

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

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

**Vol. LXXI No. 29 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 9, 2018**

ISSN 0542-5492

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 9, 2018

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

**Madam Speaker:** O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable First Minister please proceed with his statement.

### Humboldt Broncos Condolences

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I join Canadians from coast to coast in remembering the victims of this weekend's devastating collision in Saskatchewan. Our hearts break for the 15 families who lost their loved ones; the 14 families whose loved ones were injured, many critically; players; coaches; the bus driver; the media staff; players who hail from Saskatchewan, from Alberta, from BC, one from Winnipeg, who miraculously survived, Matthieu Gomerccic.

This is every parent's worst nightmare, but in the midst of this devastation and loss, we see emerge the true character of the Canadian people. We witness generosity and love, true compassion and real assistance to the families of those who perished and to those who were injured as well.

We say thank you to the first responders who demonstrated professionalism and courage in the most trying of circumstances. Thank you to the local community centres, the churches of Humboldt and

Nipawin, who immediately responded, leapt into action and provided a place to gather and support to the families who were waiting desperately for news of their loved ones.

Thank you to the medical staff in the hospitals who did everything they could do. Thank you to the crisis workers who continue to provide much-needed support to the families and the communities of those so affected by this horrible tragedy.

Thank you also to the 70,000-plus donors from Canada and from around the world, who have donated more than \$5 million to the team's GoFundMe page. That number will grow, and it stands as a testament to a country and a globe where we are united in our grief and we are also determined to help.

I am reminded of the Prayer of St. Francis: O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek / to be consoled as to console, / to be understood as to understand, / to be loved as to love.

The resolve shown by the people of Saskatchewan during this tragedy serves to renew our faith and is a testament to their resilience. The way that communities have come together is awesome in its inspiration.

Madam Speaker, I ask for a moment of silence, following the comments of my colleagues who wish to speak to this issue, in order that we might appropriately honour the memories of those who have passed. May God bless them all.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I want to send my condolences to the survivors and to the families of those lost in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash over the weekend. Our hearts also go out to Matthieu Gomerccic, Manitoba player who has survived this tragedy.

Our nation and the Prairies are in mourning. For many of us, hockey is life. And this past weekend, my first thoughts in reaction to this tragedy were as a parent. I thought about the many parents and all the time that they spent with their kids. I thought about the joys that they would have felt watching them score their first goal, win their first game, lift their first cup at the end of a tournament. I also thought about the more challenging moments those parents

would have spent when the games didn't go their kids' way and they had to help them learn how to lose; thought about all the time that they would have spent coaching Timbits, flooding backyard rinks and waking up early on Saturday mornings to drive their kids to those freezing barns in the countryside where many of us learned how to skate and shoot, and all those memories and all of that time invested in these young people.

That came to a sudden halt this weekend. It's a tragedy.

Madam Speaker, many of our faith traditions, from the Book of Job to the Anishinabe legend of Kiiwishkwebishki, have sought to answer the sort of questions that we're left with at times like this. Why do bad things happen to good people? How is it that a loving God or a Creator can see fit for something like this to happen on our earth?

And the answer that generations of wise people have come up with to date is, we don't know. We weren't there when the Creator made this world, and we won't be here when it ends. But what we do know is that we have to be there with those who suffer in times like this. And that's why so many people went to the vigil. That's why so many people have expressed their sympathies. And that's why so many people donated to the GoFundMe page.

You know, hockey is our national pastime, and every single kid who picks up a mini stick is part of that tradition. Maybe that's why this loss cuts so deep, because we all feel as though we lost someone that we're connected to this past weekend.

But in a very real way, it's the parents, the relatives and the friends of those departed who have lost something much greater. To them, we say we are sorry beyond sorry. We are with you beyond words. May you take this time with your grief, but then remember these Humboldt Broncos with pride so that they may live beyond life.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave for the member to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

\* (13:40)

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, Canada is grieving. This past Friday, 15 lives were taken from us and so many more were changed forever following the tragedy on a stretch of highway in Saskatchewan.

It's heartbreaking and difficult to speak to a tragedy like this. As a Canadian and a Manitoban, each of us knows a bus full of hockey players. These could have been our boys or our girls, which is why this loss hits so hard.

Naomi and I are parents of a son and a daughter-in-law who were involved in a tragic bus accident in which eight people died. Bus accidents are not only an issue here in Canada, but globally. My son Tom and his wife Nadine were in Cambodia, on their honeymoon, when the tragedy occurred.

They survived, but like Matthieu Gomercic, a former Manitoba Junior Hockey League player with the Steinbach Pistons and the Winnipeg Warriors, along with the other passengers present on both buses who survived, the legacy of memories lives on to be shared and endured.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus we offer our condolences to the family, to friends, to teammates, and to the community of Humboldt. We pray for healing and comfort in this time of their tremendous loss.

I hope and I ask the Premier, in light of this tragic event, that the province will consider entering into discussions with New Flyer and the Winnipeg Jets and others to fund an initiative to improve the safety design for all buses.

Leave a hockey stick out tonight for the boys and the girls who play hockey, and please add to the donations still being accepted on Sylvie Kellington's GoFundMe site for the families of the Humboldt Broncos.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, this—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Is the member asking for leave?

**Mr. Fletcher:** I am asking for leave to respond.

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

**Mr. Fletcher:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The events in Humboldt force us to ask difficult questions. As the Leader of the Opposition said, why do bad things happen to good people?

The faces could have easily been our own, that we've seen on the news, our constituents, our family, ourselves. At a young age, through no fault of my own, I found myself a quadriplegic—an act of God.

What kind of God allows these types of events to happen? Sixteen souls—15 souls are gone, many more injured, perhaps permanently, perhaps with a spinal cord injury—another quadriplegic.

Those of us of faith ask these questions. There have been many words spoken, but none of us have the vocabulary. We can empathize, but we'll never understand fully why. Why? Why? Why me? Why us? Why them? Why is life so unfair and brutal to so many?

What I have found is that, somehow, humanity finds hope, and in Canada we live in a country where we help each other through these times where there are many questions and no answers, but we just have to move on.

Like all of us, it's not a—just feel so profoundly sad at the lost potential, the lives that—and things that won't happen, kids that won't be, events and the what-ifs that will never be answered. Life is unfair.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Please rise.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Members' statements—the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Kinew:** I would ask for leave to table an updated list of the names of the victims of the bus crash to be included in the Hansard.

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

*Humboldt Broncos victims: Logan Boulet, 21; Adam Herold, 16; Logan Hunter, 18; Jaxon Joseph, 20; Jacob Leicht, 19; Conner Lukan, 21; Logan Schatz, 20; Evan Thomas, 18; Parker Tobin, 18; Stephen Wack, 21; Darcy Haugan, head coach; Mark Cross, assistant coach; Tyler Bieber, play-by-play radio broadcaster; Glen Doerksen, bus driver; Brody Hinz, team statistician*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Theresa Pryztupa

**Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River):** I rise today to honour an outstanding individual: Ms. Theresa Pryztupa. Madam Speaker, it is hard to describe someone like Theresa, given all her dedication, passion and true drive towards

community service over the past 40 years, but I will certainly try.

Theresa has been a teacher for over 25 years, and in those years she has helped many individuals with her strong, quiet approach. Theresa believes in helping others in any way she can. Whether it be helping the neighbour, being available to take people to their medical appointments or to assist with general day-to-day activities, Theresa has offered her time.

And being retired has not slowed her down. She has become an active member of her church, St. Timothy's parish. Practising faith-based volunteering, Theresa does anything from bringing residents at Misericordia Place to and from the chapel, to preparing funeral lunches.

Over the last two years, Theresa has also been assisting newcomer families from Syria. Theresa started teaching families English in her home on a one-to-one basis, and as the word spread, Theresa found herself assisting a number of newcomer families to help them feel more comfortable in Canada. This includes teaching families how to take the bus, how to pay bills and leases, and how parking works in the city, among many other things. Theresa's days now start at 8 a.m. and go until 3:30 p.m. as she visits the many people she now calls family.

Theresa is a shining example of the generosity and compassion of Manitobans. She reminds us that we can all make a difference in the lives of others.

Thank you.

### Concordia Hospital

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank the people of northeast Winnipeg who are making their voices heard loud and clear on the future of health care in their community and who are standing united in opposition to the closure of the Concordia Hospital emergency room.

I recently joined over 150 concerned residents at a town hall where folks expressed their concerns and frustrations with this government's unwillingness to listen to them. My federal counterpart, the MP for Elmwood-Transcona, and I heard first-hand from Concordia nurses and other front-line workers who talked about the confusion they are experiencing on the ground.

\* (13:50)

Residents asked questions about where patients should go for different types of emergencies, how paramedics will handle the increased transportation needs and how overworked nurses are coping with changes. But more than anything, residents expressed worry that the hospital that has been there for their own family's medical emergencies in the past won't be there to save lives in the future.

I was reminded of this reality myself just a couple of weeks ago when my family had a serious medical emergency at home. First responders were on the scene immediately, giving us their best advice, but even they didn't know exactly which hospital we would be going to.

The staff at Concordia emergency room were endlessly supportive, as well as the staff the next day at the St. Boniface Hospital as they tried to work the new—through the newly complex system.

I want to thank all those front-line workers from the bottom of my heart who provided excellent care in spite of a challenging work environment.

It is from that place of deep appreciation for our front-line health-care system, and the amazing workers who provide it, that citizens in northeast Winnipeg will continue to fight. Residents have organized letter-writing and lawn-sign campaigns, petitions and social media, all with the intention of making this government listen, and if not the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or the Minister of Health, then, at the very least, the members for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), for River East (Mrs. Cox), for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), whose constituents are begging them to stand up and to fight with them. I know I will, and I will be with them every step of the way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Mays Al Ismaeil**

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** No one ever asks to experience tragedy. As parents, we try to shield our children from hardships. As teachers and coaches we sometimes fear our kids aren't fully prepared for adversity. But despite our best efforts, as we all know, the harsh realities of life sometimes come crashing in and there's nothing we can do about it.

That's what the students and staff at Bernie Wolfe Community School, in my constituency, recently experienced.

This past January, one of their classmates, 12-year-old Mays Al Ismaeil, died suddenly and

unexpectedly of complications from a medical condition she had.

Mays came to Winnipeg with her father, Ghadir, and mother, Aya, from Syria just two years ago, and the family's here with us today. By all accounts, she was a brave, kind, caring and an amazing person, but now she is gone.

Sadly, the tragedy of Mays's passing could not be avoided. Her classmates, her teachers, educational assistants, her younger brother Mohammed, who also attends Bernie Wolfe, did not have a choice about that, but what they could choose was how to respond to this tragedy, and they chose well.

Since her passing, her teacher, Mrs. Meghan McOmer, educational assistant, Robyn Meilleur, and all of the grade 6-7 class of which she was a member—and they're all with us today in the gallery—they've chosen to honour Mays' faith, to honour her beliefs by spreading kindness and by giving to charity in her name. By having a bake sale and making a special lunch for staff, they've so far raised over \$1,350 for the Children's Hospital and for Islamic Relief Canada.

They chose not to cover up their pain but instead to honour Mays's faith and spread kindness. They chose not to forget her death but instead to pledge to remember and celebrate Mays's life. They chose to turn something tragic into something inspirational. They chose to take action and show leadership and make a difference.

And to her family, I remind them that those who loved her before love her still, and that her spirit of kindness lives on in the students that you have here with us today, and for all of that I choose to say thank you to them and I invite all the MLAs here to do the same with me.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Radisson.

**Mr. Teitsma:** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the names of all those students in Mays's class, many of whom are here today, to be added to the Hansard.

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

*Classmates of Mays Al Ismaeil: Lara Alcantara, Jyson Aniel, Landon Disbrowe, Trinity Disbrowe, Angelina Dram, Rahat Haque, Caitlyn Horbaty, Matthew Kozub, Phoenix Long, Aiden Manicone, Noemi Miller, Nola Peach, Danil Poddubnyy,*

*Aidan Salon, Josiah Severight, Shalamar Sliworsky, Ethan Solis, Aiyana Villamar, Owen Warren, Isaiah White, Arieana Williams.*

### Northern Health Care

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** As front-line health services shrink, the people of communities in my area are coming together at a public meeting on April 13th at the Flin Flon Community Hall in conjunction with Saskatchewan's Cumberland MLA to discuss health-care issues in our area.

With this government merely looking north as health-care shortages continue to worsen, the people of the North are feeling ignored and abandoned. We need this government to start listening, working collaboratively with and providing solutions.

Currently, our communities are lacking sufficient level of health care. Flin Flon is down to just two doctors. Snow Lake soon will have none. This is not sufficient medical staff for a population of this area, many of whom are seniors.

In hope of resolving these issues, we ask the minister if he will restore funding to the NHRA so that it can attract doctors, nurses, health-care professionals to our communities. We are worried, however, that the Minister of Health is deaf to our calls for help.

I would again like to invite the minister to show our community that he will listen to them and provide solutions. Will the Minister of Health come to Flin Flon on April 13th to meet and hear from people of the area? Will he listen to their concerns and ideas so that he can better understand the effects his cuts are having on our communities? Will he visit us to understand in full detail the pain and difficulty his cuts have on ordinary people and families and seniors?

Once again, I ask the minister to come to Flin Flon on April 13th. Will he show some courage and leadership and look the people his cuts have made suffer in the eye and listen to them? Will he put a face to the cuts he has implemented against the people of my community? Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) direct his minister to come to Flin Flon on April 13th?

Once again, it's time this government to stop just looking north and start taking action.

### West St. Paul Lions Club

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and thank the 16 members of the Lions Club of West St. Paul, Manitoba.

This Lions Club was chartered and became part of Lions Clubs International on September 9th, 2010. Last year they joined in celebrating 100 years of volunteerism and global community service by the Lions Clubs International that was founded in 1917 and which has become a global leader in 'humitarian' service. When disaster hits a country or community, Lions Clubs International is one of the first organizations to arrive.

Our own West St. Paul Lions Club has a shorter but very dynamic history. These volunteers have hosted many fundraising events that bring friends and families together to celebrate our community. We all look forward to their events such as fall suppers, Family Fun Day, trade and craft shows and many other events.

But the mission of the Lions Club's volunteers goes beyond serving their community by bringing people together and building community spirit. Since inception, they have given back to our community and donated much needed funds to our local West St. Paul School, scholarships for West St. Paul high school students and much support for other local individuals and organizations in need. However, their donations are not only dollars but also their very precious volunteer time to support local, provincial and national initiatives, some that we would all recognize, like the pediatric cancer care, Diabetes Canada risk assessment and the annual Walk for Dog Guides.

But perhaps their Project Pride initiative is the best example that expresses the Lions' own pride in their community and in Canada. These Lions volunteers spend time with West St. Paul grade 1 students, teaching the history of our Canadian flag. Each student is presented with their own Canadian flag and a certificate that describes the diversity of our country and the pride we have in being Canadian.

Along with their international projects to meet 'humanitarian' needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding, these tireless volunteers are currently trying to raise funds to purchase an 11-passenger van to serve the seniors in

West St. Paul and surrounding areas for transport to medical appointments and shopping.

Madam Speaker, I would ask members if they would please join me in recognizing the members of the West St. Paul Lions Club who are in the gallery here today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member—or the honourable Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Schuler:** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to table also with the statement a list of the Lions in attendance today in the gallery.

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

*West St. Paul Lions Club: Patricia Wright, president; Julia Doe, treasurer; Stephen Logan, first vice-president; Pamela Buote; Terra Doe; Rhonda Jones; Evelyn Myskiw; Nadine Neufeld. Winnipeg West Lions Club: Bill Myskiw, district governor elect. Lac du Bonnet Lions Club: Daryl Popowich. Ste. Anne Lions Club: Chris Barnard, Pat Barnard. RM of West St. Paul: Councillor Cheryl Christian.*

#### Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery, from Springs Christian Academy, 50 grade 9, 10 and 11 students under the direction of Brad Dowler, and this school is located in the constituency of St. Boniface.

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

\* (14:00)

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Stop ER Closures

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** For over a year now, a lot of Manitobans have been talking to me with great concern about the Premier's cuts to the health-care system. Again, none of them seem to understand how the time that they spend in the emergency room is going to decrease with fewer emergency rooms. None of them seem to understand how they're going to be seen quicker if they have to drive further.

And most of them are puzzled as to why this plan is being implemented, because none of them remember voting to close three emergency rooms in the last provincial election.

Now, the government announced that—had previously announced that the Seven Oaks and Concordia ERs were supposed to be closed by April 1st. Now, April 1st has come and gone. I'm glad that they're still open, but the residents of these communities are still left with a lot of uncertainty.

Now, the Premier should change course: Will the Premier stop his plan to close Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, it seems, Madam Speaker, that the member rises in this place to defend a system that was clearly broken. We had the longest waits in emergency rooms in this province of any province. In fact, four of the longest waited facilities were in the city of Winnipeg. So what the member is doing is rising in his place and defending something that is not defensible. Other jurisdictions have acted some years ago to concentrate their resources at fewer points of access so that people could get the care, the diagnosis they needed, without being moved, again and again, from one facility to another.

And, Madam Speaker, if you follow the member's logic, it would seem to be that he wants us to defend a system that clearly was broken under the NDP. We won't do that. We're working diligently to fix the system that they broke.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, the upheaval and the confusion that are being caused by the Premier's cuts are causing a lot of concern for a lot of families in our province. Many people report that when they go to the St. Boniface emergency room now, that they're being treated in the hallway. Others, at both St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre, tell us that rooms are now off limits, less people—less space to treat people because the staff are no longer there to be able to keep all the rooms in the hospital open.

This is the impact of the cuts to the health-care system. It is the return of hallway medicine under the Pallister government here in Manitoba.

Now, again, the Premier has decided that hospitals should close, not because of looking out for



the best interests of the care of families in our province, but merely because high-priced consultants told him that he could save some money if he did so. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Now, again, this is not a Premier who listens to the people of Manitoba, because they are telling him to back off the plans to close Concordia and Seven Oaks.

Will the Premier listen to those voices and instead cancel his plans to close the emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks?

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, the member rises in his place and speaks out of fear. He speaks out of fear and he asks others to be afraid along with him. But Nelson Mandela, a respected citizen of our world, once said that courage is not the absence of fear, it is a willingness to act in the face of fear.

This government recognizes that change is difficult, and change is a challenging thing to undertake. But taking the advice that the previous government was given from experts they hired and commissioned to help them to make these changes, the difference between us could never be more evident, Madam Speaker. We have the courage to face the necessities of making the system better, and the member opposite clearly does not.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, sometimes, Madam Speaker, having courage means having the strength to admit when you're wrong.

In this instance, the Premier is clearly wrong. People across Winnipeg and even in outlying communities in the Interlake and just north of Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —are very upset about the plans to close Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency rooms, but people in St. Boniface are concerned as well, and why wouldn't they be? In the Premier's—in his very own wait times report, it said that if Concordia closes, and I'm quoting here, St. Boniface Hospital will not have either the capacity to accommodate these patients either until a new and larger emergency department is built. And I end the quote there.

We know that what they're planning for St. Boniface Hospital is not enough to accommodate the surge of patients that will be heading that way and St. Boniface Hospital is already being overrun.

Will the Premier cancel his plans to close the emergency departments at Seven Oaks and Concordia?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member references having the courage to admit when one is wrong, Madam Speaker. What would be wrong would be to stand back and let a system that's broken continue to plague the people of Manitoba. That would be wrong.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans, in the last year of the NDP government, spent a cumulative over 600,000 hours in emergency rooms waiting for care, and many of them—record numbers, as you know—gave up and left before they got the care that they wanted. Now, that is something that was wrong, and the member should admit that and he should admit the failures of the previous administration to face the challenges of making it better. But he has not; he chooses to point fingers instead.

He also speaks about cuts, and that is a myth, Madam Speaker. We are investing over \$600 million more this year in health care, but it's what we hope to get from it that's the key because, as opposed to the broken system the NDP left the people of Manitoba with, we're focused on fixing that system and making it work better for all Manitobans.

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

### **Carbon Pricing Plan Green Programs Needed**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** We know that the Pallister government's carbon tax plan is going to cost the average family in this province—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —hundreds of dollars more per year. And what new programs will be available to the average family to help them make a green transition to a system to help our environment? None. There will be no programs that the average family in this province can access in order to make a green transition.

Now, instead, the Premier has decided to take more money off of the kitchen tables of families in

this province. At the same time, transit is becoming more expensive in the city of Winnipeg, and hydro bills are going up at a nearly unprecedented rate. Plus, it will cost more to fill up your tank. Now, the Premier is trying to distract from all this—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —with threats against Ottawa.

When will the Premier stop with all the drama, withdraw the current bill and come back with a real plan that will also help families to help the environment?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the member finally coming clean late last week on his plan—his party's plan for the future of our province's environment by saying he has no trouble whatsoever with double. No trouble with a tax that would be double what we're proposing. Not only that, but went further to say he has no trouble with not refunding a dollar of it to the kitchen tables of Manitobans, either. He wants to spend it all.

So, Madam Speaker, he has no trouble with double, but that's double trouble for the people of Manitoba, because what that means is, as opposed to our plan where the levy that's generated is given back—plus—to the people of Manitoba, he proposes to give nothing back. We will give everything back, plus. And the NDP will give nothing back.

Madam Speaker, that could be devastating for many families in this province. And if the member opposite is a man who does genuinely care about the people of Manitoba, he'll pull back on the back-of-a-napkin plan he proposed last week and come up with something different.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, Madam Speaker, I'm also fine with a \$10 price on carbon, so perhaps the Premier could explain why he wants to pay—why he wants Manitoba families to pay 250 per cent more than the price was actually supposed to be this year.

Now, on top of that, point to the program that the average family in this province will be able to access to help them reduce their carbon footprint. Point to the program that Manitobans will be able to access to make a green choice, whether it's transit, commuting or home heating. There are no forms of assistance being offered by this government. In fact, the transition to a greener lifestyle will become

more difficult under this Premier because the average family will have \$300 less per year.

\* (14:10)

Will the Premier withdraw this plan that he's announced several times without any details to help the average family and instead bring back a real plan that will help families in our province and help the environment?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I appreciate it every time the member rises and puts his next plan on the table. He's now okay with \$50, and he's okay with \$10; he's just not okay with \$25. He said last Thursday he's fine with \$50, and that's double trouble for the people of Manitoba. What that means is \$2 billion of levy out of the—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —pockets of the people—working people of Manitoba over the next four years if the NDP had their way. Madam Speaker, \$2 billion less means about \$3,000 per taxpayer—\$3,000 per taxpayer over four years. That's not small amount in the face of NDP higher hydro rates. It's not a small amount in the face of higher interest rates on loans. It's not a small amount in a province where over half our households are struggling with less than \$200 of disposable income to make ends meet.

Madam Speaker, our plan puts the money back on the kitchen table. Their plan just puts it on the Cabinet table; it's nothing but a tax grab.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, the point of a price on carbon is supposed to be to generate a revenue stream that can be used to help the environment.

However, there are no new programs that are being announced by this government that will give the average family a chance to reduce their carbon footprint. Instead, they're just being asked to pay hundreds of millions of dollars more in taxes each year. That's less money for them to be able to live their lives but also less money for them to use towards a green transition.

At the same time, not only are there no programs there to help them, but hydro, the cleanest form of energy, is becoming more expensive, and transit, one of the best ways to be able to reduce your environmental footprint—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —is getting more expensive in the city of Winnipeg.

So the situation that this Premier is creating is that green and cleaner forms of living life in Manitoba are further and further out of reach while the average family is getting left behind.

Will he withdraw his failed carbon tax bill and bring forward a new plan that actually helps the average family in our province make a green transition?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I appreciate the preamble referring to less money in the hands of Manitobans; it's something the NDP has expertise in doing, Madam Speaker. Making sure there's less money in the hands of Manitobans is what the NDP's always been all about, and I appreciate the member making it clear that he's about exactly the same thing that his predecessor was about, which is taking money away from Manitobans with higher taxes, higher deficits, higher expenses, higher hydro bills and putting it on the Cabinet table so he can get credit for spending it.

He says he's okay with \$10, \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50. He doesn't know, Madam Speaker, because he doesn't have a plan. His previous government didn't have a plan—the Auditor General of this province said so—and now he doesn't have a plan either. All he knows for sure is that he wants credit for spending other people's money.

#### **Changes to Health Care Nurses Working Overtime**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Last month, nurses at St. Boniface Hospital spoke out at being forced to work mandatory overtime.

Rather than getting better, it seems to be getting worse. As of March 26th, nurses at St. Boniface alone have reported 383 incidences of mandatory overtime, more in three months than in all of 2017.

Repeated use of mandatory overtime, sometimes forcing nurses to work a 16-hour shift, is bad for patients; it's bad for nurses and their families. Mandatory overtime is also bad for the government's bottom line.

Will the minister apologize for the chaos his health-care cuts are causing and announce a plan to stop forcing nurses to work overtime?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** While we will not apologize for trying to fix a broken health-care

system, one that only got worse under 17 years of the NDP government, Madam Speaker, we certainly do appreciate the work that all those who are working in health care do on the front lines. We know that they are there to respond, each and every day, to those things that are routine and those things that are not routine, and we appreciate the work that they do.

While I have the floor, I would also extend my thoughts to those who were working in health care on the weekend in Saskatchewan. I had some contact with Saskatchewan health officials; I know they did a tremendous job under difficult circumstances, and that is a testament to all those who are working in the health-care field, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Last month the minister tried to explain this problem away on the flu, but the record numbers of mandatory overtime is being enforced in wards like maternity and surgery, which had nothing to do with the flu, and now flu season is over, but mandatory overtime is continuing.

Nurses, patients and now more and more Manitobans every day know the real reason that nurses are being forced to work shifts as long as 16 hours: this government's botched plan for health care. The government's attack on health care is causing chaos in our hospitals and causing great difficulties and exhausting our health-care workers.

Will he stop shifting the blame and apologize to Manitoba's nurses?

**Mr. Goertzen:** In fact, it was only, I understand from officials, about two weeks ago that we got over the peak of the flu, as members will know if they look across North America and really around the world. In this particular flu season, it was particularly difficult in all parts of the world when it came to the flu.

Now that we are over of—the worst of it, we certainly do expect to see more normalized work in the hospitals. We intend to see improvements, as have continued to happen, when it comes to wait times.

But I do want to thank those who are working in the health-care system over the last number of months, as we've had a very difficult, a very deep and a very long flu season. And certainly we know that many of the changes that have already happened

in the health-care system helped us get through that difficult flu season.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, Madam Speaker, neither I nor the minister are doctors, but if the minister can put on the record how the flu would cause women to go into labour, I would love to hear that explanation.

He must know that forcing a nurse to work 16-hour shifts makes it difficult for nurses and their patients, and he must agree that mandatory overtime should be a last resort. But even if he doesn't speak that language, surely he must know that every nurse working mandatory overtime is paid double time. In just three months in one hospital, Manitoba taxpayers paid double time for at least 383 shifts. It's not good for anyone, including Manitoba taxpayers.

Will the minister stop the cuts and allow the health-care authorities to hire the nurses they need to take care of Manitobans?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, it's been 11 years since my son was born, and that's the last time I spoke with any expertise on the issue of labour, but what I will say is that when those who are working in the health-care system deal with a difficult situation as this flu season has been—as it's been difficult across Canada, it's been difficult across North America, as it's been difficult across the world—certainly our government is quick to stand up and thank them for the work that they've done.

It has been a difficult flu season. I understand, from health officials in a briefing just last week, that we believe that we are now over the peak of that season and operations within the hospitals are starting to normalize. And I want to thank all of those who worked through a very difficult flu season, Madam Speaker.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** We have another guest in the gallery, and I would like to introduce her to you. Avery Kisil is a student from Windsor Park Collegiate, and she is a guest here as the—for the member of Radisson. And I would like to point out that she happens to be the niece of the former Speaker, George Hickes.

On behalf of everybody here, we welcome you here to the Manitoba Legislature.

#### Small Class Size Initiative Early Years Enhancement Grant

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, without any evidence or any consultation, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) decided to end the small class size initiative. This kept class sizes small for kids in kindergarten to grade 3, and it meant more one-on-one time with teachers, and it meant kids could get the attention that they needed and the specialized help—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —that they required.

Why does this Premier think that our kids should have less one-on-one time with their teachers?

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

\* (14:20)

He should remember that what has been done with the small class size initiative is leave the choice with the school divisions as to what their plan might be, how best to use and how best to implement the needs for class size or individual help in the classroom, and, in fact, they are doing so, generally with the advice of the local teacher, the teacher involved, who is probably the person in the absolute best position to make these decisions.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, the Premier announced the smallest grant for our schools in a generation in February. This is a de facto cut that will increase class sizes for students and result in less one-on-one time with teachers. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** This minister talks about choice, but the minister's refused to tell school divisions how he will allocate the Early Years Enhancement Grant and will that money be used to keep class sizes small.

Will the minister commit here that every dollar from that grant will be used to help keep class sizes small?

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

We continue to work constructively with the school divisions across the province to meet their needs so that front-line needs can actually be handled, and we certainly follow the advice of not

only the school divisions, but the teachers involved with that. In the meantime, we built seven schools.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, Madam Speaker, the Early Years Enhancement Grant is worth over \$16 million. It should be used to make sure that every student gets the time and attention that they need from their teacher. Freedom of information requests, which I'll table today, show that the minister was, in fact, cautioned about this grant. He refused to say, though, whether school divisions would—how they would be able to use that money and how it'd be allocated.

So I'm asking the minister, here in this House, to put on the record: Will he commit that every dollar from that grant will be used to keep class sizes small?

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

This year, our government is spending almost \$50 million more than the previous government ever did on K-to-12 education. In the meantime, we are building—currently building—two more schools, and we have announced plans for five more to begin immediately.

More schools mean more classes and smaller class sizes.

#### **Manitoba Child Benefit Changes to Program**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** According to the minister's budget books, there's been a \$1.7-million cut to the Manitoba Child Benefit.

Madam Speaker, under this budget, very-low-income mothers and families who are eligible for up to \$420 tax free per child will no longer receive this. Many recipients of this benefit are single mothers who work part time or earn very little.

Manitoba wages rely—or Manitoba families rely on this budget. Any changes to the program must be communicated clearly to the families so they don't lose out on a key part of their income.

Will the minister promise that every Manitoba family who needs this benefit will receive it?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Acting Minister of Families):** Well, I'd like to thank the member for the question, but I would like to remind the member that after

17 years they've been sitting on their hands and I haven't seen the National Child Benefit being provided to those children. So we are going to continue those discussions, Madam Speaker.

But I would like to, right now, just thank Pat Wege—I understand that she is retiring after 21 years as the executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association—and wish her well as she moves forward in her retirement. She's been a passionate advocate of quality and accessible child care, and I'd like to thank her for that.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** As my colleague reminded me, the former government cut it, and it was actually our government that brought it back, so.

This is a serious issue that could affect thousands of children. A \$1.7-million cut to the program will hit 40,000 children that actually need this money.

Our most vulnerable mothers, our most vulnerable families need the support of this government, but yet, you know, they fall on deaf ears. Children need clothing for school, they're often going to school hungry and this government is turning a blind eye.

Will the minister be clear and explain how the cut to families who need it the most is going to affect them?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks again to the member opposite.

Investing in our children's future is something that this government is very proud of and we will continue to stand up for Manitoba children and their families, and that's why I would like to tell the entire Chamber about the 780 new licensed early-learning-and-child-care spaces that we recently announced on Friday, supported by \$22.8 million through a Canada-Manitoba early-learning child-care agreement.

We are very proud of supporting child care here in the province of Manitoba and ensuring that Manitobans have the opportunity to get out to work and know that their children are in a safe and affordable child-care centre.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** We're talking about children here, children who need access to this money that this government is cutting. This means families who are already living with less are going to have to live even with lesser. Like—and this minister talks about daycare—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —something that they've sat on their hands for the last two years that they've been in government.

Will this minister tell the House: Why was he cutting this budget for the Manitoba Child Benefit?

**Mrs. Cox:** That's exactly why we are investing in child care, because we do care about children and ensuring that they have a safe and affordable place to go to be able to be cared for while their parents are out working. As a government, this is a priority for us.

We will continue to ensure that we advocate for affordable child care for all Manitobans all throughout Manitoba.

#### **Northern Health Care Telehealth Program**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, in The Pas, February 26th, I was told of a resident who was sent to Winnipeg for an appointment to see a specialist, only to arrive in Winnipeg to find the doctor was on vacation. She wasted 18 hours traveling; \$3,000 in transportation costs spent by government were also wasted. The problem could have been easily handled over Telehealth. Northern residents told us the same story again and again.

Why is this government using northern patients' time—wasting their time and public health-care dollars on transportation when Telehealth means northern patients can access specialists without leaving their hometown?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, as we discussed with the member on this particular case on Estimates on Thursday, there are 164 different sites when it comes to Telehealth in the province that can access 60 different specialities and over 200 different 'specialists,' so we do have a robust system.

In particular, with this particular case, I'm happy to look into the specifics, as I mentioned to the member last week.

If we didn't have a shortfall of \$2.2 billion from the federal government over the next 10 years from expected health-care transfers, we could even do more than the 164 sites and 200 specialists, but we certainly have a robust system, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, in Flin Flon, February 27th, we heard that people there have to drive 16 hours to see a specialist in Winnipeg and have to book a hotel and stay overnight.

\* (14:30)

Manitobans in rural and northern areas have the same right to quality health care as people in Winnipeg and Brandon. We have a system that allows northern residents to see specialists over Telehealth without leaving their community. The system is there, the specialists are there, the patients are waiting.

What is this government's plan to bring them all together so we are spending money on community care instead of on wasted trips?

**Mr. Goertzen:** As I indicated in the last question there are 164 sites and access to 60 different specialties and over 200 'specialists'. There are about 25,000 or so different eHealth appointments that are held each and every year. The member talks about things being there, so our system is there. It's working for many people.

The—one of the things we don't have there is the federal government in terms of a actual partner with the health-care system. This is one of the issues that I've raised with the federal government in terms of technology. They weren't persuaded; they still decided to reduce the health-care transfer escalator by half, Madam Speaker. But, perhaps the member opposite, with his passionate plea, could speak to his federal colleagues as well.

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, the system is not using Telehealth nearly as much as it should be. We heard from northern residents that they feel abandoned, that they feel unsafe, that they don't understand why they are paying taxes for health care when the government keeps taking away their services. Most of all, they want to be able to get the care they need in their own community. They have the same right to health care as we all do.

Why is this government cutting services that work well, like the Misericordia urgent-care and the Corydon primary-care centres, when making sure more specialists use Telehealth could improve health care in the North while saving millions and millions of dollars on transportation?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, the member for River Heights says that the federal government has abandoned people in the North. That's strong language. It might not be the language that I would choose, but that's his language.

But I don't think he's entirely incorrect. By reducing the health escalator by half, Madam Speaker, the federal government has sent a signal, not just to members—or, people in the north of Manitoba, or any Manitoban, but really to Canadians generally, that they don't want to be a real partner when it comes to health care.

So I appreciate the member opposite raising the issue of the federal government abandoning Canadians. He's on track with that, Madam Speaker.

#### **Ubisoft Investment Manitoba Announcement**

**Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan):** You know, members opposite may not know much about Rainbow Six—or, far more familiar with the rebel five. Last time members opposite played Assassin's Creed was within their own party, but it went down to a splinter cell of what they once were.

Thankfully, since our PC government became the watch dogs of the Manitoba economy, private investment has returned to a major way, which is a far cry from the dark days of the NDP government.

Can the minister update the Assembly on the exciting news regarding Ubisoft bringing their innovative work to Winnipeg?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I want to thank the great member from Kildonan for that great question.

We were pleased to welcome Ubisoft to Manitoba and look forward to working with them to grow our tech talent pool. It's just another great example of how team Manitoba works together. This is \$35 million of private investment from the company, 100 jobs—high-tech jobs—coming to Winnipeg.

Yet again, Madam Speaker, it's just another example of Manitoba being open for business.

#### **Treasury Board Appointment Conflict of Interest Concern**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I have a question to the Premier.

On March 23rd, 2016, at an election campaign rally outside Tergesen & Sons General Store in Gimli, the Premier stated that the current member for the Interlake was his wife Esther's uncle. Seventeen months later, on August 17th, 2017, the Premier quietly appointed the member for the Interlake—his wife's uncle—to the plum job as a member of the Treasury Board, the most powerful committee of Cabinet.

Within four months, Madam Speaker, within four months, the Treasury Board issued—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

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

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, I suggest the member check with the owner of the black helicopter and maybe review the tape of the conversation.

I think maybe a second question will be more fulsome than the first, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Maloway:** Let me continue.

Within four months, the Treasury Board issued an untendered contract, No. 6857, for a total of \$7.65 million to Sigfusson Northern, which employed the daughter of the MLA, the Premier's wife's cousin, all of which certainly is a violation of the spirit of our conflict of interest rules.

Will the Premier admit—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maloway:** —the member for Interlake (Mr. Johnson) should've recused himself from discussions at Treasury Board and will the Premier now remove the MLA for Interlake from the Treasury Board?

**Mr. Pallister:** I—again, Madam Speaker, I would implore the member for Louise Bridge to do greater research in his questions.

**Madam Speaker:** Just a reminder to all members that when referring to other members in the House,

we are to refer to them by their constituency names or by their title related to a ministerial position.

**Mr. Pallister:** I would encourage the member to do his research properly and to ask his questions based on proper research.

As far as the Tergesen press conference is concerned, Madam Speaker, when he reviews the tapes what he will hear is my paying tribute to my wife's uncle, Kjartan Johnson, who passed away two weeks prior, former owner of the Johnson's store in Gimli. If he reviews his records properly, that's what he will hear me say.

Madam Speaker, we all treasure Kjartan's memory, but Kjartan has never received, to my knowledge, in his entire 92 years of life, a government contract from a PC government under my leadership.

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

**Mr. Maloway:** This untendered contract shows that the Premier's approach to government appears to be no family member left behind.

Can he tell us if the Premier—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maloway:** —has any other relatives, besides the member for the Interlake and his family, involved in or benefitting from any of the decisions of this government?

**Mr. Pallister:** After the publicity generated by the publication of my wife's 911 call, this is the second most bizarre thing I have experienced in the last while, Madam Speaker.

The Johnson family is beyond reproach. Everyone from the Interlake knows that. In fact, if they were offered by the previous NDP government a contract of some kind—any kind, Madam Speaker—they wouldn't take it.

The fact of the matter is these are people of integrity. They deserve to be treated with respect. The member disrespects them with his preamble. He should rise in his place, he should apologize for the insinuations of his comments. He should be ashamed of himself.

### Northern Health Care Meeting in Flin Flon

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Life is getting harder in the North, and this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts are making things worse.

There are now just two health-care professionals in my community of Flin Flon and soon to be none in Snow Lake. This level is unacceptable and would be unacceptable in any other constituency.

This loss of health-care professionals—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lindsey:** —has reached a critical level and my constituents have had enough.

\* (14:40)

We'll now be holding a public health-care meeting to hear how the minister's cuts are affecting patient care. I've asked the minister to attend several times; he's failed to answer directly.

So instead I'll ask the Premier to direct him to come to Flin Flon on April 13th and listen to the people of Flin Flon.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** You know, Madam Speaker, it was not even a week ago where that same member stood in the House and criticized members of this government from travelling to the North. He criticized members of the government for going to different communities. In fact, he said, when members of this government went to communities in the North, his communities, he classified them as junkets. Now the member stands in his place and demands that I take a government junket to Flin Flon.

He doesn't have to be consistent, he doesn't have to be right but he should at least review his own Hansard from week to week so he's not completely contradictory, Madam Speaker.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The time for oral questions has expired.



## PETITIONS

### Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba justice inquiry, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly—Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** The member has not read the petition as printed, and I would ask, is there leave to accept the petition as printed? [Agreed]

### TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

*These are the reasons for this petition.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:*

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

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

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

This is the reason for this petition:

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

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

(3) Tina was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her and—as they intervened in her life. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Travis Bighetty *[phonetic]*, Simryn Singh, Rachelle Carlisle and many other Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** The petition was not read as printed, and I would ask, is there leave to accept the petition as printed? *[Agreed]*

*TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:*

*These are the reasons for this petition.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:*

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** And I neglected to indicate after the first petition that in accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

#### **Medical Laboratory Services**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) With the creation of this monopoly, there has been the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

Signed by Sharon Vidal, Neil Thiessen and Cecile Van Wallegghem and many others.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

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

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### GROWTH, ENTERPRISE AND TRADE

\* (15:00)

**Madam Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Let's see. Previously, the minister committed to providing the funding for the 83 agencies his department funds for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, and I'm wondering if he could do this for all three years, the 2016-2017 one as well.

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** We can. There—I'd just caution the member, there is not 83 anymore, but there—for the agency—that were funded for '16-17, we will provide that information for you.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank the minister for that.

So just following up on some of the discussions again that we had the other day, a number of the departments across government have explained their FTE reductions are due to sustainable workforce strategy.

Can the minister explain what this is and how it impacts his department?

**Mr. Pedersen:** A sustainable workforce strategy—so, in the budget process at the beginning—so, if—April 1st, 2018 for the—there was milestones given for each department at Growth, Enterprise and Trade. And so the—so that's where—so we were asked to provide a plan, so we provided a plan back to Finance, budget—Treasury Board on—Treasury Board, actually, on this.

So that was the plan for '18-19—2018-2019. And that was—that's where the net reduction of 40 FTEs that we spoke about last week. That's the result of that work—sustainable workforce strategy.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So the sustainable workforce strategy is just about job cuts?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, as the member should be aware that Manitoba was facing some rather significant budget challenges when we came into government, so part of this was a sustainable workforce strategy, but that was not just entirely FTEs. It was about how to make all of government sustainable as we work towards reducing the annual deficit. And workforce reductions, mainly through vacancies, were just one component of the overall strategy in order to help government become more fiscally responsible than what it'd been.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So if the workforce reductions are just one part of the strategy, what's the rest of the strategy?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Sustainability.

**Mr. Lindsey:** That's a nice word. Would the minister care to elaborate on what exactly he means by that?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Sustainability is something that's gone through—that's been used in all departments, but I'll speak about Growth, Enterprise and Trade. You can look back at all the divisions within GET, which would be—include economic development, our resource department, for instance, that we had to look at all costs and all sources of income from within the department. Sustainability means looking at the debt load that government is carrying as a whole. The billion-dollars interest that government is now paying on our provincial debt, which means less money into every department.

And so I know that this didn't really bother the previous government, but this is not how a family has to balance their books. They have to—a business has to balance their books. And that's

what government needs to do too. We need to find sustainability where we can support those particular social services—health, education, families—while at the same time bringing our annual deficit under control and reducing our annual deficit. So sustainability means a lot of things, and it—just primarily making government more efficient and working better and bringing our finances under control, which has been a major task for us. It's—we were left with quite a mess, and we will continue to clean it up.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So did the sustainable workforce strategy require vacancy management as well or just a reduction in the FTEs across government?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Under workforce strategy, obviously the place to look was vacant positions, and that's where we've concentrated on. And, again, I remind the member not to confuse vacant positions with the—our—vacancy management with—you know, we're trying to hire those positions that we do need, but there was long-term positions that were vacant, and that's what—that's where we found the net reduction.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So last week, the minister said that his department is not employing vacancy management currently. So I'm wondering if vacancy management was in place for '16-17 or '17-18?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Pedersen:** Some of these positions in vacancy—that were vacant—all salaried positions are all vacant. All FTEs, even those that were vacant, have a dollar amount—a salary amount attached to them, and some of these vacancies had been there for a long time. So there was dollars attached to vacant positions that hadn't been filled for years and that were not going to be filled. So that's where, when you talk about sustainable workforce strategy, there's one place you can start with positions that weren't filled for a long time and hadn't been filled and yet they had salary dollars attached to them.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So last week the minister said that after deleting—I believe the number is 58—positions in his department, he still has a 12 per cent vacancy rate. But he was clear that he's actively trying to recruit to fill the dozens of jobs that are currently vacant. He said that, and I quote: We need those positions filled, and we will continue to work on that, and, quote, we are actively trying to hire people in there, end quote. The minister went on to say that, quote: We are not purposely leaving these positions vacant.

So I ask the minister: What steps he's taking to actively recruit to fill those 40-some job positions.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So for the 12 per cent vacancy rate that I said we were—are actively trying to recruit, what I said last week is still true this week; it's the same. For filling vacant positions, this is nothing different than what was under previous government. You—we use the Civil Service Commission. Many of these jobs have to be classified in order to fit into the appropriate pay structure for that classification on the job. There is HR, human resources people that are, you know, through Civil Service Commission—it's an active process and sometimes—when they're filled, it's great, and when they're not filled, it has to go back through the same process again. It's an active process, the same as it has always been.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So the minister said that he's actively trying to fill 40 vacancies, and the department also, then, needs to replace the 8 per cent of its workforce every year due to turnover. So I think that works out, roughly, to about 24 employees a year. So two positions per month need to be posted just to keep up with the turnover.

So I would then expect that the minister would be actively recruiting for some 40 positions, plus an additional two every month that come along due to turnover. Yet it turns out there are only two job postings for the department on the government website, and they expire today, April 9th.

Can the minister explain this?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, for these competitions that the member is referring to, there are times when there are groups of people hired. It wouldn't necessarily be one posting, one person; it could be people hired in groups.

Also, too, there's an eligibility factor in there. If a person applies for a job, doesn't get that, there's another job available that they would be eligible for, it doesn't need to be reposted. The HR people can work with that person, if they are agreeable, to look at another position.

So, you know, the member's looked at one snapshot in time. Other than reassuring him that we are trying to fill these positions, and if he has some magic bullet where people can be pulled out and hired and all positions filled, I think he's missing out on a great occupation, because there's a lot of businesses out there that would love to hire you too, to be able to hire—magically fill their help-wanted section.

This is something that all businesses, including government, face, in terms of not only staff turnover, but just to be able to find the qualified positions for those people—qualified people for those positions.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Okay, so right now there's two job postings for the department. Now the minister's said that, well those two jobs postings we may hire multiple people. So we may hire groups of people for those two positions. So how many groups of people is the minister planning to hire for the two actual job postings that are out there?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Pedersen:** I can just reiterate that we are doing our best to fill these positions that are vacant right now that we want to fill.

There's also—we can do secondments. And I know we have done that. I'm aware of one position that was moved over recently. You can do a term position—that's been done—where you've brought people in for terms. There are career development opportunities that we can do that will train people up for a particular position.

I guess—the member seems to be inferring that we are trying—that we are doing—that we are not serious about filling these. And I can tell him that he's wrong on that. We do need these positions filled in order to make the department work to full opportunity. Realizing, too, that the—because when your vacancy rate is higher, it also creates stress on the other workers that are having to fill up those positions—or, to fill in for those positions that are vacant. So we know that these positions need to be filled, and he can play with numbers all he wants or look at postings all he wants, he just has to believe that we will—we are doing our best to fill these positions and we will continue to work on them.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, I guess I keep asking the minister to expound on what his department has done to try and fill these positions. So there is only two job postings within his department. And, in fact, there's only seven positions posted on the government's website for everywhere.

So how does the minister expect he's going to fill 40 vacancies with two job postings in his department? And, if people are going to be seconded and moved from other departments, then that's going to leave them short. And they're already short, as well, and only seven positions posted there.

So could the minister explain a little better so that I have confidence when he tells me that he's doing everything possible to fill these positions that are empty—how he plans to do that with two job postings?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Once again, I realize that research is hard, but the member said something about seven job postings. There's actually 42 that my staff has found right now—job postings. So—you know, and this is no different than—any business or any other government department or any other government across Canada is facing the same thing with—again, I'll go back to—we have baby boomers retiring and retiring earlier; we have—it's something that industry faces all across the board. No matter which industry you have, it's about how to fill qualified people for these positions.

You know, if the member has a better idea of how to fill positions, we would certainly like to hear it, but—keeping in mind that we want to fill these with qualified people, too.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So, again, you've said that—I'm willing to be corrected if my numbers are incorrect, how many job postings are specific to your department, because the number I've got is two.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Perhaps the member hasn't been involved in hiring staff, but there are various stages from here that the—the posting closes, there are interviews, there are—sometimes people have to give notice before they can move to a job. So we are doing our very best to fill these vacant positions to help our department run even better than it is now.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I get that it's not as simple as snapping your fingers and hiring people to fill these positions, but if you've only got two job postings out there, are 20 positions for one posting? Or are you not as actively pursuing filling these positions as you'd like to have me believe?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, that was a nice admission he made; it's just not as simple as snapping his fingers, and we've realized that a long time ago. I'm glad he's finally realized that now, and we will continue to hire people as we are able to get qualified people for the positions that are vacant.

**Mr. Lindsey:** And, again, can the minister explain to me how he hopes to replace 40 positions—qualified people for those positions—with only two job postings?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The member can ask it however many different ways he wants. We're doing our very best to fill these positions.

**Mr. Lindsey:** And this member will keep asking as many ways as possible 'til I get some kind of answer other than, well, we've got two job postings up and we hope to fill 40 positions. I fail to understand how you can possibly fill 40 positions when there's only two positions posted. It—my member from Fort-Garry Riverview says it's quite a magic trick, and I look forward to pulling back the curtain, if you will, to see the magic that goes into how the minister plans to fill these positions with only two job—two positions posted.

So, if he could explain that, then we can move on.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Pedersen:** I guess we'll be able to move on when the member himself starts to take some responsibility for it, because this didn't happen just in the last two years. This has been an ongoing thing that has happened, and it continues to build, and the member—I can just continue to say that we are going to do our best to fill the positions as we are able to. And it's about hiring qualified people to do the jobs that we need filled.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So my understanding is the job postings closed today. Can the minister give us an idea when he will be announcing who got those jobs and when the positions will be filled? How many of the 40 positions will be filled with these two job postings?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So here's a process of the steps and timelines. Step 1: Vacant or new position identified by department. Timeline determined by department. Step 2: PeopleSoft HCM recruiting. Human resources, I would take that as. Timeline determined by department. Step 3: PeopleSoft HCM approval process. This is approving for the recruitment. Step 4: PeopleSoft HCM approval process. One business day. Step 5: PeopleSoft HCM approval process and posting. One business day. Step 6: Recruitment and resumé screening, weekly. Step 7: Interviewing. Timeline determined by interviewers. In other words, you can't just—you can only interview when they are available, when the prospective employee is available. Step 8: Selection. Timeline determined by department. That's the selection of any prospective candidates. Step 9: Clerical testing. Timeline determined by candidate availability.

In other words, when the candidate is available for clerical testing. Step 10: Background checks. Three to five business days, because we have to do background checks. You can't just hire anybody off the street. You have to do background checks. Step 11: Salary review. One business day. Step 12: A verbal offer goes forward. One business day. Step 13: Written offer. One business day. Step 14: Supervisor notification. One business day. Step 15: Applicant notifications. Three business days. Step 16: Orientation and a start date, realizing the start date has to work in for the candidate in terms of giving notice for their previous employee, if that's the case, which—orientation start date is determined by new hire availability, which I just tried to explain. Step 17: Physicals, health screenings, safety training. One to two business days.

There's just a bit of a flavour of what you go through to hire one employee. And, if you think you're going to do that, just—you're going to post an ad and hire somebody tomorrow, the member is sorely wrong on that, and I've just tried to explain to him what the process is, and this is the same process that was in place before with the previous government. We have not changed anything.

Again, I'll just say it again, because apparently he's not listening. We're doing our best to fill these vacant positions as we are able to.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I've been listening to the minister quite closely and, unfortunately, I think perhaps he's the one that's not listening.

If you've got 40 positions to fill, and you're diligently doing everything you can to fill all 40 of those positions, how do you hope to do that with only two job postings? Irrespective of the timeline, if you're only going to put two postings up, wait to fill them and then start the process again, we'll all be a lot older and a lot greyer by the time the process is done.

So what are you doing to actively fill all 40 of those positions?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So I'll try to explain this to the member. If he says there are two current postings for two positions is what he's telling me. So there could be 38 applicants in line in any one of those 17 steps in there. Could be, don't know, I—we're not—because it's—the department does this and the Civil Service Commission does this, so he is making the assumption that there is no other positions involved in the 17 steps.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So, then, I guess I have to ask the minister if he could please provide us with how many people are in that process and what steps the number of people are at, and do these steps just happen one after the other or can several of the steps happen concurrently?

**Mr. Pedersen:** I would have to—we will check with the Civil Service Commission to see whether that information can actually be released. I have no idea, but we will check the Civil Service Commission as to what we can—because a lot of that is very sensitive information. If a person is applying for a job, they may not want their current employer to know about it. We will be very sensitive about being able to release any information.

So we'll check on that.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I appreciate that answer, and certainly I do not want anyone's personal information because I would not want to jeopardize anyone's employment. I'm just asking for the numbers that are involved in each step of the process, so that we get an idea of just, really, how actively the process or how robustly the process is being followed to fill positions.

So is the minister suggesting that there was previous postings that are closed already, that there's people in that process already, that those postings have closed?

**Mr. Pedersen:** We'll have to check with the Civil Service Commission.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I look forward to having you come back with that information, because perhaps that can help us clear up a lot of the mystery or the confusion that seems to presently be with how this process is as active as the minister would have us believe it is.

So let's move on, shall we? So let's—looking at labour. The research legislation on policy has been cut by over 110,000. How does the minister account for this reduction?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Pedersen:** The amount the member was referring to, it was a transfer from GET to the Office of the Fire Commissioner. However, the Office of the Fire Commissioner has now absorbed this. It's part of their fire insurance levy that they do. So that money is no longer required from the department. OFC is funding it with—from within.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank the minister for that.

So, the Office of the Fire Commissioner is—increased the amount of fees that they're charging to cover this? Or how does that work?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The money in that fund, in the Office of the Fire Commissioner, is—comes from their fire levy, and the money in that fire levy account comes from a levy on insurance to—on insurance premiums. And there was this—there is a substantial surplus in that account, so the fire insurance premiums have not gone up, and they're absorbing this extra money out of that account which is in a huge surplus.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank the minister for that.

So conciliation and mediation is projected to have a decline by over 300,000. That's cut nearly in half. Could the minister explain how he accounts for this, or how the department accounts for this reduction?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The decrease the member's speaking of is the executive director position and two conciliation officer positions were vacant. So that's the decrease that he is mentioning. The remaining employment standards officers now report to the conciliation officer.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So, in effect, the executive director, two conciliation officer positions have been cut? Is that correct?

**Mr. Pedersen:** These two—three positions, pardon me, were deleted as—and they were part of the 40 FTEs that we spoke of earlier.

**Mr. Lindsey:** How long were those positions vacant?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The executive director retired in June of 2017, which goes back to my point we were making earlier about how retirements are affecting the department, but the executive director retired in June of 2017. The two conciliation officer positions have been vacant for a while, and I guess, if you really want to, we can go back and find when they became vacant, but they've been vacant for quite a while.

**Mr. Lindsey:** If the minister would undertake to provide that information I would appreciate it very much, thank you.

So are recent legislative changes how the department plans to meet the targets they've set for less conciliation officers?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Would the member repeat that? I didn't quite catch his question in there.

**Mr. Lindsey:** That there's been some recent legislative changes that may affect how the conciliation branch does its work.

Does the minister think, or is that the plan, that the changes will require less conciliation services?

**Mr. Pedersen:** There are no current legislative changes for conciliation officers. I'm not quite sure where the member's coming from on that.

**Mr. Lindsey:** No, there's no specific legislative changes about conciliation officers, but there is other legislative changes that may lead to parties wanting to use conciliation officers.

So does the minister think that some of those other legislative changes will lessen the requirement for conciliation officers?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The member will have to be much more specific in his allegations on there. I think he's on a fishing trip but—I wish him well, but he needs to be much more specific in his example than just hypothesizing about what may or may not happen.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, then, as opposed to my hypothesizing, can the minister tell us what criteria they used to determine that they did not need to fill these positions?

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Pedersen:** The member is asking about these—about last conciliation services. And the member needs to take into account that we've had and we hope to continue to have very stable labour relations. Like, if you look back 25 years ago, and maybe the member was involved in some of those, but there was some very bitter, long strikes between labour and management. There's been in—across Canada, there's been a downturn in labour strife. The number of strikes that are out there are not nearly what they were a number of years ago. So the demand for conciliation officers has certainly dropped off.

And, you know, it's still a—the ability is still there. They are now under—the conciliation officers are under Employment Standards. So the ability is still there, but the demand is not there. And that's why these positions were not filled.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So the positions are now under labour standards, and some of the things that we've seen with labour standards is that the director will now have the ability to decide that complaints are frivolous and won't have to investigate them or do anything with them. So does that help or is that part



of the reason why it's felt that you don't need as many conciliation officers?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The member is confusing two different issues. First of all, a conciliation officer or conciliation person is completely voluntary between management and labour. What the member is referring to is, in terms of vexatious claims, is individual claims, which would go to the labour standards board—sorry, Employment Standards board, and that is a totally different job than a conciliation officer between labour and management.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I certainly thought that was the case, but when I heard the minister say that they were now under the labour standards, I was concerned that perhaps maybe that's where the minister was planning to go. So does the minister intend on maintaining conciliation and mediation services?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Conciliation officers play a vital role, and we don't see any change in this in the near future.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank you for that.

How much under budget is the Manitoba Labour Board projected to be for 2017-2018?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Again, if the member would understand the budget process, that will not be available until the fourth quarter summary reports. There's a former Finance minister sitting beside him; maybe he should help him with those. There's—

**An Honourable Member:** Where?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Oh, sorry, my apologies. Finance—he has—oh, maybe it's not even a Finance—it is a Finance critic? A former Finance critic. We've got to get the terms right here, so—that's not helping you at all, I can tell, because it's not helping me at all, either.

So, for the foreseeable future, it will remain the same.

Oh, sorry, he was asking about fourth quarter results. Fourth quarter results will not be available 'til this fall.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So it was \$212,000 under budget in 2016-2017, so while the department shows a modest increase this year, is the government directive really to have it come in under budget, underspent again?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Fiscal year-end ended March 31st, so we're waiting for the final report.

**Mr. Lindsey:** But I am correct in suggesting that it was underspent in budget year 2016-2017?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Member's correct; it was \$212,000 under.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So my point of the question is, if it was underspent in 2016-2017, even the fact that you've given it a modest increase in this budget line for this year, that really doesn't mean a whole lot if it's going to be underspent by that much more in the coming years.

So is that the intention, is to continually have it underspent?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, for 2016-17, we're talking about the Labour Board \$212,000 underspend. It's because the Labour Board offered—operated more efficiently. They're given a budget, they operate within their budget and they came in under budget.

So we will wait to see how efficient the Labour Board was in this year, whether—they were given a slight increase this year to cover normal salary adjustments, and we will wait for the fourth quarter results to come in to see what happened with their budget.

**Mr. Lindsey:** The employment standards was under budget by over \$500,000 in 2016-2017, and now we see employment standards is cut by \$150,000. How does the minister intend to achieve this?

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Pedersen:** The reduction is due to less claims coming through to Employment Standards. Good news is labour and management are sorting out their differences without coming to Employment Standards. Claims have been dropping in—over the last decades, actually. In the early 2000s there would be upwards or over 3,000 claims coming in on an annual basis. In this past year, there's 2,000 claims that Employment Standards dealt with, so a 30 per cent—33 per cent reduction in the amount of claims, so there is—that's why the budget is less there too.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So this is the one area where the department plans to see less claims simply by virtue of the fact that the director can now determine that a claim has no merit without doing the investigation and just not have it proceed.

So is that part of the plan as to how the government plans to achieve savings in Employment Standards?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So the member is referring to legislation coming in now that has been introduced, and it deals with vexation claims that the director deems to be vexatious. These are employees that have exhausted all other means of appeals and then they're coming to Employment Standards.

It still is at the discretion of the director whether they are to be not dealt with or dealt with.

The thing to remember is that these very few claims, and I'll just use the example, sort of one to two claims a year. These are very costly because they—we need to hire lawyers to appeal this on behalf of the claimant and it is—it just becomes—after they've exhausted all other means and are still unhappy then they're coming and using this system here, and we feel that this—there are—they've had their avenue and—to appeal and this will—it gives a director some discretion rather than having to deal with even those that he/she may feel are without merit, this gives the director the ability to decide on the merit of the claim.

**Mr. Lindsey:** And I guess that's what gives us some concern is that the director, now under pressure from the government that they have to cut costs, will, in fact, start making determinations that claims are without merit simply to reduce costs, rather than to actually spend the time and effort to investigate the claim to determine whether it has merit or not.

**Mr. Pedersen:** We don't operate like the NDP.

**Mr. Lindsey:** That's kind of too bad.

So the Worker Advisor Office was under budget by 143,000 in 2016-2017, and now it appears that it's been cut by 34,000. Can the minister explain how you intend—or how the department intends to achieve this?

**Mr. Pedersen:** In terms of workers' advisory office, it should be noted that the Workers Compensation Board, WCB, is doing a much better job now than what they were in—over past years and working much better. So the need is declining for the workers' advisory office.

However, I will remind—the member should know, these are the two positions that he was going on ad nauseam there before about that we had posted. These are the two positions we got posted, is for workers' advisory. We're trying to fill positions.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So these two positions that you previously had both talked about are to replace worker advisors. So then, just to circle back, what

about the other 38 positions that aren't worker advisors?

**Mr. Pedersen:** The member knows that those are not all workers' advisory positions.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, I guess the minister just said that those positions that they had posted were for worker advisor positions. So, just to clarify, those two positions that you have posted aren't specifically for worker advisors; they're for something else? Or those two positions that are posted are for workers' advisors? I'm confused by the minister's answers.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'm just going by the information the member gave us. He told us earlier, and we'll have to check Hansard, I guess, we'll go back, but he told us that the two positions posted were for workers' advisory positions. I'm just going by what the member said.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Lindsey:** I would really encourage the minister to go back and find where it is that I said the two positions that were posted were for the workers' advisor positions. I asked a long time ago, it seems, about two positions that have been posted. The minister alluded to the fact that those two positions can have multiple people, positions, and not once did I ever say that they were the workers' advisor positions. The minister, however, did just say that, so that's why I circled back to try and clarify that, but the minister's answers seem to be confusing me even more.

So the two previous positions that we talked about being posted—perhaps to clear up all the mystery, could the minister tell me what those two positions that were posted are?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Job position 33892, worker advisor (Brandon), Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade; position 33937, worker advisory (Winnipeg), department: Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, thank you very much.

So the two positions that we spent a lot of time talking about before were actually the workers' advisor positions.

What about all the other positions then? Where's the posting for them? Or do you put a posting up for a worker advisor position and expect someone who applies for that to actually land up in a different department?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, we can keep going through this is if you want but we've already dealt with this, but if you want to keep asking the same question, I'll keep giving you the same answer, is that we continue to work to fill these positions and we've already told you—pardon me—that we will find out some more information from human resources.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So just to summarize, over the last two years, programs that support and protect workers have been reduced in year by hundreds of thousands of dollars. How does the minister feel he can uphold his statutory responsibility to workers with these cuts?

**Mr. Pedersen:** As I tried to explain to the member before, the need has been declining in terms of these positions, employment standards, the claims have dropped by a third over the last decade and a half, so there is still—there are employees available to do this work.

We are adamant that we make sure that we have safety in employment standards, and the member seems to infer that more people will be better, and his—we also saw from the previous government how they were all about hiring people but not about increasing safety and we're about increasing safety with the employees we have.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Okay, thank you. Let's talk about trade for a minute or two, shall we.

So procurement provisions of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, Manitoba, along with other jurisdictions, exempted representation.

Can the minister explain what that is?

**Mr. Pedersen:** We'll have to take that question as notice. I just don't have an answer for you right now about—and what you're asking for is what representation means, the definition of representation?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Yes, several jurisdictions, Manitoba being one of them, have, under their procurement provisions, exempted representation. So I'm just curious as to what has been exempted.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Flin Flon.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'm sorry. Did I miss the minister's answer to that?

**Mr. Pedersen:** I told you. I—we would take it under—we'll get you an answer to that.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank the minister for that.

So I notice that Quebec, in its provisions, has included multiple procurement exemptions for Hydro-Québec.

Can the minister explain why they agreed to exemptions for Hydro-Québec when there are no exemptions for Manitoba Hydro?

**Mr. Pedersen:** We'll take the question under advisement because the member is not providing us with any information as to what those exemptions are, but—so we will endeavour to find out what those exemptions are, if they are, in fact, relevant to Manitoba.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, they're in the Free Trade Agreement, the annex that talks specifically about procurement exceptions, so I'm not sure why the minister or someone within his department wouldn't know what those were. And, certainly, if the minister needs to get someone from his department to come and talk about that, I'd be more than happy to have him get someone that can explain what's in the Free Trade Agreement that they've just recently signed.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Our two experts on the Canadian Free Trade Agreement are not at the table here. They are busy working on NAFTA right now, but we will check with them and get back. Any other questions that he has in regards to this, get them out here now so that we—if we can't answer them here, we can check with our two staff and get answers back for you.

**Mr. Lindsey:** All right. Well, I'll go through and ask the questions, and the minister can answer, then, as he sees fit.

So I notice that New Brunswick Power Corporation and a number of their Crowns and utilities have procurement exemptions. Can the minister explain why Manitoba agreed to exemptions for New Brunswick when there are no similar exemptions for Manitoba?

**Mr. Pedersen:** What are the specific exemptions for New Brunswick?

**Mr. Lindsey:** If the—give me one second. So the excluded entities under their procurement exceptions for the schedule for New Brunswick—and this may take longer than the allotted time. So, the following entities are not covered by this chapter: New Brunswick Power Corporation, all its existing and future subsidiaries and affiliates, municipal energy

utilities, Provincial Holdings Ltd., Atlantic Lottery Corporation, wastewater commissions.

Note: the thresholds for currently covered entities will remain the same as they are in the current AIT annexes.

The following entities are only covered by this chapter above the CETA thresholds and are only covered for goods and services and construction that are covered by CETA: Forest Protection Ltd., New Brunswick Research and Productivity Council, wastewater commissions are excluded except for Fredericton Area Pollution Control Commission and the Greater Moncton sewage commission, regional solid waste commissions listed as—listed in CETA, New Brunswick Arts Board, New Brunswick Credit Union Deposit Insurance Corporation, Farm Products Commission, New Brunswick Museum.

\* (16:20)

(B) Exceptions and notice: For New Brunswick, this chapter does not cover procurement of (a) services that may, under the applicable laws of the party issuing the tender, only be provided by the following licensed professionals regardless of the value: veterinarians, land surveyors, engineers, architects, accountants, below CETA threshold. Engineers, architects and accountants that are not covered, regardless of the value of those entities, are not covered by CETA. And it goes on for several more pages.

Perhaps it would be easier if I table this so that the minister—*[interjection]*—if I could provide that copy to the minister, it will save me having to read all of this. So, if the minister is interested, that's on page 70.

So the question is: Why did Manitoba agree to those exemptions under the procurement part of the CETA when Manitoba didn't put any exemptions of their own in?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, we will—I'll take it under advisement, but just so the member knows, when it refers to CETA—C-E-T-A, that's the European free trade deal. I don't—Manitoba would not be covered under that, so we'll get an answer back for him in terms of those procurement exemptions for New Brunswick.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I guess it concerns me a little bit that the minister doesn't kind of know the answers to questions about free trade agreements when he's such a strong proponent of free trade. It concerns me that

perhaps maybe we've agreed to some things under free trade without fully understanding what those things may mean.

So the whole reason I ask these questions is free trade needs to be just that—it needs to be fair; not just free, but fair. In all other provinces—are putting in exemptions to protect their energy sector. It means Manitoba firms can't compete in those areas. Meanwhile, Manitoba Hydro is left wide open without any protections in their procurement.

So would the minister like to comment on that?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, it just makes me wonder if the member wants to sell hydroelectricity to New Brunswick given how long they took to build a line or where they built a line going from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba, they had to probably go through Florida or something to get back up to New Brunswick on a powerline, so we will—we'll get this.

Manitoba Hydro will compete with all sectors, with other provinces, other jurisdictions. We're looking—as Manitobans we need to look at selling power into northwestern Ontario. We need to look to sell power going west. There's a—federal government would be—has talked about a western transmission grid. We need to get the federal government into more than just talking about this and Manitoba Hydro is very well set up to compete with other jurisdictions, particularly given that they don't have the hydroelectric resources that we do and certainly not the surplus resources that we do, so. So long as the NDP isn't in charge of building a line, we should be able to do it comparatively.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'm no big fan of Brad Wall's. I'm pretty sure that probably doesn't come as much of a surprise to the minister, but even Brad Wall in Saskatchewan exempted SaskPower. Now, I think that Brad Wall perhaps understands what I'm talking about.

Every other province with significant energy assets introduced exemptions, so can the minister explain why the province of Saskatchewan, under Brad Wall and his Sask. Party—PC party—same thing, as far as I'm concerned—why did that province exempt SaskPower, but we didn't do anything to try and exempt Manitoba Hydro?

**Mr. Pedersen:** It's only the NDP can figure out if somebody else has higher power prices than we do, that they're going to sell into our market. This was supposed to be our competitive advantage.

Unfortunately, the NDP kind of screwed that one up on us. But—so we're not as competitive as we once were. But we have the ability to sell power outside of Manitoba. Saskatchewan is not in that kind of position. So we look forward to looking at possible power deals in the future because we have this surplus power, and Manitobans are paying for this surplus power with greatly increased—well, we expect to be—increased power rates once the PUB comes back in.

So I guess it's the philosophy of the NDP to be protective, and we take the philosophy of being proactive and being competitive. And we're not concerned about anybody else selling power into Manitoba because we have—very well positioned here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I guess it's somewhat unfortunate that the minister doesn't understand we're not just talking about selling power. We're talking about procurement. So even BC, under a Liberal government, they took a little different approach. Her government said that procurement of her energy Crown was open, but only under the condition that competing firms' provinces were equally open. So now it seems that the pragmatic approach of a free-trading Conservative, that's really what that seems to be, that if you're going to be open, we're going to be open. But really, they've said in BC that, okay, we're going to open our procurement processes, but only to other jurisdictions that are open. So if Saskatchewan, for example, says, no, we've closed our procurement for SaskPower, then that means they can't bid in BC.

But Manitoba, perhaps you could explain to me again why we didn't even at least do that?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So looking at the schedule that the member gave to me, this document, it talks about CETA, which is the—C-E-T-A—which is the European trade deal. And he seems to be confusing that with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. So he's reading procurement exemptions from BC that pertain to CETA when he is asking questions about the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. So can you just at least get your—start getting your facts right? Like, at least talk one trade agreement. You're talking—you're mixing up two different ones. Like, come on. Like, geez. At least figure out where you're at here.

**Madam Chairperson:** Before I recognize the member, I just want to remind all members to direct their comments through the Chair and don't use you. Thank you.

**Mr. Lindsey:** At this point in time, I would turn the questioning over to the member from Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux).

\* (16:30)

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** I'd like to thank the member from Flin Flon and thank you, Madam Chair. And my first question is, on Thursday, you mentioned that Travel Manitoba has done an exceptional job in targeting tourism in Manitoba.

Could you please share with us some of these targets and specify as much as possible?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So amongst the many things that Travel Manitoba is doing, and I mentioned this last week, is the place branding, where they've gone into communities and—including Winnipeg—to identify strengths and weaknesses. That's called place branding.

We have our Look North strategy, which tourism is a very big part of that one, and, again, that's place branding within individual communities in the North but looking at tourism as a whole throughout the North and the possibilities for increasing tourism in the North.

Travel Manitoba has a very extensive advertising campaign in the US, I'll sort of say the northern US, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, into Iowa, that—Montana, the—travel by vehicle within our catchment area. There are TV commercials. We feel that Travel Manitoba's ads compete right up there with Newfoundland-Labrador. They had the—undoubtedly, they had the best ads for a long time and we think Travel Manitoba's Canada's Heart Beats here are just—they've got some really great advertising going on now and it's not only advertising to whether it's US or out of province, but it's advertising to Manitobans too, for the potential tourism that we have within Manitoba.

Small things like Air Canada, if you've been on Air Canada, flown Air Canada, they're doing their advertising on the seat-back television sets in there, which is unique. You don't see very much of that in airlines and so that's how Travel Manitoba is working to increase travel—just a few of the ways that they're building the tourism business in Manitoba.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Sorry, just to clarify, then, the place branding, those are the examples that you just listed when you talked about strengths.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So place branding is when they've gone to—I'll give you a few examples—Portage la Prairie, Gimli, Flin Flon are just a few of the communities that they've gone to. In fact, they—I believe the communities actually have to put up some money to help with that, so they're—they also are very much involved in this process, but they'll go into a community and they'll look at their strengths or weaknesses, their opportunities and then help them develop a brand for that community.

If it's Gimli, it's probably based on Vikings. If it's Portage la Prairie, the member sitting down the hallway—or, down the table, here, maybe it's based on the best strawberries in the country; I don't know. It—what—we'll find out—we can find out what—but that's the idea. So that you develop a brand, so that then—the community then has a working plan to go out and be able to advertise or attract tourism to their communities.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** So you talked about potential examples, which I really appreciate. Can you give a specific one, like something that you know for sure of? I know the member from Portage la Prairie, he just talked about french fries. Can you explain that a little bit more?

I actually feel that I had my question answered, just in talking with a couple of colleagues here at the table. Only because I am only given 15 minutes, I want to move on. If you want to add that into the next answer, that's great, but I am going to move on.

Constituents have noticed a lot of empty stores at The Forks Market. Are there any upcoming plans, long-term, short-term for what's going to be happening there? It's a huge tourist attraction here in Manitoba. What are the plans?

**Mr. Pedersen:** In relation to The Forks, I hope the member's visited Travel Manitoba's office there. They have phenomenal stuff that they're showing there. But, in terms of The Forks' development itself, I believe it's called the North Portage Development Corporation, though I stand to be corrected on that, but that's a partnership between the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba and then the businesses involved there.

I believe any funding they get is from Municipal Relations. There's no funding out of our department for that. Travel Manitoba has their headquarters there, and so that's their involvement in The Forks, the very physical spot they have there.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Does the minister have any general information on Manitoba's diverse festivals?

**Mr. Pedersen:** I think you would be better to go to Sport, Culture and Heritage to get that. In terms of festivals, I know Travel Manitoba would work with the festivals but, again, that's between Travel Manitoba and Sport, Culture and Heritage.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Are all questions related to tourism under this department now referred to Travel Manitoba?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Pedersen:** So Travel Manitoba is a Crown corporation. If there are specific questions coming in about Travel Manitoba, we tend to refer them over to Travel Manitoba, but if you have specific issues about Travel Manitoba, then certainly, you know, let us know. But, as a Crown corporation, they are—and they're funded—the 96-4 funding arrangements for them. So we tend not to get—they've got a board of directors that runs the corporation. And although I can get updates from them, any—and quite—and they will come in a couple times a year to give me updates on things like the branding, place branding and that. But we tend to leave the operations up to them.

Do I—Madam Chair, if I still have the floor, if you want to facilitate a meeting—if you want us to facilitate a meeting with Travel Manitoba, if you have specific questions, issues, anything like that, we'd be more than happy to help set that up. And that would—I'll speak for Travel Manitoba, that they would welcome any input and constructive criticism, too, so.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I've actually met with Travel Manitoba on an informal basis. Like, I have gone down to the office at The Forks a couple of times now. So I'm familiar with them. I suppose I'm just trying to draw the line in the department's responsibilities and Travel Manitoba's responsibilities.

When I think about the festivals, and I use as an example, I recognize it brings in a lot of tourism into our province. And so I see that, and correct me if I'm wrong, as falling under the department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. Is that correct?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So the festival—and we're talking the major festivals of Manitoba—are funded through Sport, Culture and Heritage. So they would be working with Travel Manitoba on that. And Travel

Manitoba does promote the festivals. They work with the festivals. The festivals are all working together with Travel Manitoba. And don't forget, Tourism Winnipeg is in here. Tourism Winnipeg is involved in here, too, for the festivals that are in Winnipeg too. So that's in the mix. Travel Manitoba does work closely with Tourism Winnipeg, and everybody is out there to promote the festivals.

The—obviously, the more that Travel Manitoba can do to help the festivals, the better the tourism. You know, it's a self-fulfilling thing. They're working to build tourism because people will come not just for the festival. We want to have them experience other things, too.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Would you be able to comment on the economic gains that these festivals are bringing to the province, or is that still Sport, Culture and Heritage? Economic gains.

**Mr. Pedersen:** In terms of festivals, like, the return, or impact to Manitoba economy for festivals, I think you're better to go to Sport, Culture and Heritage. Perhaps Travel Manitoba can give you some idea on that, too. They would probably know numbers of people coming in, the average—but Sport, Culture and Heritage would be tracking that more. We don't track that in our department.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Just with my last question, I did want to ask one on the legalization of marijuana. How will this government's approach to legalization of marijuana affect small business owners and entrepreneurs who are interested in this venture?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Partly due to supply concerns and also mainly because of the timing issue, and we're very pushed on the timing issue on legalization of cannabis, the end goal of this is to have a wide-open retail market, and when I say wide open, as many as want to participate in here.

Given the time frame that we had, though, we couldn't open it up to every retail that wanted to be there because there's a licensing process. They have to go through the liquor cannabis gaming authority in order to get a licence. Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is doing a procurement, so we're doing it in stages. We've got four—selected four retailers to start with that will have various locations throughout Manitoba, and they're working with those now.

But the end game is to open it up as much as possible, again, working with our municipal partners because they're—the municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, have the ability to decide where

stores shall not be, if I'll put it that way, and where they should be or where they shouldn't be, but the idea is to open up the retail as much as we can to anyone who wants to participate as long as they are licensed and they'll still buy their product—Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries will still be the wholesaler.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Let's just go back to trade, shall we?

So I handed a document over for the minister to read, and he's accused me of being confused because he thinks it's a European trade agreement document when, in fact, it is the annex to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. So perhaps the minister tonight can do his homework and figure out that this is, in fact, part of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

What it talks about several places in here is that certain exemptions will not exceed those which are in place for CETA. It doesn't say that this is the annex to the CETA agreement. It is, in fact, the annex to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

So would the minister like to restate his thought on this document?

**Mr. Pedersen:** As I stated before, our trade people aren't here and they are experts in this. They've been dealing with—they dealt with the New West Partnership; they dealt with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement; they dealt with the European trade agreement, CETA, and they are currently dealing with the North American Free Trade Agreement so they're not at the table here right now. I'll take your question under advisement and we will get a fulsome answer back to you when they are able—when we're able to catch up to them and they are able to give us—they know these agreements inside out and backwards, and we'll be able to give you a full answer on what your questions are.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I look forward to the minister's apology at that point in time.

So let's talk very quickly about the New West Partnership because it's a little late in the day, but last year you or this government signalled that it was changing how it awards Crown lands to align with the New West Partnership.

Can the minister explain to me in detail what specific provisions of that agreement require this?

**Mr. Pedersen:** At the risk of not providing proper information, I'll take your question under review also. I know this is put under the purview of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) and we will get that information to you also.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Lindsey:** Well, I guess part of it probably shares several ministries. The minister has talked a lot about the New West Partnership and I would have assumed that he would be cognizant of some of the things that are in that agreement, so that's why I was asking for him to explain to me in some detail what provisions of the New West Partnership affected Crown lands.

So is it the minister can't answer those questions? Is that what he's saying?

**Mr. Pedersen:** As I explained to the member, and I'll explain it again, I want to make sure that I get it right because this—the New West Partnership Agreement and Crown lands that he's referencing cover a number of departments.

So I want to make sure that any information I get to him, I checked with those departments and I get him the right information, rather than me speculating on what a different department is doing on this. I have a full enough agenda trying to keep up to my own department, so I will check into that and get back to him.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Excuse me for my mistaken idea that the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade would be aware of what's in trade agreements. So I apologize to the minister for making that assumption.

So let's just, kind of, skip around a little bit here. Several places in the budget documents—and of course, now I have to try and find it—it talks about Other Expenditures. For example, under—there's a page number—on 67, under Labour and Regulatory Services. There—under research legislation, Other Expenditures goes from 157 down to 27.

Can the minister tell me what Other Expenditures are?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Other Expenditures—on the line, there's—on these it says, Salaries and Employee Benefits. And then the next line is Other Expenditures. Other Expenditures is basically your office operations. It's your computers, your furniture there, in the office travel—if I can call them miscellaneous—expenses like that is what's contained in other.

I don't know if the member had any specific questions about particular divisions, or whether he was just wanting to know what other meant.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I guess I would really appreciate knowing what other expenditures are being cut. For

example, Research, Legislation and Policy, point No. 2 says that that budget has gone from 157 down to 27, so other than some broad categories about computers and paper, what exactly are the Other Expenditures that have been cut?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So the line the member is referring to, Research, Legislation and Policy, gone from 157 to 27, I already explained that as the reduction—the OFC. It was a transfer to OFC. It is no longer needed to be transferred to OFC, so therefore, it is reduced off that line.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Okay. So, then, Employment Standards, the Other Expenditures, where it goes from 401 down to 383, could the minister explain what those are?

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, in that particular line too, it's an allocation based on staff. This is a budget, so you put out a budget based on the allocation of staff. We've already talked about a couple less staff there, so we should need a couple less computers, a couple less—there'll be less travel, then, because there'll be a couple less staff, phones are a big expense, there'll be less of those. So it's kind of based on a per-employee basis in order to make assumption on a budget and so that's why it shows up as somewhat reduced.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So the minister has said previously that he's working furiously to replace these positions that are presently vacant, and yet, now, we see that you're cutting things like phones, computers, travel, because it's based on a per-employee allocation. So does that not run counter to what you've said earlier or will employees be expected to do the same job with less?

**Mr. Pedersen:** No, this is not bring your own computer and bring your own phone to work. I've already explained to the member that there's 40 less employees across the department, so this is based on that allocation of 40 less employees that we've already talked about at length and so those 40 employees that are not—the vacancies that were—these were vacancies that had telephones and desks and computers allocated to them, so, why the previous government would have telephones, computers, desks assigned to vacant positions is something that he would have to answer to, but it's no longer needed when the position was vacant and will be permanently vacant.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So the positions we talked about, the government and minister working furiously and with all diligence to fill, those are vacant positions. So



does that mean that the allocation of phones, computers and all the rest of it has been cut based on those empty positions, which would then lead me to think that there's no real intention to fill those positions?

**Mr. Pedersen:** I don't know why the member has such a trouble figuring this out.

These are positions that were vacant before, that have been permanently deleted and that's the ones that the other expenses are. For the positions that we are going to fill—and I'm so glad that he realizes that I'm working diligently to fill those positions, I'm glad he agrees with me on that and that we are—those phones, those computers, travel, is all budgeted as if those positions—as they will be filled during the year. You must budget in advance for that because we are expecting those positions to be filled and we will continue to work on that as we speak.

**Mr. Lindsey:** So when I look at page 51 of the Growth, Enterprise and Trade Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, so that is—

**Madam Chairperson:** The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

#### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (15:00)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I was wondering if the Premier could explain why he decided to charge a \$25-ton carbon tax as opposed to starting with the \$10 fee that the federal government had prescribed.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, first of all, I'll get the copy of our carbon plan so I can reference it in my response, but just suffice to say, did an extensive amount of consultation over a very long period of time with hundreds of—thousands of Manitobans, hundreds of Manitoba groups, and the general consensus was that flat was better than rising and boiling the frog wasn't the way to deal with the issue. When I say boiling the frog, I mean, of course, the federal government's proposal to start at 10, go 20, 30, 40, 50, and now they're talking already about going higher than that. So I think there are a

number of reasons why Manitobans said to us that they didn't think that was a very good approach. On the environmental side, they said, well, it won't change behaviours much. On the capitalist side, they said, we'd like it predictable and we'd like it level, so if you can do that, that'd be better.

**Mr. Kinew:** But why not start with a \$10 price, if that was an option, bring some programs in that can help families and business, if that's going to be the plan taken, and then go to \$25 once the kinks are worked out, if you will?

**Mr. Pallister:** Again, I would say that—to the member what I just said earlier, that we based our design on something that would work better than what the federal government proposed, not something that would compare to what the federal government proposed. We based our design on what we heard from Manitobans.

And, as I outlined earlier, Manitobans told us they prefer it to be a flat, level thing more like the prairie horizon than something like the foothills in Alberta or the mountains in BC which would rise up. They wanted something that would be predictable, level, and that's—the plan that we came up with was based on that consultation.

I'll give the member—when I get it, I'll give the member a better sense of who we consulted with, because I think that would help to edify him a little bit on where these suggestions came from. But certainly, that seemed to be the strong consensus of the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I think the Premier said on Friday that he had just learned that the federal government had planned to impose a backstop if in future years the level of the carbon price in Manitoba is not where the federal government wants it to be.

That seems to just defy logic. It seems like the federal government has announced this plan for a number of years, seems like the Province was aware when the Premier talked about seeking a legal opinion that there was going to be a federal backstop in place.

So I'd just like the Premier to clarify his comments as to when he did learn that the federal government plans to bring in a backstop on the price on carbon.

**Mr. Pallister:** The member will have to check his own recollection of facts. I never said anything of that kind.

**Mr. Kinew:** Does the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—has the Premier received any other legal opinions about the carbon price other than the one that Mr. Schwartz prepared that we had discussed in Estimates last year?

**Mr. Pallister:** Lots of informal discussions, but the opinion we wanted to get was from someone who has expertise in this field, and that was the opinion we sought and that was the opinion we got.

And that opinion, in a nutshell, was that the federal government would impose it if we just said no, so we designed a plan that works better for Manitobans. It works better in terms of our measures on the economy. It works better, certainly, in terms of our measures on the environment.

What the member proposed the other day—this was the news that we hadn't had before from the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), was that he was fine with 50 and that he wasn't giving any back to Manitobans. That contrasts rather sharply with our plan. We're not fine with 50. We don't think that Manitobans should pay double for nothing, and we are certainly designing our plan in such a manner that the equivalent of any money taken away from Manitobans is given back over the next four years in reduced tax.

**Mr. Kinew:** That's simply not true on both fronts.

On the latter point, it's been demonstrated that not all the money collected from the price on carbon will be sent back to Manitobans. Again, you know, tens of millions will remain in government coffers, even after all the proposed parts of this carbon-tax bill are fully implemented.

And on the latter—the tests that I've proposed and the one that I think makes the most sense is simply to make this revenue neutral. In other words, to say that every dollar collected—if there is to be a carbon price, for every dollar collected to go back out to help Manitobans, either with environmental initiatives or to help them cope with the affordability challenge.

So, again, it's a little puzzling that the Premier has staked his position on this matter arguing that his plan is going to help reduce emissions. However, there are no initiatives that are going to help the average family in our province be able to transition to a lower carbon lifestyle. So how is it that the Premier expects to be able to reduce emissions without helping families reduce their carbon footprint?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Pallister:** Member's pretty confused in his assertions on several fronts.

First of all, our plan will, over the next four years, put more money back into the—onto the kitchen tables of Manitobans in tax reduction. Then, the total levy from the carbon proposal that we're making—however, he appears to be making it up as he goes along. He has just said last Thursday he's fine with 50, and he also said that he doesn't want to give it back in the form of tax reduction. So he's going to come up with all kinds of green agenda strategies. He claims, I guess, to spend the money, but that will just make for bigger government. What we are proposing to do is to do what we have been doing in respect of green. We've been investing in green; we'll continue to. If he'd care to take the time to read the rather detailed made-in-Manitoba plan that took a good number—hundreds of, if not thousands, of hours of work, to put together, he would see initiatives described in here in great detail. We can get into that if he'd like, whether that will make us an even greener jurisdiction.

But, most importantly, I think, what he needs to understand is that with the challenges that are going to be faced by Manitobans, are being faced by Manitobans, and will increasingly be faced by Manitobans on an economic front, many of them, the consequence of poor planning and poor management by the previous administration—by that, I would reference, for example, higher Hydro bills that Manitobans are going to be faced with; they're already—those already struggling financially will be struggling even more, so, what he's proposing is nothing back, so double for nothing. He's proposing a \$50 levy; he's proposing nothing back through reduced taxes.

This budget proposes reduced taxes for small business. It proposes bringing in a higher basic personal exemption in the coming fiscal year and another in the year thereafter. It is also a budget which reduces the deficit from, just in our first two years, over \$400 million from what we inherited from the NDP. So what we've got is a situation here where our fourth largest department in this year's budget is debt service costs, thanks to the NDP doubling our debt over the last few years in good times, and in a time when the interest rates were the lowest in the history of humankind.

So the NDP gave us that situation and said, deal with it. Now the member's saying Manitobans

shouldn't get a break. We think Manitobans deserve a break. We're going to make sure they get a break in the form of lower taxes. The net effect of the carbon levy in terms of revenue to our government's a negative one. In fact, we will be reducing our revenues overall as a consequence of the tax reductions that we will have brought in and will be bringing in in the future. The member doesn't know what all of those are. He apparently doesn't know about the ones we've already proposed in this recent budget, but he should consider them because Manitobans know that they are going to be benefiting them very considerably, and they should also know, Manitobans need to know, that what the member is proposing with his new higher levy is about \$3,000 for every taxpayer over the next four years in additional tax that won't be on their kitchen table. Instead, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) would like to have the credit for spending other people's money. The difference between our approaches couldn't be more evident. We believe Manitobans should have that money. They can decide how to spend it because they're the people who earned it. The member wants credit for spending the money, so he would like the levy at a higher level, double, and he would like none of it to go back to Manitobans, except in the form of, perhaps, some program he'll invent.

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier (Mr. Pallister) doesn't make a very cogent argument. You know, over the weekend, when I saw that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, you know, weighed in on us delaying the carbon price there, I was a little surprised. It's not every day the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, you know, applauds the NDP; maybe that's why it snowed over the weekend. But I think that them weighing in, you know, it does show that a lot of Manitobans aren't really buying the argument that the Premier's putting forward here.

So I'd just like to ask, you know, the Premier directly: Will all the money that's being collected in a carbon tax this year by the Province be returned to Manitobans this year?

**Mr. Pallister:** No, of course not. That's been well reported and is well understood by thinking people who can look more than a week ahead. The Canadian tax 'pederation' just paid tribute to the member for raising the deficit by the revenue reduction of a delay of 60 days without paying any attention to the fact that he himself has said that he wants to impose a double levy with no money going back to taxpayers. That's pretty ironic when you think about it,

you know, double the levy and nothing going back to taxpayers. You know, the member's happy to get short-term praise. What we're interested in is something that works longer term.

Now, the Auditor General did a report, which I know is somewhere here, and commented on the NDP so-called plan. And I think the member needs to, perhaps, as I know he is reluctant to do it, go back in time a little bit and study the NDP's green plan and the Auditor General's comments in respect of it.

I think there's a summary document which would save some time here which overviews the comments of the Auditor General's report, a single page rather than me reading the whole report on the record, because I know the member will have more questions he will want to ask and I don't want to use all the time reading the entire Auditor General's report. However, I could say, in summary, the main points of the report are as follows.

The Auditor General has said in no uncertain terms that they're hardly unimpressed with the report—with the lack of progress. For example, in page 1—this report, by the way, was just released last year, so it wouldn't require the member to go back too far in history to know—October of '17—what the Auditor General thinks about the NDP's so-called climate plan. For example, the December 15 plan, which was put together by the NDP in their last days of their previous administration, I believe on the back of a napkin, was to reduce emissions—they set a target up of just under 14 megatons by 2030 and to about 10 megatons by 2050. That was the NDP's target for their green plan.

Now, as Manitoba's reported emissions for 2015 were almost 21 megatons, this would require about a 7-megaton reduction over the next 15 years, plus a further reduction of just over 3 megatons during the next 20 years. Now, this would require, according to the Auditor General, more emission reductions than could be obtained by taking every gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicle in Manitoba off the road. That's what the Auditor General thought of the NDP's climate plan.

Went further on page 1 and said a lack of progress was found in reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as in developing a plan for adapting to climate change impacts. So I'm pleased to hear the member has some exciting plans he's going to be soon sharing with Manitobans on exactly what he means when he says the NDP has a climate plan and I'm sure he'll be able to introduce a lot of

exciting programs with that \$2 billion he's going to be taking off the kitchen tables of Manitobans over the next four years.

The Auditor General goes on to say, despite the efforts of the department and government over the past decade, there's been little change in Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions. Further, the NDP were aware by the fall of 2009 that its 2008 plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6 per cent below the '90 level by 2012 would not succeed. In other words, they had a 2008 plan, I repeat, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They were aware in the fall of the next year that that plan was going to fail and the plan wasn't updated until six years later.

That was the NDP's strategy on climate change—become very, very clear to the people of Manitoba that the NDP has no plan for the environment, they have no plan to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions either. The member's all over the map. He says—one day he says he's fine with \$50, the next day—today in the House he says \$10's good—doesn't know. Doesn't know because he doesn't have a plan, just like his predecessors—no idea.

The report goes on. Page 3 and 4 talks about gaps in management processes—and this is the Auditor General talking; I mean, this is amazing. There was no regular progress reporting on whether the climate change project was on time, on budget, going to achieve its stated goals.

Page 15: the department was expected to set both short-term and long-term targets so these targets would be supported by economic and scientific analysis. However, this was clearly not the case. Also on page 15, it says right in the Auditor General's report, the NDP conducted no economic or scientific analysis in setting their 2008 and 2015 targets. I repeat: no economic analysis.

I would encourage the member to consider for a second the impact of what it is he's now proposing. What he's proposing to do is take \$3,000 out of the hands of a working Manitoba taxpayer over the next four years so he can announce green projects. That's what he's proposing. He needs to consider the economic consequences of that.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, the point is that, you know, whether it's \$10 or \$25, what really matters is that

that money go towards environmental initiatives, or it goes to help people deal with the affordability challenge that's being brought in with hydro increases that this government is allowing to take place under its watch.

So, again, the point is that, you know, every dollar collected should go back out to help Manitoba families. So, again, you know, just to return to the Premier's—well, the substantive part of his answer before he kind of just started reading from a report there. He said that a three-month delay in the imposition of the carbon price in Manitoba will release—or, will result in a \$60-million increase to the deficit. So I'd just like the Premier to spell that out, so what percentage of the carbon tax revenue are being earmarked for deficit reduction?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'll explain something to the member. I had three part-time jobs several summers, and I didn't have three bank accounts where I put my money in that I got paid from the jobs. We got revenue coming in, and then we make decisions on how it goes out. If the member wants to know where we're putting it, good. We're going to report that. That's great. We're saying the equivalent of the amount raised from the carbon levy goes back in lower taxes. The member says, well, it won't, but he doesn't know because he has no idea about tax reduction because nobody in the NDP ever reduced taxes. He hasn't got a hot clue about the reductions in tax we are undertaking he says he doesn't support.

We're raising the basic personal exemption. Right now in Manitoba, we are tax—we are starting to tax people sooner than everybody on the left side of the map from New Brunswick to the West Coast, thanks to the NDP. You don't even have to make \$10,000; you're starting to get taxed.

Now, we're not going to solve every problem overnight, but we're understanding of the reality that hard-working Manitoba families need a break. So raising the basic personal exemption by \$1,010 in the coming year and then by double that, \$2,020 in 2020, is a way to put considerably more money back into the hands of the people who've worked for it in the first place.

Now, the member says he doesn't support that because, well, the NDP has a fine tradition of never supporting tax reduction—only goes the one way. It's a ratchet; it only goes up. The member also doesn't seem to support the idea of raising the small business tax limit from \$450 to five—or he'd have spoken to that—even though his predecessor promised he'd do

that in the 2011 election. Of course, he promised a lot of other things he wouldn't do, and then he went ahead and did them. Under the general theme of taking more money off the kitchen table, the NDP ran on a promise that they would raise the small business tax exemption, and then broke that promise and didn't.

They ran on a promise that they were going to not raise taxes, and then first they broadened the PST to include such fundamental items as your benefits at work that you buy to try to protect your family in case of a disaster, or your haircuts and—if you wanted to do that. And the member knows about the importance of haircuts; we all do. But the fact is that when you introduce a tax like that, you're affecting everybody. And, when you introduce a tax like that—or taxing home insurance, for example, to the tune of 7 per cent additional, which is exactly what the NDP did, within a few months of promising at the doorsteps of the people of Manitoba, looking people right in the eye and saying you weren't going to do it—you don't have much of a record to stand on talking about attacking other people on their plans to reduce tax.

So I've been part of two reductions in the GST and proud to be part of it at the federal government level. We said we'd reduce it. We reduced it. This member inherited the leadership of a party that promised that they would not raise the PST and then proceeded to raise it. And I contrast those two records, and I ask—he says Manitobans aren't buying it. Well, I ask Manitobans to take a look at the record of the NDP and take a look at the record of this government and myself. When we make a commitment, we do our very, very best to keep that commitment. When the NDP make a commitment, you almost should count on the opposite, and especially when it comes to tax reduction, because the NDP promised they would not raise that PST. They did; it hurt working families. They also promised that they'd observe and respect the processes around Hydro—Hydro—seriously.

Okay, let's take a look at that. The member talks about—well, he said in the House the other day he doesn't care if hydro rates are going up, he's just going to blame us for it. Well, you don't need much of a history lesson to understand why hydro rates are going to have to go up in this province. They're going to have to go up because the NDP dug a giant hole, billions of dollars of debt, trying to Americanize Hydro for US customers. They didn't take a look at the analysis, the data, that had been

done by experts. They didn't take a look at the global circumstances and the international circumstances of the power market. They didn't know what Bakken meant. They had no idea.

Then they go ahead with a foolish, foolish expansion of their power in Keeyask, and they go ahead with a bipole waste line—west line that goes fully 500 kilometres out of the way and is way less effective at transmitting power, got us billions of dollars of additional debt. And then the member laughingly refers to this as something we're responsible for. Obviously, he doesn't know history; hasn't studied it; isn't willing to learn about it, because it doesn't serve his purposes.

But he needs to own up to the fact the NDP record's one that's going to obviously create pressures on Hydro, and that—it's going to create pressures on every Hydro customer. Instead of saying he's not putting any of this carbon money back in the pockets of the people who are going to have to face these challenges, he should be supporting us and supporting our campaign to put more money back in the hands of Manitoba families.

That's exactly what we're about; it's obviously not what he's about.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation have said that our NDP team are potentially going to save Manitobans \$60 million in taxes this year. A tax reduction of \$60 million while in opposition is not bad for first year as Leader of the Opposition. I probably won't run on that record, but it's a good first step anyways, I would say—I would submit to my colleagues around the table. Not bad.

So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about having one bank account, here. So he seems to confirm that all the carbon price revenue are going back into general revenue—general government revenue. So I just want him to clarify, again, that this carbon price is not revenue neutral this year.

**Mr. Pallister:** I'd encourage the member not to take too much comfort in the compliments of those who are ill-informed on an issue. He wants to accept as a compliment a deferral of a bill for 60 days, potentially, which gives evidence to his lack of understanding of the long-term impacts. Just the short term is all he seems to understand.

Short-term praise—fine. The NDP got short-term praise for—in the economic numbers for building Keeyask too. They got short-term praise for building

bipole too. They made it look like they were generating jobs for our economy. At what cost? What's the long-term cost? What's the consequence? That he doesn't seem to be concerned about, but we are. We're very concerned about it.

The federal government's so-called backstop, or ultimatum plan, doesn't work for Manitoba. Manitobans told us that. They told us that again and again and again. They did not want us to do nothing. They said—well, for a number of different reasons. Some of them said they felt that it was really important that we have our own plan that suited our green record. They didn't want us to go with a federal plan that went 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, because they didn't think it would help in the respect of changing peoples' attitudes or habits.

Others have said that the tax should be much higher. And I'm sure the member—who's had three positions on this issue in the last 72 hours—is bound to have another position tomorrow and probably would say 100 would be fine with him, as long as he gets credit for spending it. But I don't agree. I don't agree, because the consequence is Manitobans have to pay that levy. And, when they pay it—if he's not giving any of it back in lower income taxes, sales tax, business tax—if he's not giving it back, he's draining the pockets of Manitobans the same way his predecessors did.

Now, the federal government threatened to do that. They said if we don't do anything, they'll impose their levy. We didn't like that. We didn't like that thought. We didn't like it for a number of reasons, but we didn't like it certainly most of all because it would mean about a billion dollars would go out of this province in the next four years and the federal Liberals promise that we get it back in some form. But I don't know. They promised a lot of other things, too, so I'd just as soon not give them control over a billion dollars.

And those who are advocating we should do nothing are showing an immense amount of faith in the Trudeau government, because they are saying: Let them do it; they'll give it back. And I'm saying: Well, how'd they do on health-care support? How'd they do on Factory of the Future? How are they doing on these other issues? How are they doing on deficit reduction? Keeping their word on that one?—not too well. So I don't trust the federal government to take a billion dollars out of this province—no way. So we're endeavouring to have a plan that offsets theirs.

Now, for our plan to be defensible—this is what the member refers to me, you know, reacting to on Friday, besides his—the silliness of his proposal, I reacted to the real dangers of a federal government that would try to impose a higher tax on us and would hang that over our head, as one of their departmental spokespersons said they were going to do.

Think about this for a second: we got a level levy—flat, like the prairie horizon. Doesn't go up. Federal government's proposing 10, 20, 30, 40, 50. We do nothing, we get the federal proposal. And how does that work? It doesn't work very well. By our numbers, our plan works way better. Works better for the environment, also works better for the economy, because, in three years' time, we will have the lowest carbon levy in Canada.

\*(15:30)

And the federal government will have to make the case that it's better to impose a 10, 20, 30 than it is a 25, 25, 25. Think about that for a second and ask yourself how that's going to work. How does that work better for protecting the environment? And if the federal government takes us to court on that, they'll lose. And then we'll be in charge, as we should be in charge, of our own carbon strategies and our own green plan instead of giving that trust to the federal government, no disrespect intended.

Now, what the member's suggesting is we should make it 50 because, well, gosh, that's a—if 25's good, 50's got to be twice as good. It's like his approach on emergency rooms: the more the merrier, the more the better, he says. Let's have lots of emergency rooms. Everywhere else, they've discarded that strategy because they know it doesn't work. It doesn't work because you spread your assets around too much, you don't get the care that you need to the people who need it. So Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, Edmonton, everybody else has got fewer emergency rooms and shorter wait times. The member goes up in the House and says, more emergency rooms is better. But the numbers don't show that at all. Canadian Institute for Health Information says that's a failed strategy. It says that under the NDP, we had the longest waits in Canada: four out of five hospitals in the top five in the country. And the member speaks to that.

He's backing a horse that just isn't going to run anymore. It's a dead horse. We got a broken health-care system, and we're going to fix it. And the member speaks about the problems of change.

Problems of change are inevitable. His party's seen them. They're inevitable. But they faced up to 'em and elected him, and I wish him luck with that.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about deferring a bill for 60 days if there is a delay with the carbon price being implemented. So can he clarify: What bill is he talking about deferring? Is this the bill for government services in Manitoba? What does he mean in particular, specifically, when he says deferring a bill for 60 days?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the member doesn't know how he's going to delay the bill for 60 days. I take some comfort in that fact, and I'll wait for him, as the Leader of the Opposition, to outline his own strategy as how he proposes to fulfill the commitment he made the other day to delay. Carbon pricing—this is from the made-in-Manitoba green plan document. I don't see a page number on it. But it says, in terms of carbon pricing—this is an answer to—or an explanation to the member's earlier assertions. As announced on October 27th, 2017, Manitoba has designed a carbon pricing system under the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan that carefully balances our unique environmental and economic realities, something the member appears unwilling to consider. The approach is based on carbon pricing modelling and analysis that shows that the opportunities to cost-effectively reduce carbon emissions in the province is significantly lower than the federal plan. Anything beyond this price is punitive economically and environmentally.

So, when the member proposes a \$50 levy as the federal government's will rise to, he is proposing economic hardship for the people of Manitoba without environmental effectiveness. Because it results in rising costs to Manitobans and businesses with diminishing emissions reductions. This finding is largely due to two unique Manitoba features that affect the efficacy of higher carbon prices in our province compared to other jurisdictions: our clean electricity grid and our large agricultural sector.

I encourage the member to read this plan and realize that there are a great many Manitobans who participated in the process and who strongly support what it is we are trying to do, which is to make sure that we do what is right for our environment but also protect our economy.

Here's a quote. This plan is a significant step forward by the Manitoba government to address climate change, including, for the first time, a price on carbon emissions. Across Canada and

around the world, businesses and communities are capitalizing on significant opportunities in low-carbon innovations. This framework is a serious start to positioning Manitobans to do the same. That's Scott Vaughan. That's the president and CEO of the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Whether climate change or government deficits, future generations will pay a hefty price if we don't take action now. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce applauds the Province of Manitoba taking the next steps in developing a Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan founded upon meaningful consultations and real-world approaches. Most importantly, the Manitoba plan speaks to the core issue itself: meaningful yet responsible emissions reductions. We look forward to continue working with the province to build a cleaner, greener and more prosperous community for all. That's from Loren Remillard, who's the president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

Here's another one: We are pleased the government of Manitoba continues to engage and consult with farmers to ensure the Province's Climate and Green Plan protects both the environment and economic prosperity—that's what's missing from the member's thinking. Ottawa doesn't always understand how policy changes impact at the farm gate, and that's why having a plan developed here in Manitoba is so important. That's Dan Mazier, president of Keystone Ag Producers.

Many, many people involved in the work, and hard work, that went into this. Would've been easy, I suppose, to just throw up our hands and do nothing, or maybe, as some suggest, you know, go to court and make a show of things when we knew we would lose—at least according to people who study constitutional law, they said we'd lose. I heard a theory lately that we might not, and we're already prepared to do what we can to fight if we have to, if Ottawa tries to impose a higher levy. But we certainly have, first and foremost, in mind the kitchen tables of Manitobans and their hopes for prosperity and financial security. We think that's critical going forward. And, again, that seems to be missing from the NDP's thinking, yet again.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier talked about deferring a bill for 60 days if the carbon price is not imposed at the time that he's insistent upon and that he shared with the media on Friday that he'd probably find some procedural ways to make sure it happens no matter what. So, again, unless the Premier just

answers a question directly, I'll be forced to assume that when he says it's a deferral of a bill for 60 days, that what he's talking about is deferring the bill for all government services, again, because if he's arguing that there's going to be an increase to the deficit, and the deficit is, you know, as a result of government services being provided, it seems that that's the bill he's talking about.

So, again, can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell us: what bill is he referring to when he says that delaying the carbon price will be the deferral of a bill for 60 days?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, to much ballyhoo, the Taxpayers Federation praised the member for delaying the advent of a carbon levy despite the fact that the member is committed at being twice as high with no money going back to Manitobans. So, if the member has a strategy, it would be incumbent on him to outline what that strategy is for such said delay so he can merit all that adulation, that great recognition that he's garnered as a consequence of his willingness to put the agenda on hold for a period of time prior to any discussions reaching conclusion in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

One thing for sure, under our analysis, Manitoba's economy will continue to grow under the carbon price that we propose. It would be endangered by the member's approach of a double levy for nothing back to Manitobans, and that's why we certainly don't support that. We believe that a reduced tax burden on Manitobans is a good thing, and that's why we're fighting very, very hard to make sure that with the thoughtfulness necessary to balance the needs of improving a social system that's been left in a state of constant deterioration and with a 10th ranking in most categories under the NDP, we have to be attendant to the needs of repairing that social system after a decade of decay. Repairing that social system is important, whether it's health care, social services for needy kids, or you name it.

So we're doing that to the best of our ability. But, certainly, at the same time, we have to be cognizant that it is a desperate fiscal situation that many predict will worsen in the years to come. The federal government appears willing to try to borrow its way to popularity. The NDP has always done that. They've made a habit of doing that. It's an institutional characteristic of the NDP. Kathleen Wynne appears to be trying to out-left-wing the NDP in Ontario and be Mrs. Santa Claus in the next election. She is promising just about everything to

everyone, including the moon, I think. And so what that will do is deepen the deficit situation in Ontario, just as the member here is proposing to do in Manitoba.

Now, we've already made some major and significant steps to reducing the deficit here. We inherited a deficit that was well in excess of \$900 million. We've made a dent on it to the tune of about \$400 million. We want to continue to make progress to improve the financial situation in respect of our budgetary expenditures versus revenues. We want to do that because moving to balance is a good thing, just as Thomas Mulcair recognized in the last federal election campaign, just as Jack Layton did in the election campaign before. And certainly it's not been the provincial NDP's abilities to do so that have stood them in good stead. They have made numerous commitments to move towards balance over the years, but they've never made any significant progress. Under this new leader's leadership, I expect that situation—if he was given the opportunity—to worsen, and rather dramatically based on what he's planning to do with the carbon levy, which is keep it and spend it on something other than reducing taxes.

\*(15:40)

Our budget proposes to reduce taxes. It proposes to reduce taxes by increasing the basic personal exemption on every Manitoba worker by \$2,020. It—who is in that category of income, of course. It also proposes to reduce the small-business tax to the tune of approximately \$6,000 for those companies—and there are thousands of them in Manitoba—that would see a higher from \$450 to \$500 on their small-business tax rate.

Again, the NDP made the promise that they were going to do that—2011 election. But we all know the record of NDP candidates on keeping the promises. They did not keep that promise. Now, the member says he objects to us keeping an NDP promise they didn't keep. But, you know, we made the promise, and we're going to keep it.

The fact is, also, that we're committed to reducing the PST in our first term, something the NDP raised. Now, let's use this as an example. It's a bit of a—I think an instructive point for the member, if he cares to consider it for a second. The NDP raised the PST by a point after saying they wouldn't. That takes about \$300 million out of the hands of Manitoba workers and families. Three hundred million is the gross revenue. He's been silent on that,



but I expect he's not committed to reducing it. We are—we are—and we're going to reduce it.

Now, that tax reduction and that loss of revenue to the government, on the one hand, means that the people who have the money in the first place worked for it, saved it, invested it, get to keep it. I think that the difference between our organizations is we trust the people of Manitoba more than the NDP does in terms of how they manage their own money.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I guess it's pretty safe to conclude, after all these, you know, rhetorical devices and reading from government reports, that the plan for this year is to take all of the money away from Manitobans—that's a charge in the form of a carbon tax—and to just use that for initiatives across government.

Again, you know, we gave the Premier (Mr. Pallister) several opportunities to clarify that; he did not. And, earlier on, he did admit that the carbon price is not revenue neutral this year. And, again, by setting out this argument that a three-month-potential delay of three months in the carbon tax will increase the deficit by \$60 million indicates that, again, the plan was to spend all the revenue that is being charged on Manitobans—all the tax revenue, I should say, that is being collected from Manitobans—to use that across a government.

So now that we've confirmed that it is not revenue neutral this year, I would like to ask the Premier, does this tax ever become revenue neutral? If so, when?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member's made some false assumptions, and so, really, I can't respond to his question because his statement was false.

**Mr. Kinew:** Does the carbon tax ever become revenue neutral in Manitoba? When, if that is the case?

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** When—when—does it become revenue neutral?

**Mr. Pallister:** It'll become revenue neutral over the next four years in terms of the total reductions in tax paid by Manitoba families versus the amounts paid in total carbon levy plus. The tax reductions over the next four years will total in excess of the amount in total collected on the carbon levy.

In addition, I would point out to the member that what he has proposed is a double carbon levy with

nothing going back to Manitobans. And I would again encourage him to understand that that would be very dangerous at this point in time—at most times—to the people of Manitoba. It would be dangerous because Manitobans are already facing threats.

Over half our households, according to recent reports I've read, in Manitoba have less than \$200 of disposable income at the end of the month. Now, the member can't—probably can't relate to that. I certainly can, from my background, understand what it's like to run out with money—run out of money before the end of the month. A lot of times I'd just have dearly loved to have had a few more dollars, so I could stay in front of things instead of falling behind. But I remember also being very appreciative of efforts made by previous governments to try to reduce the tax burden on me, and I think this is what the member forgets. He forgets the impact that higher taxes have on real families. He forgets it and the NDP has always forgotten it when they raised the PST, for example, when they broadened it to tax people on their benefits, when they broadened it to tax people on their home insurance. They took thousands of dollars out of the hands of Manitoba households, gave nothing in return.

Manitobans know that they were paying more under the NDP and they were getting a lot less, and the reality is that he seems to be ready to repeat the mistakes of the past with this proposed gouge that he's got, this self-aggrandizing tax gouge where the NDP government gets to talk about Tesla plug-in kits all over the province and things like that.

We want the money back in the hands of Manitoba families, so Manitoba families have that spending power. We recognize that they have faced some real challenges over the last number of years in terms of things like the increase in taxes I mentioned and that that money is gone from them and that it can't come back.

What we can do, if we study the history of these things, is recognize and learn from that history how to make this a stronger province. The way to make it a stronger province is to give people a better return on their efforts: on their work, through lower income taxes; on their purchasing power, through lower sales taxes; on their willingness to take risks in the private sector and create real jobs in this province with lower business taxes. We're taking steps in each of these three files, important steps to put money back in the hands of the people who create the economic wealth

for the rest of us here and who must have a chance to participate in strengthening their own financial well-being if we're to have a stronger province.

The raising of the basic personal exemption is one example—by \$2,020 dollars over the next two years—is a way to give people a better chance to get ahead. It helps—proportionately helps those who are at the lower end of the income chart more than it does those at the higher end. It's a progressive change; it makes good sense. It's been praised by poverty advocates that—the member likes to be praised by the taxpayers federation without justification, I would submit, but I don't mind our government being praised by people who stand up for those who don't have as much. That is a decent measure of a good government, and we have taken steps—specific steps—to leave more money in the hands of lower income families in our province and we'll continue to do that.

But I would say to the member he also ignores in his preambles some very important investments that we have added in terms of our green agenda, and he also, it's clear from his comments, has not read our green plan. So I'd encourage him before our subsequent meeting if he'd like to have a meaningful discussion around the issue of our Province's green plan that he take the time to read the work that was a culmination of thousands of hours of input by Manitobans who very strongly understand that they were heard in those consultations, and although no plan can reflect everyone's input and satisfy everyone's agenda specifically, certainly we have a plan which will work better for Manitoba's economy and environment and that is broadly supported by a great number of Manitobans.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) shared in that answer that he believes his carbon tax will become revenue neutral in fiscal year 2021-22. First off, can he just confirm that that's accurate in—when he said that becomes revenue neutral four years from now? That's the right year we're looking at, or would it be the year following?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm not prepared to share with the member in detail all the tax reductions we have planned. He'll have to figure that out as it goes and as they're introduced.

**Mr. Kinew:** The question was: Does the carbon tax become revenue neutral in fiscal year 2021-22?

**Mr. Pallister:** I can explain it to him, but I can't understand it for him. I'm going to try one more time.

I'm not going to outline for the member or anyone else all the potential tax reductions that we will undertake in the coming three years to make our commitment one that is kept. I will only assure him the commitment will be kept during that time period, but I will also explain to him something he may not understand. Revenue projections are just that. We have to make sure that we are prepared in case of an uptick, for example, in interest rates. We have to be sure that we're prepared in case there is a disaster in our province in terms of a flood, a fire, something else that's unpredictable. Our commitment is to make sure that, at the absolute latest, the—all revenue generated by any carbon levy is back in the hands of Manitobans. In total, over—at a minimum over the next four years.

\* (15:50)

We're also prepared to be measured by the federal government, as they have proposed and we are prepared to do in terms of the environmental efficacy of what it is we are proposing to do. What we're proposing to do is a level levy. It does not increase, and no federal official has the right to claim that they're going to impose a higher levy on us without full consideration of the effectiveness of the federal backstop plan.

The federal government spokesperson—not the minister, I must point that out—spokesperson for the department has claimed that they can add a levy. That uncertainty is not good for our economy. It's not good for our small-business sector, and it's not good for Manitobans to have the federal government claiming they're going to invoke a higher levy when they have no right to, constitutionally or otherwise—is to inject uncertainty into our economic future we don't need. That's why I shot off a warning to the federal government last Friday.

And I will say to the member, he needs to understand the dangers of what he's proposing just as much as what the federal government's proposing. By proposing to take \$2 billion off the kitchen tables of Manitobans over the next four years and proposing, in return, to get Tesla hookups and some incentive programs he might design on the back of a napkin, like his predecessors, he is saying to Manitobans that there's going to be less money for them to spend, less money for them to invest. The people in small business will have higher taxes, not lower, and therefore they'll be able to employ fewer people and invest less in the expansion of their business.

He's saying to Manitobans they should be careful about how they spend their money because he's going to want more of it—that's what he's saying—in higher income taxes and also in a higher PST. These are the alternatives to his \$50 double-for-nothing plan that he's proposing. And it's a real danger at a time when Manitobans understand—like most Canadians—they're already vulnerable to things like upticks and interest rates on their mortgages. They're already vulnerable here to upticks in NDP hydro rates and they already understand that other levels of government aren't taking the necessary actions we're taking to create fiscal balance in their jurisdictions.

They're looking—certain other governments, municipal and federal, are looking to spend their way out of trouble. And they're using money they're borrowing to do it. This is not how we get out of trouble; this is how we get into deeper trouble.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about having to guard against, and I quote, uptick in interest rates and unexpected, end quote, things like natural disasters, it seems to me that he's preserving some options as—or to the timing as to when this carbon tax actually becomes general—or revenue neutral because, if this was revenue neutral within four years, then it wouldn't matter if there was an uptick in the interest rate, right?

So the Premier seems to have a very flexible timeline as to when this tax actually becomes revenue neutral. So is it the year 2021-22? Or is it the year 2022-23? Or is it that the Premier does not actually have a concrete plan to make this tax revenue neutral?

That is what I suspect because, again, in his previous answer, he said, quote, potential tax reductions, end quote. So it seems as though he has not arrived at a definite plan to make this carbon tax revenue neutral.

So I'd ask him again: Does he have a concrete timeline to make this tax revenue neutral or not?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, let me ask the member this: When does the PST hike become revenue neutral? When did the PST broaden to include home insurance? When does that become revenue neutral? When does the PST hike on your benefits at work, when does that become revenue neutral?

All of that stuff just became an expansion of revenue to the government and out of the pockets of Manitobans. What we've committed to doing as a base line is making sure that any carbon tax levy that

this government gets goes back over the next four years as a minimum to the people of Manitoba.

What the member's asking for is for me to know whether there is going to be a major flood or an uptick in interest rates which might cause us to not be able to say it's revenue neutral on June 2020 because now we've got a flood, so it's August of 2021.

I've given him the baseline commitment that we are going to achieve. Our record shows thus far that we will keep those commitments. Those fiscal commitments are important to us. We have taken the necessary steps to achieving them.

What I would tell the member, though, is that he needs to understand that deficits are something that we must also address. And so, naturally, we're working to move towards balance at the same time. Now, some people are confused about deficits versus taxes, and they think they're two different things. They really aren't. A deficit is just a delayed tax—that's all—with an interest service cost attached to it. Deficits are a tax on future generations as much as they are a burden that we carry ourselves, going forward.

This year, for the first time, we'll see a deficit service burden of over \$1 billion in this fiscal year, largely due to the doubling of the provincial debt under the NDP in the six years prior to the last election. So the member talks to me about, well, I want a date, a month, a place, a time, a specific detail as to revenue neutrality, but, at the same time, this—the previous administration had no revenue neutrality at all. It simply borrowed more money that it brought in with some of Canada's highest taxes and fastest growing taxes, created a giant debt hole. It's enormous. It's almost impossible to comprehend how big that hole is. There was no revenue neutrality in that.

Now we're forced to pick up the pieces, service that massive debt, and, if interest rates go up, the member is trying to place blame on us for being a little later on balancing on revenue neutrality on a carbon tax when, in fact, what caused the problem in the first place? What caused the problem was NDP mismanagement of record amounts that doubled the provincial debt in six years at a time when the interest rates were the lowest in the history of humankind. How could anybody be that bad at managing the fiscal situation of the province, one might ask. How could anyone be worse at doing that?

Well, the member's applying for the job, because what he's talking about doing will make it worse. What he's talking about is taking \$2 billion more, over the next four year, and his proposal is it goes to Tesla hookups. They're not going to do—he's not going to support our budget. You watch; he won't support our budget, Mr. Chair. He doesn't want to lower taxes on people. He doesn't want lower taxes on small business. He doesn't want a higher basic personal exemption. If he did, he'd vote for our budget—not going to do that, because, well, he wants the money so he can spend it. He wants the money so he can get credit for spending it, and he's going to make the problem we inherited worse if we were to follow that line of advice.

So we won't do that, because deficits are dangerous. Deficits that continue to grow in good times are very dangerous. Here's an article by Craig Alexander. He's the senior vice-president chief economist, the Conference Board of Canada. This is from a newspaper called *The Globe and Mail*, and it says: You should be concerned about deficits. Here are six reasons Canadians should be concerned. First, the economy is running at full tilt. More than 85 per cent of businesses are running at or close to full capacity. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level since the mid-'70s. In this environment, Canada does not need fiscal stimulus.

The federal government, under the current Liberal government, promised they'd move to deficit, and they broke that promise, and they broke it in spades. And now they have no projected time that they'll move to deficit—move out of deficit to balance. Instead, they're talking about priming the pump at a time when the Canadian economy does not need that pump priming. They should actually be moving to balance, but they're not; they're doing exactly the opposite. Why are they doing that? Because they adhere to the same school of thought the member is portraying here today. He wants more money from Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans, so he can spend it and claim he's a friendly environmentalist. And I don't think that's the right thing to do given the circumstances real Manitoba families are facing these days, which are likely to worsen. And those pressures will be real on Manitoba families moving forward.

**Mr. Kinew:** The reason why I'm asking when this carbon tax becomes revenue neutral is because the Premier has said that this tax will be revenue neutral, but he is not able to tell us when. So that's why I'm trying to figure that out, get to the bottom of

that mystery. When you've established that it's not revenue neutral this year—we've also established that it's not revenue neutral even when all aspects of this bill come into effect in a few years' time. And then now the Premier tells us today that it'll be four years as a minimum.

So what would be the maximum amount of time before the carbon tax becomes revenue neutral?

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Pallister:** No, the member has misrepresented the facts again. I said it would be revenue neutral before the four years is up, not after. So let's be clear on that.

Let's take a look at the Fiscal Stabilization Account summary, just as an example, just an indication of the ability of the previous administration to establish security for the people of Manitoba in terms of their budgetary situation. The balance in that Fiscal Stabilization Account went down rather remarkably as the previous NDP administration drew the money out from this savings account. We should talk about this savings account, right? One of the fundamental principles of money management, for any personal financial plan, would be that you have a little money set aside in case of a rainy day, used to call this a rainy day fund. So the rainy day fund should have a little money in it, so if you get laid off, you got something, so you don't need to be dependent on your rich aunt right after you get laid off, or, if you run into trouble of some other kind—you have a ticket you didn't you pay or something like that, you need money for that, you got to be able to pay it, right? So you have a fiscal stabilization account that you can pay it from.

For a government, it's important to have something of a rainy day fund in case of, well, rainy days. So, in 2009-10, for example, when the former leader came in, that account stood at \$818 million—\$818 million. And, let's see, well, this year, it's not \$818 million—oh, I'm sorry, \$864 million in the year that Mr. Selinger came to office, \$864 million. It's not \$864 million anymore; it's lower than that. It's quite a bit lower than that. So, while the provincial debt went up and doubled in the next six years, this account for rainy days went down to \$114 million from 864. That's just a set of numbers, probably, to some people, but to me it's an indication of a willingness to have some foresight, not just spend all the money you get, but maybe set a little bit aside in case we get another big flood or in case there's a marked increase in, I don't know, the prime lending

rates and we end up—or you know, heaven forbid, you know, as I say, a disaster of some kind was to hit—befall the province.

So what we've done is we've restored money back into that fund. We've taken some funds and raised up the amount in that fund for the first time in many, many years, almost a decade. We're restoring the strength of the so-called rainy day fund. But the member needs to understand that, as does author Craig Alexander from the Conference Board of Canada, generally very friendly to left-of-centre governments, he's trying to make the point that governments should keep their powder dry. He uses that phrase in his article. He says economic cycles are a given and recessions are an integral part of them. Canada is almost a decade past the last downturn. When the next recession hits, there will be a need for fiscal stimulus, requiring even more government borrowing.

Now, the Prime Minister said that budgets will balance themselves. But maybe he's never been in the situation where they've done anything but that; with his personal background, I'm not sure. I can tell him that for the vast majority of Canadians, they laughed at that comment because they know that budgets don't balance themselves. It takes a force of will; it takes discipline. It takes a willingness to look at not throwing money at problems but rather find the right return on investment opportunities and invest in the right things. If a government loses that, if it loses that sensitivity, then you get what you got with the previous NDP or which, ostensibly, you might get with the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) at the helm.

Now, deficits limit business investment as well. Deficits limit productivity growth. And I'll explain more on that because the Chair has told me that I'm too long-winded in my answers.

**Mr. Kinew:** I thank the Chair for that silent guidance to the Premier (Mr. Pallister). I would agree, though, you know, it is what it is.

So, again, the Premier had said previously it's going to take four years at a minimum to get the carbon tax to become revenue neutral. I guess he misspoke, based on his subsequent answer that he just clarified here. So that's fine; I'll forgive him that. I guess it's going to be 2021-22; that's the target through potential moves that he's not yet established.

I'm curious, given what's happening in other provinces. You know, the Premier mentioned

Ontario—so if Doug Ford becomes the Premier of Ontario and decides no carbon tax for Ontario, is the Premier going to change his carbon plan? Is he going to change course if Ontario decides to go against the federal backstop?

**Mr. Pallister:** I would just say to the member that when I speak, and I know I do go on, I endeavour to fill my responses with quality information that he can make use of and not just rhetorical flourishes and misrepresentations, which he has just done.

So I would tell him that though he has not demonstrated that he has a plan of any kind for our environment, I have heard his suggestion of a plan and listened to it, just as I have listened to literally hundreds of ideas from Manitobans in the development of ours. I would say some of those ideas certainly are bad ones, but few are as bad as the one he's put forward.

What he's put forward is an idea that would very much hurt the economy of our province, by hurting the people who work here, who retired here, who want to invest in small businesses here. He seems to show—so—thus far, very little understanding of what makes an economy tick.

I can tell him our economy is ticking along pretty well. I can share with him the numbers, I just obtained them, for the past fiscal year, and tell him that in terms of capital spending, private sector capital spending growth, that we are expected to be the highest in Canada this year. That in terms of motor vehicle sales, we increased year over year, this January to last January, by 56 per cent. That is the highest in Canada.

I can tell him also that in terms of our international exports, they are up 4.2 per cent January over the previous January. That is the second highest increase in Canada. I can tell him that in terms of motor vehicle sales overall, they increased by 10 per cent in '17. That is the second highest among all the provinces. That is the best in Manitoba in 15 years.

I can tell him on capital investment in new residential properties, that increased by 33 per cent in 2017. That is the second highest among all the Canadian provinces. I can tell him that capital investment in industrial properties increased by 29 per cent in '17. That is the second highest among the provinces.

What I don't want to see—and quite frankly, we have seen also average weekly earnings increase

2.4 per cent last year. That's the second highest among all the Canadian provinces. More money in the hands of Manitobans is going to help our economy.

What I don't want to see is a—something like the nature of his plan, or the federal proposal, which proposes to threaten our plan—the stability it creates, the certainty it creates as to how we are going to deal with this issue—and sees that jeopardized by a federal government that is more interested—it appears, from the spokesperson's comments anyway—more interested in the use of power than they are in the efficacy of the plan.

Our plan that we have researched and developed, with the help of a great many Manitobans, is scientifically supportable as better than the federal plan. So why can the federal government say that it wants to invoke a higher tax unless it can't? It can't and it'll lose if it tries.

That being said, it shouldn't create—the federal government should not be part of creating this kind of insecurity and sense of doubt, because it is that sense of doubt that counters the reality of the progress we're making, where we are ranked first or second in most major categories in the country of Canada last year. Why? Why?

We deserve some credit for that, because we've taken unstable financial circumstances and we've brought them into a better light. Because we've close to reduced our deficit by half. Because we've created stability in our tax rates and a willingness to demonstrate we're serious about reducing our tax rates.

Because we've done more to reduce the unnecessary burden of red tape than anybody in North America, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Because we are the only province that guarantees stability in terms of tax rates by a referendum being required before they can be raised. Something the NDP went to court to fight. We will make sure we legislate back into existence.

\*(16:10)

These are the types of things that give small business encouragement and support. We've involved ourselves in promoting internal trade and the reduction of barriers to internal trade more than any previous NDP jurisdiction, which doesn't believe in trade. In fact, I understand the member actually

signed a thing saying he doesn't agree in trade agreements.

We do. We believe in trade; we think it's important. It creates jobs for Manitobans. The results speak for themselves. We're going to make sure that we continue to get these kinds of results: more money in the hands of working families and seniors. That's the way to build our economy. We're going to keep building our economy.

**Mr. Kinew:** The question was on if Doug Ford becomes premier of Ontario and defies the federal backstop and says no carbon tax for Ontario, you know, what will the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) actions be.

And I would note for the record that the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) repeatedly gets excited at the prospect of Doug Ford becoming premier of Ontario. He could hardly contain himself the first time I questioned the Premier about it and just recently, upon mentioning that name again, the member for Emerson again could not conceal his excitement.

But, again, the question. If a government in Ontario decides not to impose a carbon tax and fights the federal government on that, will the Premier change course? Would he, in that scenario, then not charge a carbon tax? Or is he going to charge a carbon tax irrespective of whether other provinces do the same?

**Mr. Pallister:** I think the real danger for Ontarians is if they believe Kathleen Wynne's proposed agenda and buy into it. That would be an incredible problem for them.

Here's an editorial from just a week and a half ago in the—again, *The Globe and Mail*. The member might like to read it. It says Ontario's Liberal government is all left wing and no ethos. In the past few years, it has launched a raft of policies that should be the toast of every NDP voter in the province.

Even before Wednesday's budget, Premier Kathleen Wynne gave us rent control, tuition subsidies for the poor, Pharmacare for kids and youth, a \$15 minimum wage and a cap-and-trade carbon-reduction program. In its new budget, the government's gone further, vowing to fill yet more gaps in the welfare state. Free drugs for seniors, free post-secondary tuition for the poor and lower-middle class, and free child care for preschoolers older than two and a half. Wait, there's more: money for

seniors to live at home, billions for mental health services, \$1.8 billion for people with developmental disabilities.

Every aspect of this latest spending budget requires big tax increases, you'd think, but no. The Wynne government's neglected to increase its revenues adequately to pay for its promises. Instead, it's going to borrow money and hope voters don't care. As a result, the government expects to run a \$6.7 billion deficit this year, with virtually identical deficits in the next two years, as if a deficit wasn't an increase in taxes.

Raising taxes marginally could have wiped this out, but the Liberals didn't have the courage to do that. They make government look downright easy. You just come up with things that would be nice to have and then you promise them to voters.

So Ms. Wynne is not spending this money just to bribe voters, as she often accused of doing. She clearly has left-wing instincts and thinks government should pay for programs to reduce what she calls the deficits in people's lives. But, if she believes in these things, then she should have the courage to sell the tax increases needed to pay for them.

The budget does contain a few small things. Finance Minister Charles Sousa boasted Wednesday: the province's debt-to-GDP ratio has fallen. That's only true over the last three years. Before that—also under the Liberals—it grew steadily, and now it's projected to start growing again.

So it goes on to say that Doug Ford's going to win the election in Ontario because Kathleen Wynne is making a false promise that she can solve every problem using tomorrow's money. And, in essence, that's what the member is talking about. He's going to solve all our environmental promises—problems by making promises to spend money that he's not going to earn, and he's going to take it from Manitobans instead in higher taxes.

Now, he may, if he wishes, make the case that that is the right thing to do, but he should own up to the fact that if he's going to do that, he is raising taxes on Manitobans. He is continuing the tradition of higher tax increases that his predecessor put into place. And, if he is going to be true to his word and have that \$2 billion to spend that he talks about over the next four years, he's got to take it from somewhere, because it didn't come from fairy dust or a unicorn. It came from working Manitobans, it came from seniors who've saved all their lives, and it's

going to come in the form of higher taxes on their incomes, on their savings, on their businesses, on their expenditures with a higher PST.

*Mr. Andrew Smith, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

And if the member would simply admit that, then we can have a discussion about whether that was the right thing to do or not. I submit it isn't the right thing to do. He clearly thinks it is, but he doesn't want to own up to the fact that that's exactly what he's proposing: a \$2-billion tax hike on Manitobans so he can take it and get credit for spending it on some imaginary and yet-to-be-defined green agenda that the NDP has never spelled out, ever, in its history, according to the Auditor General.

**Mr. Kiew:** You know, if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) promises to read me *The Globe and Mail* tomorrow, I can save a few minutes in the morning from having to review that paper. Definitely appreciate him taking the time to read me the editorial page in the newspaper of record here in the country. I hope he caught the editorial page in the *Winnipeg Sun* on Friday. I thought that that was an interesting analysis. I didn't agree with the irony expressed at the end of that column, but it is what it is, again.

Again, the question, though, was about whether another province debates having a carbon tax at all. If another province goes in that direction, will the Premier reverse course on his plan to impose a \$25-a-ton carbon tax here in Manitoba? So, again, whether it's a potential Doug Ford premiership in Ontario, whether it's Premier Scott Moe in Saskatchewan, if another province decides not to charge a carbon tax, will the Premier reverse course on his plan to impose his \$25-a-ton tax here?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member would have to understand that we have a plan that's made for Manitobans. It's made by Manitobans. We've worked very, very hard to design it and bring it into place. And it's about as fair a question as me asking him, if Jagmeet Singh was to adopt the position of his predecessors and speak in favour of balanced budgets, as Jack Layton and Thomas Mulcair did, would he flip his position on running massive deficits and raising taxes? It's about as fair as that question. I didn't ask him that question because it'd be unfair for me to ask him that, so I haven't asked him.

But it's really something he needs to understand, I think, that we have a plan that works for Manitoba, and we will defend that plan. We will defend it

against suggestions like his which we think will endanger our economy. We'll defend it against a federal government that claims it has the right to impose higher taxes at some future point but has not made the case in any way, shape or form that it has a plan that works better to protect our environment. We will defend it against a federal government that has shown no respect for the massive investments that Manitobans have made and have been forced to make in green energy like Manitoba Hydro; mistaken investments, for the most part, in recent years, because of the mistakes of the NDP government that we follow. Nonetheless, they're investments that Manitobans made.

The NDP treated Manitoba Hydro in the past as if it was their plaything instead of respecting the people who own it. The people who own it are Manitobans, and Manitobans should be respected. They were not respected in the process around Keeyask, for example. Keeyask was not approved by the Clean Environment Commission. Manitobans did not have the opportunity to go before that commission until after Keeyask had been constructed. In fact, the NDP's own appointees on the Clean Environment Commission said that in their recommendations in their report. They said, this project should not go ahead, except it's already been built, okay. That's the level of disrespect that the previous administration had for the rights of Manitoban on their own hydro utility; also in terms of the bipole line, the bipole waste line, 500 kilometres out of the way, delivering hydro less effectively than the proper route which the hydro-principal hydro experts recommended.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

Now, the NDP said, you know, we know that we have to look better on our economic numbers, and I think we better maybe spend an extra billion or 2 billion, even though they promised the people of Manitoba—and I recall this in their promotional literature—that it would not cost them a penny—would not cost Manitobans a penny. It's now fully—it was \$1 billion-plus over expenditure unnecessarily undertaken, and it's way more than that now, because the NDP proceeded to build this silly, circuitous route for transmitting hydro to Americans, not needed for Manitoba's security.

\* (16:20)

Now, all of this is bad enough, but what's worse is that there's a process that needs to be

undertaken to approve such monumental projects as these, which should respect and involve Manitobans. An analysis needs to be done. It's called a needs-for-and-alternatives-to analysis. That analysis was never done. Manitoba Hydro did not—was not asked to conduct such an analysis in conjunction with the processes of—the Clean Environment Commission because the NDP government excluded consideration on the bipole line from this analysis.

In other words, they were so afraid to have Manitobans have the chance to participate in the process around the bipole proposal they disallowed it from happening. Included in that disallowance were indigenous groups such as Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Metis Federation. The Manitoba Metis Federation was not allowed to make a presentation around a project which impacted potentially significantly on their lands, traditional lands.

Not allowed to make a presentation—that's unheard of. It's a shame. History books will write about it. They'll write about how enormous the errors in judgment were and how distasteful the lack of disrespect—lack of respect for the people of Manitoba was throughout the entire process of the NDP's Americanization of Manitoba Hydro.

Now, the member has the audacity to stand up in the Chamber and try to blame increased hydro rates on this government when nothing could be further from the truth. We face monumental challenges. We'll face these challenges along with many others we inherited, but we certainly will not, by any thinking Manitoban, be asked to assume the responsibility for creating those challenges.

**Mr. Kinew:** So what I've had the audacity to propose is that every dollar collected from a price on carbon should go back out the door to help the average family transition to a lower carbon lifestyle or to help those low- and middle-income Manitobans deal with the affordability challenge that's being presented by this Premier's carbon tax and hydro rate hikes.

So, again, by another word, that would be to make the tax revenue neutral. If we're going to have a carbon price, it should be revenue neutral that allows for the maximum amount of its use to be towards reducing emissions. It's also the fairest to Manitobans.



And I also had the audacity to suggest that it should be revenue neutral immediately. It should be revenue neutral in year 1.

So I'm wondering: Why the Premier does not want the carbon price to be revenue neutral in year one?

**Mr. Pallister:** That's what the member says he's proposing today, but he proposed something different last Thursday and Friday and before that, and his party has never had a green plan, according to the Auditor General of the province. So I don't know why anyone would believe him now. He hasn't established any credibility. He hasn't posted any kind of a plan for Manitobans to consider. He simply talks about what he intends to do, but he doesn't put it in writing.

So let's see a plan from the NDP, so we can have a look at it, because certainly the Auditor General has said, in appraising the NDP's performance over their period of government, that they failed miserably to ever present any kind of a sustainable development model of an environmentally supportable green plan. They never saw a target they could hit. They never set a target they did hit. They never failed to miss a target every single time.

So the member now says he's changed his phraseology from last Thursday, says he's now going to do some favours for Manitobans with some green-plan money. He's going to spend some money that's equivalent to what he's bringing in, but he doesn't say anything about how he's going to reduce the tax burden on Manitobans—not a word. If he has a plan to reduce the tax burden on Manitobans, he should put it forward. Let's have a look at it.

We've put a plan forward. We've outlined what we're going to do in the short term. We've committed to doing more over the longer term. We've recognized the difficulties we face and tried to balance and make sure that we do not overpromise and under-deliver, as was the custom under the previous government. We will endeavour to under-promise and over-deliver instead.

I would mention to the member that for the 13-year period from 2003-04 to 2015-16, the NDP never, ever hit a target that they said they would in terms of their budgeting. So why this member would assume that Manitobans would give him the benefit of the doubt, with the record that he's inherited from the NDP, is beyond me.

The fact of the matter is that there was only one year, in the previous 17 years, where the NDP actually did better than they said they'd do. Every other year, they did worse. Nearly every department of government did worse than it projected it would do. The only department where they actually underspent, underinvested for many years, year after year, was Infrastructure, and with Infrastructure they left hundreds of millions of dollars on the table, didn't put it in infrastructure, talked about it but didn't do it until the year before the election, and the year before the election, they had a lot of steady-growth signs up and they did a lot of conspicuous construction; and the other years, that was the only department of government they underspent. Everything else overspent.

So there you go. You got a record with the NDP. The member doesn't want it; I mean, he doesn't even want the party name on his literature, but the fact remains it's a record and it's a record that doesn't speak well to the ability of his party to keep its word or to plan effectively, and so, really, what difference is it—what he says he commits to, when in fact he has a record where his party never keeps its word on major commitments—environmental, fiscal, you name it. He has a record that says the NDP's word can't be trusted.

We, on the other hand, have made significant commitments to turning the cost curve of government. We have done that, we begin that process. It is not over but it needs to continue because we have to move to balance. We want to move to balance because it's important to set ourselves on a new course away from doubling debt, away from higher borrowing, away from the vulnerabilities that will make Manitoba weaker and hurt Manitoba families in the future. So we're changing that course. That's a monumental undertaking. I'm proud of the team of people we have that's engaged in doing that because it is important.

We have major fiscal challenges coming up. We have demographic challenges. Baby boomers are aging. Baby boomers age, they leave the labour force, that increases the demand for health care and we've got a federal government that proposes to drop its level of partnership in the face of that demographic reality. That's not the right course of action to take. This member has said nothing about that. He seems to be applauding the federal government and their dereliction of their responsibilities. They've moved from 25 per cent—

Paul Martin committed to that, kept his word for a couple of years—but they moved to now 19, and that is a significant difference in terms of the revenues available to provide health care to the people of Manitoba.

That's just one example of the vulnerabilities we face because of the dereliction of the federal government, and it seems the provincial NDP is so concerned about copying the popularity of Justin Trudeau that they want to support everything he does, but we support a lot of things he is doing but we don't support that one or a few other things that he's doing because they're wrong for Manitoba.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, just returning to the economy. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) was talking about the impact of the carbon tax on the economy, but I'm curious to know, like, why not make it revenue neutral immediately if you're looking at it through an economic development lens. Like, how is it going to help the economy to be taking—I believe it's \$143 million—away from businesses, from families this year, but then not offering any sort of programs to them to help transition to a lower carbon lifestyle or offering any sort of assistance with the affordability challenge that's being presented with higher prices at the pump, higher home-heating costs?

So, again, how is this going to help the economy to have a new carbon price that's not revenue neutral?

**Mr. Pallister:** I guess the member would have to understand the logic that's inherent in planning over a period of time and not simply year on year all the time. There are a number of things that take time to plan effectively.

Tax reductions—you can't introduce a basic personal exemption in the middle of a tax year. So that would be something he would need to understand. That wouldn't be a very effective way to go about doing things. So that creates a lag and I've admitted to that, the first day that we came out with our budget to the reporter for the Winnipeg Sun, when he quite rightly raised that question.

The fact remains our intention is over the four years to do what we've set out to do and the intention of the member is to do doubly that, double for nothing, and he talks about, you know, hookups for his Hummer and things like that but the fact remains that those kinds of things are not tax money back in the hands of Manitoba families. So we're going to

focus on reducing tax on households in Manitoba, reducing tax on small business, reducing taxes, proportionately more so, with the raising of the basic personal exemption, effectively on middle- and lower income families as a consequence of their circumstance. We're doing that because we believe that there are real pressures on those families and those pressures are in part at least due to the mismanagement of the past and the short-term approach the NDP took in the past.

\* (16:30)

So, while the member proposes we take a short-term approach now of everything being the same, tickety-boo each year, we propose rather to take a longer-term approach and make sure that over the course of the next four years, when it is needed—as interest rates rise, for example—as we anticipate they will—as has been projected upon as recently as today in the newspaper the member doesn't want me to read from—we are going to make sure that, as the economic—*[interjection]*—well, the member should show more concern for the people of Manitoba.

The fact remains that, as interest rates go up, there is less money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans as they have to pay more for the money they borrow. And it is commensurate on us to understand the tax reductions have to coincide—to some degree, at least—with that real challenge Manitoba households are going to face.

So we're not suggesting deferring tax reduction beyond—you know, we'll pursue tax reduction as a goal as a matter of course—but we're not suggesting not keeping our word. We're suggesting keeping it thoughtfully; keeping it in line with the real costs Manitoba families have to absorb.

We don't know, for example, what the NDP hydro rate hikes are going to be this year. We don't know because we respect the Public Utilities Board process, unlike the previous administration, which did not. We respect that process and so we do not know for sure what the rate application will result in.

So that is an impact. We—there—a variety of things one cannot know. And certainly we've committed to the broader strokes of making sure that the money that we take from this levy—which is moderate by Canadian standards—will be the lowest in Canada in about three and a half years. It is important to understand that money taken from Manitoba households will be back in the hands of Manitoba households. With the NDP plan, no such

guarantee exists; in fact, quite the opposite I'd say, based on past behaviour.

And as, you know, Premier Selinger used to say, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. So I'd say Premier Selinger's behaviour was to gouge Manitoba working families, gouge Manitoba seniors and gouge Manitoba small businesses. So I'd say probably, if that's the best indication of future behaviour, that past behaviour is dangerous for Manitobans. Dangerous for our economy, dangerous for the people who want to work here, dangerous for the people who want to support their families, dangerous for the small businesses that want to put capital at risk.

I'm telling the member that, and he doesn't like me to say this, but our economic performance in our first full year is pretty exceptional. I mean, we were kind of really at the bottom of the barrel in a lot of things in terms of economic numbers for quite a while. Now international exports are up 4.2 per cent year over year—that's the second highest increase in Canada. That's a pretty good result. We got capital spending in new residential properties—is the second highest among the provinces. Capital investment in industrial properties went up 29 per cent last year—the second highest in Canada. We got housing starts increased by 41 per cent last year. That's the second highest among the provinces.

So, you know, these are performance numbers but they represent the real growth of people's prospects in this province, something that didn't happen under the NDP.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the carbon tax that the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) bringing in will not be revenue neutral this year or next year; that's pretty sure. We're pretty sure about that, I should say. Now the Premier's saying probably three and a half years, maybe four years, something like that—it'll be revenue neutral. But even there, he hedges his bets, you know. He modifies his language; he talks about potential this and probable that.

So, again, why wouldn't the Premier just tell Manitobans when the carbon tax will be revenue neutral?

**Mr. Pallister:** Let me give the member a sort of a 101 first-year economics little guide here.

When he tells me exactly what the revenues will be overall and what the expenditures will be overall, I'll be able to give him a real accurate depiction of exactly when.

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, in preparing this book, I think there's a \$143-million revenue in, so it would take \$143 million outflow to make that revenue neutral. So that would be how you would get to there.

So can the Premier answer this question: Will Manitoba have the highest carbon tax in Canada this year?

**Mr. Pallister:** I don't know. I can explain it to the member, but he's got to work on understanding it himself, I guess. The fact of the matter is that what we inherited from the NDP was a mess.

Let's talk for a second about the credit rating situation that we inherited. Moody's maintained our credit rating issue. That's a significant accomplishment, given the inherited problems that we faced from the NDP.

The rating outlook for the NDP—thanks to us, the rating outlook this year is stable, which according to Moody's, reflects our assumption that the anticipated deficits and high-debt burden will be balanced by—get this—solid provincial economic performance and strong debt affordability.

Other bond-rating agencies have commented that they are very impressed, and they've said this in dialogue with the Finance Minister, who is doing a tremendous job and is a great person too, that they are seeing our financial commitments kept for the first time in many, many years.

Now isn't that a heck of a chastisement, if that's a word, of the previous government's record? That major bond-rating agencies, major lenders couldn't count on the assertions that the previous government was making when they had their meetings with these respected firms, being true.

The member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) says, trust me, you give me \$2 billion, I'm going to give you something back. And then—and I, quite rightly, I think, I cite the failure of the NDP in their history to actually keep their word. Then he tries to pin us down on when we're giving it back, when, in fact, he has no intentions of giving it back. No plan for lower taxes, just a plan for higher taxes.

So, you know, I take the advice of the member on wanting to know exactly when we're going to bring in more tax reductions. Because that's really what he's after, isn't it? He wants to know what other taxes do we plan to reduce, and he wants to know that now. But the fact of the matter is certain things, well, they just have to remain a mystery.

They say some relationships are better if there's a little mystery, and the member and I are going to have a little mystery in our relationship, on which taxes we're going to be reducing in the years ahead. I do assure him of one thing though: we will be reducing taxes. We will be putting more money back on the kitchen tables of Manitobans.

We are understanding, in our political organization, of the value of helping Manitobans, not hurting them. Of trusting them, not distrusting them. Of rewarding them for work, not punishing them. Of rewarding them and encouraging them in their efforts to create businesses and jobs and help others to find employment, not deterring that. And we will also lower the PST and make ourselves more competitive with surrounding jurisdictions that we will catch up to and pass on the economic front in the not-too-distant future.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** My questions, through you, will deal with the mining industry. However, I do have two observations without comment. One is the comments made by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) about the previous government are correct. And the carbon tax will cost \$9 million per year to implement, according to officials and the budget. So take that for what it is.

My question is about mining. The Premier is the minister responsible for interprovincial, federal relations. We have, in Manitoba, the federal minister—one minister, the Minister of Natural Resources, responsible for Natural Resources, and we have a federal Liberal budget that announced a national park, on top of the extension of the Thompson Nickel Belt, which is the largest and most high potential for future mining developments in Manitoba.

\* (16:40)

My question, through you, Mr. Chair, is, did we know that the federal government did not consult the First Nation communities that would be affected by this national park? We wonder if the Province was consulted, and if it was consulted, if—why they would allow this to stay on the record. And if they were not consulted by the federal government, why not condemn the national park the immediate moment it was announced, as, through you, Mr. Chair, the Premier will know, that even the mining capital flies to the best region, and the—even the suggestion of a national park on top of one of the world's largest ore deposits, potentially, is enough for that mining company to invest in other places.

And we're talking about Vale, a mining company located in São Paulo, Brazil, and they could just easily invest billions of dollars in Tanzania as they can in around Thompson, and what mining company's going to make the investments necessary, and it's billions of dollars over decades, if they even think that there's going to be a national park. That's why it's so important to disavow and insist there won't be a national park and encourage the federal government—and I don't care which federal government is in power—just not to mess around with the economic potential of Manitoba. There's lots of ways to protect the environment. Putting a national park on an ore body is not one of them.

Can the Premier tell us what he has done to deal with this situation?

**Mr. Pallister:** First of all, I wanted to congratulate the member for Assiniboia on his comments earlier today in respect of the tragedy in Saskatchewan. I think his comments were obviously heartfelt and that sharing of personal perspective, as he—as only he can, of our colleagues was touching and it was sincere, and I thank him for his comments. A rough time for a lot of people, and I think it's important to share those kinds of comments with one another and I appreciate them, and I thank him for that.

The mining issues, I think, in terms of specific details, I'd suggest, on the specifics of the park issue, we are on top of it, we are in dialogue with the federal government. We have a number of concerns, but I'll let the minister do her job on that one. That'll be the Sus Dev Estimates, and the member will get, you know, much more in-depth answers from the minister on that file at that point.

I would say to him that in terms of the real concerns we have about limiting factors in terms of the mining development in our province, one of those has been a lack of clarity around the consultative approaches that the previous government took or did not take when it came to certain projects. The—section 35 of the constitution outlines very clearly that First Nations communities, traditional lands, where they're impacted, that there must be a consultative process inclusive of those First Nations. We're not sure that the processes that are being proposed on this specific issue and generally are respectful of that duty as long as that is not clearly enunciated and understood, and we're going to have ongoing problems with respect to the proposals that come forward. That's going to make it more difficult for us to deal with, and it was

highlighted in the recent Fraser analysis, which, you know, we like to cite it when it's good for us and we don't like to cite it when it's bad for us. I would say the reality of the situation is we want to deal with the underlying issues that, in particular, that the mining industry, but specifically the prospecting aspects of that, want us to deal with.

One of those issues, generally, has been that lack of clarity around traditional lands. Where do these rules apply? How are they to be applied? For this reason, we moved to establish a group to look at developing mining protocols, prospecting protocols, co-chaired by former chief of Norway House, Ron Evans, and by former deputy premier, Jim Downey, to actually go out to actually meet with and respectfully inquire as to where the First Nations communities in our province—where relevant prospecting could be—could occur, which is many of them in the North, as the member knows, so that we could arrive at protocols that were understandable, that were, as much as possible—though that's difficult—uniform, so that when people are looking to invest in our province, in taking the risk of prospecting expenditure, that they don't have to go through a rigorous, confusing process and also so the First Nations communities don't feel inadequately prepared to deal with such proposals.

That's where we're at. I—I'll endeavour, if the member's interested, to get a progress report from the co-chairs so that I can get more updated information on progress to him, because I think it is—it's an important endeavour. I know he has great interest in this field and we have a great interest in making sure, as a province, that we pursue—in effective ways, that we pursue reductions in the barriers to development and to job creation.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Okay. Very quickly—and I'd like to thank the opposition for allowing me the opportunity to ask these questions. The mining industry used to be the third largest industry in Manitoba and it's not anymore, and it's doomed, it seems, to become less a part of the Manitoba economy. It is clear that the First Nations were not consulted in this federal announcement.

The nickel belt, by the way, extends underneath the Paleozoic limestone between Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Winnipeg, and it's just a matter of digging, really, and research and exploration.

But the process, by very laudable Manitobans—Jim Downey and Ron Evans, or Chief Ron Evans—are good people. But would it have not been better

to immediately say, no, federal government, no, minister for Manitoba? We're not going to allow you to put a national park on top of one of our great economic resources. You haven't consulted anyone provincially, politically, locally or First Nations. And development—if you want—you know, there's lots of other solutions.

I brought up an—this issue as a matter of urgent public importance at the end of the last session because it is urgently, publicly important.

And every day that goes by that it's not dealt with, or there—it's another day that we lose capital. Capital leaves Manitoba. Field season is being planned right now, and mining companies and the Manitoba geologic survey plan their surveys for May. And they go out and they dig, and they—I've worked with them one summer. It's hard work and it certainly will never be automated but they have to plan it. And they're not going to go where there's going to be a national park because, obviously, there's no mining in a national park.

\* (16:50)

I empathize with the Premier (Mr. Pallister). Like, I am just so frustrated on this file, that there's such poor public policy planning from the feds. And really, historically—I am going to be conducting my own investigation into the mining industry. It's going to be called *mindfulmining.com*, and I invite anyone to help participate who wishes. It's not a partisan issue; it's an issue of economic development.

Would the Premier right now say no to the national park on top of the Thompson Nickel Belt and so people at least will consider large capital investments in Manitoba and give hope to the people of Thompson that their smelter may find additional ore or that there will be additional mines? Please, can the minister—the Premier, through his—oh, and also, isn't the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) responsible for this file, or is it sustainability? Because it was the GET Minister that was answering these questions the other day. Thank you.

**Mr. Pallister:** So, just to clarify for the member: Sus Dev is responsible—Sustainable Development's responsible for any park application processes and Growth, Enterprise and Trade is—takes the lead on the mining stuff, so, obviously, those two ministers are interacting in respect of this federal idea that's been floated.

That being said, what we're getting from the industry is a really positive push to address the theme that the member's raising, certainly, today, which is of trying to get greater certainty in place around the whole processes of exploration, prospecting the ultimate mining projects. That's exactly what the First Nations leadership is telling, at least in the initial stages, and, as I said to the member, I'll undertake to get a progress report for him on that. But that's really what the members of the committee have heard from First Nations leadership, as well, that they don't feel—and it varies because the First Nations communities are tremendously varied—but, generally, they don't feel confident in being left to develop their own protocols as individual communities.

They would prefer to see some leadership and co-ordination so that, as has happened in BC, for example, or in the Yukon, more uniform approaches can be taken. So that, for example, if the member and I invest in a—we have a prospecting firm together and we go out to approach a First Nations community, both the First Nations leadership and our company will know that there are these agreed practices. These are the—what you can expect. If we're coming in there to prospect on their land, they need to know what the rules are. Are we going to disrupt certain traditional territories? Are we going to impact on—to any degree on sacred ground? Are we going to have the effect of initiating projects which to some degree would influence traditional practices, gathering, fishing, hunting, these types of things?

The—in British Columbia, their process, which is now, I think—if I'm right, it's about five years ago. They worked with the larger companies initially in forestry, but they saw a tremendous transferrable benefit on the forestry projects. They pulled together the major companies. They brought together the First Nations communities, leadership, they sat down, they arrived at expectations. They were common, then.

So, if we're going—you know, you may be looking to explore in three different traditional territories, maybe looking to have to have a relationship established and trust established with three different communities, but at least you didn't have three different sets of rules around everything. And the communities came together, they agreed on—it's not identical. I wouldn't want to create the impression that it's, you know, one set of rules for everybody, because there were variations for sure, because some of the communities had differences—they were based traditionally on fishing, for example,

in a couple of the coastal communities, whereas interior communities were not to that degree. So the rules weren't exactly the same, but the protocols were understood and they were fairly common throughout so that a company could go to BC and understand that it's not going to, for example, if it goes to work with one First Nation, be expected to pay a \$50,000 deposit in order to go out and take a look at creating some opportunities there.

There was also commonality that's been a—the members of the committee have to forgive me; it's been a couple years since I read that document, but I think there was also some understanding about job creation that would happen so that if you're going out there and you're doing prospecting, you're using First Nations community members for a lot of the work that's trainable work that you can go out and do, not just bringing in your own people and leaving the community with nothing to show for it.

So that's pretty exciting for us because if we can get—and we got a lot of compliments; our minister got a lot of compliments at the mining meeting down east here recently from mining industry people who really were supportive of what we're trying to get done here, bringing together First Nations' affected communities with leaders like former Chief Evans, Jim Downey, who care deeply about creating better wealth opportunities, better prosperity for our province. These are important endeavours, and there's a lot more that needs to get done.

**Mr. Kinew:** When will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) come forward with a budget and a work plan for Efficiency Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'll just say to the member that the work that we're doing is in progress, as he knows. Just tabled the legislation, and we're looking to move forward with next steps fairly soon. The hiring of the CEO, the appointment of a—selection, appointment of board members and that type of thing, so that process is under way.

**Mr. Kinew:** What is the timeline for the appointment of the CEO and the board for Efficiency Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** In due course and with the fullness of time and the expectation of achievement in the not-too-distant future.

**Mr. Kinew:** So when will Efficiency Manitoba be a fully functional organization?

**Mr. Pallister:** I know that's a rhetorical question because we all know that the NDP wasn't a fully functional organization for-ever, so that's a hard question to answer.

I would—and just so the member doesn't think that was excessively partisan, I want to share with him that during the divisive days of the 1990s, people would—when they asked me my party affiliations, I'd say I'm not the member of any organized political party. I'm a Progressive Conservative.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, that one fell a little flat. The backbenchers must be a little tired after a long day in Estimates—[interjection] Yes, I'm sure future generations will look back at the Hansard and say this was gold. Of course, I'm saying that sarcastically, but I'm sure the Premier actually believes he'll be vindicated by future generations.

It's just interesting. We know that Efficiency Manitoba—there was the act. It, you know, caused some division with the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) who we heard from earlier in this committee. And so, I am very curious about the work that's being undertaken by this organization. It's work that, you know, legislation has been proclaimed for, that—I think it was the minister for—well, he's the House leader for the government side anyways—made an announcement on. And I don't think I'm breaking any confidence to say that I think some media members were kind of scratching their head after the announcement. I'm not sure what exactly had been announced because there was not a budget or a board or a—really an organization behind the name.

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

### HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

\* (15:00)

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

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

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Just while staff are finding their way into the Chamber, it's been agreed between myself and my friend from Minto that this

section will recess at 4:30—unless it concludes sooner—to deal with a meeting. I understand that there are individuals who have walked quite a long distance from their home community to talk about issues around methamphetamine. I've extended the invitation to the member opposite to join me at that meeting, and so he has also graciously agreed to. There—we'll recess at 4:30.

So, by way of explanation that I won't have to make later on. And, while I have the opportunity, I would welcome staff of the department: Dan Skwarchuk, our CEO for finance; Karen Herd, the deputy minister; and Brock Wright, who is leading Shared Health, which I believe that the member has potentially questions about today.

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

Is it been agreed to the critic that we recess—does the committee—that we recess at 4:30? [Agreed]

So does the minister—okay, as previously agreed, questions for the department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** I am going to continue dealing with some of the issues more directed at the Department of Health itself rather than the regional health authorities.

On page 123 of the supplementary Estimates book, it shows a substantial reduction, about \$1.7 million in ancillary programs and the note says "modify orthotics program to align benefits with other Canadian jurisdictions." Can the minister explain what is being cut, and can the minister also tell us when those cuts will be taking place?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Before I respond to the member's question, I would like to read into the record a response—some responses that we have from last week's questions that were outstanding.

The member had a question on who are the ministerial board appointments on the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety, MIPS board of directors. There are to be five ministerial appointments. Currently, there are four positions that are vacant. The one currently filled is the chairperson of the board, Ms. Jan Curry.

The second question that the member had was—or, one of the questions, sorry—can the minister provide a breakdown of the vacancies by departmental sub-appropriation. As noted last week, there are 123.15 EFTs in the department,

and for clarification that was the value as at February 28th, 2018, which, I think, is the latest that we have.

The requested breakdown of the EFTs by division are as follows: 21-1, Administration and Finance, there are 17 EFTs that are vacant; 21-2, Provincial Policy and Programs, there are 26.1 EFTs vacant; 21-3, Health Workforce Secretariat, there are 29.8 EFTs vacant; 21-4, Active Living, Indigenous Relations, Population and Public Health, there are 37.65 EFTs vacant; 21-5 Regional Policy and Programs, there are 6.6 EFTs vacant; and 21-6 Mental Health and Addictions, Primary Health Care and Seniors, there are six EFTs vacant.

I have not added those up to ensure that they square with the total of 123.15, but the member opposite will, I'm sure, do that either today or tomorrow and let me know if my numbers—or the numbers I've been provided are not congruent to that.

There was a question on can the minister provide the number of vacancies in the department as of April 1st, 2017 and April 1st, 2018. There were 143.45 EFTs of vacancies as at April 1st, 2017, and, as previously discussed there—oh, sorry, and there are 134.77 EFTs of vacancies as of April 1st, 2018. And for clarification as—and this was discussed last week, this excludes vacancies under the Selkirk Mental Health Centre as those staff are considered separate from the accounting of the department and covered under Health Services Insurance Fund.

The member asked, can the minister provide the number of vacancies at Selkirk mental health as at April 1st, 2017, and April 1st, 2018. There were 46.1 EFTs of vacancies at April 1st, 2017, at Selkirk mental health and 51.3 EFTs of vacancies at April 1st, 2018.

Almost done. The member asked, can the minister provide— or, identify how many EFTs of the 746.45 EFTs in the 2018-19 Supplementary Information for Legislative Review in rural locations and there was some confusion on this, of which I will take responsibility and apologize. However, there are a total of 47.6 EFTs who work in rural locations. In Environmental Health, there are 24, in—for medical officers of health, there's 2.6; the Provincial Nursing Stations, there are 20; and Regional Policy and Programs, there is one. And I'm sure that the diligent Clerk's office, as diligent as they are, will remove these from the outstanding questions that we are committed to responding to to the member.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for providing that. And the new question, then, is for the minister to explain what is being cut from the orthotics program being funded by the department and when those cuts are going to occur.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member will know—and I thank him for the question—that, as part of a variety of different reviews that we've been undertaking in Health, not the least of which is the KPMG report, which—I believe a good part of it's been released already, but the bulk of it, I believe, is going to be released at the end of May. I think that was the scheduled release for that. There was a lot of work in terms of alignment with other jurisdictions across Canada.

And so I understand that there's quite a difference when it comes to the coverage of sort of acute orthotic devices in Manitoba as compared to other provinces and that there will be an announcement relatively shortly in terms of how we are aligning our services there with other provinces, as there is a misalignment. Now—and that certainly is part of the work that a variety of the different reports have undergone, looking at other provinces, making sure we're well aligned and there's justifications for programs and, where there are differences, why those differences exist.

So this is a part of that ongoing work, and the announcement on the details of that, I think, will be coming relatively shortly as we work with the health-care system on providing the details to them.

**Mr. Swan:** The printed amount on page 123 suggests that ancillary programs will be cut again by about \$1.7 million. What will the actual cut be to the orthotics which are provided by the Province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, as stated in the previous answer, there was a review done, not just in KPMG and the health sustainability and innovation review, but in other reviews as well, looking at the different coverages that are provided in other provinces and seeing where there's misalignment and maybe why there is misalignment where we're a specific outlier with other provinces. You know, we would look at the clinical rationale for that; we would look at the different reasons why we would be misaligned with other provinces. And sometimes there might be good reason, depending on the nature of the population in Manitoba as compared to other provinces or simply the clinical experience that we have within Manitoba, but often there isn't a rationale



for it, or a reason. And so, of course, it's our responsibility to ensure that those precious Health dollars, as they are, are spent using the best evidence that we have both in Manitoba and in other provinces.

And so, we know that this particular program will be coming in alignment—more in alignment with other provinces in Canada in this coming fiscal year, and the member will hear more about that as we work with our health-care providers in the health-care system to make that announcement.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, that's all well and good, and we'll await the minister's announcement on the cuts to orthotics, but these are the departmental Estimates, and I'm going to ask again: Is it the plan to cut \$1.7 million from orthotics, or is there a further adjustment within ancillary programs that would make that number higher or lower?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, he sees the budget number there and it's printed as we expect it to be, and there'll be, you know, different adjustments and changes that happen within the health-care system over the current fiscal year to ensure that we meet those numbers.

Obviously, health care is a difficult department, sometimes, to manage when it comes to finances and, you know, we don't want to be overly prescriptive on finances, but there is a reality to it that the significant part of the budget, the provincial budget in any province, is allocated to health care. In Manitoba, I believe it's 42 per cent. That would not be wildly different than in other provinces, Mr. Chairperson, and so for the Province to need—meet its financial obligations, of course, the Department of Health has to meet its financial obligations as well.

And so obviously the primary role of Health in any department—in any province in Canada, is to provide services to its residents as prescribed by law federally and provincially, and certainly I believe we're working hard every day to meet those requirements in Manitoba, but we have an obligation to remain within our budgets as well. The last couple of years, we've been able to do that in the Department of Health. That's not always been the case in years gone by, particularly in looking at a more sustainable model of funding health care. That's not always easy.

I'm sure the member opposite at some point might make discussions about the point that we're somewhat under budget in the 'ask'—last fiscal year. But when you look at the overall budget of Health being 6.2 or so billion dollars, the percentage by which a department is either over or under is close—this year was close to about 2 per cent, which I think is sort of, in the accounting world—of which neither I or the member opposite have spent much time, but those closer to me around this table have—would, you know, say that's sort of a targeted variance for entities to be within when it comes to that fiscal range.

And so we know we have a responsibility to provide quality health care. I believe that our province does do that, and we're working, of course, to make it better and more effective and more efficient, but we also have a responsibility to be within the health appropriations and to live within those appropriations. That's certainly—I and my officials take very seriously and we certainly expect to live within these appropriations as well.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I know that his department and his officials do take this very seriously, which is why I know that they would've carefully determined the amount of the cut to the orthotics program. I'm going to suggest, even though the minister hasn't answered the question now the three times I've asked it, I'm going to suggest the minister, then, doesn't know that answer today but can easily find it.

I'm going to ask him to undertake to provide to us how much is being cut from the orthotics program in Manitoba for the—this fiscal year.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, certainly, any changes to the orthotics program to become aligned with other provinces in Canada, as has been suggested by a variety of different reports when it comes to alignment and ensuring that our services, you know, are there for justifiable reasons, will be discussed publicly. Obviously, we need to give notification to those who are providers in the health-care system, and so this is not going to be a secret or in any way remain a secret, but there is a process under which those individuals have to be notified within the health-care system.

So I can—I think what I can commit to the member is that there'll be a public announcement and certainly providers will be notified in terms of any changes when it comes to orthotics or, of course, anything else in the health-care system, and we undertake to do that.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, we're in a public process right now called departmental Estimates, and I've asked the minister for an undertaking. I think the details of the undertaking are quite clear: to let us know how much is being cut from the orthotics program. I'm not asking for all the details, which the minister tells me will be forthcoming, but in these Estimates I'm asking for this because it is an important question.

Will the minister give that undertaking or is he simply going to refuse to give that answer to me as the Health critic in Health Estimates?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I don't want the member to take this personally. It's not that I'm trying to be evasive with him individually. As I've mentioned before, I quite like him as an individual. But the issue really is about ensuring that there's proper notification within the health-care system. The member sees what the targeted budgets are.

This would not be unlike other appropriations under his former government where, you know, a budget comes forward and then announcements are made, not all exactly on that budget day. I think I remember asking questions more on the Justice side, of course, than the Health side about different announcements that were in the budget and appropriations, and would often hear from the ministers that those answers would come in the fullness of time.

And so I'm being more detailed, I think, than what—some of the answers I received from former ministers of Health when the department is prepared in terms of notification and the work within the system for those who are most directly affected by any changes on this or any other program. It won't be a secret. It won't be done in the dark of night. There'll be a public notification through health-care providers. They'll know what any new changes are.

But, certainly, on a more general basis, I've indicated to the member we're looking to ensure that there is alignment across the health-care system, not—to not be an outlier when it comes to different provinces. And I can assure him that Manitoba, when it comes to the provision of orthotics, will be well placed when it is compared to the vast majority of provinces in Canada.

**Mr. Swan:** Mr. Chair, I think the record will be very clear that the minister is refusing for the answer, which I expect he may not have today. But the minister is refusing the—to provide an undertaking to

give information which I'm entitled to ask for as the Health critic.

But we'll move on. We'll await the minister's announcement. I mean, the minister needs to know that his own departmental Estimates book shows that there will be a substantial cut and the description is: modify orthotics program to align benefits with other Canadian jurisdictions—which we know in this government's parlance means a cut. But he's refused to provide details, and we'll just have to wait, and I guess we won't receive that in the course of Estimates.

I'll move on to another item on that page. There is a budget of a \$3-million cut in expenditures for out-of-province medical care. This is for Manitobans who require services outside of Manitoba. This has every appearance—and I know this from my own experience as a minister—of a cut which has been imposed by Treasury Board. It's a round, \$3-million decrease at a time when we know costs are increasing.

Is—does the minister have a rationale for this \$3-million cut, or is this simply an accounting exercise by his department?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I don't want to be accused of being someone who needs to get the last word. I think I may have accused former ministers of that when I was in opposition. But I do want to respond to the member's insinuation that I was refusing to answer a question. I simply don't think that that is the case, Mr. Chairperson.

I'll use a different example if he doesn't like the example that we're on now. I mean, he'll see at different places, whether it's maybe an increase in funding for certain Pharmacare drugs, that we wouldn't always be in a position to announce which drugs might be going onto the formulary. We might not know at that particular time, though there can be an expectation that over the course of the—over the year, there are new drugs that are going to be moving onto the formulary based on things that are before CADTH or the pan-Canadian price negotiations.

And so, often within a budget, there is that forward-looking estimate in terms of, well, what could that expenditure be this year if things are changed or improved? And so—and that's done based on best information at the time. And certainly the issue of what drugs might come on to a listing would be one of that. The department will look, going forward, in the context of a year and say, how can

we best budget based on what we think might be recommended out of CADTH and then the pan-Canadian review, and what implications does that have for our budget? And they'll put that within the budget even though at this particular moment I may not be able to say to the member opposite that, you know, this drug or another drug is going to be coming onto the market, because it specifically, you know, relies on a different process to be fulfilled.

So I'm not trying to be evasive with the member, although he might feel that I am. And I've sat in his chair, and so I know what that feels like at times. But, really, this is an issue of ensuring that we provide good notice and work with the health-care providers. But, you know, there's an expectation of change, and our best estimate is that these are the estimates and how they'll be reflected in the year after that change.

\* (15:20)

So I hope the member isn't feeling that I'm trying to be overly evasive with him. He'll certainly know about the changes at or close to the same time as his—everyone else does if there are changes forthcoming to bring us in alignment with other provinces and he'll have ample opportunity to either appraise those changes or to question those changes in this forum or other forums in the Legislature and the public.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, if the minister could answer my question about the out-of-province expenditures.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I mean, there's a variety of different reasons that things can change when it comes to budget appropriations, and the member will know from Justice when he was the minister it can be sometimes volume issues, it can sometimes be pricing issues, it can be national issues that are impacting local budgetary funding decisions in the province of Manitoba.

Certainly, we know that there are many people who are outside of the province who need support at any given time and we have different obligations in terms of the funding for that, Mr. Chairperson, and we take those very seriously.

I would say that we know—and while I have this opportunity—that there are far too many people when they are travelling, as an example, and travelling abroad, that don't take the proper health insurance that they need, and I think I knew that as an MLA and often would hear those stories, but as Health Minister I'm, I would say shocked and really quite concerned at how many people do travel outside of

the province without proper health insurance. And our office hears the stories so often, that people who no doubt felt that, you know, nothing is going to happen and didn't have time to get the insurance or were concerned about the cost, or whatever reason, leave the province and end up in a situation where they're stuck with a significant bill from another country, most often the United States, and it's very difficult, if not impossible, of course, under our rules and regulations, to repair all of that when an individual comes back.

And so this is a—while not the most public forum in the world, it certainly is an opportunity to encourage those individuals who need health insurance to ensure that they receive it—or, sorry—insurance, that they get it before they leave Canada and are travelling abroad.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes. We're aware of the pressures of price and volume and, in fact, that's noted in several footnotes in the Estimates on various headings. In this case, we have a decrease of \$3 million.

Is the minister saying that the price of care in other jurisdictions is going down or that the volume of Manitobans travelling is down, or what is the rationale for cutting \$3 million out of the printed Estimates?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, this particular Estimates, I think, is probably more directly related to Manitobans who are referred out of the province by a physician in the province, and so, obviously, the vast majority of times where an individual can receive a treatment in Manitoba, that's the—that's preferred, but where a service isn't available in Manitoba or there are other extenuating circumstances, an individual might be referred out of the province of Manitoba to a jurisdiction where there is the ability to be provided that service.

My point previously was more a general point about how we need to ensure there's greater awareness, to the extent awareness is the issue for Manitobans who are travelling out of the country, to ensure that they have proper health insurance. You know, there are so many times, and particularly it's true with young people, that I think that they either don't have an awareness or often they feel, well, they're young and healthy and haven't really experienced the health-care system and feel that insurance isn't necessary, even though for them it would be particularly cheap, in many cases, and they travel abroad without the right insurance and then we hear about it in our department because, of course,

they're searching for requests and searching for ways to have those expenses paid for once they've incurred a health-care crisis outside of the province. And those are heartbreaking to deal with, but the reality is it's not something our department can always do to backfill costs that have been incurred for somebody who is travelling without insurance. So that was my point on the previous response, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, this last question, the minister seemed to be saying that this amount for the out-of-province health-care services is for Manitobans sent out for treatment, but the question before that, he went on at length about Manitobans who are on holidays or otherwise out of the jurisdiction who wind up needing health-care treatment.

Is it correct that the out-of-province amount includes both of those circumstances, includes any Manitoban who travels outside of the province, who receives medical treatment, a portion of which is then compensated by the Province of Manitoba? Is that correct?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, it's a little bit of both, I understand, Mr. Chairperson.

Those who are travelling to another province and they find themselves needing health care in another province, that province will bill back the Province of Manitoba for those particular health-care services for somebody who has the appropriate health status in Manitoba. It's also for, I understand, those who get a referral out of Manitoba for a procedure that may not be available in the province for—or for other extenuating circumstances.

My point earlier was to use the opportunity to try to ensure that those who are travelling—and I think it's probably true for other provinces too. There's extended health insurance, I think, that might be available, but certainly outside of Canada, to ensure that there's proper health-care services that are provided because there are far too many cases of individuals who are finding themselves out of country with significant health bills. And I think a big part of that is simply either taking a chance, but taking a chance based on not knowing how expensive the health-care system can be.

And for Canadians, we don't always see the costs of the health-care system directly, of course, except for, you know, certain particular services, and so I think it can be quite a surprise for Canadians when they get a health-care bill. The health-care bill, you know, might have been as expensive in Manitoba

had they been paying for the bill if we didn't have the health-care services and coverage we do, but of course Canadians don't often see that. And so I think there is a propensity to sort of take the chance, not knowing how devastating those costs can be.

**Mr. Swan:** All right. So, the minister still hasn't really explained how it is that there's—the budget contains an expected decrease of \$3 million. Again, is this just an accounting exercise, or is there something in particular the minister can put on the record to help us understand why that cost would be \$3 million less in the upcoming year?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, this one is particularly, you know, based on, sort of, expectations within the department. And so the system will, as it leads up to a budget—and really, this member knows a budget cycle is really all year long—but will sort of look at what happened last year and what their expectations might be for this year.

And so that's—that would be true for CancerCare, and that would be true for the variety of the different places within the health-care system that provide different services. And they would do an analysis year over year, but what they might be expecting in any particular year.

\* (15:30)

So, on this particular line item, I think the feeling was, based on past experience, that there would be less people who would be needing out-of-province medical treatment than in previous years either because they are being referred out or because they're in another province when they need to access medical care, and so it's really based on past experience.

I think perhaps there had been surpluses run in previous years as a result of those numbers being lower than might have been expected, so it's clear that when we're doing our Estimates, and I'm sure there was the same thing when the member was a minister, you try to give the best real-case scenario you're expecting coming out of the year. And so this was the result of historical data that showed that there had been less individuals being referred out of the province and so our expectations of this would be closer to the actual number, in terms of expenditures, than previous years had been.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay. So one last question on this front. Has there been any change or is there going to be any change in this fiscal year on how residents of Manitoba are then compensated for insured hospital

services they require while they're temporarily out of Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I mean it's a good question, and I think we always need to look at how other provinces do referrals in province and outside of the province. It's certainly an area I think that all of us, as provinces, are struggling to ensure that those who need health-care services within their jurisdiction can primarily stay within their jurisdictions. I think for patients who don't—who need a particular service, going to another province is not just an inconvenience but for their family it can be a particular hardship because they want to be with the individual where they're getting care. So I think all of us—all of our provinces, all Health ministers are always looking at ways where we can insure that we minimize how often individuals have to be moved out of the province for particular care.

So that's—it's a good point the member raises. I think we need to look at that in a very careful way and a very specific way to ensure that we're trying to provide the services close to home as we can for individuals. And for those who live in the North, of course, this would be an obvious sort of a thing because quite often—the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) raised a question today about an individual coming from the North for service here in the southern part of Manitoba and that's a hardship. It can be a real challenge, but that hardship doesn't just exist from north to south, it can exist from any part of Manitoba and if they have to go to another part of Canada for service.

So the member raises a good point about needing to look at how we refer people out of province.

**Mr. Swan:** So just so I'm clear that the minister has asked to review the way that residents of Manitoba are compensated for insured hospital services they require while out of province, or this is just something the minister would like to do at some point in the future.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, there's lots of reviews that are going on in Health and certainly when we talk about those reviews—I think the member will know we had the KPMG health sustainability and innovation review. He's seen a good portion of that. He'll see more of it when it's released fully at the end of May and I know that he'll look forward to that release, and I—you know, I know there's always criticism when reviews are done, but I think you don't learn if you're not looking both internally and externally and I think

often in Health—I'm not saying this was particularly true under the former government, but it might be true for lots of governments—there's a reluctance to have that look and to analyze whether or not things can actually be done better, because along with that comes criticism. People who feel the status quo is comfortable or is the best way to do it will often reject or be concerned about how services are being reviewed, but I don't think that we should look at it that way.

I think we should consider any review to be just that, a potential way to do things better, to look at how other jurisdictions are doing it and that we shouldn't feel threatened by that. So I take the member's point that reviews are happening across the system, but I certainly don't think that that's a negative thing.

**Mr. Swan:** Does the department still track how many Manitobans are currently without a family doctor?

**Mr. Goertzen:** And just to conclude for the member, he'll know that there are a variety of agreements that happen between different provinces. We know that Saskatchewan will pay, as an example, for patients who are accessing the Flin Flon hospital. We had some discussions about Flin Flon today. And there are different agreements between Kenora, for example, who will often—their residents in Ontario will find their services in Winnipeg.

And so those agreements are used to try to make sense—to try to ensure that we don't simply use the borders of a provincial boundary as some sort of wall for Canadians, even if they're not residents of Manitoba, to get care. And so we have those agreements between jurisdictions, both to the east and to the west of us, and even to the North, when you talk about Iqaluit and services that can be provided in Manitoba.

And so, really, all around Manitoba we look for ways to try to link up to partners. That could be extended even to the southern part of Manitoba, where there's an agreement with Altru, which the member will, of course, heard about because of past situations that have made the news, not just in recent years but for many years over the last couple of decades.

So whether you're looking to the east or to the west or to the north or to the south, there are those agreements that are in place. I do want to say specifically for the member though, there has not

been any changes in this appropriation in terms of how individuals are referred out of Manitoba. The change was simply an issue of volume expectation based on historical data.

**Mr. Swan:** As I just asked, does the government still keep records of how many Manitobans are currently without a family doctor?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, you know, the issue of doctors and placement with patients has been one that's been a challenge, I think, for every jurisdiction in Canada. While I do think that there's been significant advancement for patients in this regard, nationally and certainly locally in Manitoba, we know that there is more work to do.

There's been good success, I think, in recruiting some doctors, particularly into the Interlake last year. We had some announcements there, and that's really the credit of local regional health authorities and communities, although I know that Shared Health will play a larger role in not so much doctor recruitment per se but ensuring that there's, you know, sharing of information and best practices when it comes to the recruiting of doctors, which, of course, then directly relates to the ability for an individual to find a physician.

I know this is something that was a challenge for the previous NDP government as well. In 2011, I believe they made a commitment that every Manitoban would have a family doctor by 2016. I don't believe that that election commitment were met or the member would not have to be asking this question. And so it's been a challenge.

\* (15:40)

We didn't make that commitment, but we certainly did commit to trying to work to ensure that there was co-ordination within the health-care system on the recruitment of doctors, and then hopefully that, of course, would bring down the numbers of Manitobans who are looking for family physicians, and as it relates to the Interlake in particular, there was some good success there—wonderful communities, of course, attracting doctors, which is the big part of why doctors decide to practise in an area. The nature of the practice is, of course, maybe the primary issue, but there's a practical reality of trying to ensure that the communities are welcoming communities.

So I can certainly tell the member that there's been good advancement on family doctors. There are more family doctors in Manitoba today than there's

ever been in the province of Manitoba. And while the NDP were not able to fulfill their election commitment of more than half a decade ago to ensure that every Manitoban would have a family doctor, we do believe that the efforts that are being made now are certainly advancing and making it easier for Manitobans to get a family doctor.

**Mr. Swan:** The question was whether the department is actually still tracking how many Manitobans are currently without a family doctor.

Could the minister please answer the question?

**Mr. Goertzen:** There's a lot of different tracking that happens in a department.

I—not to hearken back to the old days, but I used to—I think I asked the member opposite when he was the Attorney General about the PRISM system in the Department of Justice and the tracking of the number of cases that Crown prosecutors had. It was always interesting information until he told me that it wasn't available anymore.

And so sometimes, I guess, things change. That would be true, I suppose, for other things as well. Recidivism in the Department of Justice was always an interesting discussion because it spoke to the potential safety of the community. But the Attorney General at the time—the member opposite—the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) then decided to change the definition of recidivism to make the numbers look better previously under his watch. The definition of recidivism was whether or not somebody was convicted—sorry, charged of an offence within two years after being released from a provincial facility, and he then changed it to whether or not somebody was actually convicted of offence within two years.

And the upshot of that was, the slower the justice system was, the more likely recidivism would go down because it would take somebody so long to get—not charged, but to get convicted, that there was actually a perverse incentive—present—perverse incentive, sorry, to slow down the justice system to drive down recidivism.

But, certainly, within our department there is much tracking that happens and, yes, we do continue to track the number of individuals who are seeking a doctor.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that eventual answer.

Can the minister undertake to provide how many Manitobans are actively looking for a family doctor?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I first want to inform the member—but all members of this committee that, despite my request for a recess at 4:30 to meet the walkers who were coming from northern Manitoba to talk about addiction, that there's been some delay with the walkers. I don't know what the nature of the delay is, but walking can be tough, I suppose, to estimate in terms of time.

So we will not have to recess at 4:30, so the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and I will be able to spend an additional half an hour together to have this discussion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** So I just wanted to—before we continue to proceed 'til 5 o'clock, with—the will to the—for the committee to go 'til 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Goertzen:** And just to continue, I think the member was asking about us providing details on the number of Manitobans who were seeking a family physician—a doctor. I'm certainly willing to make that undertaking for him as the department continues to track that. And so we'll provide him that.

And I'm sure he'll have more questions in terms of the number of doctors—a record number of doctors who are currently in the province of Manitoba. But he may want to defer that line of questioning until we have provided the actual numbers of those who are waiting for a doctor.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for providing that undertaking. I presume that the family doctor program—a Family Doctor Finder program is still operating, so I would ask the minister to undertake to provide updated statistics for the end of the fiscal year, and I'll put that on the record what I'm looking for and then the minister can respond.

I understand the Family Doctor Finder has in the past maintained statistics about the number of Manitobans who register with the Family Doctor Finder. They have tracked how many of those people are matched within 30 days of registration, and matched—or provided information on exactly how many of those people had actually been matched up with a doctor. I'm asking the minister to provide that information for the Family Doctor Finder program for the last fiscal year, of course ending on March 31st, 2018.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I understand, certainly. I think the member's looking for the number of individuals who

register with doctor finder Manitoba, and we can provide that for him. We're only a little bit beyond the year end for last year, and so there might be a bit of gap. I'm not sure they will have compiled the statistics for the end of the last fiscal year, but we can provide him the data as it currently exists.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that, and I understand that his department will do the best they can do, given the fiscal year has just ended.

If I could also ask for an undertaking as to the number of doctors that said they were still open to accepting new patients. And, again, if I can ask for that undertaking as of April 1st, 2018, that would make the most sense.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I think we can provide information, certainly, on the aggregate in terms of doctors who are open to taking new patients. I'm advised, and I certainly know this from living in a, not a small community, but a smaller community than Winnipeg, that local doctors in smaller communities are sometimes reluctant to be specific and to provide public information about their openness to take new patients for, I imagine, a variety of different reasons. But I think that the information exists in the aggregate.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, that's understood, and it's accepted not every doctor might choose to register with the doctor finder service. So I think we're—I think we agree on what's being undertaken.

I do want to talk a little bit more, then, about doctors. On page 125 of the Estimates book, there's a—of course, the estimate of expenditure for physician services of \$1.37 billion in the upcoming year, a 2.73 per cent increase over the year before.

If I can just get the minister to confirm, first of all, what exactly does that cover? Is that every doctor who bills Manitoba Health and doctors who are employed by Manitoba Health, but on a salary basis, or is there a better way to describe what's contained in that envelope of funding?

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I'm advised from officials, Mr. Chairperson, that it would essentially be all physicians who are registered in Manitoba, which would include fee-for-service physicians, contract physicians with the department, doctors in the RHAs and the northern medical units as well.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that. And the increase of 2.7 per cent is described, as we've already

seen in a couple of other areas, on price and volume increases anticipated based on existing contract. What are the increases taking effect or that took effect April 1, 2018, in the rates being paid to those physicians who bill Manitoba Health on a fee-for-service basis?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So the member will likely know from his research now is—as the Justice critic, it came as—I don't know if it's a surprise, but it's not something I spent a lot of time looking at in opposition. But about \$1 billion of the expenditures of Health go to doctors to provide their services, and approximately \$1 billion of taxpayers' money goes to nurses to provide their services, and so, very quickly you've made up \$2 billion of the \$6-billion budget. So the member's right to sort of hone in on a particular area of significant cost increase there.

So the increase is essentially as a result of contractual obligations that we have with doctors, that being made up of a general rate increase of 1 per cent, market adjustments of 1 per cent and a special adjustment of 0.6 per cent, accumulating to the 2.6 per cent. So the bill that relates to public sector wages that freezes the salaries for two years, of course, is a bit of a rolling bill in that it doesn't kick in until contracts have actually expired, so it's staggered in its effect on different sectors within the public sector based on where they were on the contractual calendar, as it were, when contracts were expiring.

So, when it comes to doctors in Manitoba, this, I believe, is the final year of their contract, and so they're still under the 2.6 per cent increase, and then the public sector bill, when it comes to wages, will take effect for them, starting at the culmination of the contract after this year.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, and I appreciate, in the departmental Estimates, it's not like having a certain number of employees earning a certain amount of money, because there is no guarantee of how much any particular physician will bill the department. So I appreciate that even though the Estimates are printed, it's understood that that amount may vary. If doctors are busier, then they will submit more requests for payment, which will be paid no matter what is printed on the Estimates.

But the point I'm getting at is that the minister has confirmed that the amount being paid to physicians for identical work is increasing by 2.6 per cent, so virtually all of the increase year to

year is because of the additional remuneration being paid to physicians. Is that a fair thing to say?

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

So, essentially, the increase is as a result of the contractual changes, but I wouldn't want to leave the member with the impression that there may not be volume increases in certain areas. I think what those who are putting together the budget find from year to year is that the mix of services within the overall expenditures can change and because they're billed at differential rates it doesn't mean that—so for—not every service is—provides the same billing as the next service, and so there can be changes in volume and support for that volume even within the same global amount, if the—even if the global amount hasn't changed because the mixture of services provided within there might change, just based on historical patterns or past experience.

And so, yes, the number in terms of the contractual amount essentially accounts for the increase in expenditure, but that isn't to mean that there won't be volume increases in a variety of different places because experience might be that there is volume decreases in other places and the mixture of that expenditure differs.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay. This next question may sound incredibly easy, but I'm going to give the minister a heads-up that it's not.

How do we determine how many physicians are actually practising at any give time in the province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I think essentially what I'm advised from officials is that those who are registered as doctors and are given a billing number, that they are essentially counted, then, as practising in the province, although the member will know, and this would be true for lawyers, I suppose, too, there's a degree of independence, right, in terms of how much work one takes on. That may not be true in a big firm where you have certain billable hours that you have to meet, but certainly—for lawyers, that is—but certainly doctors, you know, can set somewhat of their own pace, depending on how many people they're taking on. And so that can be changed as a result of the personal life circumstances for a doctor, that can change based on their age, you know, and how much they want to work. You know, there are probably tax implications in terms of how much doctors can make, and I imagine that that factors into



some of this, as well, though that's not the world that I live in.

\* (16:00)

I imagine all of those things take place. But, essentially, you are counted as a doctor in the province if you are licensed to practise and you have obtained a billing number.

**Mr. Swan:** All right, I think the minister and I are on the same page on this. I think that is an appropriate measure. I—every doctor who's licensed and practising in Manitoba is recorded by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. They keep their records accessible and regularly up to date.

Is there something I'm missing, though? I presume that every doctor who's licensed and practising in Manitoba who's on the college register also has a billing number. But, if I'm incorrect in that, could—can the minister in consultation with his staff please let me know that?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I'm going to try to repeat what I've heard—not from the member, but from officials. So, if I get it wrong, I'll be clarified, I'm sure.

Doctors who are registered with the college are counted within the physician numbers in Manitoba. They may not all take a billing number if they—for example, a chief medical officer may not be billing because they're not seeing patients, per se; they're more involved in public health generally. And then, those pathologists, for example, wouldn't be doing a specific fee for a service.

So not every—we don't believe that every doctor in Manitoba would have a billing number, even though, I suppose, they're all eligible to get one if they chose to.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I think the minister's correct in that. There may be doctors who are licensed to practise who—but the ones who are not billing are likely those who are employed by the province to do specific tasks.

So, again, I think we're in agreement on that point. And, again, for someone to be on the register of the college, they're paying insurance, which I suppose would give us some satisfaction they must be generating some income as a physician, because why else would you be paying the insurance. So that's helpful.

I see that on page 125 of the Estimates, there's also an amount paid out to Other Professionals. Can the minister just encapsulate what—which other health-care professionals, then, would receive payment? And I presume this is fee for service. But, again, if I'm misstating that, if the minister can just put on the record—this \$31.1 million in compensation for Other Professionals, what exactly does that entail?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So my understanding of those other professionals are chiropractics—chiropractors, sorry—optometrists and oral surgeons.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that. Now, we see an—under physician recruitment or retention program, there's a decrease. The decrease, on print, is about \$400,000 and the note underneath says the elimination of Physician Relief Fund, with money being re-profiled.

First of all, can the minister explain, why was the Physician Relief Fund eliminated to begin with?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So my understanding is that that reduction is in relation to the elimination of the Physician Relief Fund for—in the province. Member will know, of course, that there are many challenges when it comes to doctor recruitment or retention, not just in the North but maybe specifically in the North, and that continues to be a challenge.

It certainly was under the 17 years under his government, and it is in all provinces, I believe, in Manitoba that have remote areas in relation to their province. And so it can always be a challenge to recruit doctors to the North. That can be a combination of the issue of the type of practice they have, the number of people they're able to practise with, or it can be a function of simply not being the right fit in terms of lifestyle for a physician or for a physician's family.

So, while I wish that there was an easy solution to that problem, as I'm sure every Health minister in Canada does or every former Health minister in Canada did, that challenge continues.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, and I'm not suggesting for a minute that it isn't a challenge to be able to recruit and to retain physicians, especially in certain areas of the province.

The question I have is with regard to the specific statement in the supplementary 'estimates' that the Physician Relief Fund is being eliminated.

Can the minister just say exactly what that fund was intended to do and why it has been eliminated by the government?

\*(16:10)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I—there are a number of different initiatives that governments have taken over the last several years, both here in Manitoba and across Canada, to try to deal with the issue of doctor shortages, in the North in particular, but maybe more generally in their provinces. And lots of different programs have not found the success that one might expect, and maybe that's—you know, although I think the pendulum is swinging a little bit and of—or the balance, I should say, is maybe becoming more equal.

That's been a challenge in provinces because doctors can really practise anywhere that they want in Canada. They're highly valued professionals, highly valued parts of a community, and so I think that that's part of what the challenge continues to be for every province. You need to offer more than just the nature of a practice. For a doctor to come to a rural or remote community it has to be a good fit for that particular doctor and their family, and so those programs that are sometimes developed don't always—aren't always a good fit in terms of doctor recruitment and retention or might not be as you might expect them to be, may not be as successful as you'd hope they would be, when they are created. So you're often challenged with looking for different programs and meeting with doctors as they leave different areas to determine why it is that they decided not to stay or why doctors decided not to come to a particular area, but that's a continuing challenge.

But I think as the number of doctors increases in the province of Manitoba and you increase the size of the pool, I think it certainly makes it somewhat more hopeful for communities that were otherwise struggling to get physicians.

**Mr. Swan:** Are there any changes planned for the envelope of items which are contained in the allotment for the physician recruitment and retention program in this fiscal year?

**Mr. Goertzen:** You know, there are ongoing changes when it comes to doctor recruitment and retention, for sure, and how we service the North in particular. So under Shared Health I think there'll be more of an examination in terms of how we can have doctors sometimes work in teams and work together

to move—to share perhaps the workload in a community.

You know, we've seen some efforts even within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. I know that emergency room doctors from Churchill, I believe, have come down to Health Sciences Centre to do some work on weekends and to keep their skill set up, even though they enjoy living in Churchill and practising there, but it's an opportunity for them to deal with the full set of their skills and at the volume that they might not otherwise get in a community such as Churchill.

You know, we've talked about the PECS system and our desire to look at that more fully to ensure that those who are living in rural Manitoba may have access via technology to an emergency room doctor, not just to do an assessment for treatment, although that's important, but to also ensure that people aren't being transferred from the North or other rural and remote communities down to Winnipeg unnecessarily, which is both a burden on the health-care system itself but it's a burden on the individual who might not otherwise want to be transported, of course, for a medical situation that didn't require that transport.

So, you know, that sort of co-ordinated effort together with Shared Health and looking at innovative ways to do things are certainly changes that may happen within the year.

**Mr. Swan:** Is it correct that the amount of money being paid under this allotment for physician recruitment and retention programs, those are amounts that are being paid directly to physicians as bonuses or as incentives for them to practise in a certain area.

Is that a fair statement?

**Mr. Goertzen:** It's my understanding is that increase—or that that allotment is a result of the increased class size for doctors at the U of M Rady school of medicine and that the increased size of the class then also results in the increased size of those who are taking positions once that they graduate in residency, and so that is what that allocation is for.

**Mr. Swan:** Just so we're clear, that allocation is going down from last year to this year. All I'm saying is that whatever amount is in there, that's paid out to the physicians themselves. It's not given to the health-care authority or the health authorities or to the communities. That's all I want the minister to confirm.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I'm advised the funding is not given to RHAs, but some of it would flow into the Faculty of Medicine.

**Mr. Swan:** All right. I thank the minister for that clarification.

Now, this is not a new issue, but I know we've—I've heard, as critic, from a number of communities who say, well, look, we need a doctor in town. Why is it that we're having to incur the expense to try to encourage someone to come here? Why isn't the Province helping out?

Is there any program or any allocation that actually helps communities struggling to find physicians to pursue those doctors or communities still on their own?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So, of course, it's not a requirement that municipalities, towns, or cities undertake those efforts. I think that they've largely chosen to do so over the last 15 or 20 years, you know, simply because of the dynamics of the number of doctors and communities and people have desired, as opposed to the supply that has been available in Canada, so it's not really a Manitoba issue. It's—in fact, it's a North American issue, probably a worldwide issue.

\* (16:20)

So there is support from the Province when it comes to some of the recruitment efforts, partnering with sort of recruitment fairs and being part of the residency programs and certainly trying to attract doctors into rural areas and to encourage them to be part of rural communities.

But there's no question the member's right, that many rural communities and municipalities have taken it upon themselves to take it to another level, another step, in terms of trying to attract doctors into their communities. Those communities that might particularly struggle because of the size of the community or the remoteness of the community or just historically having a difficult time attracting and retaining doctors, they clearly have taken it upon themselves to be a part of that.

And so it's really developed in many ways into a bit of a partnership where you have municipalities, you know, promoting the nature of their community, although some have taken steps even further than that in terms of residents and that sort of thing. But, generally, it certainly is a partnership between communities being involved with promoting their

community as a place where doctors could not only find a good place to practise but also a good place to live and then the department providing support, in terms of those recruitment fairs and efforts to try to ensure that people are considering rural or remote areas to practise when they're going through and graduating from medical school.

**Mr. Swan:** I know the Association of Manitoba Municipalities has been advocating to try and get assistance from the Province for those communities who find themselves short of physicians. Is that something the minister's prepared to follow up on and perhaps meet with officials from the AMM?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Sure, in fact, I was just speaking with president of the AMM, Chris Goertzen, not a relative, but a friend, which is better than being a friend or—but—or, sorry, he's a friend but not a relative, which is better than being a relative but not a friend, I would say.

And I've certainly agreed. He asked me on the weekend if we could have a meeting with AMM. He didn't say it was regarding that particular topic; I'm sure that might be part of it, though. And, yes, I've agreed to do that.

You know, I think there's ways where we can be of assistance, whether that's a logistics way or co-ordination way or other ways, always opening to—open to hear those ideas. I don't want to leave the impression that this is a uniquely Manitoba problem or dilemma; it is not. It's a challenge across Canada, it's a challenge across North America and likely around the world. You know, it's different than the member and I who might have, you know, more experience in other occupations and more connection to other occupations, but there's not—you know, they don't, I think, have the same kind of recruitment drives for lawyers in communities as they do for doctors. It's a different field with a different demand level and different kind of service.

So it's true that it's a challenge across Canada and North America to try to get doctors to practise in certain areas. And I often think that it's not always so much that there's a shortage of doctors per se, but there's a misalignment in terms of where they are—where they're practising. But we don't live in a country, nor do I want to live in a country, where we can force doctors to practise, or anybody else, to live in certain places.

But we do have efforts, of course, to try to recruit and to show the attractiveness of living in

certain rural and remote communities, and probably the greatest thing we could do is to encourage those who are living in those rural or remote communities to become doctors themselves because I think the greatest likelihood that someone is going to practise in a rural community is if they grew up in a rural community and know it for all the values that it has.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, yes, I mean the minister and I both went through law school, so it is true; there weren't communities trying to sign us out of law school. There's a saying that any community that's too small for one lawyer is probably too large for two. And, if you think about that, it's not the warmest statement.

But I know the minister is correct when he's saying this is a challenge not just in Manitoba but elsewhere. It is also the fact, though, that this government actually cut funding for programming to encourage medical students to practise in rural areas.

I'm wondering, in light of these challenges, whether the minister is prepared to revisit that decision and reconsider whether there shouldn't be more incentives given to young physicians who may want to go either back to their home community or to a part of the province that maybe they haven't been to before and begin their practice in a smaller community.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I think what we did was sort of the prudent thing. We looked at programs and determined, you know, were they successful or not.

You know, in some ways the member answers his own question in that he acknowledges that under the former government, there were significant challenges and problems that existed in rural recruitment and retention. Some of those continue to exist today. So if those—if the solutions rested in the previous programs, then the problem would have been solved.

I think when we looked at some of the programs when it came to trying to attract individuals to go to rural Manitoba they focused almost exclusively on money, and in talking to those who are graduating from medical school or who have longer term practices, when you would ask those who are leaving communities, and I can say this sort of personally, you know, because our community, even though Steinbach isn't really a small town, it has struggled at different times to retain and attract doctors as well, and, you know, their questions weren't related specifically to money, and if you had talked to those who are leaving communities and going

somewhere else, and you'd ask them why those—they've made that decision, money almost never came in the top 10 in terms of explanations. It was almost always a life circumstance that had changed or the nature of the practice that they had in that community. Maybe they wanted some other kind of practice or a more expanded practice. They may have wanted to work with a different group of medical professions. It can just be a lifestyle issue.

We've talked about the challenge of international medical grads. They come from countries that can be very different than—and not just Canada, but than in rural parts of Canada that can be completely different culturally and religiously, for example, than they might see in their own home countries, and so the desire to move to a different part of the province or sometimes a different part of Canada so that they can have those things that they might not be finding in some of these smaller communities.

But money is rarely one of the top motivators, and I would say that it is not probably just true for doctors, but for other occupations as well, that if money is your motivation for being in a community, that motivation can dissipate pretty quick because it doesn't take very long before you realize, as we all know experientially, that there are many more important things in life than money, although money does help in certain things and you need a certain amount of it to do the things you want in life, but most doctors that I know of aren't necessarily struggling financially, and so they're looking for different things in their life besides money.

So it wasn't an issue of necessarily cost savings, although it might save costs, but any time you take a program that isn't meeting the needs or filling the needs that you'd hoped and transitioning to something else, it can result in money being saved, but why would you want to pour money into a program that wasn't working?

**Mr. Swan:** When the Department of Healthy Living was dissolved by the new government, much—not all, but much—of that department came into the portfolio of Health once again, and with a sweeping way to describe it, I mean, the purpose of Healthy Living was to try and deal not just with the impacts of illness, but to try and promote wellness in Manitoba, which means preventing disease from happening, trying to improve food and nutrition for Manitobans, trying to prevent injuries, trying to prevent people from becoming users of illegal or harmful substances to begin with.

Can the minister point out anything over the past fiscal year that was actually undertaken as a new initiative on any prevention front?

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Sure. I think there's a number of important things that have happened, and it probably speaks to the rationale for bringing these departments together. And, you know, I used to—not that I paid a great deal of attention to it, but certainly as an observer in opposition—would watch the Health Estimates, and you'd have the Health Minister together with the Minister of Healthy Living, and while they had different departments, the appropriations were the same, if I remember. They were sort of under the same appropriation, so you'd have the two ministers there together, and it was sort of this oddity where, you know, you had one minister with a \$5.3-billion budget and another minister with the smallest fraction of that probably imaginable.

But, you know, it was strange in that way that, you know, you had, sort of, in the same appropriation, but departments that were kind of working separately. And so I think bringing these two departments together, it made a lot of sense, both for one of the reasons I think the member's alluding to, in that, you know, in the long term, obviously, if you can provide a healthy lifestyle, of which I will not be preaching to anybody about—but if you can provide a healthy lifestyle, you can certainly reduce some of those long-term costs, and I think that that's been a lot of discussion nationally and a lot of focus that has happened over the last number of years.

But bringing the departments together, I think, provided some of that synergy between the different departments because they really are connected in an important way. And to have them separate didn't always make a lot of sense, and so I think that it was an important initiative to bring both Health and Healthy Living together because there is such a connectedness between the two, as the member himself acknowledges. And I think it's been well-received within the department. I recognize that it's the sort of acute—or the acuity that gets most of the attention when it comes to health because it's sort of the top line in the news on any given day, but that doesn't mean that there isn't an important connectivity between the Department of Health and Healthy Living.

**Mr. Swan:** All right. Well, I mean, it is what it is. This area is now under the minister's control, which is why I asked the question: In the last

fiscal year, what new initiatives that we could describe as prevention did the department introduce? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Sorry—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry. I didn't have the mic on. Sorry.

Honourable Minister.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, sorry, Mr. Chairperson.

There's always lots of ongoing activity that's very, very important when it comes to healthy living, and whether that's 'ceccation' of—cessation of smoking as an example and one of the key examples. And it reminds me, as I say that—although it might be a bit of a diversion from the member's question. You know, we've talked about this issue of the legalization of marijuana and the normalization of smoking activity, and this was something that the cancer society made a particular point about, that under the Estimates for Healthy Living, that there's been significant work to try to denormalize the activity of smoking. And the normalization of that activity of smoking through the legalization of marijuana is a—it's a particular concern for the cancer society. And I have taken some criticism, I think, for the term normalization of the activity, but I believe that the cancer society and the lung association's correct that any movement towards now normalizing the behaviour of smoking after having, for so many years, put investments in—including the former government, who invested in trying to reduce the amount of smoking tobacco—I think is a concern.

So, while I have the opportunity and have the floor, I would encourage the member, you know, to move quickly to pass the legislation that will work to ensure that the smoking and vaping of cannabis will not be allowed in indoor public places or outdoor public places, and not move to that normalization. I'm sure that he would not want to be part of an opposition that did anything to stop some of the good work that both his former government did and other governments across Canada have done in terms of trying to not normalize the smoking behaviour, as described by the lung association and, I believe, the cancer society of Manitoba.

So I hope that the member takes my encouragement for him and for his party to move quickly on passing that bill through the Legislature

in the spirit of healthy living and the question that he's asked.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, this was a weird diversion. And we will have a good discussion about cannabis; and I would agree that measures to try to reduce—to limit the use of cannabis and—especially among young people—is a reasonable prevention alternative.

The question I asked the minister was what new prevention initiatives did his department commence in the last fiscal year. And I still haven't had an answer.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think the member did have an answer, although it may not have been as crystallized as he would have liked it, so I'll try again.

When you're bringing the two departments together, the department of health and the department of active living and preventative care as it relates to that, you do see that synergy. I would argue that the work that we're doing in terms of clinical reorganization, the creation of Shared Health to have a clinical plan across a variety of different disciplines that didn't exist before is, in fact, prevention.

When you have a system that is misaligned, that has long waiting times where people don't have access to care as quickly as we would like in emergency rooms—when you look to fix that through the work that we're doing and Dr. Peachey's recommendations that came from the consultant that the member opposite helped to hire—those, I think, are geared towards prevention. When you look to put in place a—clinical plans that exist across the province so that regions are not just talking to each other but are working towards the same standards of care, I believe that that will have a significant impact on prevention and have long-term effects that way.

Now, looking even—so that answers the member's question, but I want to take it even one step further. If you extend that beyond that particular vision—if you look at other jurisdictions who've gone through consolidation, who've gone through trying to ensure that their acute-care system is working well or as well as it can be in the system that we have in Canada, that also provides savings. And once you have that system working in a way that is producing both good results but also producing those savings, you can reinvest those savings, you can push those savings out of the emergency room and into the community, which is, I think, where you really have that impact of prevention.

So I don't think the member should look at them as silos, which was, I think, what was happening before. The efforts on consolidation are going to have, I believe, a long-term impact on prevention and preventative care. But the ability to take those acute-care centres and have them working more effectively and more efficiently will allow the system to then push some of those saved resources into the community for prevention.

And I think, had we operated in the silos that had been established previously, some of that might have been lost and some of that direction might have been lost.

\* (16:40)

So I would never want to suggest that having the two departments together somehow means that one focus is lost at the expense of the other. I think, in fact, it allows you to look at both together, and so the work—the good work that's being done by Dr. Brock Wright and others that he has, in terms of clinical leads, it's going to be significant.

And I think that once we continue—if we continue to see the improvements in how the acute-care system is working, not only will people wait less time, which I think is an issue of preventative care, but some of those savings can then be realized into the community.

**Mr. Swan:** I'm still not really—I don't—maybe the minister doesn't understand what I'm asking. I'm asking questions under the appropriation for active living, population and public health. There's 133.45 EFTs, although, of course, we know there's a lot of vacancies in that area, but that is an area which has been working on trying to prevent people from needing emergency care and hospital care to begin with.

And I've asked the minister a couple of times now to point to one single initiative that his department took on, as a new initiative in the last fiscal year, and the minister still can't come up with one. So I'll change the answer—or question around.

Are there any initiatives which are truly based on preventing Manitobans from needing health care that will be implemented in the upcoming fiscal year?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Oh—no question. In fact, the work that's being done by Shared Health, there's a reason why it is entitled a clinical and preventative service plan. It's because it is about both service today,

but how do you ensure that through that service, you're preventing individuals from becoming ill or becoming more ill from what they may currently be dealing with? So I think that that's one of the largest changes in the history of our province.

In fact, it's something that the member opposite has opposed repeatedly. So, on the one hand he, today, sits in this House during this period and asks for, what are you doing on preventative services? But, on the other hand, he opposes the largest clinical and preventative services plan that this province has probably ever seen.

And part of that is because we're breaking down those silos. We're breaking down those silos between the regional health authorities. I mean, I can say and I think I said it last week, but it bears repeating. I was shocked and somewhat concerned, as a Minister of Health coming into this relatively—well, it was a new role for me two years ago—to understand that the regional health authorities really didn't speak to each other, that those experts within the individual RHAs, and, of course, most of them are housed within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority because of scale and scope, but they really weren't talking to each other and planning together.

And one of the mantras, I think, that we've been guided by and that Dr. Wright has helped us—guide us by is that notion of planning provincially and delivering locally. And it's something that I continue to bear in mind, because, in a province the size of Manitoba, which is a big geographic area but really 1.2 or so million people, there is that opportunity to plan on a province-wide basis while being able to deliver, where possible, locally.

And so the clinical and preventative plan that Dr. Wright is putting together, I think, will be one of the largest changes to health care in Manitoba that we've seen in a generation. It's part of a generational change that we're undergoing, and so I'm very optimistic about the changes that'll be happening from the preventative side, and concerned that the member opposite hasn't been supportive of that.

Perhaps we have a change of tone today. Perhaps, from the questions that he's asking, it leads me to believe that he is now supportive of this work, and I'm glad for that. I think his leader said today that there is no shame in admitting that a course needs to be changed and that it's perhaps time to admit that something needs to change. And so that seems to be now the direction.

He's heeded the advice of the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) has taken that advice and is now changing his particular perspective, when it comes to preventative care. And I'm glad for that. I don't think there's any shame in that, and he shouldn't be ashamed for changing tack, and I support him and I thank him for that, Mr. Chairperson.

So I look forward to the work that Dr. Wright and his team, which we'll be speaking more about, I'm sure, in the days and weeks ahead. We'll be able to provide Manitoba, as we undertake significant change but significant change for the better in Manitoba, both when it comes to immediate care, acute care, but also that preventative-service part that the member opposite has previously not supported but now has come around to supporting and I thank him for it.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** First of all, a comment. The minister said that he thought doctors were sometimes working in teams. You know, in my experience in traveling around the province, I would guess that probably 95-plus per cent of physicians are working in some sort of health-care team, maybe it's even considerably higher than that. There are very few who don't, in some fashion.

Now, one of the concerns which came up repeatedly as I have talked with people is the use of locums versus permanent doctors and nurses, and rural communities complained that they were too often supported by locums, whether it was nurses or physicians, as opposed to having permanent physicians and nurses, and I think that it would be important to have an approach to recruitment both for nurses and physicians that emphasized the use of people who were permanent health professionals in communities and rooted in the communities rather than locums who are temporary. It's much harder to build teams when you are—have a system based on locums.

For example, when I was in Thompson, people were very upset that there was no consistency in their family physician and felt that the whole approach to recruiting and retaining doctors needs to focus on having long-term doctors rather than short-term doctors. What's your response?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I just want to make sure that there's clarity between me and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), not that we've ever not had clarity on an issue, but the issue that I was talking

about, you know, in terms of doctors working in teams, yes, of course they work in teams. This particular was—particular comment was about in rural communities where there's sometimes more of a rotation of a team of doctors who can be rotating through a community and have an agreement that they be part of working in a community at some point and then moving on to a different location then coming back to that community. So it was more about that type of a team that I was referring about, not to suggest that doctors don't, of course, almost always practise as part of a team.

So I want to make sure that me and the member for River Heights aren't misunderstanding each other.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. I would ask the minister what he is doing in terms of locums versus permanent doctors and nurses in terms of recruitment.

\*(16:50)

**Mr. Goertzen:** So I mean the issue of recruitment is always a challenge and I know how frustrating it is when an individual loses their family doctor. I've experienced that myself, where I've lost a family doctor because they've gone on to a different kind of practice or they have decided to retire or one instance where they had a loved one in their family who was ill and they needed to deal with that. And so there are a variety of different reasons why people have a difficult time getting access to a family doctor in a variety of different settings, and it's not all about being remote or being rural, although that is a particular concern, for sure.

And, you know, I know there's a number of different efforts going on. One that has been pointed out to me in particular is the distributed medical education program, about having those doctors who are training to be doctors do some of that work and that education in the rural communities. There's a number of sites in Manitoba where that happens so they can experience what working in a medical environment in a rural or remote community is, to try to encourage them, once they're done their practice—or, sorry, once they're done their education, potentially establish a practice there. You know, there are a number of nurse training programs that have the same sort of model about trying to expose nurses to what a rural or remote practice is.

The member will know, having been a doctor of some renown himself, it's not possible to force someone to work into a community, but there are many things you can do to expose them to a

community and to try to encourage them to be a part of that community long-term, and those are just two examples of the sort of things that are happening.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes. I want to talk for a moment about and ask questions about Telehealth. Notwithstanding the 164 sites that the minister talked about, we heard in Thompson that there are far too many unnecessary visits for five minutes to see a specialist which should be handled over Telehealth.

One man said he had 10 trips to Winnipeg, most of which were not necessary and could be easily handled, so there's a big gap which exists from practice now to what practice could be.

There's also a need, I heard in Thompson, to have Telehealth from Thompson to link with nurses in smaller communities in the North—Thicket Portage—but really there are many communities in the North which could be connected to Telehealth with Thompson with significant benefit. There's an importance to local health care and to the quality of health care when you can link a nurse to a physician.

And, lastly, you know, the world outside Manitoba is moving to a world in which laptops are used broadly for Telehealth and, you know, if every doctor's laptop was used for Telehealth and set up that way, we'd have, you know, 2,000-plus sites and we'd have a much more connected world for doctors and be able to, you know, be able to access services more quickly through Telehealth processes.

I'd be interested in the minister's comments.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I mean I appreciate the member raising this question. He raised a specific issue in question period in relation to this and I don't know the specific details about the case that the member raised in question period.

I understand from officials that the most significant user of and most significant area of use for Telehealth is oncology, and we do believe that through Shared Health and working together to have clinical standards that are aligned and having a system that is working more closely together through Shared Health that we'll be able to increase and expand the use of Telehealth, so that's one benefit of it. And I think I referred, at the end of last week, to the member, that we expected that Shared Health would have a significant role in that, and that's certainly been confirmed to me. I know the member raised that particular issue during question period. I'm still open to hearing the details of—if not the individual's name, then certainly, you know, when



that occurrence happened so that we can look into it more specifically for him.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I want to move on to southwestern Manitoba. There's been quite a bit of news coverage about the future of health care in Boissevain, Deloraine, Melita, Killarney area. I wonder what—if the minister would tell us what his long-term vision is for health care in that area.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I think the long-term vision for health care in Westman is as it is in all parts of Manitoba. We'd like to see a system that is sustainable and predictable, that people know how to access care and where to access care. I mean, I realize living in rural Manitoba that the concerns that exist in rural Manitoba are different than the concerns that exist in Winnipeg. When we talk about, you know, what's happening in Winnipeg, people are often saying, well, we're, you know, we're wondering what the wait time is going to be when we get to an emergency room. In rural Manitoba, it's not how long is the wait going to be when we get to the emergency room, it's whether or not that emergency room is going to be open.

There are multiple facilities, more than a dozen, well more than a dozen, that have been temporarily closed in rural Manitoba for the last 17 years, at least, and maybe longer, and people who are living in rural Manitoba don't know is their facility going to be open, what kind of service are they going to get in that facility? So my vision for, and our government's vision for, Westman and for rural health care more generally is so that there would be certainty for those who are living in rural Manitoba. What is going to be open? What are the services that are provided in those facilities?

Now, there's always going to be debate about whether or not, you know, that's enough, whether or not there's enough of a particular medical experience that you can have in rural communities, and that can be a challenge. I live in Steinbach. I've lived there my entire life. I would love if the Health Sciences Centre was downtown Steinbach, so I could access all of the trauma services that they have in downtown Steinbach if I was—needed one or for a friend or a loved one—had one. But I recognize that that's not realistic and that's not reality.

So what is it that we can provide to those who are living in different areas where it can be difficult

to have specialities or certain services, and how can we do it in a predictable way so that those who are living in those areas know where to go, know what they're going to get when they get there, and, if they can't get there or those services aren't the right services, do they have access to an ambulance service which is predictable? And that's a big part of the Reg Toews report from 2013, which the member from River Heights demanded, demanded very passionately in this House, be implemented up until the fact—up until the point where he had to little bit of pushback in certain communities and then he didn't implement it anymore. But the reason why the Toews report is important is because it provides the backbone for the medical service.

So government's vision, I think, for health care, both in Westman and across the province is, predictable emergency services through EMS, a community that understands what kind of service they can provide in their particular health centre that they might have and when those centres are going to be open. That doesn't exist now, and it hasn't existed in 17 years.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The Toews report, as the minister knows, is supposed to be based on further consultation with communities. Part of the reason that I've emphasized telehealth is that, really, it's about better care, the ability to do more locally and to help health professionals locally do better care and to do more of it locally.

Just a heads up in terms of tomorrow, I will have a couple of questions for you that may require a little bit of looking into. One is the status of the self regulation for radiation therapists; and, two, is the status of help for health professionals, paramedics and others in terms of PTSD. There was a focus on this some time ago, but I just want an update on terms of where we stand currently because I've heard some concerns about the accessibility for help in this area.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 9, 2018

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