minister by his commitment, and he's confirmed again that the promise was 1,200 new PCH beds, and I just—I think the minister, by his answer, has confirmed that the number completed stands at zero right now.

So I would like to talk about an issue that we got into to some extent a few days ago. I just want to talk a little bit about the options for addictions outside of

the city of Winnipeg, as we continue the view outside the Perimeter.

I know that concerns were raised in the Westman region; we heard about that in Boissevain and in Brandon, about a lack of available beds in Westman. And, at that time, we were told the Brandon Regional Health Centre does have detox beds, but our understanding is that they were only for recovering alcoholics and not for those with other substance abuse issues. Can the minister confirm that?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, I don't want to speak—we don't have the Regional Health Authority here or online to give us some of the specifics that the member is looking for.

I need to go back, though, to correct him on the previous response that he provided on the PCHs. The election commitment was for 1,200 personal-care-home beds in eight years. Certainly, based on the first three proposals and more proposals to come, I believe that that's on track to being met in terms of the commitment and the insurance that those'll be done.

But it's also important that—it's not just about new personal-care homes—that was a commitment made and we believe that that commitment will be kept—but he should also look at other things that are happening, in particular when you look at transitional housing, which was supported through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, which the member opposed, I know, because there was a private element to it. But that alone—by ensuring that those who are waiting for personal care homes or might otherwise go to a personal care home in a hospital could move to that transitional housing for up to three months has greatly reduced the number of people who are waiting for a PC in Winnipeg. In fact, the numbers—I think, when I looked last week, there was only nine, in the entire Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, individuals who were in hospital who otherwise would be there waiting for a PCH and being served inappropriately. That transitional housing has greatly helped that process; it's been, at this stage anyway, it's been a real tremendous success.

And so I don't want the member to think that just because we made a commitment and are on track to fulfill the commitment of 1,200 beds, that that doesn't mean that there aren't other things that are happening as well.

In terms of addictions and when it comes to Westman in particular, there certainly are—there are things that I think need to happen generally throughout the system, but that would include Westman. One of the great concerns that I've been hearing—and there are lots—and when it comes to addictions, many people have many different ideas, all of which might be beneficial in some way for certain populations. Our job is to analyze the data, to look at experts and say, where can we have the most impact with the allocations that exist?

And so, in looking at that, I think one of the great gaps within our system is the ability to be able to connect into primary care more quickly for those who are dealing with addictions. I don't know that people are able to find the right door, to use that term, to find access into the primary-care system and immediate help from a primary-care doctor if they're dealing with an addiction issue. And I think that is one of the most significant gaps in Manitoba and one that I hope to see addressed in the time ahead.

**Mr. Swan:** Today, during question period, the minister seemed to be taking credit for a six-bed detox unit in Thompson. Does he mean the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba detox facility that our government established?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think if I remember correct from question period, the reference was to the addictions crisis centre, which was opened by the current member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) in June of 2017, and I want to give the current member for Thompson tremendous credit in the work that he does in the North.

It's been a long time since there's been a Conservative representing Thompson—too long, I would say. I believe Ken—I think Ken MacMaster was the last Conservative prior to Steve Ashton. And while I had many good interactions with Steve

Ashton, particularly in dealing with the rules and looking at the new rules, there was many things that I disagreed with the member on. And in fact, I know that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) disagreed with a number of things for the former member for Thompson on—with Steve Ashton on.

But I think that the people of Thompson are incredibly well represented by the new member for Thompson. I think he's truly a breath of fresh air, a humble individual who is truly dedicated to his community, incredibly hardworking and has a great vision for the North. And I know in listening to him and hearing him speak about the future of the North, he speaks about it with nothing but optimism, and nothing except the optimism that it's going to be great opportunities, but also with the recognition that there are challenges and that, you know, he has a heart for those who are struggling with—whether it's addictions or other things.

And so, yes, I'm glad the member for Minto raised this issue in particular, that it was the current member for Thompson who in June of last year, opened in that community an addictions crisis centre for youth. And I know when he spoke there, he spoke about his heart for youth and for addictions, and so I appreciate that the member for Minto has raised this issue and given appropriate credit to the current member for Thompson for the great work that he does in that facility.

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

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, April 24, 2018**

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