

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVII No. 51B - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 9, 2023

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
KHAN, Obby, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLEIN, Kevin E., Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice, Hon.	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg, Hon.	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew, Hon.	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James, Hon.	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 241—The Mandatory Training
for Provincial Employees**

(Systemic Racism and Human Rights) Act

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 241, The Mandatory Training for Provincial Employees (Systemic Racism and Human Rights) Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Moses: I am pleased to introduce Bill 241, the mandatory training for provincial employees act. We know that many people in Manitoba live through the negative impacts of racism, racial discrimination in their everyday lives.

I know that we need this bill here in Manitoba, and it grows more relevant each and every day as Manitoba becomes a more diverse place for many people to call home. People of all walks of life deserve to live with dignity and with respect, and so it's on all of us—including those in this very House—to do their best to live in a diverse province harmoniously.

And as elected officials, we need to lead by example, to ensure that we're taking the steps to rid ourselves and our communities of racism in all its forms.

This bill would require regular antiracism training for provincial employees, and it is an overdue step in ending systemic racism in Manitoba, and I look forward to all members supporting this bill.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social
and Economic Development
Fourth Report**

Mr. Reg Helwer (Chairperson): I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 8, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 29) – The Life Leases Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les baux viagers**
- **Bill (No. 38) – The Builders' Liens Amendment Act (Prompt Payment) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège du constructeur (paiement rapide)**

Committee Membership

- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. JOHNSTON (Assiniboia)
- Mr. SANDHU
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WASYLIW

Your Committee elected Mr. HELWER as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. SCHULER as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following 13 presentations on **Bill (No. 38) – The Builders' Liens Amendment Act (Prompt Payment) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège du constructeur (paiement rapide):***

Roy McPhail, Private citizen

Chris Lorenc, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association Inc.

Teri Urban, General Contractors Alliance of Canada-Manitoba Chapter

Steven Ness, Surety Association of Canada

Gail Little, Manitoba Association of Architects

Andrew Zimmermann, Intact Insurance

Kasia Kieloch, Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Manitoba

Michael Jack, City of Winnipeg

Ron Hambley, Winnipeg Construction Association

Shawn Wood, Construction Association of Rural Manitoba

Ramona Coey, Manitoba Prompt Payment Coalition

Terry Henry, Electrical Contractors Association of Manitoba

Julien Lafleche, Mechanical Contractors Association of Manitoba Inc.

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Builders' Liens Amendment Act (Prompt Payment) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège du constructeur (paiement rapide)*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 29)** – *The Life Leases Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les baux viagers*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Builders' Liens Amendment Act (Prompt Payment) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège du constructeur (paiement rapide)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill with the following amendment:

THAT the following be added after Clause 16 of the Bill:

Review

16.1(1) Within two years after the coming into force of this section, the minister appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to administer the amendments enacted by section 13 of this Act must undertake a comprehensive review of this Act, which must include public representations.

Tabling report in Assembly

16.1(2) Within one year after the review is undertaken or within any longer period that the Legislative Assembly allows, the minister referred to in subsection (1) must table a report on the review in the Assembly.

Mr. Helwer: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Fifth Report

Mr. Len Isleifson (Chairperson): I wish to present the fifth report on the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 8, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route*
- **Bill (No. 22)** – *The Emergency Measures Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence*
- **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (pompiers affectés aux incendies échappés)*
- **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*

Committee Membership

- Mr. BUSHIE
- Mr. ISLEIFSON
- MLA LINDSEY
- Hon. Mr. PIWNIUK
- Hon. Mr. REYES
- Mr. WOWCHUK

Your Committee elected Mr. ISLEIFSON as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. WOWCHUK as the Vice-Chairperson.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Ms. LAMOUREUX

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route*:

David Grant, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 22)** – *The Emergency Measures Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence*:

David Grant, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (pompiers affectés aux incendies échappés)*:

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Blaine Duncan, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU)

David Grant, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*:

David Grant, Snoman (Snowmobilers of Manitoba) Inc.

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 22)** – *The Emergency Measures Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Wildfire Firefighters) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (pompiers affectés aux incendies échappés)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques d'inscription équitables dans les professions réglementées*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Isleifson: I move, seconded by the honourable member from Swan River, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'm pleased to table the revised Estimates order that is in place for today only.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Municipal Relations—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Community Foundation Day

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): I am honoured to rise before the House today to recognize community foundation day.

This is the inaugural year that we celebrate community foundation day. This proclamation also comes at an opportune moment, Madam Speaker, as The Winnipeg Foundation celebrated its 102nd anniversary of April 26 of this year.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow us to recognize April 26 as the community foundation day, and the—on The Winnipeg Foundation's 100th anniversary in 2021.

The Winnipeg Foundation is Canada's first community foundation, created by an act of legislation on April 26, 1921, founded by a local business person, William Forbes Alloway, and his wife, Elizabeth Alloway.

There are now more than 200 community foundations across Canada. That includes 57 community foundations in Manitoba, which is the highest number per capita in the country.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge the important work of The Winnipeg Foundation through the Endow Manitoba initiative. Endow Manitoba provides capacity building, support and advocacy on behalf of Manitoba's 57 community foundations.

Our government is proud to support the community foundations to meet the needs of their

communities. And since 2017, our government has been proud sponsor of the annual Endow Manitoba giving challenge. For every \$5 gift made to the community foundation during this event, the Manitoba government contributes \$1. The event raised a total of \$1.68 million in 2022, based on 2,828 contributions to the community foundations across the province.

Community foundations play a crucial role in our province and support a wide range of charitable organizations and projects that enrich the well-being and quality of life of all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I ask that all my colleagues here in the Legislature join me in celebrating our community foundations that have joined us here today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Smith: Yes, Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask leave to enter all the names of the folks in the gallery into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names of the members in the gallery into Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Community Foundation Guests:

Interlake Community Foundation: Murray Slagerman

Pembina Manitou: Thor Thorleifson

Selkirk & District Community Foundation: Shauna Curtain, Bev Klegg, Michele Polinuk, Bonny Wynnobel

Westshore Community Foundation: Krista Narfson

The Winnipeg Foundation: Sky Bridges, Denise Campbell, Stacy Cardigan Smith, Rick Frost, Alan Goddard, Gerry Labossiere, LuAnn Lovlin, Kevin Parsons

The Winnipeg Foundation, serving Morden Area Foundation, Plum Coulee Community Foundation, Morris Area Foundation, and The Steinbach Community Foundation: Lynda Lambert

The Winnipeg Foundation, serving North Norfolk Foundation, Big Grass Community Foundation, Carman Area Foundation, Miami and Area Foundation: Caddie Crampton

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge community foundation day. Community foundations are an integral part of our communities.

Community foundations are public charitable organizations that pool and permanently invest donations. The interest earned is granted to local charitable organizations each year. Since the capital is never spent, these gifts support our communities indefinitely.

There are 57 community foundations in Manitoba, all doing important work to support local non-profit organizations with essential funding.

Manitoba has a rich history of community foundations. When The Winnipeg Foundation was founded in 1921, it was the first community foundation to be established in Canada. More than 100 years later, they are still making a positive impact in Winnipeg with many different grant programs for organizations large and small.

Thanks in part to the early adoption of community foundations in Manitoba, today we have more community foundations per capita than anywhere else in North America.

To support all of these foundations, we also have Endow Manitoba, an initiative of The Winnipeg Foundation. Endow Manitoba is a network of the province's community foundations with the goal of helping increase their impact and advancing the community foundation movement across the province.

We know that Manitobans are generous people and our community foundations are evidence of this. Community foundations are an important piece of what makes Manitoba communities so vibrant. And it is all thanks to the incredible people behind the scenes who make community foundations successful.

On behalf of the Manitoba NDP, I want to thank all the community foundations in Manitoba for the amazing work you do every day.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I rise today to speak to community foundation day, that was officially proclaimed on April 26th.

The proclamation speaks to the important role that community foundations play, in our case, here in Manitoba, and they truly demonstrate just how generous Manitobans are.

Foundations all over Canada support a wide array of organizations and projects that are meant to enrich

the lives of people and make our community an even better place. And because donations to these public charitable organizations remain in the communities, they are growing strong and providing sustainability in so many ways.

* (13:40)

One of the very neat facts about these community foundations are how they serve the local community's unique interests. This makes me think of the grass-roots issues being discussed within our communities.

In addition to customizing every foundation, CFC, Canadian foundations of Canada, works with community foundations throughout the country on programming that targets social issues. These social issues include gender equality, social innovation, sustainable development and youth engagement, just to name a few.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is home to 57 community foundations. This includes Canada's first community foundation, which we all know of, The Winnipeg Foundation, now 102 years old.

In wrapping up, I just want to thank the minister for bringing forward today's ministerial statement and welcome all of our guests here in the gallery this afternoon, and just thank you for all the work that you're doing for our province here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Health—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I rise in the House today to recognize that our government has proclaimed May 2023 as the first Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month in Manitoba.

Cystic fibrosis, or CF, is an inherited disorder that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs. It is fatal, a rare disease that affects approximately 130 Manitobans.

In October of 2021, I was pleased to announce that our government added TRIKAFTA, a treatment for cystic fibrosis, to the provincial formulary available through the Manitoba Pharmacare program.

Madam Speaker, in addition, in August 2022, our government expanded the coverage for patients aged six and older.

TRIKAFTA is a triple-combination drug used not only for treating symptoms, but has given hope to tens of thousands of people with CF.

One of the ways to raise awareness this May is at the annual Walk to Make Cystic Fibrosis History. On Sunday, May 28th, friends, families and colleagues will join Cystic Fibrosis Canada at the Woodhaven community club to celebrate, remember and support Manitobans living with cystic fibrosis. I encourage all Manitobans to participate in this year's walk.

Madam Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge Jackie Snarr, who has a grandson with cystic fibrosis, and Lee Huber, a CF dad, and Kim Steele from Cystic Fibrosis Canada, who are joining us today in the gallery. I want to acknowledge the valuable work and support that Jackie, Lee and Cystic Fibrosis Canada have done for those living with cystic fibrosis and their families.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members in the Chamber to please join me in recognizing Cystic Fibrosis Canada, Jackie and Lee for all they do for those living with cystic fibrosis in Manitoba and across Canada.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs of the body. It can be devastating to Manitoba families and those living with CF.

Thankfully, there are now treatments that drastically improve the lives of those suffering—especially TRIKAFTA, which has been described as the single greatest innovation in cystic fibrosis history.

After CF advocates and our Manitoba NDP urged the Province to do so, this PC government added the drug to the provincial formulary. Since then, Manitobans living with CF have seen their conditions improve dramatically. However, Manitoba has the highest deductible in the country that people need to pay in order to access this drug. This is a serious accessibility issue and only serves to keep treatment from Manitobans who desperately need it.

Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have a CF drug program, since the life saving drug program here in Manitoba was eliminated in 2018 by the PC government. Manitoba, unfortunately,

also has the highest number of hospitalizations and hospitalization days for cystic fibrosis in the country. This is why we must commit to doing everything within our power as legislators to support all Manitobans and their families who are living with CF.

Today, advocates for cystic fibrosis continue to work for increased supports for those living with the condition. We applaud Cystic Fibrosis Canada and the Manitoba chapter for all of their work and commend all of those who continue to raise money for research and those who continue to provide care, be it for family members, friends and community who are living with CF.

Madam Speaker, this issue is urgent. Every day counts to not only significantly improve the quality of life, but to actually save Manitoban lives.

And to all those who are living with cystic fibrosis, I want you to know that the Manitoba NDP will continue to stand with you. We will continue to fight for you to have better access to treatments and resources and supports and human resources within your organizations.

I can't acknowledge the folks who are in the gallery, Madam Speaker. I really want to, but thank you to all those advocates across our province. We're with you.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, compared with other provinces, Manitoba has the highest number of hospitalizations per capita for cystic fibrosis, the highest number of hospitalization days per capita of all provinces and the highest number of clinic visits per capita.

It is likely that these results are in part because the major drug for helping most people with cystic fibrosis, TRIKAFTA, is not fully funded in Manitoba, nor are many of the other drugs needed to help those with cystic fibrosis fully funded.

And there is more. Manitoba has the highest percentage of people with cystic fibrosis-related diabetes and the highest number of adult cystic fibrosis patients post lung transplants. These are additional signs that we need to better support those

with cystic fibrosis in Manitoba, so that fewer people need hospitalizations, treatment for diabetes, as well as for their cystic fibrosis, and so that fewer people with cystic fibrosis need lung transplants.

As a pediatrician, I have watched the amazing progress that has taken place over the years in the understanding and the treatment of cystic fibrosis. The identification of the gene in Canada, in Toronto by Dr. Lap-Chee Tsui and his team, and now the use of what can be best described as designer drugs based on the specific mutation causing the cystic fibrosis. This has been incredible progress.

We now need the government of Manitoba to step up and to come through with the additional funding support for those with cystic fibrosis. This funding is needed to match what is being done in other provinces in Canada.

Thank you. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Phil, Marilyn, Jack and Julia Snarr

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as my colleagues in the House have mentioned, May is Cystic Fibrosis—CF—Awareness Month, and I am truly pleased and proud to welcome Waverley constituents Phil and Marilyn Snarr, parents of daughter Julia and their son Jack.

Back in the summer of 2021, I first met with Marilyn and Phil on a virtual call about CF and their son Jack bringing light on this issue concerning their son and those who are diagnosed with CF.

Jack's parents have been champion advocates for those suffering with this disease by creating more awareness to the general public. I was proud, as their MLA, to assist them in navigating through the pathways on how to communicate their message. They educated me about the transformational drug called TRIKAFTA.

I want to thank the member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon) for taking steps to add TRIKAFTA to the provincial formulary. This positive announcement was welcomed by many young individuals, including Jack, who is here with us today.

Jack started treatment of TRIKAFTA in November of 2022. At his check up on January 2023, the diagnostic tool for CF showed that Jack's sweat test improved significantly, meaning that the drug is having a profound impact and is slowing down the

progression of the disease, giving Jack a robust childhood that his family was not sure he would have. As a result of TRIKAFTA, Jack has more energy for many activities like school, going camping and fishing with his family and, his favourite activity, playing hockey.

* (13:50)

Thanks to the tremendous advocacy efforts of Phil and Marilyn, alongside the CF community, those who have access to this drug are coming off the lung transplant list and are getting on with living.

TRIKAFTA is changing the trajectory of CF for kids like Jack; their future looks brighter than ever, as do their hopes and dreams. I know he loves to play sports and his parents are obviously proud of his accomplishments. So am I, Jack: you have a big fan in me and us all.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to celebrate Phil and Marilyn with me for being resolute in their dedication towards promoting such a life-changing initiative that is now transforming lives in the cystic fibrosis community. And let's not forget Julia, for being a great big sister to Jack. Go, Jack, go.

Strathcona School

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Today, I'm honoured to recognize the incredible grade 6 class from Strathcona School, a school I attended in my constituency, and their teacher, Daniel Orlikow.

These young people made a big impression on me when each one of them sent me a letter last winter expressing the work—expressing support for the work being done by myself and others to advance reconciliation and MMIWG2S, as well as their concerns about these ongoing issues in our society.

These issues aren't easy to confront and it shows tremendous leadership that these students took the—took political action by contacting their representative.

On a personal note, reading these letters gave me a tremendous boost at a time when I needed it, and I'm extremely grateful for that. This was during the aftermath of the murders of Rebecca Contois, Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, Buffalo Woman.

Changes have to happen in our society to stop tragedies from—like this happening in our world. We have to address colonialism and the legacies of genocide that are still taking place and taking family members from our communities at increasing rates.

I know from experience that this work takes a lot out of you, which is why I'm so grateful to these

students today for their advocacy. I'm eager to share with other leaders and advocates in the hopes that they, too, might get a boat—boost as well.

While it brings me joy to acknowledge that these true—to acknowledge this true leadership from young people, I must acknowledge, as well, how unfair it is that they have to step up in this way. They deserve to live in a world where young people don't have to worry about the injustices, that it's our responsibility in this House to do whatever it takes to build that world for these young people.

Please join me in thanking and uplifting these young, amazing grade 6 students and the powerful reminder that they've given us for our—in our sacred responsibility.

Builders' Liens Amendment Act

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, last night in the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, a piece of legislation passed through committee to hopefully move to third reading. I know this is something we've seen before and we will see it again, but this 'legislation' was introduced four times with slightly different wording, two MLA/ministers and it's moved on.

Bill 38, The Builders' Liens Amendment Act (Prompt Payment) is hopefully on its way to becoming law.

It has taken several years to get to this stage with numerous individuals, associations, business and labour providing guidance and suggestions. I hesitate to calculate the hours that have been spent on this legislation, but I know it is legislation that will work in Manitoba, as it has in other provinces and countries.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to get us to this stage. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and government of Manitoba have been clear in their support. The Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services (Mr. Teitsma) has been a champion, listened closely and accepted changes and amendments.

The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) and the opposition has seen fit to support the prompt payment legislation, and I encourage them to continue in their support. Thank you—and the House leaders have found a path for the bill.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is enabling legislation for business and labour. It will allow construction projects to continue being built even when there are differences of opinion on payment. It will

allow contractors, subcontractors, trades and labour to be paid in a timely manner.

There is still third reading and much work is yet to be done, but I am confident that we will get through that process. My thanks to all who have contributed to this legislation. I believe it is a fine example of how the legislative process works.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Just before we move on to the next statement, I would like to indicate that we did have in the public gallery from Woodlawn School 48 grade 3-to-4 students under the direction of Simmy Ghandi, and these—this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

So I just wanted to make sure we got that on record. I wasn't sure when they were going to leave. So we welcomed them here.

Team Clam

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I rise in the House today to recognize some incredibly talented students and educators from Sisler High School. Team Clam, which includes Sisler CREATE students Xierra Cansino, Kimberly Chau, Sam Balanial, Gian Abad, Francesca Musni, took the top prize for best high school in the recent 24 HOURS Animation Contest for Students.

Teams around the world were asked with creating a 30-second animation in 24 hours. Their entries were then judged by a panel of industry leaders. I had the pleasure of meeting Team Clam and the department head, Jamie Leduc, a few months ago, where I got to learn about their 24-hour whirlwind experience.

From planning, to drafting, to creating, the students had to get this all done within a 24-hour time frame. In those 24 hours, team members took turns napping and snacking while others worked. The prompt for the challenge was to visualize life 100 years into the future, and Team Clam made a humorous short animation titled Superfluous, which depicts a future where birds rule the earth and embody humankind's wasteful tendencies and desire to consume and keep consuming.

Xierra, Kimberly, Sam, Gian and Francesca exemplify excellence, and I am proud that such young leaders are representing Burrows and our province on the global stage. I also want to applaud the success of the CREATE program, led by Jamie Leduc, which

gives students the opportunity to learn filmmaking, game design, animation and other digital media.

Team Clam is already making their mark in the animation industry, with all five group members being selected for internships with notable industry giants, and I wish them all success.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing Team Clam, their families and educators who are here with us in the gallery.

Thank you.

Non-Disclosure Agreements

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I am sad to say it appears the—that our bill to reform NDAs is likely to die on the Order Paper in Manitoba this spring. We're waiting on a report of the law commission—Law Reform Commission of Manitoba, and it will not be ready 'til June.

This is more than unfortunate, since legislation has already been passed not just in Prince Edward Island but in many jurisdictions around the world. And every day that this legislation is not passed, everyday people are being required to sign gag orders so that they can never again speak about their sexual assaults, assaults, harassment or mistreatment—especially at work—every single day. We know this because we're still hearing about people being required to sign gag orders in exchange for their severance.

Last November, we had a very powerful committee meeting at which people who had been mistreated and required to sign NDAs were able to speak, some for the first time in their lives: the teacher who was mistreated and whose health was put at risk at work, the union leader who was silenced through a one-sided non-disparagement clause, the police officer who reported that her colleagues were turning a blind eye to domestic assaults, an Indigenous health-care worker assaulted at work. There were many more: journalists who worked at major news organizations, The Globe and Mail and Fox News; university professors who were shunned for pointing out that their employer was protecting a predator.

* (14:00)

There were also deeply personal stories: people who were victims of family violence and sexual abuse; a woman, abused by her father, whose estate is still keeping her silent after her death.

They can't speak to family, to employers, to spiritual counsellors, and we know that, in many cases,

NDA's are being used to protect serial predators in the workplace, with each new victim unaware because everyone else they've hurt has been forced to sign a gag order.

One reason our committee hearings were so powerful was we determined every presenter at committee also shared parliamentary privilege, which means that, as they spoke, their NDAs had no force.

While it is unlikely to happen this spring in Manitoba, I am very glad that today, Senator Marilou McPhedran is introducing a federal NDA reform bill that will afford witnesses who wish to break their NDAs and speak their truth to talk about the harm and NDAs at committee in Ottawa.

I hope it has the same powerful effect that our presenters did, and the federal government makes it the law of the land.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Patti Tweed, who is a constituent for the member of Union Station, and Jean Hodgins, and both are cystic fibrosis advocates in Manitoba. And both are the guests of the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Management of Health-Care System Health Professionals' Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Doctors are speaking out. Respected physicians are providing examples of the, quote, profound dysfunction that has been engineered into our health-care system by this government. End quote.

The PCs have created, quote, a series of silos, end quote, and no one can provide an organizational chart for who does what. That's the health-care system under Brian Pallister and the Stefanson government.

It means worse care for patients and more frustration and stress for those heroes who work on the front lines of our health-care system. Quote, those who can't endure the sheer moral injury quietly resign, and those who protest get reassigned. End quote.

Does the Premier agree with the diagnosis of Dr. Dan Roberts, acting head of neurology at the Health Sciences Centre?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): I, indeed, want to thank all doctors in Manitoba for the incredible work they do to look after their patients each and every day, Madam Speaker.

I do know that we are in the process of a recruitment program for doctors. In fact, Madam Speaker, just a couple of weeks ago, we had an RFP for 150 more doctors in rural and northern communities. We have already attracted 73 physicians, including 30 family doctors, a cardiac surgeon, a neurologist and a neurosurgeon.

We recognize there's more work to do, Madam Speaker, and we'll continue to get that job done for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we know that when doctors come forward from the Misericordia or surgeons come forward with recommendations to invest in our public health-care system to this Premier, they're ignored.

But, and I quote, if a private business comes knocking at the door claiming a special elixir, it seems that the only process required is a wink and a nod. End quote.

That's the state of health care under this Premier. Quote, agreements emerge in days and are eagerly signed without any scrutiny, transparency or due process. End quote.

There needs to be accountability from this government for their failures.

Can the Premier tell the House why she prioritizes private business over our public health-care system?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, what's important to, certainly, us on this side of the House, is that Manitobans get the surgeries that they need when they need them.

And that's why we are making significant progress through our Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, Madam Speaker. I want to thank Dr. Ed Buchel, as well as Dr. Peter MacDonald, for the incredible work that they do and all the other doctors who are a part of that whole process.

Madam Speaker, we're making significant progress where we've eliminated the pre-COVID pandemic backlog, and we want to continue to move in that direction towards making sure that Manitobans get the health-care services they need when they need them.

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

Mr. Kinew: I just want to quickly point out, what the Premier said is not true. Manitobans are still waiting for hip and knee surgeries and they're waiting longer than they ever had before.

But to remind the Premier, the question was specifically about medical experts, who are speaking out about this government's failures. They're calling out the dysfunction of the PCs when it comes to their attempts to manage our health-care system. They're also calling out the special treatment that private companies get when they approach the Cabinet of this PC government.

And at the end of the day, they're demanding accountability for the real damage that the PCs have caused, first under Brian Pallister and now under the Stefanson government, to the public health-care system that every Manitoban relies on.

My question for the Premier is this: How many more medical health system experts are going to speak out and condemn her mismanagement of health care in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, again, I want to thank all of the doctors for the incredible work that they do, and the nurses and all of those who work in our health-care system right across this wonderful province of ours.

We are making significant headway when it comes to our surgical and diagnostic backlogs, Madam Speaker. We have already eliminated the pandemic backlogs for cataract surgeries, for CT scans, for ultrasound tests, for cardiac catheterization, lab tasks for pacemaker surgeries—and the list goes on.

There's several that we have eliminated. We recognize that there's more work to do, and I just want to thank our diagnostic and surgical task force for the incredible work they're doing to ensure that we eliminate those black-backlogs.

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

Education Property Tax Credit Out-of-Province Rebates

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier is underfunding education in Manitoba at the same time that she sends out big cheques to billionaires who don't even live in Manitoba.

On this side of the House, we say sending money to out-of-province billionaires while public schools are underfunded is wrong. On this side of the House, we say that those resources should be invested in our kids, invested in their future.

That's why, once again, we're calling on this Premier to abandon her commitment of sending cheques to billionaires who don't live in Manitoba. Seems like an easy commitment to make.

Will she do so today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, the companies that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to actually own property in Manitoba. They pay taxes in Manitoba. They create jobs in Manitoba and they are significant contributors to our economy.

Now, I know the Leader of the Opposition doesn't care about jobs, doesn't care about economic growth opportunities for the province of Manitoba. We know what his hidden agenda is. It's just to raise taxes in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

We think that's wrong. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I know the members of the cystic fibrosis advocacy group would like to hear what is being asked and answered on the floor, and I know that they would like to hear better democracy in action and better civility towards each other.

So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

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

Mr. Kinew: Yes, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the companies. The parent company that owns Superstore and No Frills in Manitoba yesterday raised its dividends. They did so because they made \$426 million in just the first three months of this year. They did that by charging Manitobans more money at the grocery store.

At the same time, this Premier turned around and saw a—thought that this hugely profitable corporation needed even more money. She cut a cheque for \$327,000 to this same company.

I'll table the documents that prove the case.

The only thing that the Premier needs to respond to now is: Why does she want to send hundreds of thousands of dollars to a wildly profitable company while Manitoba schools are underfunded?

* (14:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the company that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to employs more than 3,000 Manitobans. And he's talking about putting them out of business in this province.

Madam Speaker, millions of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —dollars of tax revenue that we—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —get as a government from this very corporation that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about, and he's talking about shutting them down in the province of Manitoba.

Well, Madam Speaker, we're all about economic development opportunities for Manitoba companies, and we will continue to support those companies in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I invite the Premier to continue running on her what-about-the-billionaires platform.

On this side of the House, we say that billionaires should pay their fair share. There is no risk that this company goes out of business. I will repeat that they just turned a profit of \$426 million, and that's in the first three months of this year alone.

The only point that we're making is that a company owned by Galen Weston, which is so wildly profitable, should not get an extra \$325,000 from this PC government, especially not when that \$325,000 is being taken from revenue that is supposed to fund public schools.

You have a choice when you vote this year. You can send cheques to billionaires with the PCs, or you can establish a province-wide nutrition program in public schools with the Manitoba NDP—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I have been standing for some time, and everybody's so busy heckling each other that they're not paying attention to me trying to carry out the rules of the House.

So I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, I wonder what he says to the more than 3,000 Manitobans that are employed by the very company that he's talking about. That's 3,000 Manitobans that are employed in this province—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —who pay taxes, Madam Speaker. And the company that pays millions of dollars in taxes to our government, that of—that makes us be able to afford health care, education that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about.

That's how we're going to pay for the future, is by growing our economy, not by taxing Manitobans.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program Resignation of Out-of-Province Manager

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, for over a year survivors and nurses have spoken out about the program—the problems, rather, with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program.

Lack of staff has resulted in sexual assault survivors being turned away from the SANE program, and that includes—devastatingly—children, Madam Speaker. We repeatedly called on the PCs to take action, and their response was to hire an out-of-province forensic manager to work remotely from Alberta.

That's not a solution that works for Manitobans. And now we've learned that this person has resigned, and so it's essentially back to square one.

Will the minister stand up and admit it was a mistake to hire an out-of-province manager for the SANE program?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Our government will always stand up for survivors of sexual assault. That is why it is our government—this Health Minister—who established the sexual assault nurse examination program with ongoing operation dollars. And it is why this government established a community-led program.

And we were very pleased a few weeks ago to announce with Klinec and with support from Ka Ni Kanichihk to have a mobile site in community, to have a community-led sexual assault nurse examination program, because our government always stands up for sexual assault survivors and our government always believes sexual assault survivors, something the NDP cannot say.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, respectfully, it's unacceptable that the Health Minister won't stand up and answer this question when she is the one who has failed this program. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: And the Minister for Families made an announcement that actually had zero steps or plans attached to it to make sure that survivors could immediately access the care they need in communities right now.

In the meantime, the SANE program has fallen apart. SANE nurses need support from this government, and survivors across Manitoba deserve support from this government. Now we've learned the Alberta hire has resigned.

Will the minister simply stand in this House today and admit her approach has failed?

Ms. Squires: So, I'd like to provide an update for the member that, on this side of the House, we work together, and that Manitoba Health and Status of Women and the Department of Families, we all worked very collaboratively together to provide services both in community and in hospital so that we could support survivors of sexual violence.

Unlike the members opposite, who failed to establish an ongoing commitment to a sexual assault nurse examination program; unlike members opposite, who do not support survivors of sexual violence, nor do they believe them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Union Station, on a final supplementary.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the minister's claim that we don't stand with survivors on this side of the House is a disgusting attempt to distract from the reality that her Health Minister and her government have failed survivors and have failed nurses at the SANE program.

Their shameful incompetence is having devastating impacts—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —on survivors across Manitoba. Survivors, including children, are being sent away and

told not to wipe themselves or to shower until they can come back and be seen when staff are available.

At least 10 nurses have resigned from the SANE program, including the one the PCs hired to work remotely from Alberta. It's clear their approach has failed.

Will the minister stand up, apologize to survivors and the nurses at the SANE program today?

Ms. Squires: Our government will always stand up for survivors of sexual violence, and our government will always stand up for children who are in need of protection, unlike members opposite.

Let's review the facts. We—our government announced money—invested money in the Toba Centre for children who are abused. What did members opposite do? They voted against it.

Our government announced \$650,000 last year for the sexual assault nurse examination program. What did members opposite do? They voted against it.

Now our government announced \$1.2 million for a community-led sexual assault nurse examination program that has a survivors' circle that is advising the implementation of this program. Members opposite, what did they do? They vote against it.

They don't stand for survivors and they don't believe survivors.

Project Nova Budget CEO Compensation

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, new revelations show that the issues at MPI and Project Nova go all the way to the top.

* (14:20)

While Project Nova costs were ballooning more than \$200 million overbudget, the hand-picked MPI CEO received not one, but two raises. And he also racked up \$88,000 in travel costs as he toured the country for the equivalent of seven and a half weeks away.

This PC government and their hand-picked board, including Grant Stefanson, signed off on all of this. It's clear that the PCs have been in lockstep as their mismanagement has led to higher Autopac rates once again.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain, why does she support giving the MPI CEO massive raises while Project Nova is \$200 million overbudget?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): The member opposite will remember, because he sat in government at the time one of the last years that the NDP was in government, that they approved a 3 and a half per cent rate increase for MPI.

That was the same year that CEOs at MPI got hundreds of thousands of dollars of severance, and then the NDP turned around and hired them as consultants at \$200 an hour, Madam Speaker. And that member did absolutely nothing.

We had some concerns and we've taken action, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the reality is that this minister and this government have taken no action, because their hand-picked CEO and MPI board are meeting with the minister and updating him weekly on this over-expenditure.

Even as the CEO received over \$30,000 in not one, but two, raises just this year. He was out of the office seven and a half weeks, racking up \$88,000 in travels costs. Inside sources say this—quote—this absence has a huge impact on Project Nova. End quote. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister and the Premier explain: Why do they support giving the MPI CEO massive pay increases all at the same time that Project Nova is \$200 million overbudget?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, obviously, Madam Speaker, we did have concerns and we acted upon those concerns.

Two directives were sent to the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, one regarding tenders, one regarding inter-organization 'refiew.' That is exactly two times more directives that were sent under the former NDP government at a time when rates for MPI were going up 3 and a half per cent, at a time when they were giving hundreds of thousands of dollars of severance for former CEOs and then turning around and hiring them back at \$200 an hour and jacking up rates on Manitobans.

That member, who sat in the government, did absolutely nothing. We had concerns, we're taking action, as opposed to what they did, which was make Manitobans pay more and do nothing.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's clear that the PCs are desperate to do anything to distract and to distancing themselves from this boondoggle over at MPI called Project Nova.

Yet Manitobans know that the issues at MPI are the responsibility of the Premier and this PC government. And they're paying for it, Manitobans are paying for it through higher Autopac rates even now.

The PCs hand-picked the CEO and the MPI board that have allowed Project Nova to go \$200 million overbudget, and they supported giving the CEO massive raises while they froze MPI employee wages for over two years. That's the record of this PC government.

Can the Premier just explain, why does she continue to defend giving the MPI CEO massive raises, all while spending—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Absolutely not defending it, and we brought directives in because we have some concerns, Madam Speaker.

But let's look what the NDP did. They increased rates by 3 and a half per cent when they were in government. They decided to take money out of MPI and try to give it to universities, and then they got stopped doing that.

So then, a few years later, they tried to take money out of MPI and put it into roads and highways because they weren't funding infrastructure properly, and they got stopped doing that.

Then they fired CEOs and gave them \$100,000 of severance, turned around and rehired them in the corporation—one Marilyn McLaren got \$50,000 contract. When we went to committee to find out what the contract was for, they stated it was to do nothing. They gave them \$50,000 a year to do absolutely nothing and they did nothing about that. They raided MPI. They treated it like their piggy bank. They did nothing.

We had concerns, and we're taking actions, Madam Speaker.

Political Ad Campaign Funding Election Advertising Rules

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Manitobans expect—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —a level playing field when it comes to election advertising. But Brian Pallister rewrote the rules to create a loophole to try and tilt the playing field in his favour.

The PCs are planning to use this loophole in the rules to use government dollars to advertise their partisan messaging. We think that's wrong.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) commit to not using taxpayers' money to advertise issues before this Assembly after August 4th?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): We recognize there's rules and, certainly, we intend to play by the rules. That's always been our intent, and I think we've demonstrated that over the last number of years.

And we, certainly, will continue to play by the rules, even though we know opposition members rarely do.

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

Mr. Sala: Manitobans know this House will rise soon and we won't be coming back until after the election, and that means the government should not use taxpayer money to advertise issues before this House.

But it looks like the Premier is going to try and use the loophole Brian Pallister created to tilt the playing field in her favour. That's wrong, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans deserve a clear answer: Will the Premier commit to not using taxpayers' money to advertise issues before this Assembly after August 4th?

Mr. Cullen: I'm glad the member raises October 4th. I know we've got a lot of work ahead of us to make sure that Manitobans fully understand what is in this year's budget. In fact, this year we will reduce individual income tax \$524 for Manitobans. When next year's transfers come in, we'll save Manitobans \$1,400.

I know that's something that Manitobans will want to know. That's something we want to tell Manitobans. And, by the way, we'll also tell Manitobans the NDP voted against that.

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

Mr. Sala: It sounds like the Minister of Finance is committing today that they will be exploiting that loophole, and that is deeply unfortunate.

We know the Premier has already been cautioned by the Commissioner of Elections for breaking the election law. That's not a good record.

And we know the PCs are using government resources to push their partisan agenda. We think they

should not make use of this loophole Brian Pallister created.

There are millions of dollars of taxpayer money at stake.

So, will the Premier be clear: Will the Premier commit today to not using taxpayer money to advertise issues before this Assembly after August 4th?

Mr. Cullen: I—just going back in history here and looking at what the NDP did prior to the last couple of elections, we had record expenditures and advertising over the last election, 2016, of \$13 million. The previous record high was before the election in 2011: just under \$13 million.

Madam Speaker, we have spent nowhere near that amount when it comes to prebudget advertising.

Madam Speaker, I will say, and guarantee, this government will play by the rules as they exist. We know the NDP never had and never will.

Drug Overdose Death Reporting Request to Pass Bill 221

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Manitoba is facing an overdose crisis. The PC government spent months refusing to release the number of overdose deaths in Manitoba in 2022, and we now know why.

The preliminary data shows that 418 Manitobans died of overdoses in 2022. That's four hundred and people—four hundred Manitobans—418 loved ones that succumbed to overdoses, while this government refuses to do nothing.

This is shameful, Madam Speaker. The PCs should do the right thing and be transparent and pass Bill 221.

* (14:30)

Will they commit to doing so today?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I do agree. There are too many laws—lives, sorry—lives lost to addictions. On this side we are committed to providing accurate information so Manitobans can see what the—have that information.

My department does not provide oversight of the process to determine the overdose deaths. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for this and it is under the Department of Justice. And the member opposite needs to reach out to that department if she needs to know more now.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member—[interjection] Order.

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

Request to Release 2022 Data

Mrs. Smith: That minister is the minister of addictions and mental health. Why should she be sending me to Justice? She should have access to the numbers so that they could be accurately reflected so the people on the front line could do their work and they can respond accordingly.

So I want to ask the minister, it's now May, almost five months into 2023. We still don't have the data for how many deaths have happened here in our province.

So I'll ask the minister: When is the minister going to be transparent? When is the minister going to tell Manitobans how many deaths have happened this year? And when are those preliminary numbers from 2022 actually going to be accurate and listed on a website for Manitobans to see and—

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

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I hate to repeat myself, but I will. The member opposite needs to go and check out the website for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and preliminary numbers are posted on there. Those numbers are the numbers that the public has access to.

Thank you.

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

Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): In Estimates yesterday, the minister said that those numbers were actually on her department website. I went on the department website and they were nowhere to be found.

So I'll invite that minister to actually go look on their website. That is their portfolio and they should be able to give the public those numbers, especially front-line organizations who are actually doing the work so that it could help those so that we're reducing those deaths: 418.

We should not be trending up. We don't even know what the number—the final numbers are.

So I'll ask this minister: Will they do the right thing—and the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—open up a safe consumption site today so that Manitoban lives could be saved? Any organization signed on asked this Premier to do that.

Will they do it and open up a safe consumption site today?

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I agree. We need to meet individuals at the levels that they are. We need to provide the services that they seek to reduce harm. But we refuse to leave them there, not like the opposition members who do.

So that is why I want to highlight a couple of the investments that we announced into the program areas over the last week: Huddle, a service that provides mental health, sex abuse and addiction peer support primary care for our youth received funding through our government through The Winnipeg Foundation, RBC Foundation and the Bell-Graham Boeckh Foundation, a great support for youth who are seeking the supports for their mental health.

The Link Youth and Family Supports Centre Staff Shortage and Mistreatment Allegations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's now five months since I wrote the Premier asking about whistleblowers at The Link and allegations—which used to be Macdonald Youth Services—into allegations that that facility was in crisis.

The FIPPA I table shows the major concern of the government and Link at the time was shutting down criticism and denying the issue, including the claim that, quote, there are no allegations that children or vulnerable, adults were harmed.

They were certainly at risk.

The ministry certainly knew about Fischer Place in The Pas where, in 2021, short-staffing of care for adults with intellectual disabilities, quote, has resulted in chronic vacancies and staff turnover to the extent we're unable to provide services without disruption. End quote.

Why does the document say the Department of Families will work closely with The Link, instead of getting to the bottom of the issue, and where is the promised report that was due two months ago?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government takes any allegation very seriously because our job No. 1 is to ensure that children and

youth receive the protection services that they require when they need them the most.

And that is why we've taken serious action against any allegations into any agency, including The Link, and that is why we hired a third party evaluator to go in, in addition to the audit unit within the Department of Families, to work towards ensuring that all children are getting the services that they need, youth are getting the services that they need to ensure that they are protected and are able to access the benefits that they need.

And we're—we've hired a third party evaluator, as the member knows.

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

Mr. Lamont: I've heard from many former workers, Indigenous youth and foster parents of The Link who told me about the mistreatment, abuse and staff shortages so bad they were putting children in group homes at risk.

I heard from people who were in tears because when they finally read the accounts about the tokenization, abuse and mistreatment of workers, and the fact that their story was finally being told, validated them.

The minister already has the interim investigative report into The Link, which won't actually deal with any of these complaints, many of them directed against the CEO.

Why is this government defending a former NDP Families Minister? Is this government now siding with the NDP on their abysmal treatment of children in care?

Ms. Squires: While we know that the members opposite can spend all kinds of time creating these theories and conspiracies that have absolutely no relevance in reality, the reality is, is that our government ensures that all the services that we are needing to provide to children and youth and to vulnerable families throughout the province are being delivered.

And that is why our government has enhanced the budget. In fact, the Department of Families has received a 25 per cent increase in overall expenditures since the time our government took office, something that I would like to point out that that member has voted against each and every single year.

If he really cared about the protection of children, he'd vote in favour of these historical increases for the Department of Families.

Funding Support for Hearing Aids Individuals Aged 19 to 64 Years Old

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, at noon today, there was a rally in front of the Manitoba Legislature in support of those who are hard of hearing.

Individuals attending the rally were thankful to the government for heeding our call last year to provide funding for hearing aids for those 65 and older. The rally today was to seek support for similar funding for those with impaired hearing who are ages 19 to 64 years of age.

Hearing aids are a medical necessity. At the rally, we heard from Gladys Nielsen and Tammy Perry about the need for help in this age group. A number of those at the rally are in the gallery today.

When will the government provide funding support for hearing aids for those aged 19 to 64 years of age?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to hear the member indicate his support for the hearing aid program that the government has implemented. That program was developed through a great deal of consultation and discussion with seniors. And our whole seniors strategy is to fulfill the needs of seniors, which we are doing.

We take a whole-of-government approach to everything that we initiate and we have a program that is extremely well received by the public of Manitoba. And, as we proceed with that program, we will review it and determine whether or not we are—we will proceed further.

Public Safety Initiatives New Programs

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): We know that Manitobans do not trust the NDP on anything they say, anything they do, but especially when it comes to addressing crime and public safety.

They have opposed bail reform. They have encouraged governments to defund the police.

Can the Minister of Justice please share how our government prioritizes community safety and investments in resources to keep Manitobans safe?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Brandon East for that important question.

* (14:40)

Our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the government of Manitoba has been a leader in calling for bail reform across Canada. But we know that we can't just wait for the federal Liberal government to take action.

And that's why, last week, we announced a number of initiatives, including enhanced bail supervision, probation supervision, electronic monitoring supervision in the province of Manitoba. We want to ensure that those who are being released are being monitored in our communities, so that they are not committing more crimes and creating more victims.

However, we do need the federal government to fulfill their commitment to toughen up on bail, so that individuals aren't released when they shouldn't be released.

We know that the NDP opposition are the only party in Canada who doesn't support that provision.

We'll continue to do our job in making Manitoba safer, Manitoba—Madam Speaker.

Thompson Aquatic Centre Request for Funding Support

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): In 2019, the Thompson pool closed under this government and has sat closed ever since.

An announcement was made leading up to the Thompson by-election. In that announcement, they announced a project that would cost approximately \$15 million. The city of Thompson has put out a tender now for that project, and we know the cost will be well over \$20 million.

Will this government stop dragging its feet and increase their contributions to the Thompson aquatic centre so the children of Thompson have a safe place to swim?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, we recognize the challenges that communities like Thompson are facing with cost overruns. Our provincial government is finding the same thing. We have \$5 million on the table.

In addition to Thompson and the aquatic facility, we've also just recently completed \$15-million investment into water and sewer lines; we're currently

redeveloping the Miles Hart Bridge—\$36 million; we're in the—currently in the middle of upgrading the provincial courthouse—\$17 million; we just invested in a waste-water treatment plant—\$12 million; we just put \$2.8 million into a healing serving centre for the community; affordable housing, another \$1.2 million; MKO youth restorative justice facility—\$2.8 million; PR 280—\$2.4 million; Thompson library—\$30,000; UCN funding—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Health-Care Coverage

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care, such as migrant workers with work permits of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care for undocumented, irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care

to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to inform all health-care institutions and providers to expand coverage for those without health-care insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented; and, finally,

(4) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration status and ensure they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible to most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or a urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at risk—further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer wait times for services and poorer services in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to get their samples at the same time—give their samples at the same time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy, blood sample, sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to the blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

(2) The—a large percentage of those people in this age group require medical necessary foot care and treatment.

(3) A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are living on low incomes.

(4) The northern regional health authority, N-R-H-A, previously provided medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

(5) The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and the surrounding areas.

(6) There is no adequate medical care available in the city and the region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

(7) The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

(8) The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson, effective April 1st, 2022.

This petition is signed by Tracy Boxell, Russell Boxell, Kelly Selminak [*phonetic*].

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Drug Overdose Reporting

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Across the province, many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more deaths and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

* (14:50)

(2) Three hundred and seventy-two Manitobans died from an overdose in 2020, and that's over one a day and 87 per cent higher than in 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data is not publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2020 and 2021 was compiled through media inquiries, and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps to inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed in various communities.

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government opioid informational-information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will report the data publicly in a timely manner to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths, as well as the type of drug, on a government website in a timely fashion.

And this has been signed by Donna Bellow, Tim Bellow, Donna Bartram and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday, at private members' business, will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer). The title of that resolution is Committing to Balancing Future Budgets While Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West. The title of the resolution is Committing to Balancing Future Budgets While Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you please resolve the House into Committee of Supply.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

ROOM 254

**MENTAL HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY WELLNESS**

* (15:00)

The Acting Chairperson (Len Isleifson): 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 Mental Health and Community Wellness.

Questioning for this department will continue in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): So, I just have a few undertakings for the minister. I'm hoping that the minister can undertake to give a list of all technical appointments in her department, including names and titles.

Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): So, there are two technical appointments: Danielle Orvis is the executive assistant and Laura Guttormson is the special assistant.

Mrs. Smith: Can the minister undertake to give an organizational chart that lists all employees and program areas?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: If the member would go to page 14 of the supplement of Estimates.

Mrs. Smith: Yes. So I am aware of page 14, but what I'm asking for is a breakdown of all employees, as well as program areas. So, this is in the department, but I am asking for organizational chart with all the employees and the program areas.

And if the minister can undertake that, that would be great, because it's not in this, and I'm sure it's going to take time to put that together.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, there are three admin, two tech, one deputy; and under the deputy, there are two admin and one policy person, two ADMs; and under the two ADMs, there are two executive directors, four managers, two collective policy analysts. In total, there are about 75 employees.

Mrs. Smith: I did ask if the minister would provide an organizational chart that lists all employees as well as program areas. So, if the minister can undertake

that. I know you've given me some of that, but, again, employees—all employees and program areas.

So, programs that are administered by the department.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, we can provide the chart and the different program areas, but the employee names are not included on the chart.

Mrs. Smith: Yes, and that's fine. If the member—or the minister can undertake that.

So, my next question: Can the minister give a list of all current vacancies in the department as a number and a percentage?

Mr. Dennis Smook, Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay. So, as of March 31st, 2020, the executive has 14.5 total full-time. Total filled are 14. Total vacancy—0.5.

* (15:10)

The mental health and recovery, as of March 31st, 2023, has 33.7 total full-time. Total filled are 31.9; total vacancy, 1.8; wellness, as of March 31st, 2023, 14 full-time; total filled, 13; total vacancy, 1, with a total as of March 31st, 2023, of 60.2 full-time; total filled, 58.9; total vacant, 1.3 or 2 per cent.

Mrs. Smith: I thank the minister for those answers. Yesterday, I asked about the 1,000 beds and how the government defines addiction treatment spaces.

If the department says they're investing in 1,000 spaces, is 1,000 different spaces or spaces that they can serve 1,000 people? For example, 1,000 spaces serves 10 people each.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'd just like to remind the member that in the November 15th, 2022, Throne Speech, it stated our government was committed to increasing and supporting 1,000 treatment spaces in the province to ensure everyone who was seeking treatment had access to the supports.

The reason for the commitment to spaces is that not all services required are bed-based. We know we need a continuum of addiction supports in the province.

So, for example, mobile withdrawal services are offered in a person's home; intensive day programming is not a bed-based treatment. It's not all in the facility.

Mrs. Smith: So, the minister claims that the Province is investing in 1,000 treatment spaces; it's even written on page 20 of the Estimates book.

Yet the government's own request for expression of interest posted on MERX makes it clear what 1,000 spaces actually means.

On page 2, it says: This initiative will enable up to 1,000 treatment spaces, people served, to receive substance-use addiction services. A table makes it even clearer—even more clear. In the same document, the Province is looking to build 155 spaces, not 1,000.

Can the minister explain, does she think it's misleading when she says the PC government is going to build 1,000 spaces, when in reality it's far less?

* (15:20)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, no, that is not misleading. That is how you measure or track the capacity in the system. So 300 of the 1,000 treatment spaces have already been announced, and the additional capacity is being purchased through Shared Health and the regional health authority yet to be announced.

So the remaining amount went out through the expression of interest, and it would go through supportive recovery housing, adult bed-based treatment services, multifunctional bed-based transition supports and intensive day programming.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Could the minister repeat the first part? Would you actually mind repeating your entire response? I missed the first part. I want to make sure that I've captured it properly.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: No, it is not misleading, the measuring and tracking of the capacity in the system.

And then it—we've already announced 300 of the 1,000 treatment spaces. And then the additional capacity is being purchased through Shared Health and the regional health authority, and that is yet to be announced. And the remaining number of spaces—treatment spaces went out through an EOI for supportive recovery housing, adult bed-based treatment services, multi-functional bed-based transition supports and intensive day program.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister clarify, did she say that the additional—the remaining spaces are to be purchased through Shared Health, and then she said something subsequent to that. So, was it EOI that—I just—I'm not clear. What does that acronym represent that she's saying?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: EOI is expression of interest.

MLA Asagwara: So, I think it is misleading that, you know, the minister and the Province would say that they're claiming 1,000—they're creating 1,000 new

spaces when, in reality, when you add the numbers up, it doesn't appear that those are actually 1,000 new beds, which I'm sure they're aware the general public, that's how they interpret it.

And, you know, and also very curious to know about timelines because that's—it's a big announcement. This minister is saying they've already announced 300 of those 1,000 beds and there's going to be an expression of interest for others and more to be purchased through Shared Health, et cetera. But that doesn't provide any comfort to families whose family members cannot access beds right now. And there's no clarity around when folks who are in need of those beds that don't truly total 1,000 are going to be able to access those services.

So, with that in mind, because we know the reality of it is that Manitobans are not only being turned away from services that this government purports to be meeting the need, like RAAM services, which turn away many Manitobans who are in desperate need of care. We also know that folks are waiting to be able to access treatment beds. And, you know, treatment being detox bed or longer term treatment.

So I'm wondering if the minister can provide clear information around what the average wait time is for someone who does have to wait to access bed-based addiction services. And if the minister could articulate, you know, what areas those waits are in. Is it for detox beds? Is it for longer term treatment? How long, on average, are those folks waiting to access the varying types of beds that are available?

And, you know, breaking that down by what is the top 10 per cent of wait times, just as an example. And with that in mind, has the department set a goal to reduce those wait times?

Maybe I'm being a little greedy. I see the minister nodding and—loading a lot into that question.

But thank you.

* (15:30)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, I just want to begin by stating it's treatment spaces, it's not beds. So when we said 1,000, we meant treatment spaces. That's what we're advertising for.

And not all the services that are required are essentially bed-based. There are other services that an individual may need to access, depending upon where they are.

We have home services, the mobile withdrawal unit services so individuals, if they're unable to access a service, are able to take the services in their home. If they have children, they can take services at their home. Days, evenings, services provided go to the needs of the individual so that we can assist them at the level that they're needing the support for.

With RAAM clinics, we've announced six. There is a seventh to be opening, which is seven more than were previously in place prior to those.

So, we've done seven RAAM clinics, and the road map identifies the needs for consistency in reporting for the targets for individuals, so use the road map.

Mrs. Smith: So, I think the question was pretty clear. I'd asked, how long on average is someone waiting to access treatment beds? And the minister outlined, you know, the RAAM clinic, which we know, like, three to four people get into a day.

There's all sorts of ramifications with that in terms of someone that's ready to get into treatment and going there and being turned away, or an appointment being made.

We know that there's not enough beds for folks to actually get into recovery when they're ready to get into recovery.

So, the question was, what is the wait time, and what is the top 10 per cent of wait times? So, if the minister can provide that, that would be great.

And what is the goal? It says to reduce it by 5 per cent.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I think it is a little concerning that the member opposite doesn't support RAAM clinics and the work of the service providers that they provide for the community.

The wait times to access withdrawal management services vary and fluctuate depending upon the program, the number of people requiring the service at that time. Wait times can range from immediate access to up to one month. The wait times for bed-based treatment beds vary significantly between programs and change on a month-to-month basis.

And wait times for support of recovery housing units also vary significantly between programs and are dependent upon the flow of residents in the independent housing.

Mrs. Smith: In nowhere did I say that I did not support RAAM clinics. I've had RAAM clinic staff approach me and talk to me about bringing their voice

to the Manitoba Legislature because they have to turn people away, and there has been people that have left there and have lost their lives.

So, I want to be clear. I support RAAM clinics, but I support them with more resources. They are under-resourced; they're only open a certain amount of hours a day; they're not able to get folks into treatment right away; they're often given—their hands are tied; folks that are there have to wait in line at like 5:30, 6 in the morning, and staff are saying that they're only able to take three or four.

And many times that those folks that are coming in, they have to give them appointments to come back, and then they don't see them again. There's a certain amount of window that they need to be able to get into treatment.

So, again, I'll ask the minister—and I find it problematic that the minister can't even give us an average. Like, they're saying it's an average of a month. Well, how many people are waiting, for how long, for bed-based addiction services? And it says the goal is to reduce it by 5 per cent. Again, bed-based addiction services.

So, I'll ask the minister again: How long is someone waiting to access bed-based addiction services? What's the top 10 per cent of wait times?

And the department has set the goal to reduce the wait times by 5 per cent. Where is the department on that?

* (15:40)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, there is no central wait-list for services. The services are provided by many community agencies, and they have their own unique criteria for admission. So, when we're speaking about wait times, we tend to speak as an average wait time to get into a facility.

The 5 per cent target that you're referencing is a measure that would be projected for the end of 2023-2024, once everything has been put in place with the 5 per cent wait times.

So, some of the numbers—I can give you some of the numbers for wait times. So, we have—our P-C men's day program is 38 days; the Compass, male, 37; Compass, female, 35; problem gambling, men, 35 days, women, 35; and Brandon, Parkwood, female, wait time is 65 days.

Mr. Chairperson: Just a friendly reminder, before I—we're doing very well here, but just to keep it in line,

we should, you know, go through the Chair so that way it doesn't, you know, lead into anything.

So, thank you very much.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for that reminder.

I would ask the minister if they could actually provide—undertake to provide a breakdown for each program that the department supports, whether that's through Main Street Project or a Siloam Mission or Behavioural Health Foundation. I'm sure that, you know, those organizations report to the department on how many, you know, folks are accessing their services, how many folks are waiting get into those services.

The minister also referenced they've already created 300 of the thousand spaces. So I'd also like the minister to undertake or let us know where those 300 spaces are.

And the minister also talked about—that's the 2023-24 projection. We're in a couple of months and, you know, certainly 300 beds would start to break that 5 per cent down. So if there's 300 beds now, you know, where are those beds? What's the impact? And if they can undertake, again, to provide the numbers for the different treatment spaces that they provide funding to.

* (15:50)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: For the 300 spaces—so, up to 300 spaces were announced for Prairie Mountain Health, for Brandon, for Portage with Shared Health, Southern Health and Interlake 'eastern' health in the Ashern hospital.

The information of the wait times in that is not something that is shared, so I would direct the member to go back to each of the agencies that she's seeking this information from and ask them for it.

Mrs. Smith: I find it problematic that the minister wouldn't have access to those average wait times from organizations that they actually provide funding to, because ultimately they report to your department.

And, you know, if there's a greater need—which we know that there is—and we know that these wait times, and—we still haven't, you know, been given an answer from the minister on what the actual wait times are, the average wait times for, you know, across Manitoba.

We've heard announcements of beds; we don't even know if those beds have opened up. We know that there's no services provided for folks that are actually sitting on a waiting list, that they're just left

without any support. And some have not even made it to recovery and have lost their lives waiting to get into detox or treatment which is, you know, very disheartening.

So I would, you know, suggest to the minister that they should be consulting and actually looking at these numbers, and actually looking so that it guides them in the direction that it's going to reduce these wait times. If you have a 5 per cent goal, how are you meeting that goal if you're not even looking at these numbers? And you're—sent me to Justice yesterday for the medical examiner, you're—now you're asking me to go to these different organizations to get these numbers that the minister should have access to.

Like, these are Manitoban lives. These are people that are waiting to get into treatment, and we're playing with, you know, here, go here, go there, you go get the numbers yourself. It's not for me; I'm asking for, actually, family members that are waiting to get their loved ones into treatment. And I shared yesterday, my brother-in-law was in treatment three times. Came out; no services offered, no wraparound services. While he waited to get into treatment, he lost his life.

So, these are very important questions that I'm asking. They're not questions that are just, you know, I'm trying to catch the minister in some kind of web or anything. These are people that are actually waiting and need to know how long they have to wait to get into treatment.

You know, I've been speaking to a mother today that's watching these proceedings, and they want to know. You know, you gave a few numbers of some day programs: 68 days to get into a day program. How long is it to get into a bed-based program where actually you get the supports that you need?

So, whether it's 30 days, whether it's 60 days, whether it's 90, or six months or up to a year, those numbers should be available to the minister. And the minister should be accountable to Manitobans and be able to provide those numbers. You know, it's very disheartening to sit here and hear the minister say, well go to behavioural foundation and ask them what—how long their wait time is. Go to Main Street Project.

Like, you're government. Our job is to ask these questions and to get answers, and I don't understand why the minister wouldn't want to provide those answers. Those answers are going to help guide the response. You know, you're saying 1,000 beds. We probably need double that, if not triple that.

So, I'm going to move on from that, but I just wanted to state that.

So, on page 24 of the Estimates book, it says that the department prepared draft legislation and regulations on the subject of licensing public and private addiction organizations.

What has the minister heard from the addictions organizations on these proposed changes? And does the minister think that the fact that front-line community organizations universally oppose their proposed licensing regulations, as these regulations would have hampered addiction services?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, I just want to go back to the member's previous comments. The information on wait times and services, we have. But it is confidential and it is not for the department to share.

There is also an expectation that part of the standards to be put in place would have been put in place with a bill that we presented, but the bill was stopped by yourselves.

So, we absolutely cannot share any information because it is not universal for individuals to have access to that knowledge.

And I would like—

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, the honourable Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay, thank you—and to have the member repeat the question.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to get clarity. So, the minister is saying that the wait times, which at first she stated they didn't have access to, now the minister's clarifying they do have access to the information around wait times, but that that information is confidential and cannot be shared beyond the department.

* (16:00)

What mechanism is it? Is it a part of an act? What is it exactly that precludes the minister from disclosing what those wait times are?

The minister also just stated that Bill 33 would have established standards that would have allowed for the minister—would have allowed—standards that would have allowed the minister to make public that information.

So, what is the mechanism specifically that is preventing the minister from being transparent and providing the information around wait times right now and generally, as stated by the minister?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, not naming the individual organization, and the wait times is confidential. And we don't want to share that on public record.

And the public reporting of the aggregated wait-list is a priority of the roadmap. So the road mapping will put the aggregated numbers on that.

MLA Asagwara: So, I see that the minister has abandoned her narrative, almost immediately—effectively immediately. So, the minister stated that the information was confidential and that couldn't be provided and would've been able to be provided if we hadn't stopped a bill they brought forward.

Yet, in her response to my question for her to identify specifically what is the mechanism that is precluding the minister from providing this information, there's no clarity around what that mechanism is. Is it a piece of legislation? Is it something somewhere that we should be talking about?

And the minister also makes no mention of the legislation she claims would've been a way for them to actually provide that information. So, that is a bit—from my perspective, that's a bit concerning because it reflects that, for whatever the reasons are, the minister isn't wanting to be transparent about why it is or what it is that she says is preventing them, that is resulting in this information being confidential, which is a pretty strong statement.

* (16:10)

To say that that information is confidential, but to not clarify what makes it confidential, what is preventing her from providing it when, you know, we've asked questions along those lines in other Estimates committees, and that information is readily provided. And if it's not available immediately, it's undertaken to be provided at a later date.

And so I'm concerned that there's some potential mechanism in place here within this particular department that isn't allowing the minister to provide that information. Yet, the minister won't provide clarity as to what that mechanism is.

Further to my point regarding this legislation that the minister did bring forward that, yes, we have stopped, I think it's important to talk about the fact that front-line community organizations, front-line organizations, service providers, community health providers, have been unified—medical experts, doctors, have been clear—that that legislation would directly

impede and harm the efforts of folks who are providing life-saving health care to those struggling with addictions.

You know, myself, everyone, I think, is well aware I am a nurse by background. I'm a psychiatric nurse. I'm also an addictions specialist. I'm somebody who has trained hundreds and hundreds of Manitobans to provide care to family members, to people across the province struggling with addictions, folks struggling with co-occurring disorders, so mental health disorders and challenges alongside addictions issues.

And through all of my training—years of training, education, front-line experience as a health-care provider working with families, I would not position myself as somebody who should be the be-all, end-all on the—on what legislation should look like to best help families.

I recognize, as we all should, that there are a number of experts, organizations, front-line service providers, workers who should be informing us, who we should be working with to make sure that we're doing what is necessary and evidence-backed to save lives of those struggling with addictions and provide them the services and supports they need.

And so, I think it's really concerning that the minister continues to try to condemn or criticize. Not us in opposition, because what you're actually—what the minister is actually doing is being critical and condemning the very people that we thank for saving lives in our province. They're the ones who have been unified in their criticism of this government, bringing forward legislation, licensing, regulations that would directly impact the ability of folks to support those in communities who desperately need it.

And so, what does the minister have to say to those organizations? What does the minister have to say about her position that she opposes the experts and the front-line community organizations who have made clear that the licensing regulations that this minister has brought forward would have hampered, would have interfered with, would have harmed addictions services? Does the minister think that all of those folks are simply wrong, and that it's her perspective that matters most?

What's the minister's position on that?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, I'm going to begin by saying that I am not condemning or critical of services, and there is not unanimous consent. Recognizing front-line workers and the work that they do to support the individuals seeking the support from

service providers is very important, and I have met with front-line workers prior to, and as, the minister of this portfolio.

And I do not contradict myself when I am posting wait times—sorry—interests are provided accurate information to Manitoba's agencies, are not calling them out by specific name.

And then, just to further correct, it's a small group of critics, but I would not agree there is a unified perspective. We have strong supports from organizations and experts on the standards and associated legislation.

Yesterday, the critic described all the services that are ideal in a supervised consumption site, none of which are a requirement to receive authority to operate a site. I think we can all agree we need to make these sites as safe as possible and help connect individuals to care.

The only way to do this is to ensure clinical staff are available on site and there is an expectation on organizations to help connect individuals with mental health and addiction services, all of which were the foundation of the bill.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Point—*[interjection]*

Sorry, I may not have had my mic on. The honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Smith: Well, I'm very disappointed in the minister's response to that because there were 80 organizations, a number of doctors, who wrote to the minister opposing that bill and really outlined how it would impede the work that they're doing in terms of saving lives and Manitobans.

I encouraged the minister yesterday to go visit a safe consumption site, to actually not walk by like their predecessor and take pictures. Or like the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) saying that, you know, she visited a safe consumption site in a place where there was not even a safe consumption site, misleading Manitobans, both the 'predecess' minister and the Premier.

And now we have a new minister. So, this minister has an opportunity to do the right thing, to help save Manitoban lives. And I encourage the minister to go visit those 80 organizations that are on the front lines that are doing that work, life-saving work, to go and meet with them, to actually go and

tour. As well as go and tour the mobile overdose prevention vehicle. They were just here last week. You know, I came. They've been doing life-saving work.

So, I'm going to move on from that because we're not getting any answers, which is unfortunate because, you know, if I go onto a website and I look, if I want to go to an urgent care, I can see how long the wait times are. I can go and see how long a wait time is for surgery. I can go see how long a wait time is to get into emergency rooms. But yet, there's nowhere that anyone can access wait times.

* (16:20)

And I wasn't asking the minister to provide site by site. I simply asked, like—you know, you're providing funds to these organizations. As a collective, in all of the organizations that you provide funding to for bed-based treatment, what was the average wait time?

So, I wasn't asking for names. I was simply asking for the average wait time. And then the minister said there was policy and that this, you know, bill would have allowed that to happen. Then the narrative shifted.

So, I'm going to move on, because clearly, you know, the minister doesn't want to provide those answers to Manitobans. And Manitobans want to know those answers, should know those answers, should have confidence in their government that they're being transparent. And that someone that wants to access treatment should know how long it's going to take them or how long a family's going to have to wait to support this person, this individual, before they get into treatment.

There's no services before they get into treatment. People are dying before they get into treatment. They're dying after they get out of treatment because there's no wraparound services.

So, I'll move on. My next question has to do with HIV cases in Manitoba, and if the minister can provide how many HIV cases were recorded in 2022 and how many were a result of using drugs.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I just want to put on the record that I have spoken to and visited some of the agencies on that list and I have actually toured the overdose prevention site.

So—and repeat your question. Sorry.

Mrs. Smith: My question was, how many HIV cases have been reported in 2020 and how many were attributed to drug use?

But I'm also going to put another question in there just for the sake of time. And it's nice to hear that the minister has actually visited the mobile prevention site.

And that—so I'd ask the minister, one of the reasons why safe consumption sites are so important and help save lives is that they provide people with clean needles so that blood-borne diseases aren't being transmitted, such as HIV.

Does the minister agree that safe consumption sites would help reduce the spread of diseases like HIV, syphilis?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, HIV falls under Health, and you need to speak with Public Health on this issue. That being said, the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness and Manitoba Health work collaboratively to address harms related to substance use and provide policy planning, funding and oversight to HR initiatives.

Departments work together to integrate policy interventions, including training for health and social service practitioners, improve data transparency, and enable collaboration between service delivery organizations and community-based organizations.

Mental Health and Community Wellness invests almost 1 and a half million dollars annually in harm-reduction initiatives. These initiatives include support for harm-reduction-based organizations, providing safer sex, safer substance use supplies.

Overall, the government invests over \$2.2 million in harm reduction: one and a half for mental health and community wellness, and \$700,000 for Manitoba Health's take-home naloxone kits.

Other investments that we have are: \$210,000 for the take-home naloxone kit with over 200 distribution sites; on November 1st, 2022, we announced Narcan pilot program, which invested \$200,000 to make Narcan easily administered form of naloxone accessible to RAAM clinics; invested almost \$215,000 in funding to support St. Boniface Street Links Outreach and support of intervention for people who use substances; the OASIS project is led by a multi-disciplinary team and will provide support to approximately 80 people experiencing homelessness and are struggling with substance use.

And on December 16, 2022, we also publicly released substance-related harm stat, including information on fatalities due to drug overdose, substance use, hospital admissions, emergency department

visits, substance-related calls responded to by the fire–Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service.

The–there's also–the department has also made significant investments in clean needle programs.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Smith: We often hear this notion of whole-of-government approach, but yet what I'm hearing from the minister is yet again shirking the responsibility to another department.

The minister should wholly have these numbers at their disposal. It should be something that is guiding their response in their department, because it is a leading cause–drug use–in terms of some of these blood-borne diseases, especially HIV. So, how can you properly, you know, service these agencies and know actually what's happening if you're, you know, leaving it with Health? Like, it is a responsibility of your department, not Health.

And when we look at the medical examiners–and I know–I think that the minister is just as frustrated as I am, and maybe could direct their staff to, you know, find those numbers. If they're on the Department of Health's website, then perhaps the minister can ask the staff to find those numbers and provide those numbers.

It's not, you know, this web that we're trying to entangle you in. We're trying to find physical numbers for Manitobans to actually get the information out. People don't know how much HIV is rampant and the symbiotic relationship between syphilis and HIV that's happening in our province, because our government is not doing anything to let the public know.

So, again, you know, I–it's frustrating to hear the minister continually say, go here, go there, when this whole-of-government approach obviously isn't a whole-of-government approach. It's this department does this work, and I don't know anything about what that department does; I don't have the numbers. It's very frustrating to say the least.

And I just want to remind the minister that there are people watching these proceedings. They do go in to read committee reports. They are looking for answers, especially our front-line organizations that help–these numbers help guide their response. And these numbers should be helping guide this government's response.

And I hear, you know, these these numbers being thrown out of, you know, yes, we're providing this. But these numbers are trending up, so obviously not

enough is being done. And how can you know what the response can be if you're not even looking at the numbers? You're saying, oh, that's Health, let Health deal with those HIV numbers.

I'm asking specifically, if you don't want to provide the numbers of how many people were–how many people contracted HIV, perhaps the member–or the minister can provide how many member–how many individuals contracted HIV through drug use?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, I will agree with the member opposite: we do have a whole-of-government approach and tables where departments work closely with other departments, including Health, Justice, to release the data online, and that's including the 'overdith' data and the HIV rates.

For 2020, there were 117 cases of HIV new to Manitoba, compared to 119 in 2019.

Mrs. Smith: So, the minister just gave numbers for 2020, and we had the second highest rate of HIV nationwide for 2020.

I did ask for the numbers for 2022 and the numbers for how many were a result of using drugs. So, if the minister could provide those.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: The question I had heard was 2020, not 2022. So, I'll see if I can get you that.

Mrs. Smith: Okay, I appreciate that. I might have said 2020 too. I apologize.

So, I'm going to move on, while the minister is looking for those answers, to the suicide epidemic. And I've spoken about those in the House. You know, there's been several epidemics in our First Nation communities. I was up in Tataskweyak when there was 19 suicides that happened, young people.

So, I'd ask the minister: What–how many suicides have there been in Manitoba over the past five years, and if the minister can provide a breakdown by demographic?

* (16:40)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, the development of a provincial suicide prevention strategy is a priority for our government, as identified in both the Mental Health and Community Wellness five-year road map and the 2022 Speech from the Throne.

The strategy will build upon existing supports to create a provincially co-ordinated approach for the prevention of suicide, with a special focus on at-risk populations.

Investing in evidence-based mental health promotion in schools through programs like Indigenous youth mentorship project, Project 11, Thrival Kits is a key part of our efforts to promote the mental well-being of all children.

Suicide numbers fall under the Chief Medical Examiner's office, but I will read the numbers that I have: from 2018, the total number of individuals who passed away from suicide were 236; 2019, 232; 2020, 215; 2021, 198; and the 2022 numbers haven't been posted.

Mrs. Smith: I thank the minister for looking that up and actually providing those numbers. I wish that would've went on for the duration of our couple of days here because it could have made—you know, I think things go way more smoothly.

I don't have access to those numbers. Neither do the public. So, you know, it's being transparent and helping guide the direction that this government needs to go.

I didn't hear it broken down by demographics. I'm hoping possibly the minister could undertake that, if they can't provide it right now.

And then, the minister did reference that there is a provincially co-ordinated plan for the prevention of suicide among children, youth and adults, with a special focus on at-risk communities and populations.

When will this plan be completed? Will it be publicly available? And when will it be implemented?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay, thank you. Which would you like?

Mrs. Smith: I can break the questions down, if that's what the minister is asking. I put those together so that they all kind of combine each other.

So, I asked when will the plan be completed? So, the minister referenced the provincial plan—co-ordinated plan for the prevention of suicide among children, youth and adults. When will this plan be completed?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, the provincial co-ordinated plan is—after December 2023, it will begin. But we haven't been waiting for that start, so that's why we've making seven investments in youth and adolescents to support the needs that they have. It'll be publicly available at that—after December.

And the timeline, the implementation is a three-year plan and it will be implemented over those three years, as was discussed with stakeholders.

Now, the—so, the demographics. We have in 2018—I just need to—do you want it broken down per—sorry, through the Chair—I don't know how this is through, like, 20 to 30, 35 to 39, that's—I don't know how in-depth—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Smith: I would say by, maybe gender, as well as age.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Okay, thank you. So in 2018, there were 162 males, 74 females. In 2019: 172 males, 60 females. In 2020: 150 males, 65 females. In 2021: 122 males, 64 females.

Okay, so, in 2018: ages 10 to 19, 25; 20 to 29, 63; 30 to 39, 28; 40 to 49, 31; 50 to 59, 44; 60 to 69, 28; 70 to 79, eight; 80 and older, nine.

In 2019: ages 10 to 19, there were 22; 20 to 29, 55; 30 to 39, 50; 40 to 49, 29; ages 50 to 59, 35; age 60 to 69, 27; age 70 to 79, nine; and 80 and older, five.

In 2020: ages 10 to 19, there were 16; ages 20 to 29, 55; ages 30 to 39, 52; ages 40 to 49, 32; ages 50 to 59, 26; age 60 to 69, 21; age 70 to 79, seven; 80 and over, six.

And in 2021: ages 10 to 19, there were 29; 20 to 29, 49; ages 30 to 39, 37; age 40 to 49, 24; age 50 to 59, 25; age 60 to 69, 13; age 70 to 79, 16; and age 80 and older, five.

* (16:50)

Mrs. Smith: Over the past year, multiple First Nation communities have declared states of emergency due to suicide epidemics.

Can the minister explain what she's doing to help reduce suicides and improve mental health, specifically in First Nations? And—as well as providing the numbers for 2018, '19, '20, '21, based on Indigenous ancestry.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: So, investments that we have made in the Indigenous mental health services are \$850,000 for the virtual crisis stabilization unit in telepsychiatry services; and investing an additional \$538,000 in the one-time funding to expand the telepsychiatry assessment services. This will improve timely access to the mental health services for adults from First Nations communities and rural health facilities while reducing wait times and unnecessary patient transfers and admissions.

On January 24th, 2023—announced an investment of \$893,000 in a new Indigenous-led RAAM clinic at the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre to ensure culturally safe programming. And services are offered to Indigenous peoples by a culturally informed workforce. And the RAAM clinic will also work with the Manitoba mobile addiction medicine team to enhance community capacity and access to provide ongoing virtual support to rural and northern-residing Indigenous peoples.

Mental Health and Community Wellness currently provides funding and oversight to the Indigenous youth mentorship program, PAX Dream Makers, Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre, Indigenous Women's Healing Centre's addictions counsellor, Ma Mawi centre's—sorry, I don't want to say that—centre's solvent abuse program.

And the last question you had with the Indigenous ancestry, we will have take that back and take it under consideration.

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate the minister taking that under advisement and getting those—or, the demographics back to me. My question wasn't answered, though; it's specific to First Nations, but that's fine.

I'll conclude my questions and wrap up.

Mr. Chairperson: Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions.

At this point, we will allow the virtual members to unmute their mics so they can respond to the questions; I don't believe we have any.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,749,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Mental Health and Recovery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,364,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Wellness, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$72,079,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Physician Services—Psychiatry, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$318,703,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Funding to Health Authorities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$820,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Costs Related to Capital Assets of Other Reporting Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.7: There are no monies allocated for resolution 24.7 this year, so there doesn't need to be a vote. The information was included in the books to reflect change from last year.

Resolution 24.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,600,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

So, last item to be considered for these Estimates is item 1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 24.1. At this point, we request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,567,000 for Mental Health and Community Wellness, Executive, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness.

The hour being 5 p.m. committee rise.

ROOM 255

MUNICIPAL RELATIONS

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Brad Michaleski): 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 Municipal Relations.

Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'd like to ask the minister if he can share how many employees the department has that are responsible for reviewing subdivision applications, and are there any vacancies in that department?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): Just before I do answer the question that was asked by member opposite, I'd like to provide the member with some information that was asked of yesterday.

So, the application portal for Agencies, Boards and Commissions, I have a copy of that. And I also have a copy—or a link, rather, to the Canadian Home Builders' Association benchmark study, which I referenced yesterday in one of my answers.

So, I can provide that for the member opposite. How many? *[interjection]*

I'll table it for the member opposite, and—*[interjection]*—go.

Ms. Naylor: Thank you very much for that, but I thought the minister was going to answer the question I already asked. So that's fine; I wasn't expecting to ask it again, but I can. *[interjection]* Okay.

Mr. Smith: The most recent numbers that I have is a total number of 54 employees, with a net vacancy of nine.

Ms. Naylor: And, on page 21 of the Estimates book, it states that the department has a target to communicate 75 per cent of subdivision application decisions to applicants in under 16 days.

Does the minister have any concerns that a target of less than 16 days may rush thorough examinations of subdivision proposals?

Mr. Smith: Right. Just to clarify that, that 16-day process is really the front end of the entire process.

With respect to this particular issue, if a member—somebody who was applying would come through our—to us, that 16 days would allow for all the due diligence to be done and make sure that the application is complete. That does not necessarily mean that decision's made by then. It's a 16 days that they will receive a letter saying that, yes, indeed, that this has been received and that all the correct procedures have been followed.

A lot of that does include co-ordination with other departments in government. So, Agriculture would be one, as you can imagine, in rural settings. And, of course, MTI, again, rural settings and—would be another example where that might be the case.

We always encourage applicants to come ahead of time to discuss with staff here, and we have staff that are very willing to do that and have those discussions ahead of time to make sure that everyone understands what the process is. And, of course, there'll be some flexibility built into that process, as well, knowing full well that some cases are more complex than others.

Ms. Naylor: So, just to clarify then, the—so, the minister doesn't have any concerns? Like, that target of 16 days or less, it feels like the right amount of time? It's not—it hasn't been a concern?

Mr. Smith: Well, like I said, it's—and it is a process that's trying to get a good turnaround time for those who are applying, ensuring that—again, it's not necessarily a decision being made.

It is certainly, though, giving the time—or an expedient turnaround time for the applicant to make sure that they know that the application has been received and that the process is now in place.

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask the minister how many subdivision applications did the department receive last year, and how many of those were approved?

* (15:10)

Mr. Smith: So, for the subdivision applications, on average, about 800 subdivision applications in a year, and a little less than a dozen are often denied. Sometimes their denials aren't necessarily a denial. It could just be that some of the considerations that haven't been thought of when the application was made. So, we would then go back and make some recommendations and ask them to come back and reapply.

Subdivisions, of course—these subdivisions are—occur outside the city of Winnipeg. Winnipeg takes care of its own, but these would be outside of the largest metropolitan region in—or largest metropolitan city in the province.

Ms. Naylor: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

And can the minister also share how many assessment inspections were completed on time in 2022-23?

Mr. Smith: The most recent numbers we have would be 98,675 property reviews, and that's assessed of a total of 442,000 properties.

Ms. Naylor: I—in my opening statement yesterday, I made a reference to the Winnipeg police headquarters and I know I was advised that I couldn't ask about things that weren't in the budget book. So I just want to be clear, though, the budget book states that the

minister is responsible for policy that supports autonomy and accountability of local government.

And, knowing that the City of Winnipeg is an important and trusted partner of the Province, would the minister—like, will the minister listen to Winnipeg 'citech'—city councillors, support Winnipeg City Council and ask his government to call a public inquiry into the Winnipeg police headquarters, as they have asked?

Mr. Smith: Given the nature of this issue, I think it's best that that would be dealt with through the courts, and let the courts decide on how best to proceed.

It is a City of Winnipeg matter, as well, and I know City of Winnipeg will be certainly—appreciate any lessons learned that City of Winnipeg has learned throughout that entire process.

Ms. Naylor: I just will ask one more question on this.

The City of Winnipeg has been asking the government to call a public inquiry into the Winnipeg police headquarters. The project went nearly \$100 million over budget, and the courts found that a city official accepted a bribe worth hundreds of thousands. Yet the PC government refused to call a public inquiry despite the City's requests.

* (15:20)

So, can the minister explain: Does he think that this is—and I'm quoting from the book—can he explain how this is supporting autonomy, accountability, safe and financial efficiency of local government?

Mr. Smith: Again, I say that this is an issue that's best dealt with through the courts. And, you know, it's a matter that is before the courts. And I know that we trust the legal system and the court system to deal with this issue as it sees fit.

Ms. Naylor: I'm sure our partners at the City of Winnipeg would hope for more from our government, but I will move on to talk about roads because they're in rough shape. We all know that, and that this government has repeatedly underspent on infrastructure spending.

So, my question for the minister is, why is this government failing to support municipalities and their much-needed road repairs?

Mr. Smith: Well, Mr. Chair, I mean, I know that with—discussing infrastructure would really fall under the Infrastructure department. However, this department, I can say, and I know, our government on the whole has been very supportive of municipalities.

Municipalities received a \$47-million increase in operating funding this year, and that's going to be a permanent increase to their operating budgets. In addition, a 23-and-a-half-million-dollar increase in capital spending—capital funding. Again, a permanent increase to their budget. I think that speaks to the—how much this government is invested in growing and working with our municipal partners.

I know if that municipalities were very important to the NDP caucus, I just question why today they voted to defund the police. And let's be honest. We as a government have called on the federal government to cover the back pay for RCMP pay to the municipalities. Federal government hasn't come to the plate, and we've asked them to.

We had a resolution before the House this morning to do just that and the NDP voted against it.

Ms. Naylor: Well, the minister's raising something that's not actually in his department book, so I'll just respond to it that we also have called on the federal government to do same.

And I think the minister's well aware that—and as I said to the leadership at AMM, clearly his government was playing a game with something way too serious to play a game with. Because you don't write a resolution that is full of negative comments on the other side of the House and then expect them to vote for it.

So, if they seriously wanted to help folks at—in municipalities, they would have approached it differently and not made just a political game out of it, unfortunately.

In November 2020, the provincial government announced that construction was to begin on the new Daly Overpass in Brandon and would be completed by October 2023. But it took the government until February 2022 to hire a construction company to start work on it, pushing the timeline of completion to the summer of 2024.

Can the minister explain why it took them over a year to hire a construction company and what the timeline for completion currently is for this bridge?

Mr. Smith: I know the member opposite knows that that would fall under Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure. So, it does not fall under the auspices of this Department of Municipal Relations.

However, it's—I will go back to discussing what happened this morning in the House. Unfortunately, the NDP decided, instead of defending the police, to

vote in favour of defunding the police. It's something that is on record forever, and I know that the members opposite—I don't know if they want to tell their constituents that's how they voted. But, certainly, I think every constituent and every person in Manitoba should be aware of the NDP's stand on defunding the police.

Just because there's certain words in a resolution they didn't like, that means they would rather stand against police and in favour of their own political ambitions. I think that's been made very clear—

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

I would just like to remind the minister and the members that are answering and are asking questions that we are—try to keep the question matter relevant to the Estimates book. Just recently, that kind of wandered away from that.

I just want to remind everybody to loop it back more specifically to the Estimates book.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and appreciate your sage advice on that.

Again, I would suggest to the member—and I suggest that the member is aware—that the overpass she's referencing falls under the Department of Infrastructure, not the Department of Municipal Relations.

Ms. Naylor: I expect I'm going to get the same answer here. It's unfortunate that the minister for municipalities can't provide more information on municipal issues, but the Arlington Street Bridge in Winnipeg was supposed to be decommissioned in 2020, but as of this year, the City has said they do not have the funds for this project.

Could the minister explain if his government is planning to fund construction of a new Arlington Bridge?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Chair, as the member's aware, the City of Winnipeg sets their own infrastructure priorities within their own basket funding, and we know that it was our government who created this basket-funding model, and we know we've further simplified it and have increased the amount of money that municipalities receive for that—for this type of basket funding.

I know that last year, we provided all municipalities with \$15 million for road repair. This year, we gave 7 and a half million dollars to the City of Winnipeg for road repair. And we know that potholes are certainly an issue in the city of Winnipeg and, of course, all municipalities right across the province this

time of year. And the City of Winnipeg was very, very happy to receive this money.

I know it was—I attended the announcement with some colleagues of my own here but also with councillor and deputy mayor Janice Lukes, who was delighted to have that money come into the City budget and very delighted to see that the Province is taking such action to repair roads here in the city of Winnipeg.

And, of course, in the past, we've done it across the entire province. We've actually had \$100 million of accelerated street renewal in Winnipeg over five years. That's another initiative our government has undertaken.

So, to suggest that some municipalities are not receiving funding would be ill-founded. I believe that municipalities are giving a very fair share. And, of course, we know that there's always work to be done and there will always—more work to be done, as always, and, of course, there's always evolving issues and challenges that arise.

And as those arise, we will continue to work with our municipalities and be good partners, not only with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities but also municipalities directly. And we understand the importance that they serve. When they serve their constituents, they serve the residents of their communities. They are often on the front lines and on the ground level, making sure that the province that we live in and enjoy stays prosperous, healthy and beautiful.

Ms. Naylor: I mean, we all know that municipalities were—had their funding frozen for a long time, for six years, so it's not a surprise that certain projects that were planned couldn't be completed.

I don't know if the minister's ever driven over the Arlington Street Bridge, if he's familiar with that part of the city. But it—I think this is a very important issue for not just Winnipeggers but for lots of Manitobans who travel through this—through the city, and it's unfortunate that there's really no accountability for what—the fact that municipalities haven't been able to do many of the projects they committed to because of the lack of funding from this department, from this government.

But I will ask a little bit about water infrastructure, and I'm sure I'm going to hear more of the same: it's not my responsibility; it's not my department. But we'll try.

Water infrastructure includes critical projects such as water treatment facilities, lagoons and sewers, the infrastructure needed to transport and clean—transport clean water. These are often funded with—these are often funded with the investing in Canada program, a joint federal-provincial-municipal funding program which the provincial government has failed to properly subscribe to for many years.

* (15:30)

Can the minister explain why his government is failing to properly invest in a program that provides funding for water infrastructure projects?

Mr. Smith: I just think I want to correct the record here. I'm not sure that the member is terribly accurate in her assessment of our government's investment in wastewater.

Let's just talk about some of the things that our government has done. In 2020, a previous minister in this government committed to \$137 million per year in total capital expenditures. That 137 in 2020, 137 in 2021, 137 in 2022 and \$160.5 million in 2023. So, we're estimating around a little over—around \$525 million total.

That does not include our one-time supports throughout COVID, so, Manitoba Restart, \$272.5 million; road repair grants, \$22.5 million; disaster prevention and climate resilience, \$32.1 million; Centreport wastewater and sewer, \$40 million; special warrant, so water and wastewater, \$100.1 million; a special warrant for the Manitoba Water Services Board, \$4 million; one-time provincial transit support, \$13.4 million.

We've had COVID supports: one-time census top-up, 0.84, so \$840,000, to a full total of \$486 million.

Mr. Chair, I think that speaks to how much our government has actually invested in waste water, and I know that it certainly doesn't necessarily make for a terribly appealing political campaign. So that's probably why the NDP did not invest in those types of critical infrastructures and rather to focus their investments on things that they felt would make them more electable rather than investing in things that need to be done.

So, where they didn't get it right and they decided to take the low road and try and avoid the most important pressing issues of the time that would have alleviated a lot of pressures, particularly during COVID, we did it right. So, over \$1 billion of investment that I just talked about right here, that's a record of our government.

Their government failed; ours succeeded.

Ms. Naylor: That was quite a campaign speech. But in the meantime, municipalities across the province are saying that they need investment in water infrastructure. So, I don't know if the minister is listening or thinks they're lying; I don't know. But what I'm hearing is that municipalities are struggling on this issue and that without provincial support, they're going to have to pick up this tab themselves.

Can the minister explain what his government's future plans are for investment in water infrastructure?

Mr. Chairperson: Before we go on, I just want to remember—or remind members of this committee, that you're not to imply or use language that would suggest people are lying. So, just a reminder for committee members.

Mr. Smith: I've been very clear that our government has invested a tremendous amount—over \$1 billion—in waste water. If the NDP were so concerned about investment in this sector, in this space, they would've done that over 17 years. They didn't. Their priorities were political priorities. They did not give unconditional funding. Everything came with strings attached. And those strings attached would make sure that the NDP government of the day got re-elected.

What we're doing is giving municipalities the autonomy and giving them money to invest in their local priorities that we've helped them, and plus that, over \$1 billion of investments in waste water.

So, I will take our record and put up against the NDP record any day of the week. I've talked to municipalities. I've talked to AMM. I know what the priorities are. I know that there are concerns. But let's not forget that when you have 17 years, 17 years of a government that does not invest in critical infrastructure, that creates problems for years to come. Those problems are still being dealt with. We're still making up for lost time under the NDP government. That's the record of them.

After our government formed government, we had—dealt with one of the most disruptive issues of the 21st century—was COVID-19. Despite all that, we've managed to invest more in this critical infrastructure space than the NDP ever did. The NDP failed miserably at this, and that's why we're cleaning up their mess; we're making sure that this investments go into municipalities.

They have the ability to invest in their own communities. They have the autonomy to do what they

believe is best for their residents and their citizens. We've helped them along the way with waste water. We've helped them with infrastructure. We've helped them with operations. I just wish the NDP had thought of that 17 years. They had 17 years to get it right, and they didn't.

Ms. Naylor: I'll just repeat my last question.

What are the minister's—what are his government's plans for future investment in water infrastructure?

Mr. Smith: Well, it's quite simple: not make the same mistakes the NDP did.

Let's be honest. Our government has invested considerably in this space, and we're going to continue to do so. We've already made a commitment to municipalities that operations and capital will have permanent increases. We're giving \$1 billion to wastewater space here in the province of Manitoba. I wish that the NDP could have done the same over 17 years because, let's be honest; they failed to deliver on critical infrastructure. That's not only with waste water; in all kinds of infrastructure projects, they failed at it.

* (15:40)

What we've done is made sure we cleaned up the mess of the NDP, all the while having to deal with a global pandemic that no one foresaw and was able to predict. If the NDP had to deal with that, who knows what kind of mess we'd be in right now.

So that's why I'm so proud of what our government's record on infrastructure, on waste water, and on how we dealt with municipalities—and again, if the municipalities were so important to the NDP, they would have voted in favour of a resolution that would have called on the federal government to make sure that they cover the back pay for RCMP and fund police in critical communities across this province, at a critical time when crime is at a high.

Ms. Naylor: I know the minister is very new in this department and in this role, but I would hope that, you know, with this budget and with some forward thinking, he would be able to share with me even one plan for future investment in water infrastructure.

I'd like to hear all of the plans, but let's hear one.

Mr. Smith: Well, I appreciate the comments from the member opposite.

I know she's new to the role as well, and I—but she must understand, and know full well, that our government increased capital spending to municipalities in

Budget 2023 by 17 per cent—a budget which her and her colleagues voted against, by the way. Her and her colleagues voted against asking and calling on the federal government to fill the back pay for RCMP this morning.

During their 17 years of government, they failed to deliver on critical infrastructure projects. They failed to deliver on critical waste-water projects for municipalities across the province. Our government has come in and cleaned up their mess and dealt with that despite a COVID-19 pandemic.

So, I mean, the member has asked me before and I'll say again: What is our plan? Not to make the same mistakes the NDP did. We won't do that. We're going to make sure that funding is done in a proper manner, in a manner that gives municipalities the autonomy they need and gives them the money they need to invest in the communities, to invest in their future, and invest in their economies, because that's how we grow a province. And that is the goal of this government: to grow our province, and we know that municipalities are key to doing that.

The NDP had no respect for municipalities. When they were in government, what did they do? They forced amalgamations, and at the slightest hint—at the slightest hint—of any opposition to that they called them howling coyotes. Well, that's not very respectful to municipalities. And I know that municipalities across this province are still frustrated with the NDP performance over their 17 years.

And I know a lot of them are hoping that they don't repeat those 17 years again—even another four years of that. That's why I'm very proud of our government's record on investment in our communities, in infrastructure, in waste water, things we got right that the NDP didn't.

Ms. Naylor: The minister may recall that his government tried to download responsibility for snow clearing to municipalities a few years ago.

Can the minister share the status of agreements with municipalities for snow-clearing services?

Mr. Smith: It's my understanding that the shared services that the member is referring to is—does go through MP—or, MTI, rather. Maybe just clarify what, specifically, she was referring to because the cost-sharing services does come through MTI, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure.

So, maybe she can clarify what she's asking, for my benefit.

Ms. Naylor: Well, is the minister able to tell us what the cost-sharing formula is for snow-clearing services?

Mr. Smith: The cost-sharing formula the member's referring to, it's actually MTI that—again, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure that enters into those particular agreements.

On this side, Municipal Relations, we're responsible for providing operating funding to municipalities, as the member's aware, of course. I've discussed a few times in this Estimates process.

But, again, that—agreements are entered into by MTI department.

Ms. Naylor: Perhaps the minister can just speak to whether or not, in his estimation, if municipalities are happy with snow-clearing agreements and the cost-sharing formula.

Mr. Smith: As the member knows, and I've said, it does come through the MTI department. So, municipalities do deal with MTI directly, as well, with respect to some of these service agreements. So, that's where some of the—any issues or any concerns or any contentment with that—those agreements would be expressed, at that table, not so much through Municipal Relations.

I would defer to my colleague, the Minister of MTI.

Ms. Naylor: I guess I would have thought that the minister would be having lots of conversations with municipal leaders about their contentment on a wide variety of issues and could have spoken to that. But I'm—luckily, I've been able to have those conversations myself. So, I can get a read on that.

I would like to ask the minister if there—if his government has any plans to bring back 50-50 transit funding.

* (15:50)

Mr. Smith: As the member is aware and knows full well that we, as a government, in 2016, went to this basket-funding model, giving predictable funding allocations to each municipality.

With respect to transit, of course, we know that unique challenges came up during COVID and as a Province, we provided \$13.4 million to the transit-needing communities, in—I believe it was four of them in the province of Manitoba; \$13.4 million went to them. And that leveraged over \$53 million in federal funding, as well. That's just for municipalities here in the province.

Likewise, the Winnipeg Transit plan, we've committed to it—almost \$170 million. I'll read off some of the projects that we're committed to: the ICIP projects; radio and intelligent transportation system replacement, \$4,500,000; the north garage replacement, we're looking at sixty thousand eight hundred—\$60,800,000; transition to zero-emission buses, \$92,200,000; rapid transit, the downtown corridors and preliminary design, \$2,200,000; primary transit network infrastructure, \$6,100,000; Wheelchair securements retrofit, \$3,800,000.

So, I think it's very clear that our government is committed to investing in transit, not only in our largest city in the province, but of course any of the municipalities that use transit in their own communities. I know that these are very important initiatives that's been undertaken, and in our time in government we've been very clear that we support municipalities and we've done so—we've put our money where our mouth is—and we've done it.

Previous government did not do that. Previous government did not give unconditional funding to municipalities. They did not give unconditional operating or capital funding to municipalities. So I think that's—it's very stark difference. And to be clear to the member opposite, I mean, we've been in contact, I mean, with municipalities right across this province; in very close contact with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and we're very aware of the concerns that they have that's—as it relates to this department.

And we know that they do deal with other departments, as they should, and that's a whole-of-government approach; that's what a team does. We, as the—this side of the House, and this government, works as a team. We ensure that everybody has a role to play in making sure that any time we have any impact on any particular community, that that particular department is engaged with that community or a group that represents that community.

So, we're very aware of any issues that are going on in department—at a department level, and that's why I have no issue with referencing colleagues of mine, saying that they would be best to discuss certain issues with, because we know that we work as a team. And we saw under the previous NDP government—in the guying days—that was anything but a team. It was nothing short of chaos.

And we, on this side of the House, and we—this government, don't subscribe to that kind of governance. We make sure that when you work as a team, you serve

your constituents and residents and your communities best, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Ms. Naylor: Yes, I'm certainly getting a lesson in observing chaos in the dying days of a government, so, thanks for bringing that up.

I—just to further ask about transportation funding, certainly, some of the municipalities I've spoken with are concerned, do want to see a return of 50-50 funding. And I guess—I mean, that's not what this government's planning to do, so that's been established.

But I'm sure the minister's aware of recent, you know, there certainly been a lot of recent news coverage around the city of Steinbach and concerns about transit there and the impact it's having on people in terms of work and the economy there.

So, is there—are there any funds earmarked specifically to help the City of Steinbach with transportation—with transit funding?

Mr. Smith: I know that the member opposite did ask about the transit plans for the city of Steinbach.

And, you know, they did undergo a study. They underwent their study to determine whether or not they want to go down that route. And we trust, and we have the greatest confidence in the City of Steinbach and council to make their own decision as to whether or not they are going to go that way.

We know that we, on this side of the House, believe that municipalities should have autonomy. So, I've heard the member opposite ask about autonomy, and then in the same breath, turn around and say, but the government of Manitoba should somehow intervene on the decisions at the local level with respect to transit in the city of Steinbach.

So, I'm not sure which one it should be, but as far as I'm concerned, at this side of the House, in our government, we trust municipalities to come back when they do plans like this—and there's more than just Steinbach that's done these plans—they come back with a council-approved plan saying, this is what we want.

We will look to work with those individual municipalities on a case-by-case basis to see where we can assist them in helping them grow their communities.

I know that members opposite that have asked in some capacity to—for us to intervene. And, you know, it seems politically convenient. They want us to intervene in some cases, but not in others. They want us to give autonomy in some cases, but not others.

So, I'm not too sure which direction the NDP have finally decided on, but on this side of the House, in our government, we are going to make sure that municipalities have the ability to make these decisions and come back to us when they have those proposals and council approval.

Ms. Naylor: Yes, I'm not even going to comment on that.

I'm going to ask some questions about the Office of the Fire Commissioner.

How many comprehensive fire protection surveys and risk assessments were undertaken last year and over the past five years?

* (16:00)

Mr. Smith: So, the—there was a comprehensive assessment and risk assessment done of—or with the 237 fire services throughout the province. And that was done—meeting with every single one of them to make sure that there was a snapshot of all the needs in each service and what they're able to provide.

It's my understanding through GIS technology now they can also kind of map out the services that can be provided by each of the services. So, it gives a snapshot of where we're at as a whole.

I think that—want to—can commend the Office of the Fire Commissioner and all the work that they do in the province of Manitoba and, of course, work to continue to do to keep our communities safe and make sure that they provide the essential services of protecting life and homes.

Ms. Naylor: Can the minister tell us how many fires there were in municipalities last year and over the past five years? And if he could also elaborate on major causes.

Mr. Smith: I'll endeavour to get that information for the member opposite here. I know that the Office of the Fire Commissioner has been working closely with Stats Canada to do a national fire incidents report. I believe that BC was a pilot project where they released that information. I understand this year, other provinces will be released as well, so have a nationwide snapshot.

However, we will endeavour to get that particular information to the member that she asked for.

Ms. Naylor: Okay, I'll ask my next question. I understand you may have to get that information as well.

But if there—like, if the minister knows how many fires were caused by arson and what kinds of things his department is doing to mitigate fires across the province.

Mr. Smith: I mean, as far as the number of fires due to arson, most of those would be under investigation, so I couldn't comment on the numbers of those due to the investigation nature of it.

However, I know the Office of the Fire Commissioner is very clear on a number of initiatives they want to undertake to make sure that fire safety in general is taken seriously. We know that 237 organizations—or, offices right across the province all have their outreaches to communities and number of initiatives like, you know, Fire Prevention Week, Burn Awareness Week and other public messaging that goes out to make sure people, families, especially families with children, understand that, you know, small things they can do in the home to either prevent fires or at least mitigate the damage and potential loss to life that can be experienced through fires.

Ms. Naylor: Can the minister tell us how many investigations are currently under way?

* (16:10)

Mr. Smith: Municipalities are actually responsible for determining the cause and origin of the fires, and the OFC is actually brought in, in specific circumstances, to bring in certain expertise.

So, but it—typically it's the municipalities that are responsible for determining the cause of fires.

Ms. Naylor: My question was about investigations of fires.

Does the—I mean, the fire—like, does the minister not have an overall understanding of, you know, the—I guess, the total investigations of the Fire Commissioner would be responsible for right now?

Mr. Smith: So, the Office of the Fire Commissioner is—has 31 undergoing right now.

Keeping in mind, of course, that municipalities aren't required to report to the Office of Fire Commissioner; only when they're brought in for the special—for their speciality.

But, right now, 31 active cases.

Ms. Naylor: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

Are there any funds available to help municipalities dispose of hazardous materials, like asbestos?

We know that there's, like—I've certainly seen in Winnipeg, I'm sure it happens in other places, where there's, like, piles of rubble after a fire that can't be cleaned quickly.

And there's that potential of having asbestos in them, or other hazardous materials. And is that something that the government, you know, thinking about the fact that's an obstacle to economic development, but also community safety.

Have any funds been set aside to help municipalities with clearing those hazardous wastes?

Mr. Smith: Municipalities are able to compel the property owner to clean up the mess that is left after construction or some kind of demolition. Of course, we know that if the property owner does not comply, they can be fined and then charged the amount to enforce and certainly compel them to clean up.

And, of course, in terms of funding—and as we know that there is that unconditional basket funding that goes to municipalities through the Province. But at the municipal level, they have the ability to play the enforcer on that through compelling residents and property owners through billing them for the cleanup.

Ms. Naylor: Thank you for that, Minister.

And I'm—I ask—I previously asked some questions on water infrastructure, but I have a few additional questions that I missed before.

So, does the minister have any idea how many households in Manitoba don't have clean drinking water? And in which municipalities those are.

Mr. Smith: Municipalities are typically responsible for the delivering of drinking water to their residents. Of course, the standard that is set is through Environment and Climate. They set the standard. And, certainly, if there's any issues in the municipalities, they can come to the Water Services Board and request assistance at that time or through other means. But Water Services Board would be one avenue that they could get to address some of the issues with drinking water in their communities.

Ms. Naylor: So can the minister speak to—I mean, maybe not exactly how many households, but how many requests in the past year to the Water Services Board for concerns about clean drinking water in municipalities?

* (16:20)

Mr. Smith: Water Services Board this year was at \$24 million—was their budget.

With respect to the list that's been requested, we don't have that on us but we'll endeavour to get that information. We'll make that request of the Water Services Board and see how many clean drinking water requests have come through that. But at this point I can give you the—give the member opposite the budget amount, which is \$24 million.

Ms. Naylor: I would appreciate getting that list, that would be helpful.

And also wondering if the Water Services Board has any issues with the Sio Silica project and the potential impact on clean drinking water from, you know, that community.

Mr. Smith: Well, the Water Services Board is not a regulator, but the Clean Environment Commission is. You know, and so that's before the Clean Environment Commission right now and we want that independent body to make that decision and certainly provide advice as to how to proceed with reference to Sio Silica sands project that the member opposite has referenced.

Ms. Naylor: So, my understanding from the government website is that the Water Services Board conducts feasibility studies and environmental impact assessments for developing intermunicipal or regional infrastructure services.

So, would the minister not think that there might be a role for the Water Services Board in—like, regardless of the fact that there is a Clean Environment Commission review happening?

Mr. Smith: It's my understanding that, of course, through the municipalities, if they're going to build a water infrastructure project, they go to a the Water Services Board to get the environmental impact assessment done. So, that would be the onus on the municipality to do that, to come to the WSB, the Water Services Board.

In the case that, referring to Sio Silica sand, that is, like I said, with the Clean Environment Commission, which we're going to rely on their expert advice on that mine potential.

Ms. Naylor: I have a question. You'll have to rule if it's in order or not. I'm hoping the minister would want to reflect on this.

But a lot of us, probably all the MLAs, have experienced—have received a lot of emails from people, that sort of 15-minute-city conspiracy theory, and I'm wondering if there's been backlash, you know, with

his department, from people subscribing to this conspiracy theory, and if the department has plans to try to educate Manitobans on this.

Mr. Smith: Certainly, our department relies on the expertise of professional planners and don't live in the world of conspiracy theories. And we rely on our planners in our department and around the province in different communities who can make decisions what they believe is best for their individual communities.

Ms. Naylor: Well, that's good to hear that that's the intention. Is—but does the minister—does the department have any plans to try to, you know, educate Manitobans?

There's—seems to be a lot of people believing in this conspiracy theory. That would get in the way of municipal relations, city planning. So, there's an education opportunity here for the department.

Has the minister considered using that opportunity?

Mr. Smith: Well, let's be clear. If our government had to respond to every conspiracy theory out there, we'd spend all our time chasing down rabbit holes and never get anything done.

So, like I said, our goal as a government is to rely on the planners and professional planners to give us expert advice.

Ms. Naylor: The—is—I noted in the budget notes that the department target and completion rate for respectful workplace training was 90 per cent. So that the—that has been met in the department.

And so my question is if the minister has participated in respectful workplace and diversity training.

Mr. Smith: As an MLA, I have undergone respectful workplace training. I know a number of MLAs have done that throughout their career here over the past few years.

And I know that, you know, as times change and evolve, expectations in the workplace change and evolve, and I think it's important for not only elected officials but folks right across the civil service to undertake these types of trainings to make sure that they're aware of current conditions and what's considered acceptable.

* (16:30)

Ms. Naylor: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

And also, has the minister endeavoured to undergo reconciliation education and training?

Mr. Smith: I appreciate the question.

Of course, I think everyone—every MLA in the Manitoba Legislature has a responsibility to and a commitment to reconciliation. We know that that's certainly something that is talked about quite often, but I think should be backed up with actions and not just words.

Of course, I'm always open to different types of training that would advance reconciliation and, of course, advance different types of inclusion in the workplace.

Ms. Naylor: I'm going to give 15 minutes of time to the member from River Heights to ask some questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Over the last number of years, there have been several instances of—where women on councils or mayors or reeves have been harassed or bullied. And one of the outstanding examples was in St. Andrews, where Joy Sul was mistreated. She had to spend something like \$100,000 to defend her reputation and to defend democracy.

And I wonder if the minister would comment on the current situation. And not many people are in a position where they could even spend that kind of money, and I'm not sure that she was either, but she did it because she thought that was the principle that she had to stand on. She was re-elected, and she was vindicated in the courts.

Mr. Smith: I'll thank the member for the question.

And as—member's probably aware that since that time there's been a requirement for municipal elected officials to take code-of-conduct training and respectful workplace training.

We've certainly seen a number of new councillors, reeves and mayors elected throughout this past election, the civic election, and, of course, I think it's very important that they're able to now—not only able, but required to take this type of training to make sure that they understand what's appropriate as far as codes of conduct and respectful workplace.

We know the Manitoba Legislature and other elected bodies are no different than any other workplace; there should be a code of conduct and there should be elements of respect in the workplace. After all, it's representing the residents and the good people that elected you to that—or, in this case, us—to that position.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the minister has responsibility—or, for oversight at The Forks Market. And a number of

people have come to me over the last several years observing that there was quite a bit of empty space at The Forks Market, and concerned about how this was being run and managed.

And I wonder if the minister could comment.

Mr. Smith: As the member is quite aware, that the Province has one-third share on the board, so it's the three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal.

But there's—the board does rely on the management team on the daily operations. Certainly, we understand that COVID had an outsized impact on all small businesses, particularly retail and restaurants and those types.

So The Forks is no exception, but by looks of things now, have improved considerably since the height of COVID, and it looks like things are on the upswing.

But again, you know, the board is—has oversight, but they do rely primarily on the management team at The Forks to work on the daily operations of the facility.

Mr. Gerrard: This is a municipal issue, but it's also a transportation issue and the minister may not have direct responsibility here.

But I think it's important that he is aware of—Provincial Highway 424, which runs from Highway 1 up toward just south of St. Eustache, is currently not considered an RTAC road, but it has major manufacturing facilities along the road—including, as an example, a soybean processing plant, which processes on the order of a million bushels of soybean a year.

And they—there's a real concern that this needs to be updated to an RTAC road in order to address the needs of people along that road, which are—I mean, that's not the only major—there's steel manufacturing and various other manufacturing plants along that road.

Mr. Chairperson: Before I let the ministers answer that question, I would just say to members of the committee that the level of conversation around the table is getting a little bit loud and distracting, and I would hope that members would have a respect for those that are asking questions and answering questions, and that we give them the respect of the floor. So I would now call on the honourable minister.

Mr. Smith: I, with respect to the question of Highway 424, that does fall under MTI, Manitoba Transportation Infrastructure, so I would defer to them on that—whether

or not they are going to RTAC a standard highway or not.

Mr. Gerrard: I wanted just to make the minister aware of the situation and the—one of the concerns, and again, it may only be partly under the minister's purview—is the problem of lead water pipes, and many other jurisdictions are making a major attempt to replace all lead water pipes.

* (16:40)

We have lead water pipes in Winnipeg and in Portage and various other cities in Manitoba. Brandon's an example. And, lead has a major health issue surrounding it, and there was a study in Winnipeg which showed that 20 per cent of those who have lead pipes—water pipes have got high lead levels in their water.

I'm just wondering whether the minister's involved to any extent in this issue, because, clearly, it's a, you know, a simple issue, even if it is, at least in part, health, but it deals with infrastructure and so on.

Mr. Smith: Of course, I appreciate the member bringing this important issue forward. It's—certainly, we know that lead is not—it's less than ideal as a water pipe. I mean, largely, that comes under the Department of Environment and Climate. However, of course, through our department, it is a municipal overlap there.

We can—through the Manitoba Water Services Board, municipalities can request funding to have them replaced. And, of course, there's other mitigating factors that can be done to create more safe conditions for drinking water that our department can provide education on. But largely, the replacement would be done through Manitoba Water Services Board, and, of course, Environment and Climate has a large role in it as well.

Mr. Gerrard: In a similar vein, there's recently been concerns brought forward about asbestos in Winnipeg's water. And my understanding is that there was asbestos in many of the pipes and that when these pipes get older that there may be asbestos getting into the water.

And, again, it is a mix of municipal and health and other issues. But it seems to me that somebody needs to stand up and to tell people in Winnipeg whether this is a significant issue, and if it is, what's going to be done about it. So, over to you.

Mr. Smith: The guidelines set forward are set by the Department of Environment and Climate, with respect to quality drinking water. Again, much like it was with the lead pipe issue.

Of course, municipalities can endeavour to take on the project themselves if they want to, or in the case of changing outlet pipes, they can get the Manitoba Water Services Board to do that.

In terms of flushing pipes, I understand that municipalities can undertake that endeavour themselves. So, of course, the standards are set by the Department of Environment and Climate, and of course, as the Municipal Relations Minister, we take all these issues seriously.

And there's often—as you've well aware, the member opposite has been—served in the federal government and knows that often there's a whole-of-government approach to certain issues, just given the nature of, and sometimes the complexities of it. So, of course, this has overlap in more than one department.

An Honourable Member: Thank you, and I will pass it back to the MLA for Wolseley.

Ms. Naylor: I don't have any further questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no more questions, we will move on to resolutions.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,705,000 for Municipal Relations, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,520,000 for Municipal Relations, Municipal Assessment and Advisory Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$372,501,000 for Municipal Relations, Financial Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,725,000 for Municipal Relations, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

[interjection] Order.

Resolution 13.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$117,354,000—I apologize, I will start this again.

Resolution 13.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$117,364,000 for Municipal Relations, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$90,548,000 for Municipal Relations, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

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

The floor is open for questions. There's no questions.

Seeing no questions, we will move on to the resolution 13.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,782,000 for Municipal Relations, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Municipal Relations.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Agriculture.

The hour being 4:51, what is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

CHAMBER

SPORT, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

* (15:00)

The Acting Chairperson (Shannon Martin): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I do, Mr. Chair—Mr. Speaker? Chair.

Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to be here today and I would like to welcome my colleagues and the members opposite today. It is an honour and a privilege to be the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage and to introduce the 2023-2024 budgetary Estimates for my department.

As everyone's well aware, this is my first time as minister, so the first time here in the Committee of Supply, and I'm very excited to talk about all the great things that our government is doing and going to keep doing.

I'd like to introduce, I guess, the members of my department when they arrive or when they're let in. But in Budget 2022, our government committed to an investment of \$100 million for the arts, culture and sport in community fund, providing enhanced support for capital projects and programming related to the arts, culture and sport initiatives and communities across the entire province.

In Budget 2023, we accelerated our support for the fund, expanding the planned \$34-million investment by \$16 million to \$15 million and investing a further \$50 million in 2023-2024, for a total of \$100 million over two years. These funds will enable the many Manitobans who enjoy and celebrate the province's rich culture to benefit from this support for capital projects and programming related to arts, culture and sport initiatives.

Manitoba's cultural industries continue to be an economic driver for the province, with a total production value for the film, music and publishing industries estimated at over \$250 million for 2022-2023.

Nearly \$3.6 million was provided to Manitoba film and music to ensure ongoing operations and continued growth in the film and music industries. Through international marketing and promotion, administration of the film and video tax credit, grants and other financing programs for Manitoba artists, artisans and production companies, representing more than 2,500 professionals.

The book publishing tax credit, along with other publishing and printing support programs, ensure that Manitoba continues to provide meaningful employment to Manitoba residents engaged in the creative industries.

It has been exciting to see the return of more sport activity as pandemic restrictions have lifted as well.

This past year, young Manitoba athletes were able to participate in both the summer and winter Canada Games.

To acknowledge the significance of sport in our province, we are continuing to invest over \$13 million in sport through our agency, Sport Manitoba. Our government, the Manitoba Combative Sports Commission, Sport Manitoba and the almost 70 Manitoba provincial sport organizations are committed to delivering and welcoming a safe and fun sport experience for Manitoba residents of every age group, gender and skill level.

For these reasons, we continue to advance our two-year annual commitment of \$250,000 towards sport—Manitoba's Safe Sport strategy. This is above and beyond the current funding. Progress was made this past year with new resources and a public awareness campaign about our Safe Sport hotline. In year 2, additional critical resources will be developed and implemented.

Manitoba's public libraries are essential community hubs. Our government is delivering on its commitment to strengthen the Manitoba public library system. In 2021-2022, we provided a \$769,000 increase to the public library sector. And in 2023-2024, we will further enhance support of the public library sector with an additional \$277,000 investment as we continue to develop a more effective and responsible approach to support public library operations along with municipal governments.

Heritage grants, programs and technical support services to community-based museums, organizations and owners of designated properties ensure that the unique people, events and places that are representative of our collective past are remembered and that the irreplaceable resources we have inherited as a legacy continue to be conserved.

Manitoba's heritage community leads important research, provides capacity and workforce development opportunities and creates public programming that all serve to build awareness of how the heritage sector enhances community cultural infrastructure, works towards social cohesion and provides enriching experiences which, in turn, contribute to community well-being and evolving understanding of our society and grow cultural tourism potential.

Close to 300 different heritage programs, initiatives or operations will be supported through the allocation of just under \$2.4 million targeted to the heritage sector. New programs such as the Heritage

Resources Conservation Grant, the Community Museum Project Support and Military Memorial Conservation Grant continue to provide annual funding support as defined within the various trusts and endowments that our government has established.

Additionally, work and collaboration continues with our partners at the Winnipeg Foundation and Endow Manitoba to advance heritage sector sustainability through Manitoba Heritage Trust endowments, signature museum trusts and the \$25-million investment into The Bay Building Fund.

An additional \$243,000 will be invested to support mineral exploration and development work in the province by increasing our archaeological complement by three full-time staff and providing funds required to perform targeted surveying. This will assist companies with their planning efforts to ensure their work is not stopped or delayed by unintended impacts to our province's protected heritage resources.

The Archives of Manitoba continue to work on the Manitoba information record administration—also called MIRA—technology project. MIRA is a government records and information management system that must be modernized in order to support improved processes and the management of digital records. A publicly tendered contract for the replacement of the system was awarded in March 2023, and implementation will begin this fiscal year.

This winter, the Archives of Manitoba co-hosted Indigenous Afternoons in the Archives to support and encourage Indigenous research at the archives. The events featured displays of archival records and offered the opportunity for visitors to connect with archives staff, local academics and other researchers.

The Legislative Library continues to provide professional research and reference services to members, legislative staff, members of the public service and members of the public. In the past year, library staff provided 18,860 books, articles and online resources to their clients. They also acquired almost 9,000 books, periodicals, government publications and newspapers.

* (15:10)

The Province will provide a total of \$13.865 million in provincial funding to Travel Manitoba in 2023-2024. Our government continues to invest in tourism and travel marketing as the tourism industry shifts from a short-term pandemic response to rebuilding for long-term growth.

On May 6th, 2023, Canadians will celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III—sorry, just three days ago—and Her Majesty The Queen Consort. This historic event, the first coronation of Canadian head of state and monarch in seven decades, will allow communities to come together and highlight themes that both King Charles III and Canadians hold dear, including service, the environment and sustainability and our nation's diversity.

Our constitutional monarch and Commonwealth realm—as a constitutional monarch and Commonwealth realm, Canada will be marking this milestone event with a number of national initiatives that celebrate the close ties between His Majesty and Canada, as well as the role the Crown plays in our system of government and our self—and our sense of identity. Provinces and territories, including Manitoba, will join the federal government in marking this occasion.

Lastly—and I know you're all waiting for this—lastly, I would like to—*[interjection]* Hear, hear. I would like to extend my gratitude to the entire staff and Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage for their continual work, effort, passion for this department and province. Their hard work, expertise and dedication has enabled us to move forward towards the sustainable recovery of our arts, sports and culture community at large, and I am honoured to be the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and that concludes my opening remarks.

The Acting Chairperson (Shannon Martin): We thank the minister for those brief comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any comments?

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Welcome to the minister, as well.

I'm eager to ask questions for this year's Estimates for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage. And I'm hoping that the minister will provide informative answers.

Manitoba has a thriving arts and culture sector. Our libraries, museums and other arts organizations, like the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Winnipeg—oh, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, are key institutions of our province and are a part of our lives in many ways. We also enjoy cheering on our many local sports teams.

Many of these services and recreational opportunities rely on government support. And I'll be interested

to hear from the minister about the funding decisions being made this year.

Manitoba arts organizations have been struggling in the wake of COVID-19. Their attendance levels have still not rebounded to what they were there before the pandemic. Many fear that without additional support they will be unable to continue providing the services and entertainment that Manitobans enjoy.

In the past, we have raised issues such as increased protections for youth in sport and increased arts funding, that we are still waiting for this government to act on.

I hope to hear from the minister that his department will be doing everything possible to provide our local arts organizations as well as all organizations that fall under his department.

Ekosi.

The Acting Chairperson (Shannon Martin): We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of the ministerial—minister's salary is the last item considered for a department. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 14.1(a) contained in resolution 14.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and I would like to ask the minister and critic to please introduce their staff in attendance.

The honourable minister to introduce his table staff.

Mr. Khan: I'm honoured and proud to be surrounded by such a great and admirable staff in the few months I've been working here. Absolutely fantastic.

So, to my left is my Deputy Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, Jeff Hnatiuk. I have in—to his left, Veronica Dyck, the assistant deputy minister of sport, culture—culture and sport programs. To her left, I have Mike Sosaiak *[phonetic]*—Sosik *[phonetic]*? Sosiak? Was close, never said your last name—Mike Sosiak, assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer and administration and finance. And to his left, we have Julia Tetrault, director of strategic priorities.

The Acting Chairperson (Shannon Martin): I thank the minister for those introductions.

Will the critic from the official opposition please introduce their staff?

Ms. Lathlin: Before me is Julia Antonyshyn, our caucus assistant, who will be assisting us today.

Thank you.

The Acting Chairperson (Shannon Martin): In accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put on the resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Lathlin: My first question for the minister is, can the minister undertake to give a list of all technical appointments in his department, including names and titles?

Mr. Khan: Thank you for the member opposite for a good opening question to get me warmed up. So thank you for taking it easy on me.

The list of technical appointments and positions. So, minister's staff: Olubumi Aregbesola, outreach co-ordinator. And we have Sukhi Jandu, special assistant; Mercedes Casar, executive assistant; Lieutenant Governor's office—and I apologize if I say the last name incorrectly—Katherine *[phonetic]* Gameiro, and she's the executive director, private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor; Sonia Stubler, support to Lieutenant Governor. And we have military envoy Anna *[phonetic]* Healey, military envoy co-ordinator.

Ms. Lathlin: Can the minister undertake to give an organizational chart that lists all employees and program areas, please?

* (15:20)

Mr. Khan: Sorry, Mr. Chair, a clarifying question: Is the member opposite asking for just the—I understood the organizational chart, but is the member opposite also asking for all of the staff enlisted within the entire department?

Ms. Lathlin: I'll repeat my question: Can the minister undertake to give an organizational chart that lists all employees and program areas?

Mr. Khan: I'm still a little unclear on the question, and I know she repeated it but I'll do my best to answer to my best ability.

So, on page 14 of the Budget 2023, they will see an organizational structure as of April 1st, 2023, that shows the organizational chart of this department.

I believe the member opposite asked for all of the staff in the entire department, and that will be an undertaking of 100-and-plus staff that I'll have to get; I don't have that readily available in one sheet. But if that's what the member's asking, then I can also provide her with every single person that works within the department.

Ms. Lathlin: My next question is: Can the minister give a list of all current vacancies in the department as a number and percentage?

Mr. Khan: Thank you again for that question.

So, vacant positions in this department as of February 28th, 2023—as of February 28th, was 28.4 full-time employees.

Since then, however, 11 have been filled, five are at the stage—interview or job-offer stage and seven are being reviewed for priority needs.

Ms. Lathlin: As a former representative workforce co-ordinator, how many identify as a minority, Indigenous?

Mr. Khan: I thank the member opposite for the question.

As the minister in this department, as an obvious visible minority myself, and speaking to an Indigenous leader on the opposite side, I see the value, and I believe she sees the value in that, as well.

So it's very important to me. I think it's wonderful to have more diversity represented in government and all aspects of life, wherever it may be.

So, I'll again refer the member to Budget 2023, if the member takes a look, in the Supplements to the Estimates of Expenditure is laid out on page 36.

At the very, very top, where Manitobans are—where it states, Manitobans are best served by a public service that is inclusive and representative of the diverse population of Manitoba at all levels of the organization, including senior management.

Employment equity status is self-identified on a voluntary basis when individuals are hired into a position or at any time during their employment with Manitoba's public service.

Employment equity groups include women, Indigenous people, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. This measure will capture diversity in Manitoba's public service and in senior management.

So, if we go ahead a little bit further and we look at that chart. You can see that an equity group, the

women benchmarks are 50 per cent, but as percentage, total employees as of December 31st are at 72 per cent.

Is Indigenous people—self-identified—16 per cent is the benchmark, and they're at 12 per cent. Visible minorities, 13 per cent. And above that, you can see the total employees as of December 31st are at 17 per cent.

Person with disability benchmark's 9 per cent, and as of December 31st, you can see that that's at 5 per cent.

So, it is something that we value in this department, that we track, and that we're proud of the progress we're making here.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for that information.

In regards to—I want to go back to vacancies: 5.4 full-time FTE weren't mentioned. Why is—vacancies weren't mentioned.

Why is the department not planning on filling those vacancies this year? On page 10, it states that the number of employees will not increase at all this year.

Mr. Khan: I will go back and reiterate my comment earlier, maybe there was some confusion over what was stated.

The numbers were stated as of February 28th, 2023, that there was 28.4, so the chart that—the—yes, the numbers that the member opposite's referring to is 136.6. That is the core staffing target of where we are—the department is fully staffed.

Out of that, 28.4 on February 28th were vacant. Out of those, 11 have been filled, five are at the interview or job-offer stage, and seven are being interviewed from priority.

So, although the number has not increased from 2022-2023, we are working to fill those positions within the department, so that, I think, adds some clarity to the question of what the member opposite is asking.

Ms. Lathlin: Arts groups in Manitoba are still struggling with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Their attendance level still hasn't—still haven't rebounded and they're worried that without additional funding, the status of their organizations are at risk.

* (15:30)

Can the minister tell us what actions is he taking to prevent Manitoba's arts groups from going under?

Mr. Khan: I really want to thank the member opposite for bringing this great question forward.

It's been one of the priorities of this government to support art, culture, and sport organizations in this province, and we're well aware that they were hit especially hard during the pandemic. So, I'm going to take this time and really thank everyone in the arts, culture, and sport community for making it through the pandemic, which is one of the hardest times in history to get through.

But we realized as a government they needed a lot of help and a lot of support to get through that, so our government stepped up and made many, many historical announcements and, actually, supports for organizations that had been neglected for decades without funding like this.

Our government is proud that we are investing in our communities, and not only are we helping them thrive—survive, we're helping them thrive. We're taking action, and in a historic move by this government and our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), we created the Arts, Culture, and Sport in Community Fund, a \$100-million investment in exactly what the member opposite's question was relating to: supporting our arts, culture and sport organizations.

On top of that, there were many, many other announcements and programs that were created. The Community Celebrations Program, the ethnocultural program and supporting of the arts, where the member opposite—I think the question was mainly focused on the arts for that one.

And our government is committed to the economic and social well-being of not only Manitoba residents but also Manitoba performing arts organizations. So, this included significant investment and support for this sector.

You know, I'm proud to say that our—on top of the \$100-million ACSC fund that was created, they—we provided an additional \$12.7 million to the Manitoba Arts Council, \$11 million of which was invested in cultural organizations, projects and the creation of grants.

We also invested over half a million dollars annually in the independent music sector through Manitoba Film & Music and provided \$2.5 million annually to the Manitoba centennial concert centre, a critical piece of performing art infrastructure in Manitoba.

And all of these were—Mr. Chair, I'll reiterate—were historic investments that had never been done before by any government. So, coming out of the pandemic, these were astronomical, I would say, from the feedback we've gotten from community and the organizations that benefited from these.

The Manitoba government—I mean, I can go on and on. I know I only have five minutes for this and only two minutes left, but I could talk for the whole two hours on the great work we've done. The Safe at Home program for non-profit organizations provided \$2.7 million to cultural organizations. On top of that—oh, I mentioned the \$12 million for the recovery of the sector.

And, in summary, if I was to list these all off, we could go through the stay grant—stay-at-home grant program, which was \$5.25 million; the centre—CCFM, \$300,000; the Manitoba centennial concert corporation, \$1 million and then an additional \$400,000; Manitoba Film and Sound and the Arts and Culture Sustainability Funds received \$250,000 and an additional \$500,000; the Manitoba Arts Council; Arts and Culture Sustainability Funds, which I mentioned earlier—actually totalled, sorry, \$11.25 million in two intakes.

Folkaroma [*phonetic*]-Folklorama, not Folkaroma [*phonetic*]-Folklorama was provided a one-time additional support to pavilions of \$400,000. Sport Manitoba was provided an additional \$250,000 for their Safe Sport framework. And then, again, the arts, culture and sport community fund, which was \$100 million. And the demand and the response we've had from community was so high; it was originally \$34 million for the first year, 33 and 33, but the demand and the need was so high for these sectors that it was increased to \$50 million because those organizations needed the money now.

So, we're proud that we could flow that through. If I have an additional follow-up question on this—so much good things, good announcements that our government did to talk about how we supported the arts coming out of the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lathlin: Arts groups are saying that the PC government funding is inadequate. Twenty arts organizations in Manitoba, including the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Manitoba Opera and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and more, have said they're at risk of going under without additional funding.

Can the minister explain: Has he spoken to these organizations?

* (15:40)

Mr. Khan: Again, I want to thank the member opposite for that question.

And, been in this department now for, I think, just over two months, and when I came in it was—my top priority was to meet with—you know, almost every stakeholder I believe I've met with within this department, or I've tried to, and I still have meetings going forward.

I take a lot of pride in meeting with people in this department, people that we're involved with, our stakeholders, our OREs, anybody that's involved in any sort of sector within our arts, sport and culture—Sport, Culture and Heritage Department. So, I have met with them.

So, when the member opposite asks if I've met with them, yes, I have. And I've met with some of them numerous times and attended many of their events, gone to the actual facilities themselves and had them into the department.

We had a roundtable discussion, as well, with many of the organizations that the member opposite lists off—so, the Manitoba Arts Council, the Manitoba centennial concert corporation, Manitoba Film & Sound Recording Development, Manitoba Film & Music—referred to as—and the symphony—the, sorry, Winnipeg symphony, the ballet, Manitoba Museum, opera as well.

So, I might be missing one or two in there, but I have taken a lot of pride in meeting with all those organizations. I got to hear what they're saying and what they're feeling.

And, overall, you know, the sentiment is that coming out of the pandemic was very tough. It's been very tough for them. And I won't sit here and deny that it's been tough for them and that the recovery has been taking awhile. It's taken awhile in almost every sector across this world and within this province, as well. And we're here to help support them along that path to recovery.

Some of the things I mentioned last time—and I think the member opposite's well aware of this and the arts organizations echoed this to us—was they were very grateful of the support we've given them thus far. And we will continue the dialogue going forward in how we can continue to support them in that.

But some of the things I'd mentioned earlier was the \$12.7 million to the Manitoba Arts Council, which \$11 million of that was invested to these organizations. Over a half a million dollars to the Manitoba Film & Music. During the pandemic, \$2.5 million of annual support to the Manitoba centennial concert corporation. These were just some of the investments that our government was working with these art sectors coming out of the pandemic.

The creation of the historic, never done before in the history of this province—never been done before under any government—was the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund. So, as the member opposite says, you know, what additional funding and support we did, well, let's take a look at that.

Manitoba centennial concert corporation for an auditorium renewal for \$249,908. And this is on top of the already—funding that they had received, on top of the historic 12.6 art—\$12-million Arts and Culture Sustainability Funds program. So, on top of that one that was created for this—during this government's time, during the pandemic. This is additional funding.

The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre was to—production equipment upgrade was \$297,250. The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Inc. was \$300,000 on top of funding, again. The Manitoba Museum: \$138,688.82 for the innovation and modernization capital investment. An additional Manitoba Museum for innovation modernization priority was \$83,355.

The Manitoba Opera Association—this is a great one and I'm really proud of this one. I know within our department and our staff really love this program. The opera will present the first Indigenous-led opera on a Canadian stage. It will feature singing in several Indigenous languages and English and French. The project will include panel discussions, lectures and class on Métis and Indigenous culture: \$300,000.

A total of \$1.369 million on top of all the other funding we have done.

There is more dialogue to happen. All of these stakeholders and all of these sectors know that I am a minister who loves to meet with them and talk with them, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue going forward, working with them to make sure that we have a healthy and fruitful recovery coming out of this last couple years.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lathlin: How much funding is set aside for libraries this year and how much was set aside over the past five years?

* (15:50)

Mr. Khan: Again, I want to thank the member opposite for, you know, allowing me the opportunity to some of the—highlight some of the great things our government is doing. And one of them is the funding for public libraries.

So I believe the member—and I might be mistaken—maybe they can come back after I'm done my answer here—but I believe the member asked for the funding over the last five years previous to this year, so they wanted this year's, and then they want the previous five years going back. The member opposite's nodding, so I assume that's yes.

So, we can take that under advisement and bring that back. We don't have a table right now showing the previous five years, but I can comment on, like, last year and this year and what we are doing to support. So, we will go back and get that over the last five years.

In 2022 and 2023, the rural public libraries received funding of \$4,894,200, and the Winnipeg public libraries received \$2,010,100. So that is reflected—so, total of over \$6.8 million in 2022-2023.

I'll also comment that there was a review process done and being done, and there was a \$769,000 increase for public sector. This is going back to 2021-22. So there was a \$769,000 increase. Of that, \$600,000 was distributed annually to rural public libraries and \$169,000 of that was allocated to build sector capacity and improve services to Manitobans with print disability.

Along with that, I—you know, I'm proud to say that there was an additional increase of \$277,000 in provincial funding to rural public libraries. Again, this is above the six—769 I've already mentioned. So, \$277,000 in provincial grant funding for rural public libraries in 2022-2023—sorry, '23-24, stabilization funding for libraries that would have otherwise seen a decrease in provincial funding due to the impact of the 2021 census data. So, government realizing that there would have been an increase based on previous funding models, proud to say that our department realized that, stepped up and increased the funding for that as well.

Our government is very proud of the work we're doing. And, again, another sector we realize more

funding and more support is always needed. And I don't think you'd get an argument from anyone and anywhere that you can add more funding to support all—everywhere, let alone the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage. I think you could say that everyone is needed for funding.

So above and beyond that—again, government realizing that these sectors were hit really hard during the pandemic. So, the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund: \$100 million—historic investment in these sectors.

And I'm going to go on and list—I have a minute forty-five, and, again, I need more time to talk about all the great things our government is doing and this department is doing. I could not be more proud of the work we're doing.

The Flin Flon library board, critical renovations for safety and accessibility, \$213,000; Comité culturel de Somerset, Somerset library bibliothèque renovations, \$24,234; Victoria Municipal Library, technology and storage upgrades, \$25,000; Lac du Bonnet Regional Library, library renovations, \$25,000; South Central Regional Library, circulation desk replacement, \$25,000. I apologize—I'm going to get this next one wrong—Braidavik Nyja Island Historical Library & Resource Centre, \$25,000; Sigloons [*phonetic*] district library—

An Honourable Member: Siglunes.

Mr. Khan: Siglunes, Siglunes, Sigloons [*phonetic*]. Sigloons [*phonetic*]. Siglunes. I apologize to the lovely folks of Siglunes—district library, \$3,112.

I can go on and on. I'm not going to have time. I only have 38 seconds. I've got two pages listed here.

Thompson Public Library, library special initiative project, \$35,000; bibliothèque régionale Joles [*phonetic*] regional library, \$25,000; Prairie Crocus Regional Library, \$19,765; Library Allard's youth area modernization project, \$24,500; Western Manitoba Regional Library, Shoppers facility enhancement project, \$16,348.

And I'm not going to have time, I only got 10 seconds left. We are making significant investments in our library public funding and we are proud and will continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lathlin: In regards to his—the minister's answer in regards to library funding, can the minister break out funding by library system as to which received an

increase of funding this year? Which libraries received an increase—of libraries this year?

Mr. Khan: Again, I'm going to go back to the previous one and, just to clarify, so, we do want the five-year funding, right, for the previous five years? That was asked, right? So, I just want to make sure because we were having some discussion, so we'll get that—we'll take that under advisement.

As well as your specific question to this one, I—from what I understand, you're asking for the funding per library. So, we don't have that right now but we can take that under advisement. We'd be more than happy to provide the funding.

But what I can say is that no one was decreased funding. So, proud to again say—and I 'reiterated' this in last point, that no one was decreased funding. Our government increased funding in a reactive manner, understanding that if we had stayed with the previous funding model due to the 2021 census data, library funding could have been decreased for some of these libraries.

* (16:00)

So, in 2021-22 it was an increase of \$769,000; \$600,000 of that was distributed annually to rural public libraries and 169 was allocated to build central capacity. And, on top of that, there was an increase of up to \$277,000 in provincial funding for rural public libraries for the '23-24 Estimates.

So, the member opposite can see that there was no decrease in funding. It is an increase in funding to stabilization for library systems, which would have 'otherwise' seen a decrease in provincial funding supports.

So, it's important to note that, again, we will take it under advisement; we will get the funding per library for you, but that our government has increased funding.

And also, you know, when we do some math and we add that up—because I think that's important to do math and realize, because we're throwing around a lot of numbers and everything's kind of like, oh, millions and thousands and who's getting what—since 2021–2020-21, the library sector has seen an increase of \$932,000 of additional funding.

That's important to know that our government realizes the importance and understands that libraries are essential community hubs, constantly evolving, connecting communities and forming—bringing people together, having a safe space for people to come.

So, again, proud of the work our government is doing to building stronger communities, continuing to enhance library services for all Manitobans, which is critical. With the diverse growing population we have now a lot of people are going to libraries for resources and it's great that they have these safe spaces.

That's an increase in funding, and again, more funding can be done. I'm not saying that this is the say-all, be-all. But the reality is, is there was a significant increase coming out of the pandemic as well.

I don't want to go back to the list. I think there's probably another 20 I could lead-list off, but I don't think the member opposite really wants me here to list them all off, or anyone here or—I don't know—*[interjection]*—you want to, really? Seriously?

Okay. Well, no; I'm not going to do that. But I am going to talk about that our government has strengthened communities through increased support, and it's evident of the numbers that I'm presenting today and what we have done.

I also want to emphasize that consultation is ongoing. It's not we're sitting here saying that it is—we have all the answers and this is what it is. I'm proud to say that my colleague, the MLA from Brandon East—and I think this is really important to note—that we have done survey focus groups with rural and northern libraries and they were just completed as of April 17th, 2023.

So, we are having ongoing consultation dialogue with libraries and this is important to know that this was rural and northern libraries, that the MLA from Brandon East led these consultations to hear what rural and northern libraries are saying so we can put together a plan moving forward on how we can support these key sectors.

I also want to point out that there was another meeting—were completed on May 5th, and those meetings included meetings with the Manitoba Library Association, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities and the Public Library Advisory Board.

Consultation with stakeholders is important. Listening to people is important. As government we have to do that. As a minister my door is always open, welcoming for anyone to come in and talk to me about how we can help them and support them, and I'm proud of the steps that our government is making in supporting libraries across this province.

Mr. Josh Guenter, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lathlin: On page 19 of the Estimates book it states that the department is considering, quote, 'modernization' of the public library funding and policy structure. End quote.

Can the minister explain what exactly this means?

Mr. Khan: I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

And, again, I touched on this in the last minute and a half of my last question, so I'll just go back to what I had reiterated in the last question, and I'll add some more information and clarity just to further emphasize how—the work our government is doing.

So, the—I believe the question was in related to public library modernization and what we're doing. So, again, as I had stated, we are consulting with library communities to better understand their needs and consider how we might be more responsive to them.

I had mentioned that the member from Brandon East had led these conversations, and I'm so proud of the great work he has done with them, selflessly serving, you know.

In late evenings, meeting with these focus groups, early mornings with them, to really understand them and focus surveys with them—the rural and northern libraries, as well. So, those were completed on April 17th, 2023.

So, we are meeting with these organizations and libraries to understand what is needed to help them as we modernize for the future.

Whenever—so, further to that, understanding that there are financial pressures on libraries. And according to the previous funding support, as a result of the 2021 census data, there would have been a potential decrease in funding to some libraries, and we don't want to see that happen.

So, as a government, we don't want to see that happen. This—it's been tough coming out of the pandemic. So, there was an additional up to \$277,000 in provincial grant funding for supports.

This is what we're hearing from them: these libraries need support, they need financial supports to help them modernize, and that's what we're doing. We're listening to them.

We have met with stakeholders—again, I mentioned in the last question, Manitoba Library Association, Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, Public Library Advisory Board.

Along with dialogue with the City of Winnipeg with MR through the municipal funding fiscal transparency and accountability subcommittee table. Currently organizing meetings with Winnipeg's Community Services Department and Winnipeg Public Library management.

*(16:10)

So, we are taking the steps to understand the needs and pressures and strains put on libraries and their funding.

Responses to the public library sector and key sector stakeholders on the new funding model have been overwhelmingly positive. Participants recognize the issues with the existing regulations and have appreciated the opportunity to provide input for policy consideration. They have expressed their joy and support in the increase in funding when there could have been a decrease due to the funding models set up on the census, with the decrease in population from 2021.

So, these are all things we're hearing from sectors and how we're helping them modernize.

If the member, you know, goes on to read, on page 19, it clearly lays out some of the steps done through how the modernization will be done, through collecting public and sector consultation, 'jurisdictional'—jurisdictional scans, other research and analysis to consider modernization of public library funding and policy.

I mean, I don't need to read the whole paragraph there, but the member can see it. Those are some of the steps we are taking to work with libraries on modernizing them and supporting them as we come, you know, a year now, or—pandemic, I think, was just officially declared over this week or last week.

So, these are some of the steps we are doing as a government to support them. Many, many more funding here on these tables I could list off, but I think we get the idea of where our government is at when it comes to funding and supporting libraries.

Thank you very much for the question.

Ms. Lathlin: The department has set a goal of doubling the number of Indigenous owned and operated businesses within the tourism sector this year.

How is the department planning on doing this? Is there funding set aside to help Indigenous businesses, and how much?

Mr. Khan: Again, I want to thank the member opposite for just another fantastic question to just highlight some of the work we're doing in this department.

So, the question was in regards to Indigenous tourism, and how we are supporting Indigenous tourism and the growth within the Indigenous tourism in this province. So, a little history to back up and I'll kind of bring home the point of where we're going and our support, and our—again, another historic investment by our government.

So, in 2017 Travel Manitoba and ITAC, that is the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, established a three-year MOU to foster growth of the Indigenous tourism sector in the province. That was in 2017.

In April of 2021, the MOU was renewed and will be in effect for three more years, ending on March 31st, 2024. The renewed MOU also includes the newly formed Indigenous Tourism Manitoba, ITM, as a strategic partner and signatory.

An updated strategy was launched in 2021 which reflects the significant progress made since the 2019 strategy. So, we can see that there's been ongoing work being done with ITAC, being done with ITM, with Travel Manitoba, and our government has been proud to walk alongside with them as this strategy has evolved.

The industry need for COVID recovery in further alignment with updated Manitoba Tourism Strategy. So, the updated strategy was developed in partnership, again, with ITAC, and ITM and Travel Manitoba, where there was a commitment of \$500,000 in funding in support of that strategy over a three-year period.

But wait, it gets better, Mr. Chair. The target of the updated strategies—it goes through the targets of stabilizing recovery of Indigenous tourism businesses in Manitoba, to return to 2019 employment and GDP levels by 2025—and I believe they are ahead of schedule when it comes to 2025—and align tourism training programs to meet the specific needs of Indigenous businesses on an annual basis.

So, it's important to highlight that these programs, and this investment of \$500,000, is specifically targeted to the Indigenous tourism sector. Since that

strategy launched, Travel Manitoba has provided \$300,000 of the \$500,000 in committed funding; in addition, in the 2021, '22-23 fiscal year, and then—sorry, this one here.

And we fast-forward to now this year of '23. As the Minister, I was honoured. One of my first events was to attend the International Indigenous Tourism Conference here—held right here in Manitoba, where there was over 1,000 delegates; 1,000 delegates came from across Canada, and I believe I met some people from the states as well that were up here, Mr. Chair, to better understand, get involved, find out how they can support and grow the Indigenous tourism strategy and component of tourism, highlighting that.

And I was proud at that conference our government was—announced an additional \$451,000 over two years to the—Indigenous Tourism Manitoba, to increase Indigenous tourism, products and experiences—market and promote tourism businesses and foster increased collaboration and leadership specific to the Indigenous tourism sector.

It was great. As one of my, you know, earlier events, and a big announcement as a minister, and the overwhelming joy we—I saw on people's faces when they heard that and they saw that our government is proud to support this vibrant, growing sector of our province.

Not only for economics, but also from an education and understanding and, you know, a truth and reconciliation component of that. So, it was really wonderful to be a part of that announcement.

* (16:20)

Travel Manitoba is also actively supporting the growth of Indigenous tourism through their Indigenous Tourism Strategy, which I highlighted in the opening. So, the full circle of where it's come from, in 2017, through the pandemic, through the growth, through the additional investments and support by our government to support Indigenous tourism.

So, with all of these investments, we do believe that this will significantly increase the Indigenous tourism sector, thus increasing jobs, training, awareness and all the other great things that come along with that.

Due to the time, I will have to stop talking.

Ms. Lathlin: How is this government looking at increasing tourism in northern Manitoba, such as—we had a Look North office at Otineka Mall on OCN. Every time I passed by there, the doors were shut and

locked. Didn't see any employees in there, so I always figured it was just window dressing, and now it's no longer there.

So, what happened to that strategy to increase tourism in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Khan: So, I missed the name of the place, sorry—maybe afterwards if you can write it down on a sticky note or something and give it to me, I'd love to look into that and see what's going on there. I didn't even hear the town or the city you mentioned, so if I'll get that info from you, it'd be great.

You know, to highlight the tourism strategy, the northern tourism strategy, so, Travel Manitoba, within their tourism strategy to promote northern lights as a third season for travel to Churchill.

And I have had, as the minister, significant dialogue in meetings with people and businesses in Churchill and how we can help them promote their northern lights as a third season for travel to Churchill.

There is a—develop a municipal advocacy toolkit to assist communities in building a case for greater investment in local tourism in the North; develop an inventory of tourism products and assess export readiness in key opportunity areas such as Indigenous, francophone, water-based experiences, attractions; and winter—develop winter tourism.

I think it's vital that we realize as a province, we're not Mexico, we're not Florida. We are Winnipeg, we are friendly Manitoba and we are proud of that.

I spoke at the international Winter Cities Conference in Winnipeg that was hosted in February 2023. Again, just a great honour to speak at these events, and people from all over Canada and in the States came here. And the theme was that we are proud of our winter. We are proud of our winter excursions and what the North has to offer here.

So now, it's about developing those winter tourism plans for key opportunities for people to go to the North and visit these areas. Key opportunity areas including ice fishing, snowmobiling; again, we mention the northern lights, polar bears and whatnot. Partner with Indigenous Tourism Manitoba and Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada to increase the number of Indigenous markets and export-ready businesses in the North.

Now, this is all a strategy. Strategies don't happen overnight. We just—as much as we would love to think that, hey, let's get this done and let's get going and let's

get people, you know, here, and let's support this sector, they take time to develop their strategies.

And that's why this has been strategies for years in the works and then the COVID happened. And then now we're coming out of COVID and our government realized that another investment was needed, and we proudly we did that with a \$440,000 investment in that sector.

So, these are strategies. This is what's highlighted in the strategy, and to the member's—opposite—question of what are we doing? Well, this is exactly what we're doing.

We are promoting the North. We are creating Indigenous tourism and Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada to Indigenous markets, to export-ready businesses in the North, to develop a plan for key opportunities in the North.

When we look at advancing winter tourism, that's what it is. We're Winnipeg. We love the snow. If you don't love the snow, Winnipeg's not for you. And mosquitoes, although mosquitoes have been good the last couple years.

In 2022, more great information coming out. Travel Manitoba supported 26 winter experiences, including skate trail development, rental cabin winterization, overnight fishing experiences, ice bike rentals, winter light events, snow recreation activities and more.

These are all initiatives, packages that are going to highlight the great work that Travel Manitoba is doing to highlight our northern strategy for tourism.

When we look at the trappers'—Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival, a grant that was from this department—and I know it's come up here numerous times in the House. There were some questions or, I believe, statements on the Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival—\$25,000.

Funding assures that Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival continues as a major tourism event in Manitoba. I'm sure there are others in the hundreds of applications that came through the department. Or approvals that came through the department for the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund; that's just another example where organizations can apply for funding, and our government would support those if they went through the requirements and went through the vetting and whatnot.

We did see that program was oversubscribed because there was such a demand for it; something

that had never been done before in this province. I look forward, as we review the second intake now, to see more northern experiences come through, and support that growing, vibrant sector and communities of the North here in Manitoba.

Ms. Lathlin: What happened to that Look North strategy office that used to be in the mall at OCN? Are there any offices in the North pertaining to the Look North strategy anymore?

* (16:30)

Mr. Khan: Appreciate that acknowledgment.

The looking north strategy—so that—from what I understand, that was not developed within this department. That was another department that had that strategy, so I can't comment on what that was or what the results are on that and where that went.

So, we're not aware of that within here. I—as the new minister, sorry, I'm not aware of that here. *[interjection]* Yes, I mean, we can—I will take it under advisement to see where that strategy is, and we can get back to you on where that is and what department that sits in. It may have been EDIT or another department, but it wasn't sports, culture, heritage.

Ms. Lathlin: It does pertain to tourism, so, yes, I would like to have that answer—I remember it was under economy, yes. So, I would like that answer because, you know, it just doesn't make any sense why that office was removed, like it was ever useful, you know.

But, anyway, my next subject is, is the department looking at drafting a framework to protect youth in sport from potential abuse?

Mr. Khan: Again, I want to thank the member opposite for bringing up a very, very important area within this department, and that's safe sports, the safety of kids.

So, you know, I want to thank—start off by thanking all the coaches, all the volunteers, all the parents who have put so much time and effort in providing a safe space for kids to play in, to grow, to nurture their not only athletic ability but also just their spirit, their leadership, their communication, their teamwork.

Sports—and it's no secret to anyone in here, I absolutely love sports. I love the arts. I won't get into my art story, that's for another day. As my deputy minister knows, I love sharing that story.

But I think they have such an important place to play. And I want to thank the coaches and the parents and the volunteers.

And I also want to thank the survivors that have come forward to highlight—or, to sadly highlight incidences of maltreatment in sports and how we need to do better as a society. We need to protect these kids, and I'm proud of the work that our government is doing to highlight that. Our government understands that having a safe sport environment is key to a positive and rewarding sporting experience.

Whether it be as a volunteer, an athlete, a coach, official, a spectator or athlete, sport contributes to the well-being of our communities; there's no argument there. And a lot of these kids and athletes go on to be future leaders in our communities in whatever sector they are.

In May of 2022, our government announced an additional investment of \$250,000 towards Sport Manitoba Safe Sport strategy. And this is, again, another historic investment. And I think I've used that word more than anything else today is historic, because that is what our government has done.

Whether it comes to library funding, whether it comes to the ACSC funding, whether it comes to the arts sector grant funding and now with maltreatment of athletes in sports.

So, \$250,000—never been done before in this province, to invest to support the Safe Sport hotline and other sport mechanisms, training and resources to facilitate better policies and understand how to prevent and address maltreatment, including public awareness campaign.

And I can't wait to share some of the data with you. Again, I wish I had ten minutes to stalk, instead of just five, about all the great things we are doing to address the maltreatment in sports.

So, when you look at that—the \$250,000 contribution, it's—break it down here a little bit. So, the Safe Sport media campaign was \$100,000. The REES-Football Manitoba pilot project, which was the respect, education, empowering survivors; it was an online platform used to report incidences of maltreatment to the northern Indigenous community projects for \$40,000.

Rural community survey—you got to get information; you have to have—get data. Safe Sport championship—Champions was \$40,000. Sport Culture Index—\$7,500 was the—athletes and coaches Sport Culture

Index was \$2,500. Training and resources—\$26,500. All for \$250,000 investment to help protect our kids, our future leaders and, you know, athletes, when it comes to athletics.

And I highlight this \$250,000 announcement because I had the pleasure of attending an FPT—my first FPT a couple weeks of being—as a minister in PEI. And we had our discussions, and maltreatment of athletes in sports was a big conversation.

And when Manitoba had the opportunity—when I had the opportunity to get up and stand and talk about the work we are doing, other ministers were blown away by the third-party mechanism that we're already developing. And that is a three-pronged approach, which plays in with this investment by our government, but it has a Safe Sport hotline, it has a Safe Sport law resource for them, counselling.

So, we are developing a third-party mechanism. And we had committed—at that FPT, every province had committed to having a third-party mechanism by the end of this year.

And it's great that, since then, I've had ongoing dialogue with ministers across Canada discussing the third-party mechanism, sharing how they're doing it, how we're doing it. And Manitoba is well ahead of the curve when it comes to developing that.

I will also would, in 14 seconds, say that I've had numerous conversations with them—federal minister on this as well, and Minister St-Onge is very impressed and happy with the progress we are making. And we will continue to work towards that third-party mechanism by December of this year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lathlin: We know that the Archives of Manitoba building is pretty old. I spent significant time in that building when I worked for Indian and northern affairs Canada on a major billion-dollar land claim. Beautiful space to be.

And so, my question is: Why was funding for the Archives of Manitoba cut by \$37,000 this year?

* (16:40)

Mr. Khan: I apologize for a little bit more delay on that. The question with the archive was literally dug deep into the archive of all these books and papers I have spread out, so it took me a while to dig it out.

Great question by the member opposite. So, MIRA—I'd mentioned that in my opening remarks, and I'll talk a little bit about that. So, MIRA is the record

modernization of our archives. It's something that is much needed in this province and hasn't been done, but as we start to go to more of a digital world and future, the integrity of these records is deteriorating, so there is a 'digititaze'—'digidi'—you know what I mean—digitization. I got it. So, continues to work with Manitoba information and records technology project.

So, what does that all say? It's modernization of records.

So, to the member's question, in 2022 and '23, there was \$153,000 that was budgeted, but it was a non-reoccurring expense for the MIRA project. So, that was a one-time, approximately \$153,000 budgeted for a non-recurring scope for the MIRA project.

So, once that scope was set in the scoping phase for the MIRA project, that funding was no longer needed because it was a non-recurring expense, scoping was done. MIRA project has now been commenced. So, that is why there shows a slight decrease within that non-recurring expense. Happens all the time on financial statements as you review them. And once the scoping was done, that is now over.

So, the project has now moved into the implementation phase of MIRA, so it's exciting to say that in March of 2023, that the contract was tendered for replacement of the system, and it was awarded to OpenText Corporation in March, and happy to report that that implementation will begin within this fiscal year.

So, it's exciting to see that we are finally heading to the modern age of 'digiti'—you know what I mean—of our records. Another thing to point out for financial purposes is that implementation will be capitalized. So it's important to note that that expense will be capitalized for the MIRA project.

I could go on and on about what the MIRA project is, how it's going to be implemented—but I think we understand where the financial—why there was a slight decrease in there for a non-reoccurring expense.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for your answer there, Minister.

Now I have a very important motion to bring forward. *[interjection]* No.

* (16:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): The honourable critic.

Ms. Lathlin: I'm done with my questions, and listening to our minister's five-minute answers.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): Thank you.

So, seeing no further questions, we will now turn to the resolutions, beginning with the second resolution as we have deferred consideration of the first resolution containing the minister's salary.

For the information of the committee, there are no monies allocated for the resolution 14.4 this year, so there doesn't need to be a vote; the information was included in the books to reflect change from last year.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$56,496,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Culture and Sport Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,811,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 14.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 14.1. At this point, we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions. *[interjection]* The floor is open for questions.

Ms. Lathlin: Okay.

I move that line item 14.1(a) be amended so that the minister of port—sport, culture and 'heriches' 'salay' be—salary be reduced to \$21,000.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): It has been moved by the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak that line item 14.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage salary be reduced to \$21,000.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Seeing none, the question before the committee is the motion moved. All those in favour of the motion, please say yea—*[interjection]*

Shall the—is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): The last resolution for—before us is:

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,234,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2024.

Resolution agreed to.

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

What is the will of this committee?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Committee rise. *[interjection]* Recess.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): All right. *[interjection]*

Mr. Johnson: Committee recess.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): Is there a will for the committee to take a brief recess? *[Agreed]*

All right. The committee is in recess.

The committee recessed at 4:55 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5 p.m.

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

The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Acting Speaker (Josh Guenter): The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 11:30 p.m. tomorrow—1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Oral Questions	
Introduction of Bills		Management of Health-Care System	
		Kinew	2127
		Stefanson	2127
Bill 241—The Mandatory Training for Provincial Employees (Systemic Racism and Human Rights) Act		Education Property Tax Credit	
		Kinew	2128
Moses	2119	Stefanson	2128
Committee Reports		Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program	
		Asagwara	2129
		Squires	2129
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development		Project Nova Budget	
Fourth Report		Wiebe	2130
Helwer	2119	Goertzen	2131
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		Political Ad Campaign Funding	
Fifth Report		Sala	2131
Isleifson	2120	Cullen	2132
Tabling of Reports		Drug Overdose Death Reporting	
		B. Smith	2132
Goertzen	2121	Morley-Lecomte	2132
Ministerial Statements		Safe Consumption Site	
		B. Smith	2133
		Morley-Lecomte	2133
Community Foundation Day		The Link Youth and Family Supports Centre	
A. Smith	2121	Lamont	2133
Naylor	2122	Squires	2133
Lamoureux	2122	Funding Support for Hearing Aids	
Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month		Gerrard	2134
Gordon	2123	Johnston	2134
Asagwara	2123	Public Safety Initiatives	
Gerrard	2124	Isleifson	2134
		Goertzen	2135
Members' Statements		Thompson Aquatic Centre	
Phil, Marilyn, Jack and Julia Snarr		Redhead	2135
Reyes	2124	Cullen	2135
Strathcona School		Petitions	
B. Smith	2125	Health-Care Coverage	
Builders' Liens Amendment Act		Altomare	2135
Helwer	2125	Diagnostic Testing Accessibility	
Team Clam		Maloway	2136
Brar	2126	Foot-Care Services	
Non-Disclosure Agreements		Redhead	2136
Lamont	2126	Drug Overdose Reporting	
		B. Smith	2137

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Room 254

Mental Health and Community Wellness

B. Smith	2138
Morley-Lecomte	2138
Asagwara	2139

Room 255

Municipal Relations

Naylor	2148
A. Smith	2148
Gerrard	2157

Chamber

Sport, Culture and Heritage

Khan	2159
Lathlin	2161

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>