

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Second Report

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 7, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)/Loi sur la mise en œuvre de l'Accord de libre-échange canadien (modification de la Loi sur la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre et de la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées)*
- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Boards, Committees, Councils and Commissions Streamlining Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)/Loi sur la simplification des conseils, des comités et des commissions (modification ou abrogation de diverses lois)*
- **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act/Loi sur la classification et la distribution des films et des vidéos*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Hon. Mrs. COX*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Ms. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. NESBITT*
- *Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mr. SMITH*
- *Mr. SMOOK*

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson.

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

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 15) – The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act/Loi sur la classification et la distribution des films et des vidéos:

Ken Rodeck, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)/Loi sur la mise en œuvre de l'Accord de libre-échange canadien (modification de la Loi sur la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre et de la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Boards, Committees, Councils and Commissions Streamlining Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)/Loi sur la simplification des conseils, des comités et des commissions (modification ou abrogation de diverses lois)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 15)** – *The Film and Video*

Classification and Distribution Act/Loi sur la classification et la distribution des films et des vidéos

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

Mr. Smook: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Test of the Alert Ready Warning System

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): As part of the national Emergency Preparedness Week, I'm reminding everyone that tomorrow, there will be a test of the Alert Ready warning system. On Wednesday, May 9th, at 1:55 p.m., a test alert will be broadcast, and for the first time, it will include all compatible wireless devices on long-term evolution or LET networks in Manitoba. This wireless message is in addition to the traditional methods of radio, cable, satellite TV distribution and web feed notices.

The alert begins with a distinct sound and vibration, and then an emergency alert banner will display on the wireless device and be followed by a message. For television, radio and web feeds, the test emergency alert will begin with a distinct sound, followed by the message.

The Alert Ready system notifies Canadians of potentially life-threatening events such as fire, weather events, hazards or other threats to public safety. It will also include AMBER Alerts, which will also be displayed.

With the recent inclusion of wireless public alerting, these messages are able to reach more Manitobans when emergency arises. The Alert Ready system is a partnership between federal, provincial and territorial emergency management officials, Pelmorex corporation, better known as The Weather Network, and the broadcast industry.

The Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization and Environment and Climate Change Canada are the only agencies authorized to issue the Alert Ready messages. The Manitoba government is committed to ensuring Manitobans have the critical information they need in emergencies to make necessary precautions to stay safe.

Madam Speaker, please note for tomorrow, it is only a test. And the message will clearly display: This is only a test; no action required.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): This week, mobile devices and tablets across Canada are being tested for Alert Ready wireless emergency alert system. Devices across Manitoba will ring tomorrow at 1:55 p.m. for all those that are connected to a 4G LTE network and have wireless public-alert software installed. To confirm whether a mobile device is set up to receive already-Alert Ready messages, mobile subscribers are encouraged to contact their service providers.

The test aims to familiarize the public with receiving mobile messages for emergencies like AMBER Alerts or tornado warnings. As I mentioned yesterday, Manitobans are no strangers to severe weather events: floods and forest fires to tornados and snowstorms, we've got a little bit of everything here.

It's important not to only to know about an emergency but also be prepared for when one occurs. While the majority of Canadians agree to that having an emergency plan is important, only 40 per cent actually have planned response to any emergency.

Our NDP team wants Manitobans to feel prepared to face any kind of emergency, but we also want our government to make sure that emergency services they rely on are accessible. This government is attempting to privatize crucial government air services like Lifeflight and water bombers. We know that privatization means less quality service. In an emergency, Manitobans want the reliability of knowing that help is on the way.

Instead of making cuts to infrastructure, health care or flood protections, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) should be investing in the public services that we need to stay safe. Instead of cutting front-line workers that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: –keep us safe during emergencies, the government should be investing in making sure they continue doing their jobs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to commend the Government of Canada for implementing this incredibly important initiative using mobile wireless to keep Canadians safe.

The tests scheduled for Wednesday are being 'connucted'—conducted after the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, ordered wireless providers to implement the system to distribute warnings of imminent safety threats, including tornadoes, floods, AMBER Alerts, terrorist threats, et cetera.

Government has an important role in dealing with emergencies and erratic weather, particularly with climate change. While Manitoba has often been prepared for floods, we're not as prepared for drought, which we're seeing now. Just yesterday, a number of homes burned down in Little Saskatchewan First Nation due to forest fires. Our caucus has been asking this government now for two years to develop community safety plans for all Manitoba communities.

Tremendous amount of blood, sweat and tears was put into getting new homes for those in Little Saskatchewan who had to be evacuated for so many years. This is a sad moment, and, sadly, it affects somebody who I know very well.

And so let us get to work, I ask the government, and make sure that every community has a much better safety plan to protect from grass and forest fires and other fires near their community.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, in early May of each year, we recognize North American Occupational Safety and Health Week in Manitoba, or as it's known as, NAOSH.

NAOSH Week is an opportunity to promote the importance of preventing workplace incidents and injuries and to promote awareness of safety and health issues. It is also an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the hard work and efforts of our safety community to make our province safer for all Manitoba workers.

This year's opening ceremonies for NAOSH in Manitoba were held yesterday at The Fort Garry Hotel. Many more events will be held this week in communities and in workplaces throughout the province.

The theme of this year's NAOSH Week is make safety a habit. We know that safe and productive workplaces are a part of the foundation that is critical to building and growing Manitoba's economy. When consistent safety habits are adopted by all people in Manitoba workplaces, we will have considerable positive change on our hands and we will have a positive safety culture.

A key dimension of a strong, positive safety culture is that leaders demonstrate a commitment to safety. I am proud to say that as a province we are acting on this element. Earlier this year we announced the Province's own shared commitment to achieving safe work status—SAFE Work Certified status and our shared support for an industry-based safety program by—for self-insured employers. By doing so, the Province will be moving closer to identifying gaps in workplace safety and health and supporting long-term approaches to reducing workplace injuries and illness.

* (13:40)

The deputy ministers from five departments are engaged in establishing a plan to prevent—to improve prevention efforts, and SAFE Work Manitoba is working with them by providing consulting services to identify gaps. By adopting proven, consistent safety practices, we will lower the risk of injury and illness to workers and reinforce the elements of a positive safety culture across all levels of our government.

As a province, we must continue to invest in a strong culture of safety focused on prevention and awareness. NAOSH Week is an excellent opportunity to reinforce this message and strengthen our commitment.

As we look to the future of our province and the safety of our workers, I invite all of us to work together to help make safety a habit.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): North American Occupational Safety and Health Week brings awareness to the importance of creating safe workplaces so that every worker can go home to their family at the end of their shift. All workers deserve a workplace and an employer that prioritizes health and safety regulations that prevent injury, illness and tragic deaths.

Madam Speaker, last year, 13 Manitobans were killed on the job. More than 14 died as a result of occupational illness. Each of those 27 individuals were part of a family. They had friends, co-workers and community, and the loss of each one is no doubt a tremendous blow to each of those families.

One worker death is too many. Families of workers who lost their lives at a job site have lobbied the government to raise awareness about the importance of protecting health and safety of workers. It's imperative that this government works with families to fish-push for stricter regulations and more oversight in workplaces.

When there is an accident or death at a worksite, investigations must be prompt and thorough. It is up to government to be transparent with families and workplaces who are trying to keep workers safe.

We recently honoured Manitoba workers who were killed and injured on the job at the national Day of Mourning. On that day, we renewed our commitment to investing in the training, equipment and supports needed to keep workers safe.

During occupational health and safety week, we are raising awareness about how workers and employers can keep and prevent illnesses and injury at the workplace.

It's important this week, however, that awareness is not everything. We also need regulation and enforcement to keep workers safe. This government is reducing inspections and failing to enforce safety laws, and at the same time, suggesting that they're going to do away with the automatic adoption of

occupational exposure limits. As we heard yesterday, safety laws and their enforcement are crucial to keeping Manitobans safe.

Our thoughts are with all families in feeling the loss of a loved one due to a workplace safety and health issue. Our caucus is committed to protecting workers and promoting safety so that every Manitoban can come home safe.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Manitobans are injured every single day at workplaces around the province. That's why it doesn't make sense that this government is discouraging people from coming forward by pushing through Bill 20.

Madam Speaker, this bill takes away the rights of a person to make a complaint about employment standards if they are covered by a collective agreement. The government should be acting and encouraging people who have information to come forward and make sure that those coming forward are appropriately protected.

We also need to be open-minded. Occupational health and safety are not exclusive to physical injuries. It also includes our mental health. Look at us here in the Leg. Sure, we may be safer physically at work because of the nature of our jobs—plus we have an amazing security team keeping us physically safe—but, Madam Speaker, there is still workplace bullying and harassment, and this can take an enormous toll on a person's mental health.

We have a long way to go, but ultimately we need to encourage people to feel safe enough to voice their concerns and do everything in our power to create safer workspaces for everyone.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Linda Elmhurst

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, Linda Elmhurst has been a resident of St. Vital for over 60 years. She has lived, worked and raised her family in our community. As the previous owner of a special-events planning business, Linda was able to showcase her creativity and passion for helping others. She has since retired, but continues to leave her mark wherever she goes. Linda has been an

active community member for as long as I've known her, and far beyond.

As one of the founding members of the Old St. Vital BIZ, she has always contributed her professional skills and small business sense to the betterment of the community. Although Linda is no longer a business owner, she continues to act as their recording secretary, and after 22 years of volunteering her time, is an invaluable part of our team.

When you meet Linda, you can't help but be drawn to her warmth and compassion. Much of her time is now spent volunteering with the seniors at the Riverside Lions Seniors Residence on Worthington Avenue and the Prendergast Centre in Windsor Park.

For nearly 10 years at Riverside Lions, Linda has continued to use her event-planning skills and regularly helps organize their celebrations and teas. Each month, residents are treated to a holiday-themed party or a birthday celebration. Linda lovingly refers to each senior as my sweetheart, and as she is known to many as Mama Linda.

I can truly say that every individual who crosses paths with Linda is made to feel special. Her nurturing spirit, warm hugs and unwavering faith will leave you feeling blessed that you have known her.

She's always reminded me, nothing is going to happen to me today that God and I together can't handle, and over the past two years, I have revisited those words many times, and it's helped me on some very long days.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the residents of St. Vital, our family, our friends, I'd like to wish and thank Linda all the best for her years of service to our community and her continued volunteerism.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital.

Mrs. Mayer: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include the names of the guests who are here with Linda in the gallery into Hansard.

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

Linda Elmhurst and guests, Joan Boone, James Fuller, Etienne Legyue, Joan Legyue.

Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. This month is an opportunity to inform Canadians about how cystic fibrosis impacts lives, and also to raise essential funds for research and care.

Cystic fibrosis, or CF, is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting children and young adults in Canada. CF causes various effects in the body, but mainly affects the digestive system and lungs. Living with CF means frequent trips to doctors, hours spent in treatment, routine medication, difficulty breathing, nutrient absorption problems, serious lung complications and the prospect of lung transplants.

Across Canada, CF patients facing challenges when trying to access the drugs they need to drastically improve their quality of life. While CF has no known cure, the recently approved drug ORKAMBI has shown promising results in treating some living with CF. The drug is expensive, yet we understand there may be a way to negotiate a significant reduction. We urge the government of Manitoba to be a leader in covering the drug for those it would help.

Until recently, Manitoba's special drug program helped more than 1,100 individuals in Manitoba, including many living with CF, to manage high out-of-pocket costs for their life-saving medication. Patients were shocked when the provincial government cut the special drug program, forcing them now to pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars for the medication they need to live.

Our NDP team believes that access to essential prescription medication must be part of the universal health-care system. Funding medication for CF patients is a life-saving investment, keeps patients in better health and enjoying life, reducing the flow into hospital emergency rooms and decreasing the need for lung transplants.

Manitobans living with CF need to be protected and valued. We call on this government to reverse its damaging cuts to the special drug program. We also call on the federal government to establish a national pharmacare program so that all Manitobans and Canadians suffering from diseases such as CF have access to the essential drugs they need.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Red River Wild Peeewe Hockey Team

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I rise to congratulate the Red River Wild peewee hockey team from Morris who represented Manitoba in Canada's 150 peewee division at the 19th annual Bell Capital Cup in Ottawa.

The team had a near perfect performance, winning six games with no losses, and did not allow a single goal against for the entire tournament. They were so dominant that they earned the nickname the Killer Bees due to their distinctive black and yellow jerseys. Manitoba could not have hoped for better representatives at the Bell Capital Cup.

* (13:50)

To enter the tournament the team had to submit a short essay and video on why they deserved to represent their region, and I would encourage everyone to have a look at that video on YouTube. They talked about how each member of this team is unique and how this uniqueness comes together as one as the Red River Wild. They said they wanted to represent the spirit of the prairies, to which, I'm sure we can all agree, they did an excellent job.

Beyond representing Manitoba on the ice, the Red River Wild peewee team was given the opportunity to tour Parliament, the aviation museum and were served dinner at Sens House, the restaurant where Hockey Night in Canada sets up for national telecasts. Afterwards, the team enjoyed some beavertails, a casual skate and were given tickets to attend the NHL game between the Senators and Bruins. I sincerely hope this was a fun and rewarding experience for all those involved.

Participation in youth sports helps young people learn skills like team building, how to work together, hard work and discipline. All these qualities were on full display during their impressive run at the Bell Capital Cup.

Manitoba produces some of the best hockey players in the world, and if the Red River Wild hockey team from Morris is any indication, the future of Manitoba hockey is in good hands.

This team has been named CTV Sports Star of the Week, as well as being acknowledged in the Canadian Senate. So please, let's add the Manitoba Legislature to that list, and congratulate the Red River Wild peewee hockey team, who've joined us here in the gallery today.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Morris.

Mr. Martin: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to add the names of the team members as well as the coaches and manager to Hansard.

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

Red River Wild peewee hockey team: Keenan Bourcier, Ethan Clace, Natasha Driedger, Sebastien Hicks, Rylan Keck, Alexander Manning, Logan Mazinke, Hayden Peters, Spencer Sabourin, Awstin Suwala, Ayden Wiebe, Tyson Wiebe. Coaches: Laurie Keck, Kevin Klassen, Steve Peters, Jared Wiebe. Manager: Dixie Mazinke.

Future of Primary and Secondary Education

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, April 29th I was privileged to host a panel on the future of primary and secondary education in Manitoba. It was an inspiring afternoon.

Our leadoff speaker, Rebecca Chartrand, a long-time indigenous educator and currently executive director of indigenous strategy at Red River College, spoke of emergent learning and of injecting indigenous language, culture and perspective into our education system.

Wendy Bloomfield, an innovative leader, chair of the Seine River School Division and the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba, spoke of investing in teachers as teachers adapt more flexibly to the learning styles of individual students. She spoke of evidence-based strategies, including alternative reading recovery; of strengthening music, arts and drama to inspire students; of enhancing students' emotional, cognitive and physical well-being; of enhancing early education, including Kids at Play, half-day learning and half-day play.

Leah Ross, a lawyer who's found her real passion in teaching, emphasized the need for individual attention to help children with learning disabilities do well.

Ara Dungca, president of Grant Park High school student council in 2012, talked of experiential learning, of continuous feedback and the need to integrate technology to tailor learning to individual students' needs.

Valérie Rémillard, the president of the *Éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba* and representing the Manitoba Teachers' Society,

spoke of the need to address the shortage of French immersion and French teachers. The demand for these programs is increasing, and the benefits in our global world of a second language and broader cultural understanding are large.

Thanks to all our presenters and to the many in our audience who added comments and suggestions. We're in an exciting time for learning. We have a big task ahead of us to be sure all Manitobans have the opportunity to learn and achieve their potential.

And thank you to all our teachers on teacher appreciation day today. Merci.

Daffodil Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Every three minutes another Canadian is faced with the battle to fight cancer. This year an estimated 6,800 people in Manitoba will be diagnosed with cancer—about one out of every 19 people—per day.

April 27th was Daffodil Day, a day to show solidarity and stand with those that have been impacted by cancer and those currently battling this terrible disease. The daffodil is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer.

There are many ways to show support for those dealing with cancer: run, walk, ride, volunteer, fundraise, support a foundation, take an active part in awareness, like Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and Lymphedema Awareness Day, and many others, just to name a few, Madam Speaker.

One of my ways was to get involved with Relay for Life. Relay for Life is a fundraiser for the Canadian Cancer Society whose mission is to eradicate cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with the disease.

The first Relay for Life event in Canada was held in 1999 and raised \$85,000 and has raised over \$500 million for the Canadian Cancer Society to date.

This year will be the seventh relay which I have been part of in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet. I am honoured to be involved as co-chair, along with my friend Sue Tribula, to once again bring Relay for Life to the town of Beausejour. We have a fantastic volunteer committee that has already a great entertainment lineup with a lot to do for those that are survivors and participants who are walking or running in remembrance or for support.

This year's Relay for Life in Beausejour is happening on June 15th at the Sun Gro Centre, starting at 6 p.m., with the luminary ceremony at around 10:15 and wrapping up at midnight. Last year 16 teams participated in the Beausejour Relay for Life and raised just under \$40,000.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all honourable members not just on Daffodil Day, but each and every day to reach out to those impacted by cancer as well as their families and see how you can help in the fight against the terrible illness.

Let's kick cancer, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to enter the names of the volunteer committee members of the 2018 Beausejour Relay for Life into Hansard.

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

2018 Beausejour Relay for Life volunteer committee members: Sue Tribula, Meghan Baker, Bonnie Stefanson, Kimi Erickson, Lydia Ewasko, Cindy Wadelius, Cheryl Millan, Miehelle Rosentreter, Louis Gmiterek, Terry Liske, Debbie Ravenstein, Leanne Urbanski, Robert Klapprat, Sharlene Thompson and Colette Toews.

Introduction of Guests

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

Seated in the public gallery from Warren Collegiate we have 55 grade 11 students under the direction of Lee Stewart, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Home-Care Services Privatization Inquiry

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's public home-care system is the most comprehensive system in Canada. Nurses, home-care attendants and home support workers are the backbone of our home-care system. It has withstood past Conservative governments, including the efforts by the Filmon government, which

included the Premier (Mr. Pallister), a generation ago to try and privatize it.

Why has this Premier not learned from the past, and why is he still moving ahead to try to privatize home care in Manitoba?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question because it gives me an opportunity to remind the House about the enhanced home-care program, which this government brought in a few months ago. And I know that the opposition didn't support the program, but it reduced the number of people who are waiting to get from a hospital into a home environment so they get the—a care that's more appropriate for them and get it in a place where they would desire to have it: in their home.

When we came into government there was about 150 people at any given time waiting to get from the hospital into a home or into a place of better care. Last week there were nine, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Just yesterday the WRHA issued a request for proposals that's further cause for concern. It seeks to hire private companies to provide nurses, home-care attendants and home support workers to perform more than 141,000 hours of work.

That's a massive amount of worker time caring for our seniors and others as they—so they can remain in their own homes. It's another step in the dismantling of our home-care system to hire a private firm to hire back health-care workers that could ensure work in a private system.

Why is the Premier moving to privatize the delivery of home care?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, all the decisions that we make are intended to ensure that people get the right care, that they get it in the right place and that they get it at an appropriate time.

This is a classic example of the NDP not concerned about people actually getting care, but more concerned about their ideology, and that was never more demonstrated than when it came to the enhanced home-care program. The NDP fought it. They fought it tooth and nail. They didn't want it to go ahead. They questioned it in the House. They questioned it in the public, Madam Speaker, and hundreds of people were able to leave hospital and go home to get care in the environment that they're

most comfortable in, where they wanted to be to get that care, and the only people in the province who didn't want it to go through are the NDP and their union leaders.

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

* (14:00)

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, Manitoba's patients do want their workers to be properly paid, to be properly trained and properly supported—what happens in a public system.

The reason that we believe in public home care is clear. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Their work is cost effective. Their work provides continuity of care to patients in their homes and it's better quality.

But that's evidence this minister will not look at. In this government's desire to cut costs they're undermining the best home-care system in the country, and it looks like the Premier will fill the demand for labour by taking nurses and aides out of the public system and then having private companies hire them back at a lower rate of pay without any benefit to the system.

Why is the Premier undermining our home-care system in Manitoba? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, I think what patients most want is to get care. That is their primary concern. And they want to get care in the proper place, and for the vast, vast majority of those individuals, they would like to be at home if it's appropriate, if they can get that care at home. And so we put in system—in place a system that allows them to go home.

Now, the NDP want to set up some sort of a scanner at the front door of everybody's home, and somebody has to swipe a union card before they can get into a person's home to provide them care, Madam Speaker. We're concerned about workers getting in to provide care to patients who need it, get it in their home. They're just concerned about unions and union dues.

Mifegymiso Drug Review Request for Report

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In January, this government said that it would begin a review of the abortion pill and its accessibility for Manitoba women and girls. Five months have passed and no review has been announced, nor has the government made any effort to fully cover the costs of the abortion pill for all Manitoba women and girls, Madam Speaker.

It's more than a year since the Common Drug Review recommended full reimbursement and coverage for patients who received the abortion pill.

Will the Minister of Health tell the House where his review is?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Our government, unlike members opposite, we don't pick and choose the times and circumstances and places in which we support women. We support women in all circumstances all the time.

I would also like to point out for members opposite, since our government made Mifegymiso available, over 227 women have had free access to Mifegymiso, as well as another 21 through-access through the formulary. We're continuing to review the uptake, and we're going to continue to monitor progress and ensure that this is available for women when they need it.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Why does the Minister responsible for Status of Women get up and answer this question repeatedly? She doesn't ask questions on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: She doesn't answer questions on the Mature Women's Centre; she doesn't answer questions on lactation consultants; she doesn't answer questions on mesh pads for postnatal women. This is a question for the Minister of Health which he has refused to answer or even utter the word abortion in this House.

We know that the pan-Canadian—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —Pharmaceutical Alliance completed joint negotiations on the abortion pill at the end of

April, Madam Speaker. Provinces are working together to get a cheaper price for the abortion pill so that they can fully fund it for women and girls.

Where is the minister's review, and where is his commitment to Manitoba women and girls' reproductive health?

Ms. Squires: Members opposite asked a question that deserves an answer. She asked why I continue to stand up for women day after day, month after month, year after year. And the answer to that is because it is 2018.

I will never apologize for standing up for women in this province, and our government is continuing to work towards the betterment of all Manitoba women, unlike members opposite who failed women repeatedly during their time in government and continue to fail women in opposition. And unlike them, we will continue to stand up for women.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Clearly, the Minister for Status of Women actually doesn't know what it means to stand up for women, not when she is limiting the accessibility of the abortion pill to all Manitoba women and girls, spouting off stats that only—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —rely—or only refer to three spots in Manitoba, when there are women all across Manitoba in the rural and northern areas that do not have access to the abortion pill, but that require it and that it is part of their human rights to access it.

I don't know what she's talking about when she says she stands up for women's rights, but she does not and she needs to stop misleading Manitoba women, saying that she does—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —when she clearly doesn't.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, while the member opposite is self-declaring as an advocate for women, she forgets that others know her past, and her refusal to stand up for women given the opportunity is well known to most.

That being said, Madam Speaker, it would be wise to be 'temperant', I think, when she's just learned of a report, prepared by good friends of hers, to her own party that describes her political

organization opposite as an old boys' club, that says that it's misogynistic in its dealings, overly sexualized and sexist, and that there's a different standard for women than for men within the very political party she's been part of for some time.

So she has a record of failing to stand up for women, that is her personal record to change and I encourage her to seize the opportunity—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —to join with us to improve the circumstance for women in this workplace, to end harassment in the workplace, to advocate for no wrong door and to stop over-politicizing what should be something we're all after.

Water Bomber Services Privatization Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's wildfire season in the province. In southeastern Manitoba there were a number of fires burning out of control last week. Grass fires destroyed several homes in the Interlake, but instead of investing in our front-line workers, the pilots and support staff who keep our water bombers functioning, the government is trying to privatize this essential service.

Will the government back off its plans to privatize our water bombers? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I want to take this opportunity to thank all the first responders, whether they were paid or, in most cases, volunteers, who went out and helped to fight those fires. To those individuals who lost their homes, we know the one reeve of one of the municipalities lost his home, and we say to him, our condolences on losing your home. But there were volunteers and firefighters who in the most courageous way went out and fight—fought those fires, and we say to them, today, you are our heroes.

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

Mr. Lindsey: One of the greatest dangers of wildfires is their unpredictability. We do not know when they may break out.

When governments privatize their water bombers they lose the ability to react with speed to changing conditions.

I table an RFP—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —that the Alberta government signed with Conair. If Manitoba signed the same contract with a private water bomber company as Alberta did, this contract wouldn't have started yet and it would've cost millions more to get the water bombers into action.

Will the government back off its plans to privatize water bombers in this province?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, yesterday and even today I got up, in the ministerial statement reminded all Manitobans that it's national safety week and to protect your home. You know, go around your property and if there is some dry brush or leaves or grasses, mitigate those so that, you know, it doesn't contribute to the fire.

* (14:10)

I would suggest to all Manitobans that we have an amazing fire suppression system. We have a lot of paid staff who deal with this, but we also have a lot of volunteers and we want to continue to thank and encourage those volunteers. We have a very good system here in Manitoba and we as a Legislature should be standing up for them and thanking them for their work.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Fighting fires is an essential service and it's one that should be done by public servants. The minister had to learn about that this year, but to folks facing the prospect of dry conditions, no rain and a dangerous fire season, this was nothing new.

We know investments in water bombers are an essential service, save lives, help prevent and protect homes and communities. Yes, volunteers are important, but making sure that we have water bombers available when we need them is important and essential.

Will this government back off its plans to privatize?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): This government will always take the safety of the people who are working on our front lines to protect us seriously and put it at the forefront of every decision we make, Madam Speaker, as opposed to the previous government, who had the opportunity and were instructed that their public service emergency communications network, FleetNet, was falling

apart. They were told that a decade ago, Madam Speaker, and they refused to take action, to the point that they were buying parts on eBay to keep the system running.

The front-line workers—the member speaks about saving lives—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: The member references life-saving to protect the lives of those working on our front lines. Madam Speaker, nothing could be more important than a communications network that functions, that connects the RCMP with provincial and local officials, with EMS personnel, so they're able to co-ordinate their actions together and protect themselves in the process of protecting us.

Madam Speaker, what speaks best to the animal opposite is its tracks, and the tracks it left were neglectful tracks. It did not pay attention to the safety of front-line personnel for years, and I—it would look better on the member if he would admit that flaw in the previous administration and their failure, a \$500-million failure.

Manitoba Teachers' Society Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, it's Teacher Appreciation Day south of the border, as we know, but we also know that appreciating our—the work that our teachers do should not and could not be limited to just one day. And one of the most fundamental and important ways that we can show respect to our teachers is to honour their right to collectively bargain with their employer.

Now, many teacher unions have signalled their intention to bargain, so the question is simple: Will the minister permit teachers to freely collectively bargain with school divisions this summer?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. We're certainly a government that is pleased to recognize the great value of education and the great value of teachers that provide that through the K-to-12 system and in early years and in post-secondary, all across this province.

As to bargaining, we know that discussions are going on between Manitoba teachers association, Manitoba Association of School Trustees, and we respect the process that is in place.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, teacher contracts expire June 30th. The promise—the Province has shown that it's willing to collectively bargain with Legal Aid Manitoba, as we learned today. The—it recognized the rights of those workers to bargain their working conditions as well as their wages.

But teachers across the province want to know if the Premier will recognize their rights to collectively bargain. The Premier shouldn't be picking and choosing who he collectively bargains with and in a fair way.

So will the Premier allow teachers to collectively bargain their wages with teachers this summer?

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

We certainly do respect the process that is underway right now between Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba school trustees, in a discussion. We especially respect the long-standing request on behalf of Manitoba Teachers' Society to have a single approach to bargaining here in Manitoba, something the NDP ignored when they were in government.

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

Mr. Wiebe: This minister talks about respect. Meanwhile his Premier is trying to threaten and bully teachers at every turn with heavy-handed pronouncements and ominous warnings. He's trying to prevent teachers from exercising their collective right to bargain.

We know teachers in different school divisions have formally expressed their intent to bargain. We know school divisions, local governments are willing to get to the table and get to work for students in this province, but we also know what the Pallister government has in store.

So I ask one more time: Will the Premier not interfere in teacher negotiations this summer?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well I know, Madam Speaker, it's tough for the member to understand any history. He needs to talk to a history teacher, because then he would understand, as we do on this side of the House, that it's been a long-standing position of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, my former union, to advocate for central

bargaining and, in fact, that the teachers' union at the top of the organization supports it.

But not only that, Madam Speaker, if the member would take the time, as we have on this side of the House to consult with classroom teachers, what he would discover is this: they would rather do student work than union work. They would rather be in front of their kids in the classroom. They would rather be making a difference in the lives of their students than they would duplicate the work being done in three dozen or four dozen other tables around the province. They prefer—our teachers in this province prefer to make a difference in the lives of students, and we prefer to see that because not one of us would have the opportunities we enjoy today—not one of us—if it wasn't for teachers.

Brandon's Worker Advisor Office Funding for Support Programs

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Last year this government cut all funding for the Brandon workers' advisory centre. This centre is a non-for-profit organization that supports workers across southwestern Manitoba access their benefits. The centre helps workers with EIA, CPP or employment standard concerns. It also supports workers as they appeal EIA or Workers Compensation Board decisions.

Why has the minister cut these supports for workers?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, the member is quite wrong in her assertion. There is still an office in Brandon and she is wrong in her assertion. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mrs. Smith: I just spent the weekend in Brandon and that's not what I heard from people in Brandon.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mrs. Smith: This government has launched an all-out attack on workers. With 7,500 less workers in this province and a crackdown on wages, workers need all the support that they can get. More and more

workers in Brandon will be relying on EIA and workers compensation because of this government, just to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —make ends meet. Under the government they face higher housing, education and utility tax. They deserve an advocate, someone who will help them navigate in Brandon because their local MLA is not.

Will the minister restore funding for the advocacy centre in Brandon? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm glad the member took a junket out to Brandon to see all the good—great developments that are happening in Brandon: new school being built and, amongst other things, I'm sure at the convention they were talking about their \$300 carbon tax and they were talking about the mistreatment of women within their own caucus and within their own Leg., and I'm sure she should have gone out and seen all the great things that are happening in Brandon.

* (14:20)

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

Mrs. Smith: I've spent a lot of time in Brandon.

The minister is doing everything he can to do—to bring in wage freezes for workers while he takes a 20 per cent salary increase. Shame.

His government's plan to slash services and cut budgets will mean less jobs in Brandon and southwestern Manitoba. It'll mean more Brandon workers relying on welfare to pay their bills. They're putting more people in poverty.

When will they have a plan?

This minister is turning his back on workers and their families: Will he reverse the cuts to the advocacy centre and give workers the support that they deserve?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, we're proud, as a government, to be supporting one of the best job creation records in the country, in fact, the highest increase in take-home pay in Canada last year. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: This is a record that the people of Brandon are enjoying and are aware of.

But let's take a look at the NDP record. Let's take a look at the degree to which they cared about front-line workers. Let's consider for a second that they added a tax, a PST, on their benefits at work. The very people that the member now claims to be defending were attacked by the previous NDP government on their benefits at work becoming PST-able, Madam Speaker, also their home insurance, their contents insurance, so the things they had saved for in their lives. They endured waits of up to four years under the Provincial Nominee Program. People who went to Brandon to work at Maple Leaf—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and in other job opportunities had to wait four years because the previous administration couldn't run the Provincial Nominee Program effectively.

We've eliminated those waits. While they're raising taxes on front-line people, Madam Speaker, we're lowering them.

Provincial Justice System Staffing and Case Backlogs

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, our justice system needs desperate help. The number of court cases being thrown out over unreasonable delays continues to grow. To date, five cases have been dismissed due to trial delays. Since July of 2016, 76 delay motions have been filed in this province, seven of which are still before the courts, two of the seven being murder cases.

Madam Speaker, these stats are alarming and indicate a much larger systemic problem within our provincial justice system.

Can the minister explain to the House why they've cut six full-time employees from our courts?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I welcome the question from the member opposite. And, in fact, she's quite wrong. We have one of the best track records with respect to this issue across the country and we've been recognized as such.

And, Madam Speaker, I know, within our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy, we have initiated several initiatives within there that will help deal with court backlogs. That is why we

introduced this and that's why we're moving in the right direction.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this government's cuts to Manitoba's Justice Department are having a ripple effect right across the province. Criminal defence lawyers have acknowledged that problems facing rural courts will end up causing more delays in the city because of the lack of court sessions. The most recent cases involve defendants having to wait between two to five years to stand trial.

Madam Speaker, this government must act.

How does the minister plan to address the inefficiencies of rural courts while the court operations budget continues to be cut?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member opposite is just wrong with her facts, Madam Speaker. We are spending more on our justice system than we have in the history of Manitoba, and we are quite proud. But it's not about spending more, it's about spending more wisely.

We know, under the previous NDP government, in our justice system, they spent more and we got less for those services. We take a different approach, Madam Speaker. We take a proactive approach. That's why we introduced our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy, to deal with those court backlogs. We will continue in that direction.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, two of the court cases that were thrown out involved firearm offences and sexual assault charges. This is just alarming. This government needs to act now to address these delays that are negatively impacting victims, families and the public's trust in our justice system.

Madam Speaker, will this minister commit to allocating the necessary staffing and resources to avoid unnecessary trial delays and ensure our provincial courts operate efficiently?

Mrs. Stefanson: That's exactly what we're doing within our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy. We have put in place this strategy to ensure that we deal with and tackle the court backlogs that we inherited from the previous NDP government.

We will continue to move in that direction towards dealing with delays.

This is nothing that is unique to Manitoba. It's across the country. It's something that we've had discussions with our—at our federal-provincial-territorial meetings.

In Canada, we have one of the best track records so far when it comes to this, Madam Speaker, and it is recognized across Canada.

Travel Manitoba Star Attractions Announcement

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): We know that tourism is an important sector for Manitoba's economy. That is why our PC government promised and delivered to implement the 96/4 initiative to help further promote Manitoba and spur economic benefits across the province.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade share with us how this PC government is further putting Manitoba on the map? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I thank the member for La Verendrye for that great question.

Manitoba is home to many unique and very vibrant tourist attractions all across our province. Manitoba Star Attractions draws attention to many of these sites. Today, with Travel Manitoba, we announced seven new Star Attractions being unveiled. That brings the total to 70, across the province, of Star Attractions.

We continue to work with Travel Manitoba; we welcome all Manitobans, all visitors to our province to check out these Star Attractions. Madam Speaker, Manitoba's a star on Canada's tourism map.

Carbon Pricing Revenue Incentives for Green Economy

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): For a government that claims that it has no money—with the exception of 20 per cent salary increases, of course, for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the ministers—here's a question for that same government that says they have no money: How much revenue—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: I know, they don't like to hear the questions.

How much revenue is this government going to lose every single time a local trucking firm registers one of their rigs in another jurisdiction?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, finally a question from the NDP about Budget 2018. I would have expected it from the critic for Finance, but I'll take it from the member for Wolseley.

The member knows, as all members here know, that we inherited a mess. What I think the member is asking for clarification of is how much are we making progress on reducing the deficit. It's a good question. From \$840-million budgeted loss, we are showing in Budget 2018 a \$521-million loss; more than \$300 million in deficit reduction for Manitobans.

We are getting progress, we are keeping our word; real progress for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. It explains a lot without saying anything at all. I would suggest that this government's out-of-touch behaviour and their disrespect for local stakeholders was perfectly demonstrated by that minister.

In truth, every single time—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (14:30)

Mr. Altemeyer: —a local trucking firm is now registering their vehicles and moving their industry out of our province, this government loses \$4,200. There are 1,500 rigs registered in Bison Transport's fleet alone. Their CEO says that this government has paid them lip service to his concerns and that they are moving none of their new Tesla truck—electric truck fleet here to Manitoba or those jobs.

Why is this government ignoring the green economy?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I can understand how our government's plan would be incomprehensible to that member because it's one that relies on tax cuts to Manitobans and letting them keep more of their own hard-earned money. And that is why Budget 2018 will—introduces a plan to raise by 2020, by \$2020 the basic personal amount. That means that every Manitoba household of two income earners will keep almost \$500 more of their own money because we

are fully recycling the proceeds of our carbon-pricing mechanism which will work better for our economy and better for the environment.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Madam Speaker, that answer is horrible.

The trucking industry is moving to Ontario. Why? Because that jurisdiction is actually—wait for it—using carbon revenues to incent good behaviour and provide rebates for the new green economy, whereas this government is stuck in the dark ages.

If Bison Transport alone moves the registration alone, to Ontario, of their 1,500 rigs, that is 6 million less dollars this Finance Minister will have to work with, presumably to benefit the welfare of everyone in Manitoba and the planet.

What is it going to take for this government to realize their policy on carbon is wrong, that they need to be using carbon revenues to build jobs and green opportunities right here in this province, not export them elsewhere?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It's too bad that passion didn't result in anything of a green plan for 17 years under the previous government, Madam Speaker.

So the member speaks about the dark ages. Let's just—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —give the member a little pause for reflection and let him be a little more introspective than has been evident so far.

His party advocates for no trade agreements; now he cares about things going to another province. But he never, ever, as part of government, supported trade relationships with other provinces, let alone other countries. His party supports leave it in the ground, which means they don't want mineral development in the North. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: And now we learn, Madam Speaker, though it was not a surprise to anyone who follows political realities in this province, that this past weekend the NDP has decided that they're going to

seek re-election on a platform—wait for it—of higher taxes, higher debt, higher spending.

Madam Speaker, this is the NDP yesterday, this is the NDP today, but this will never be the NDP in government again.

International Students Health-Care Coverage

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Students are raising their concerns about the Pallister government's cuts. Graduate students of the Centre for Earth Observation Science recently wrote to us. They said that tuition hikes and the cost of private health care are adding a large and unforeseen cost to them. They have to make hard decisions about their academic future.

Why is the minister cutting health coverage for international students?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): We are working very closely with the Manitoba association that represents schools that teach international students to make sure that we have in place a program that makes sure health coverage is available to all students that come to Manitoba to study.

Certainly, there's been every sign that there's been an increase in the number of students that have been coming to Manitoba and will continue to be coming to Manitoba now and into the future.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Graduate students at the Centre for Earth Observation Science tell us that if the cost of education becomes too high, scholars will choose other universities and the centre will lose talented scholars that enhance the university's Arctic research and international reputation. But the minister seemed unconcerned with this and is rushing tuition hikes and cutting health-care coverage.

Will the minister listen to the students? Will he reverse his cuts?

Mr. Wishart: I think the member should know that we are the second lowest cost jurisdiction in Canada when it comes to tuition, perhaps that's something that she has overlooked, and we also supported University of Manitoba—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: –and their Churchill observatory to help study northern environments. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

I'm having increasing difficulty hearing the questions being asked and the answers being given. I would ask for everybody's co-operation please. We're almost through oral questions and we do have guests in the gallery. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation please.

The honourable member for Logan, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: Many of the graduate students at the Centre for Earth Observation Science made life-altering decisions to come here. They put their lives on hold, some even relocating families here for many years.

The minister's cuts have caused real uncertainty for the students and the future of this important research. The minister should be supporting bringing strong researchers to our universities, but instead he is putting up road blocks.

Will the minister change course and reverse his cuts to health coverage?

Mr. Wishart: As I said earlier, we're working very 'construcively' to make sure that all students that come to study in Manitoba have access to health coverage.

We're also very pleased to put in place special programs for Manitoba students under Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program to make sure that they have access to a long-term plan for their family that includes Manitoba in their future, something the previous government managed to mishandle so badly.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Tina Fontaine–Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge–(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 Jerry Daniels, Erica Fleury, Earl Kelly and many other Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

* (14:40)

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

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

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

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

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government or the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as the St. Boniface

industrial park, the 200,000 acres at CentrePort or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

(3) The provincial government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which could be consistent with the residential area.

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for such a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors, Active Living has stated that the Department of Health has no role to play in the acquisition for the Manitoba Housing project to be used as a drug addiction facility.

(5) The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the provincial government changes the fundamental nature of the community. Including the park and recreational uses, the concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values and their way of life are not properly being addressed.

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project, even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or other parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of the Manitoba Housing renewal corporation.

(8) The province of—the provincial government does not have a co-ordinated plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba, as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

(9) The community has been misled regarding the intention of Manitoba Housing, as the land is being transferred for a 50-bed facility even though the project clearly is outside of Manitoba Housing responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take all necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for a addiction treatment facility; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to take all the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purpose of parkland and recreational services for the public use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current PR2 designation for 255 Hamilton Ave. at the Vimy Arena site and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for parks and recreation, active neighbourhoods and communities.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The petition was not read as printed. Is there leave to accept the petition as printed? [Agreed]

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

The background to this petition is as follows:

1. The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the the Provincial Government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.
2. The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and neither the Provincial Government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi rural or industrial locations such as: the St. Boniface industrial park, the 20,000 acres at Centre Port or existing properties such as the Shriner's Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.
3. The Provincial Government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.
4. There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the department of Health had no role to play in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.
5. The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the Provincial Government changes the fundamental nature of the community. Including park and recreation uses, concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety,

property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

6. The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier other neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

7. The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation.

8. The Provincial Government does not have a coordinated plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba, as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

9. The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing, as land is being transferred for a 50 bed facility even though the project is clearly outside of Manitoba Housing's responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

1. To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.
2. To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purposes of park land and recreational activities for public use (including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem) under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton Avenue location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for Parks and Recreation Active Neighbourhood/Community.

Medical Laboratory Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): 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.

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

(4) The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive activities where it has changed the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged some medical offices for collection services.

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

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

* (14:50)

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

complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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.

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.

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 Vanessa Keryluk, Brian Pelda, Jackie Jean and many others.

Twinning Leila Avenue

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of The Maples community have diverse needs, such as the issue of twinning Leila Avenue, which was raised with the previous minister responsible for Municipal Relations.

(2) The residents of The Maples appreciate that Leila Avenue is a City of Winnipeg city responsibility, but the new Minister of Municipal Relations has not complied with requests to ask the City to make twinning this road a priority, even though the provincial government provides the City with this—with its share for funding such projects.

(3) Leila Avenue is the main road to approach the Seven Oaks hospital and one extra lane would ease the traffic that has been created by a corresponding increase in population in the area.

(4) The Maples residents are frustrated because both the City and the provincial government do not treat infrastructure developments in north Winnipeg equally with those in the south.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request that the City twin Leila Avenue to reduce traffic and commute time for the residents of The Maples and surrounding areas, enabling the accessing of timely health services, which will contribute to both the economy and society.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk). The title of the resolution is Trans Mountain Pipeline.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden. The title of the resolution is Trans Mountain Pipeline.

And I would also at this time like to indicate to the House, I would like to advise the House, that in accordance with subrule 4(5), I have received written notification from the government and opposition House leaders that the House will be sitting in the Committee of Supply on the morning of Friday, May 11th, 2018. Accordingly, Estimates will be held that morning from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

* * *

Mr. Cullen: I'm seeking leave today to move the Department of Families into Committee of Supply in replacing Executive Council in room 255 for today only.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to replace Executive Council in Committee of Supply with Families for today only?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear that leave has been denied.

Mr. Cullen: Would you call Committee of Supply, please.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FINANCE

*(15:10)

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 Finance, including Crown Services.

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): Welcome to the minister and his staff back again today.

So, when did the ministry—not the minister—but when did the ministry become aware of the MMF relationship agreement between Hydro and MMF? What date?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I'm just going to seek clarification there. What was the wording you used in your question? Just want to make sure I'm referencing the correct document.

Mr. Lindsey: When did the ministry become aware of the MMF relationship agreement between Hydro and the MMF?

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I'm seeking additional clarification on this. It's kind of a vague reference to a relationship agreement. Would this be the Turning the Page Agreement that the member is referencing?

Mr. Lindsey: Of course not. This would be the agreement that this minister has characterized as not being an agreement, but Manitoba Hydro in the minutes of their meetings has called it an agreement, and the MMF has called it an agreement. It is the agreement that talks about the sum of money agreed to over the course of X number of years. That whole agreement that the ministry, the government said no, stop. So, that agreement, or whatever the minister prefers to call it, as opposed to an agreement that everybody else has called it.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much. The member is referring to a weak term, as a term sheet. Quite frankly, the document in question is a proposal that was negotiated between Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Metis Federation talking about various terms and conditions that would—could ultimately form the basis of an agreement. So, to the member's question, Manitoba Hydro board—and this was our discussion yesterday—did have a discussion around the proposal, the term sheet, in the July—early July—meeting, at the board level. And my understanding was, you know, at that time, the board agreed that it would be a good idea for the Province of Manitoba, the government of Manitoba to review that particular proposal.

And, I think it was shortly after that early July board meeting that that information was provided to the—proposal was provided to the government, at that time.

Mr. Lindsey: So, to use the minister's terminology, the term sheet, the minister is suggesting the first they saw this was sometime early July. Is that when the ministry, and I recognize that this minister wasn't the minister responsible—but that's the first time the ministry became aware of this potential agreement, term sheet, however the minister wishes to characterize it? And, if he doesn't have that exact date when they first became aware, I'd be more than happy to have him take that as an undertaking and supply it.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I—certainly, I characterize that document as a term sheet or a proposal that would ultimately—could ultimately lead to a legally binding agreement. But, certainly, at that particular point in time when the Hydro board reviewed it at their board meeting in early July, it was—clearly, it was a proposal or a term sheet and certainly laid out some terms that could be used in terms of writing in a formal agreement.

So it was some time—I'm—to my knowledge, sort of mid-July would be the time that the ministry—and the member is correct. It was not me as minister at that particular time, so certainly relying on some other advice in terms of the date. But it seems to be in that mid-July time of the year. And it would certainly—it would stand to reason if that—the meeting we talked about yesterday, the board meeting was, I think it was either the 5th or 7th of July that subsequent to that meeting the board decided it would be a good time for the government of Manitoba to have a look at that particular term sheet.

So I think, then, the mid-July date would stand to reason.

Mr. Lindsey: So, just to be clear, the ministry was unaware of this potential agreement term sheet until some time in July of 2017.

Mr. Cullen: So I think that was in the—subsequent to that July—*[interjection]* Subsequent to the July 5th meeting was when the term sheet or the proposal was provided to the ministry. Not sure of the exact date, but it was sort of that mid-July time period that, you know, the ministry would have had the opportunity to see the terms that were outlaid in that—outlined in that particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So Manitoba Hydro and the MMF are pretty far along in this process by mid-July. They had what the minister terms a term sheet. They have alluded to it as being an agreement. There's a lot of pieces that they'd agreed to and then it went to the government. And the minister is suggesting that until such time as that term sheet showed up in—some time after July 5th, that that's the first that the ministry was aware that that process was taking place?

Mr. Cullen: I may seek some clarification from the member on his question. I—and I don't know what kind of discussions may have happened prior to the mid-July with the minister or the chairman of the board. I don't know that. But, certainly, my understanding, mid-July was the time when the government became aware of the details in that particular term sheet.

* (15:20)

And—obviously, there'd been an ongoing process with Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation prior to that time, and I'm not familiar with how that time frame looks like either; I'm not sure how long that process evolved. But, clearly, from a government perspective, it was mid-July before the ministry knew the details of that particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: And, again, recognizing that this minister wasn't the minister responsible at the time, I would assume when he took over the ministry, it's the same players underneath the minister that would I assume apprise him of anything that's in the works. So, if the ministry was aware that a discussion, a term sheet, an agreement was imminent, that it had been in the works for quite some time, I guess I would have assumed that someone would have made the minister—the new minister aware of that.

So I'm just trying to find out when did the ministry under the previous minister become aware that this relationship agreement, term sheet, whatever you want to call it, when did they become aware that these negotiations were taking place that were going to lead to a term sheet coming to the ministry.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I'll certainly trying to answer the member's questions as I understand it. And I don't know the history in terms of when the discussions started with Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation.

In terms of the Manitoba-Minnesota transmission line, potential lines into Saskatchewan, and then how it evolved into transmission lines that hadn't actually been contemplated at this point in time. So I don't know the history of how those discussions evolved.

And I suppose to go back even one step further, when we talk about the relationship agreements, that in my mind goes back to the Turning the Page Agreement, which was signed by the previous government and Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Metis Federation back in 2014. So that really served as the basis for discussion around bipole, Keeyask, and then how future relationships and discussions would take place. And that Turning the Page Agreement was really a document for—a framework for further discussion.

So, you know, in my view as the relationship unfolded, that Turning the Page Agreement could be viewed as a relationship document so that the players, all three parties, understood what the rules would be going forward.

So, you know, we still operate by the terms of that Turning the Page Agreement; that's why we're going through the tripartite steering committee process right now to determine exactly what the dispute is between the three parties.

So that relationship document, or that framework, is still in place. We're honouring the terms of that particular agreement as we go forward because I think that is—in my view, that is the relationship document that basically drives the discussion for further discussions.

So, at some point in time, when the parties discussed the Manitoba-Minnesota line, and there was an evolution there I'm sure as the discussion moved on, bringing in to bear the potential Saskatchewan lines, and then I assume the discussion evolved into, okay, what about future transmission

projects, or other hydroelectric dam projects. So that's why the proposal, or the term sheet, that's how it came to be, and being a 50-year agreement into the future. So, certainly, a unique agreement that was negotiated between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation.

So it appears, as the member pointed out yesterday, that the Hydro board discussed the issue July 5th at their board meeting, discussed the proposal at that point in time, and the board agreed it would be the wise thing to do to ask the government of Manitoba to review that particular proposal.

So, sometime in mid-July, the government of Manitoba then became aware of that particular proposal and, within that, the details of that particular term sheet. And subsequent to that, the—obviously the government undertook a thorough examination of that particular document to make sure government understood what the ramifications could be for that particular proposal going forward.

So it was a matter of the board doing their diligence, and then from there it was a matter of the—I think it's the government of Manitoba doing their diligence as well in respect of that proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So, over the last couple of days and last week, we spent a lot of time talking about this, what the minister terms as a term sheet. And recognizing that this minister wasn't the minister in charge, so at any point in time since we've begun these discussions, or prior to, did the minister seek out information from the previous minister as to when he was aware or when the ministry became aware that the discussions were taking place with a potential for an agreement?

Mr. Cullen: Well, I've had a number of conversations with the previous minister over a lot of different topics.

I don't specifically remember the conversation about timing in terms of when the minister first knew about the discussions, or any subsequent discussions we had in regard to the timing of the discussions. Clearly, we've indicated that it would appear that it was mid-July when the ministry and—I assume, at the time—the minister would have been made aware of the actual terms in that particular proposal.

So I certainly don't remember a discussion about when the previous minister knew about the discussions between Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation, but it's clear now that it was at mid-May when—sorry, mid-July—when the

previous ministry and I assume minister were made aware of the terms of that particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So he hasn't specifically—the minister hasn't specifically asked the previous minister. What about people in his department? Has he asked them for a timeline as to when they became aware that the discussions were taking place?

Was there any mention anywhere throughout time—other than all of a sudden, they just spring this agreement on you, on the ministry?

Mr. Cullen: And, yes, the member is correct—a different minister at the time in July. I came on as the new minister in sort of mid-August and there was also—at that same time, there was a transition in deputy ministers as well. So we have two different deputy ministers involved in the file as well.

So, from our knowledge, government became aware of this proposal mid-July subsequent to the early July board—Manitoba Hydro board meeting. It's fairly clear that Manitoba Hydro board reviewed the proposal, thought it would be the right thing to do to turn it over to the province of Manitoba for them to review it as well.

* (15:30)

And, from there, the government did a thorough review of the proposal and making sure they fully understand what the ramifications and repercussions would be for the government, what it would be for Manitoba Hydro, and what they would be for not only the Manitoba Metis Federation, but also Metis people around Manitoba would obviously be implicated in this particular proposal, because the proposal was quite unique in that it covered a 50-year time span, as well as proposals that really haven't been contemplated by Manitoba Hydro.

So it certainly is an all-encompassing and very unique proposal, and that's why the Hydro board felt it was important for Manitoba government to review that particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So the minister would have us believe that there's a change in the minister, a change in the deputy minister, and everything that had taken place within the ministry prior to that stops, forgotten, and we start over afresh? There's nobody left within the department that can answer that simple question of when the ministry first became aware that this agreement, this discussion was taking place. Is that what the minister is suggesting?

Mr. Cullen: Well, for clarification, you know, clearly I don't know what discussions the previous minister would have had with, say the board chair, you know, prior to this particular proposal coming to the ministry. I don't know if he was aware of any of the details of the discussions, because they would have been discussions with Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Metis Federation prior to any document being delivered to the government of Manitoba.

So, clearly, the board reviewed the proposal at the July meeting. It appears that the document then was delivered to the government of Manitoba in that mid-July. Assuming that would be the first opportunity that the ministry and, I would assume, the minister and the government would have had a chance or the opportunity to review the details of that particular term sheet and then act on that accordingly.

So I think we've been pretty clear. That was the process. Obviously, I would—certainly after that July, once the government would have received the document, there would have been an undertaking by government to review that particular document. So that was ongoing work for some period of time, and I don't think changing the minister or the deputy ministers would have had a bearing on the work that was being done, in terms of reviewing that particular term sheet.

I'm not exactly sure what the member's seeking there.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm seeking clarity on when anybody within the government became aware that this negotiation was in progress, that they were—either party was trying to get to some kind of agreement, and the minister suggested that, well, he didn't know because he wasn't the minister and deputy minister didn't because he wasn't the deputy minister.

And, apparently, he hasn't asked anybody—minister hasn't asked anybody within the department or they don't know when they first became aware of it, until all of a sudden the board of Manitoba Hydro plops the finished agreement or term sheet on the desk. Is—it's somewhere along the line; it just seems to me that somebody within the ministry must have been aware that these discussions were taking place.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I think—I don't think there's any smoking gun here. You know, Manitoba Hydro obviously have ongoing discussions with all their stakeholders, you know, whether it be the Manitoba Metis Federation or whether it be indigenous

communities around the province and, obviously, they have established relationships and have ongoing dialogue with those respective stakeholders.

And, you know, there's a lot of different projects going on around the province at the same time. You know, we have the multi-billion-dollar Keeyask project under way, ongoing discussions with northern communities about that particular project. We've got the—at the same time, we have the \$5-billion bipole project under way. So there would have been a lot of indigenous communities, First Nations communities involved in those discussions.

And, if you'd look back at the Turning the Page Agreement back—signed by the previous government back in 2014, there was obviously discussions with the Manitoba Metis Federation around the Keeyask project. And the bipole project was contemplated in that particular agreement which was signed by all three parties. So obviously Manitoba Hydro, and by extension the government of Manitoba, views these relationships as very important. And we certainly go out of our way to make sure there is communication with our respective stakeholders, and that's really an ongoing, very important critical piece of the operation at Manitoba Hydro to make sure we're following up on communication, make sure that we're having discussions with stakeholders.

So I'm assuming, probably since—even during or prior to the Turning the Page Agreement with the Manitoba Metis Federation, there would have been a lot of discussion between Manitoba Hydro, the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Metis Federation in putting the terms of that particular document together. And that—in my view that document sort of sets the framework for further discussion. So I'm sure, subsequent to 2014 with the view that we were going to be creating the Manitoba-Minnesota project, there would be ongoing discussion with First Nations communities and the Manitoba Metis Federation as well.

So that project was on the way and, also, there was contemplated putting in some lines running into Saskatchewan as well for export sales there. So there would have been ongoing dialogue, you know, prior to the signing of the 2014 Turning the Page Agreement. There would have been ongoing dialogue following that signing of that agreement contemplating that these other transmission projects were going to be in the works. So, you know, those sort of things happen as a normal course of doing business.

You know, when we get to committee stage we'll have the—you're going to have the CEO of Manitoba Hydro here to answer some of those questions in terms of those relationships and those discussions, when they've been taking place. And I'm sure that it's just an ongoing part of doing business with our key stakeholders. But we'll have a very—opportunity hopefully in the very near future on a standing committee where we can ask those questions of the CEO.

Mr. Lindsey: Perhaps the minister could undertake to ask the former minister if he ever had any discussions with anybody about this particular agreement, term sheet, so that the minister can be more informed as to the history of how they got to the point where the board of Manitoba Hydro resigned, that Manitoba Metis Federation is threatening lawsuits. And, really, would be most helpful to know what discussions or how often, even, the previous minister may have met with the board of Manitoba Hydro to discuss this. We know that the government has—an MLA sits on the board. Be interesting to know if there was any discussion between that member and the previous minister or anybody within the ministry up before July 5th board meeting so that we can just kind of get a idea of the progression of these discussions and when the government, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister), I guess, became aware, when the minister became aware, just to try and figure out the timeline of that discussion and where they got to the point of introducing the term sheet, as the minister calls it, the agreement, as the other parties call it, to the government.

* (15:40)

Mr. Cullen: I think we've covered this process, how I see it unfolding, but certainly don't mind going back over and tilling the same ground here if it helps the member frame the discussion and the timeline as well.

You know, clearly, there is a number of projects that were being contemplated by Manitoba Hydro that would precipitate discussion with the Manitoba Metis Federation and a number of First Nation communities around the province as well. So, I'm sure, there was all kinds of discussions taking place over a number of years, and I would assume the board would probably be aware of, you know, those discussions in broad terms. To my knowledge, it appears that the terms of that—this particular agreement with the Manitoba Metis—I should say

proposal, with the Manitoba Metis Federation came to the board in July of 2017.

And, once the board had an opportunity to review the proposal, as had been negotiated with the Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Hydro, they decided it would be wise to let the government of Manitoba, as a stakeholder of Manitoba Hydro, review the particular proposal.

So mid-July, that's when the government became aware of the details of that proposal, and from there, government undertook its evaluation of that particular proposal. And, as a result of that review, subsequent discussion with Manitoba Hydro, the Cabinet issued a directive in March of this year not to proceed with the signing or an agreement around the proposal that was put forth by Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation.

So that's the time frame around how this proposal came to be and how it was dealt with. And I reference the Turning the Page Agreement because we are still operating under the terms of the Turning the Page Agreement because there is a reference in the Turning the Page Agreement to a dispute, and, clearly, we've come to the point where we're having a dispute, the parties are having a dispute, over this particular proposal. And, clearly, we are defining it as a proposal; Manitoba Hydro are defining it as a proposal; the Manitoba Metis Federation are terming it an agreement. And I suggest that's cause for disagreement among the parties.

So, under the Turning the Page Agreement, there is a tripartite steering committee representing three parties who will undertake to make sure they can clearly identify what the dispute is, and that's the process that we are currently going through right now. I know the steering committee has met on a couple of occasions, just over the last couple of weeks. I know there's some documentation that's been prepared, and there will be a follow-up meeting of that tripartite steering committee to ascertain exactly what the dispute is.

So that's the work of the committee that's being undertaken under the terms of the Turning the Page Agreement, and we certainly are adhering to the terms of the Turning the Page Agreement and we think that's the proper mechanism and the proper channel to work our way through. So, once that process is complete, then we can move forward to the next stage of the process.

Mr. Lindsey: So the previous board of Manitoba Hydro characterized it as an agreement; the MMF characterized it as an agreement; the government characterizes it as something different and apparently maybe the new board of Manitoba Hydro is characterizing it as something different.

Okay. So you're—the minister's saying that early July the government became aware; August they get the document in front of them. When did the government initiate its review of this particular—

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Cullen: Clearly, this proposal—I'd say Manitoba Hydro characterized this as a proposal as well—was—is very unique and quite complex, actually, when you look at it covering a 50-year period.

So it considers not only projects that were—are currently before Manitoba Hydro, but it also contemplates projects that Manitoba Hydro haven't considered yet. So it certainly was unique in scope, for sure, and that certainly led to complexities in the nature of the proposal.

So, certainly, the government, once they were aware of the proposal—I would think fairly shortly after that—thought it would be prudent to do a deeper dive and make—get a full appreciation for what the proposal would mean to both government, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Metis and the Metis Federation as well, especially because it did cover a 50-year period into the future. So certainly unique from that perspective.

The other thing, too, I think you have to be aware of is we do have the Turning the Page Agreement that was already signed by the previous government in 2014, so that being a relationship document and a guideline for relationships, I think the government thought it was important to go back and review that particular document as well and keep—understand how these two documents were related. Obviously, both documents are fairly complex, so it certainly did take some time to—for government to fully evaluate those particular documents and understand what the repercussions could be in respect of both those documents.

So—and as the process evolved and discussions with Manitoba Hydro subsequent to becoming aware of the proposal, we went through the Cabinet review and it was March of this year that Cabinet directed Manitoba Hydro not to proceed with further—to the agreement stage with that particular proposal. So that was a directive issued in March of this year.

Mr. Lindsey: So does the minister or anyone within the ministry know what date they decided to initiate the review of this particular agreement, term sheet?

* (15:50)

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I'll run through the time frame for the member again. So Manitoba Hydro board of directors reviewed the proposal early July. Subsequent to that, it came to the government of Manitoba mid-July. The government undertook a review of that particular document shortly after that time. And I think it was the prudent thing for that board of Hydro to do. It was a prudent thing for the government to do, and as I've indicated before, both this particular proposal and the Turning the Page Agreement are complex documents, so it certainly did take some time to review that and keep them in context, and how they related to each other as well. So I'm certainly not apologizing for either the board being diligent or Manitoba Hydro being diligent in reviewing these particular documents. It's too bad the previous government wouldn't have been as diligent when the decisions were being made around Keeyask development and Bipole III development.

As we learned last week from the PUB report, the previous decision by the NDP government to route the Bipole III line on the west side of the province cost Manitobans an excess of \$900 million. So, if the previous NDP government were doing their due diligence, we as Manitobans wouldn't be financing Bipole III to the tune of an extra \$900 million. So I am not apologizing. I will never apologize for being diligent in terms of reviewing these important documents and these proposal—this particular proposal that actually extends for 50 years into the future. Which also potentially takes away rights of Metis people across the province. So I will never apologize for being diligent in that regard. It's just too bad the previous NDP government weren't diligent when they were making decisions about Keeyask and Bipole III.

Mr. Lindsey: So sometime in—shortly after mid-July, this government undertakes a review of this particular document. So when did the government, the minister, receive the findings of this review?

Mr. Cullen: Well, again, I'll underline the complexities of these two documents and the relationship between these documents. Obviously that took some time to review and also there's—as I said—this one particular proposal expands through a time frame of 50 years. So there's obviously a lot of

potential repercussions arising out of an agreement of that term. And certainly the government wanted to be sure that what they were getting into when they were reviewing this particular proposal. And if this particular proposal was to eventually come to a binding agreement, what that would mean for all the parties and, in particular, what that would mean for Metis people down the road.

And the government's review clearly indicated that Manitoba Metis rights, individual rights could be taken away by this particular proposal. And that's certainly the concern that was raised by legal counsel. It was an issue that was brought to the Cabinet table and, ultimately, Cabinet made the decision by ordering the directive in March of this year to Manitoba Hydro to not enter into an agreement around the terms of this particular term sheet.

So that's how the process unfolded.

Mr. Lindsey: So there was some kind of review of the term sheet—the agreement, depending on who's characterizing it. There was some kind of review that was ordered by the government. We know that in March of 2018 the government told Manitoba Hydro not to proceed.

So when—[interjection] I'm trying to figure out—so the government has ordered a review. When did you get the results of that review that caused the government to say, in March, stop?

Mr. Cullen: Well, I think we've been pretty clear in our discussion here that, you know, once we were made aware of the term sheet in July, we undertook to review that particular proposal in a thorough manner because it does have far-reaching potential issues for many Manitobans and Manitoba Hydro, the government of Manitoba Hydro and the Metis Federation—and by extension, quite frankly, indigenous and First Nations communities around the province.

This particular agreement is unique, first of its kind with Manitoba Hydro in that it contemplates projects that have not even been undertaken at yet, so certainly a complex nature of this particular proposal. And, obviously, there's a lot of angles that had to be covered under these—under both the proposal and the Turning the Page Agreement, as well.

So that—all that review and undertakings took place over a number of months. Ultimately, the recommendations would come to Cabinet for final

review and once—it was March of this year that Cabinet made the final decision, ordered the directive to Manitoba Hydro to—not to proceed with this particular proposal any further. So, you know, it—extensive undertaking, and I think it was absolutely the right thing to do.

Again, if the previous government would have been as diligent as this government, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in of Manitoba Hydro. You know, the Keeyask project, the 'biprole' project. We're going to be—we're seeing—we're going to see Manitoba Hydro in around 2021, 2022 with a \$25-billion-or-more debt load. The debt-servicing costs alone on that—at that period of time with today's interest rates will be about \$1.3 billion a year—a \$1.3-billion service charge on the debt of Manitoba Hydro in 2021. And our revenue right now—our domestic revenue in Manitoba is only about \$1.8 billion. So you can imagine the challenges that Manitoba faces not just now, but down the road they're going to be faced because of decisions that were made by the previous government.

And, unfortunately—it was very clear now, and the PUB, Public Utilities Board, pointed out last week the government did not do their diligence in terms of those projects. So, if the previous government would have been as diligent as this government, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in at Manitoba Hydro.

*(16:00)

Mr. Lindsey: So there was a review undertaken. So who conducted the review of this particular term sheet agreement?

Mr. Cullen: I did indicate these—this proposal was quite—is quite complex, obviously very unique in that it considers projects that haven't even been contemplated yet, and contemplates payments for a 50-year period. So, something very unique to Manitoba Hydro and quite frankly, unique to Manitoba.

So previously agreements were in place with stakeholders that dealt specifically with one project. So it was relatively, I'm going to say relatively easy, probably not that easy, but in relative terms to a 50-year agreement where Manitoba Hydro and government could contemplate what steps would be needed to mitigate damage and to compensate communities for damage relative to one project.

So this being a really complex undertaking, a complex proposal, it certainly would take more time to review.

In terms of reviewing this proposal, I think it's important to recognize it's not just a Manitoba Hydro issue; it also speaks to various communities and various agreements as we go forward. So it has consequences across government. And different departments were brought in to review this particular document as well. Clearly, there's the consultation component that is required under section 35, Sustainable Development Department is in charge of that section 35 consultations for government. So, obviously, they were consulted as well. Certainly, legal counsel under Justice was consulted as part of this review as well.

So it was a thorough review of this particular proposal, and I think we have to keep in context that this particular proposal—in light of the Turning the Page Agreement that is also before us. So those things have to be weighed together and also weighed separately in terms of what ramifications they would have for future.

And I think that the big thing in this review—came to light—is what does it mean for rights of Metis people in Manitoba 50 years from now, and that's really the 'cruxed' of the matter, and that's certainly where we ended up as Cabinet as well, recognizing that the rights of Manitobans could be impeded down the road. And, in view of that, that was the decision taken by Cabinet in March of this year to order the directive to Manitoba Hydro to not proceed with this particular proposal any further.

Mr. Lindsey: I understand that this agreement is complex and somewhat unique, but can the minister tell us who exactly undertook the review that came up with the decision for the Cabinet in March to say stop? Was it staff of the Executive Council? What individuals—what groups of individuals specifically did the review and made the recommendations to government?

Mr. Cullen: This particular proposal, I think it was about a 67 and a half million-dollar arrangement for future years as well, so a very complex proposal before Manitoba Hydro board and before the government of Manitoba and, clearly, diligence was required to make sure that we are—if we were going to move ahead with this particular proposal, what it was going to mean to Manitobans, and a lot of Manitobans would be impacted by this decision if we did move to a legally binding agreement.

So, our view, it was a whole-of-government review because a lot of departments would have an interest in this particular and very unique proposal as it was brought forward to government.

Clearly, across government, we want to make sure that we, as a government, are operating within policies and the priorities that government has laid out. We also want to make sure that our Crown corporations are acting within the priorities and the policies as have been laid out by the government and our fear was this particular proposal didn't necessarily align with some of the policies and priorities that we have laid out as government.

So this particular proposal was a whole-of-government review to make sure we fully understand the implications; implications over, I would remind the member, over a 50-year period, and also contemplated projects that have not—not even on the drawing board yet, so a very unique proposal brought forward to the board at Hydro and the government of Manitoba.

So it was certainly worth a thorough review across government, and, obviously, keeping in context the Turning the Page Agreement as well, was an opportune time for government to review that particular document that was signed by the previous government back in 2014 and signed by the Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Hydro as well.

So the government undertook to do its diligence. I do appreciate the line of questioning because we have nothing to hide here. The directive that was issued by Cabinet in March of this year was a result of the review and the work that was done across government and that particular directive is open and available to Manitobans to see and we have done our due diligence on this \$67.5-million proposal. I just wish the previous government would have done their diligence when they were contemplating the \$5-billion bipole project and the \$8-billion Keeyask project. If the government of the day would have been doing their homework at the time, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in at Manitoba Hydro.

*(16:10)

And, you know, when we talk about the \$25 billion or more of debt that Manitoba Hydro will be facing by 2021, the \$1.3 billion in interest payments that we're going to be forced to find, clearly, Manitoba Hydro faces challenges; faces challenges today and will face even bigger

challenges down the road. And all because a previous government made decisions and didn't necessarily continue to do or did their due diligence on those particular projects.

And the Public Utilities Board clearly pointed that out last week when they brought forward their order and—also making some recommendations, and they certainly talked about the \$900-million burden that ratepayers will be facing with no apparent technical benefit for the west side route.

So, clearly, decisions were being made without the government doing due diligence and, clearly, the Public Utilities Board is laying those decisions at the hands of the previous government and, clearly, Mr. Selinger, during a leadership race, quite publicly stated that the west-side route was going to be the preferred route for Bipole III, even though Manitoba Hydro preferred the east-side route.

Mr. Lindsey: So can the minister tell us who conducted the review, or can he not?

Mr. Cullen: I think I was very clear in stating that this was a whole-of-government approach and—there was a number of departments who were involved in this particular review, recognizing the importance of this particular proposal. The proposal was very—is very complex. It's very unique in that it represents a 50-year time frame, and it's unique in the fact that it could take away Manitobans' rights to voice their opinion on future development projects, which is certainly a key component of this particular proposal.

This is not something that had been contemplated by Manitoba Hydro before in any of their other projects and proposals or agreements that they have signed with individual communities, whether they be First Nations communities or Metis communities in the past. So, clearly, a unique proposal requires a unique look and a unique review, and that's why we took the whole-of-government approach that various department would be required to review not only the proposal, but also the relationship this proposal would have to the Turning the Page Agreement that was signed by the previous government.

So there is certainly a lot of players involved in this particular review of this very important proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So can the minister supply us with a list of what all government departments, then, were involved in this review? He's alluded to their being many government departments. He's alluded to all

kinds of things. I'd kind of like to have a list of which departments were involved in that review.

Mr. Cullen: I will say for the member, we—this being a very complex file, there was a lot of—pretty well every department in government could be impacted by this particular proposal because it is such a comprehensive proposal. Comprehensive in nature that it covers a lot of ground—and I mean physical ground—in Manitoba relative to the proposed Manitoba-Minnesota line, relative to transmission lines going into Saskatchewan. And it also contemplated projects that hadn't even been developed yet. So, you know, it really potentially would cover all of Manitoba. And you could imagine all of the sectors that could be impacted by projects that would be developed anywhere in Manitoba.

So, obviously, we're dealing with, you know, First Nations, indigenous issues. We're dealing with municipal issues. We're dealing with agricultural issues. We're dealing with clearly environmental issues. There's Finance issues here as well, clearly Justice issues as well. So clearly it's a whole-of-government approach to reviewing what this particular proposal would mean because it could quite frankly impact all of those respective departments and impact a lot of Manitobans going forward.

So, that's—that was the whole-of-government approach to it. Information was put together, ultimately sent to Cabinet for Cabinet consideration, and then it was in March of this year that Cabinet made the ultimate decision, issued the public directive for Manitoba Hydro not to proceed with this particular proposal, not to enter into an agreement regarding the terms of this particular proposal.

So that's—what was the process that was undertaken. I think it was the right process. It was a very diligent process. And I know the Hydro board were acting in good faith in terms of their review of this proposal and subsequently asked the government of Manitoba to review their proposal as well. So the whole-of-government approach, in this particular case, I think was the right method to handle it. Obviously, at the end of the day, it's—it was a Cabinet discussion and a Cabinet decision based on that review.

And I will say, Madam Speaker, that—Madam Chair, that it's important to do these types of diligent work because previous governments ignored that without having a proper framework before entering

into decisions about Keeyask or Bipole III. We're left holding the bag for those major projects. And, quite frankly, it was probably government intervention that got us into this mess. Government wasn't doing its due diligence, and these reckless political decisions have left us in quite a bit—quite a mess. And this isn't just me saying this; this is the Public Utilities Board identifying \$900 million for bipole—the bipole project alone that Manitobans are on the hook for.

So I will not apologize for being—doing our due diligence on this particular file, because it is important for Manitobans, and it's important for Manitobans all across our province.

Mr. Lindsey: So most or all government departments undertook a review of this particular document to determine what effects it would have on them. So did all those government departments submit a report on the outcomes of their review and what effect it would have on their particular departments?

* (16:20)

Mr. Cullen: Yes, clearly, this is a unique project and certainly all-encompassing, and that's why we took the whole-of-government approach to have the opportunity to review this particular proposal. So clearly some departments would have bigger interests in what was at stake than others. Obviously, each department would have the opportunity to provide information. Certainly, those that wanted to weigh in could weigh in on the issue. Ultimately, the information was provided to Cabinet or Cabinet made that decision on March of this year not to proceed with this particular proposal. And certainly, after reviewing the terms of the document, we as Cabinet believe that was the proper decision because it—if we were to proceed with the proposal, it would have implication—far-reaching implications for the rights of individual Metis in terms of their ability to make comment on future developments in Manitoba, whether they be transmission lines or future hydroelectric development in Manitoba.

So that certainly was a concern that government would have, and I think we're hearing from people as well that they would be concerned to have their rights taken away by this particular agreement if it was to come to an agreement. Certainly, the terms of the proposal made it such, and I think their, certainly, concerns have been expressed by community in and around those particular rights being taken away.

Mr. Lindsey: So, many, some, all, optional—who, which departments responded, how did they respond to Cabinet to allow Cabinet to make the decision it made? Was there a report from departments that did their due diligence and went through the agreement in great detail to determine how it would impact each department? Was it just kind of an off-the-cuff thing that the—how did—what reports, what review process, how did Cabinet come to the decision it made, based on what the minister's said about all government departments, or those that wanted to, reviewing the implications of this potential agreement?

Mr. Cullen: I certainly appreciate the question, and so members around the table, I'm sure, have been familiar with the Cabinet process in the past. I assume the process is probably similar to the way it was under previous administrations. Clearly, this particular proposal required a all-of-government look at the various angles and what the repercussions would be if we were to take this proposal and enter into a binding agreement. So that's certainly the approach that was taken. Obviously, senior staff from various departments as high up as deputies would be involved in this particular review. And, obviously, information respective of the various components would be put together in a Cabinet submission for Cabinet to consider. And that's the usual course of doing business and, ultimately, Cabinet will take the information that's provided and weigh the options and make those decisions. And that's—this is the process that was undertaken with this particular proposal and I think it was a comprehensive approach which, in my view, is the right approach because this particular proposal is very comprehensive and quite unique. So I think that was the right process to undertake. At the end of the day, the Cabinet would review the information prepared for it, and, in March of this year, that's when the Cabinet made the decision to issue the public directive.

Mr. Lindsey: So, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) came out and characterized this agreement as paying hush money to special interest groups, is that the advice that Cabinet received?

Mr. Cullen: You know, clearly, there's a lot of legal ramifications by taking this particular proposal and entering into a legal binding agreement, and it has legal implications for many Manitobans, especially Metis Manitobans for up to 50 years down the road. That's why we took the approach, a whole-of-government approach, a comprehensive approach to reviewing this particular proposal. And,

you know, it's the same process I would suggest has been in place for years in government in terms of reviewing complex issues. There's complex reviews undertaken in dealing with complex issues and, obviously, for Cabinet to make a decision, they have to have as much information before them as possible, and this was really the same process that was used in this undertaking as it would be in any other complex undertaking—undertaking by government.

So, clearly, we want to make sure that this particular proposal was in line with policies and the priorities of the government of Manitoba. We—obviously, as a Cabinet, concerned about the potential rights of Metis people into the future that would have their rights taken away, to voice their opinion about hydroelectric development, whether it be a dam or any future contemplated transmission lines.

So it had very significant implications for many Manitobans and it was not a review that was taken lightly. It was not a decision that was taken lightly, and at the end of the day it was a public directive to Manitoba Hydro to—not to continue with this particular proposal.

Mr. Lindsey: So does the minister acknowledge and agree that any agreement with the MMF would not necessarily preclude any other agreement with Metis citizens or groups representing Metis people such as, I don't know, the union national St. Joseph?

* (16:30)

Mr. Cullen: I think the member's asking me to speculate a bit on this question, but I'm—*[interjection]* Let me say that, you—this is clearly a unique agreement. It's something that Manitoba Hydro had—has not contemplated in the past because previous agreements with communities or First Nations or Metis were always around a specific project. This particular proposal contemplates projects that haven't even been developed by Manitoba Hydro as yet.

So it creates a bit of a challenge, I think, for government because this proposal, if it was to become a binding agreement, would have implications for rights of Manitobans for 50 years to come. And this could take away their rights to voice their opinion on future development projects, which, clearly, doesn't seem to be the right thing to do.

And, you know, Manitoba Hydro and government have entered into a number of agreements over the years with their key

stakeholders, with various respective communities, more or less on a one-off basis, based on a specific project. And that's always been the narrative in the past. This particular proposal is unique in that sense that it doesn't represent just one project, but represents potential future developmental projects.

So very unique in that respect. I think there will be future discussions, I'm sure, with our key stakeholders as we move forward to develop in the near future the Manitoba-Minnesota line. I know the process is under way for the consultation under section 35 as we speak with First Nations community, with the Metis community in respect of that particular project. I know there's other projects Manitoba Hydro has contemplated, and I'm thinking specifically of transmission lines into Saskatchewan, which provide us an opportunity to market our excess power. And, certainly, those discussions are under way with those stakeholders, including the Manitoba Metis Federation, as well.

So, certainly, those discussions are ongoing. Whether we will reach agreements on those—I expect we will at some point in time. And, obviously, those agreements are important. They're important relationships and they're important discussions to have with our stakeholders as we move forward because we do recognize we have the duty to consult with those communities to make sure that we get things right.

So, by saying no to this particular proposal, I don't think, in any way, jeopardizes future discussions or future arrangements that we might come to or future agreements that I expect we will come to in respect of these development projects.

So, certainly, we as government, we look forward to working to try to export as much hydroelectricity as we can. We know we're going to have an abundant source of electricity in the very near future once the Keeyask comes online, so it's incumbent upon not only Manitoba Hydro but we as government, to try to find export sales for that particular product. And it is a clean, green product, so I think it's something that Manitoba should be proud of—the product that we are producing. Now, the challenge, of course, is to get it to those export markets. And we have to work with our stakeholders to make sure that we can get that done.

So those discussions, and those ongoing relationships, and those agreements are very important, and we as—both as Manitoba Hydro and government, have to make sure that we are doing our

diligence and working hard to make sure that we have those relationships in place and ultimately have those proper agreements in place.

Mr. Lindsey: So has the minister, or the Premier (Mr. Pallister), or anybody else had the discussion with the newly appointed Hydro board about this particular agreement—or what did the minister call it—term sheet?

Mr. Cullen: Yes, we've had some very positive discussions with our new board of directors.

Clearly, the new board of directors have some challenges before them, and I think they're coming to the realization of just how significant those challenges are. Certainly, we've had our Public Utilities Board order come out just last week. So I know the board is certainly reviewing that 300-page document and the respective orders that are in there and also the number of recommendations outside of the orders as well.

So, clearly, the board will be busy undertaking the task before them with respect to that particular ruling by the Public Utilities Board. I'm sure they will also have a view to the \$25 billion of debt that Manitoba Hydro will be facing in 2021 and the corresponding interest payments of \$1.3 billion and how they're going to try to manage that huge financial challenge before them. So, certainly, they've got big challenges ahead of them.

Clearly—I think they understand the importance of relationships that we as Manitoba Hydro and government have with our key stakeholders, whether they be Metis community or the indigenous community—obviously very important relationships as we move forward.

So we certainly shared the directive—the Cabinet directive, March 21st—with the new board. So they were certainly familiar with the direction that Cabinet wanted to proceed with. And we've had discussions with them in respect of that directive, and we have ongoing discussions with the board in respect of a lot of issues before Manitoba Hydro.

* (16:40)

So, clearly, the new board will be getting up to speed on all the relative issues to the board. I know they've had some extensive meetings just recently to get up to speed on all those particular issues. So we certainly wish them well in their deliberations as they move forward. And certainly, from my

perspective as a minister, I think it's important that we do have a positive working relationship and communication with all of the Crown corporations and their board of directors. That's my intent, and we're going to continue to work to that, to that end, and look forward to having even more lively discussions with the board of directors at Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Lindsey: Has the Premier (Mr. Pallister) found time in his busy schedule to meet with his latest hand-picked board of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Cullen: I think I'll point out for the members opposite that we have well over 200 agencies, boards and commissions in Manitoba. We're currently going through the whole review process with those boards and agencies, commissions. This is a lot of new people put in place over the last year and a half, and that will be a continuing evolution as we go forward with the agencies, boards and commissions.

So, not being privy to the Premier's schedule, but, certainly, I think he has confidence in us as ministers to deal with the boards as we see fit. And, clearly, we have developed as a government a framework for that under the new Crown corporation, governments and accountability act. So that really establishes the roles and responsibilities of the various parties. So we think this legislative framework works pretty effectively. We're working through that process. It's obviously a new piece of legislation and a new process for us, but it certainly identifies responsibilities for the minister, for the deputy minister, for the roles and responsibilities of the chair of the boards, the boards themselves, and it talks about the accountability mechanisms, it talks about the relationships, and I think it's a key component as we move forward.

The framework allows government to provide mandate letters to the respective Crown corporations. And we've certainly done that. Those mandate letters are obviously public documents. They're made public. And they're also subject to change, too, so mandate letters can be revised from time to time, and that's a work-in-progress and the government undertakes that work on a regular basis. And part of that work is communicating with the board and the board of directors, as well, to make sure that their policies and their priorities are aligned with the policies and priorities of the provincial government. So that's all part of that legislative framework.

And the other thing that we can do through government and through this legislative

framework is the issuing policy directives or issuing directives, and we've done that in this particular case, vis-à-vis, this proposal. So that's an opportunity for government to make a statement in terms of what our policies and our priorities are going forward. And we think it's an interesting model and I think it leads itself to a higher level of accountability both within government and also a higher level at the board level as well. And that to us is very important.

I know when you read reports like the Public Utilities Board report that came out last week, you know, where it talks about the provincial government providing, you know, direction on the Bipole III, that's certainly an area of concern leaving Manitobans on the hook for an extra \$900 million. We believe that it was important to put in this governance and accountability legislation to provide proper oversight for these very important Crown corporations.

So that's what we've done. We're working through that process. It's, like I say, it is a work in process. It's an evolution as we journey down this path. But, certainly, from my perspective these relationships the government has with Crown corporations is very important and the communication with the boards of directors is very important as well.

Mr. Lindsey: Can the minister please provide copies of the mandate letters, the roles and responsibility records for the previous board of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Cullen: The intent of the legislation is an accountability mechanism and it speaks to the accountability side of it pretty clearly, and the intent is to be open and transparent in terms of our relationship with the respective boards. As such, the mandate letters are posted on the website, so those are public documents that are available for the member to view. So—and as I did mention, too, the mandate letters can be changed as we move forward, so that can be an evolution, but certainly the mandate letters that the Crowns have received are posted on the website.

The roles and responsibilities component, that's an evolution as well. We're working through that process currently because this is a new piece of legislation we're working through. We're also working closely with our board of directors, so we want to make sure our boards are in sync with what the government's policies and priorities are. So as we go through that we want to make sure that we're on the same page in terms of the roles and

responsibilities. So we're working on the roles and responsibilities component, you know, as we speak, to get those finalized. Those will also be posted on the website once they're finalized.

* (16:50)

Additionally, the directives, which are—can be directed by Cabinet will be on the website as well. So any directives that have been issued to Crown corporations are readily available on the website for review.

And I will say as well, in respect of both—*[interjection]* I will say, for the member's interest, that certainly the directives require Cabinet approval before they are—they're issued. So—and those are public documents, along with the roles and responsibilities will be public documents once they're completed, and mandate letters were also public documents.

Mr. Lindsey: So I will ask the minister again to please undertake to provide the mandate letters and any changes to those mandate letters that went to the previous board. And if he could also provide at the same time the mandate letters that have been given to the current board.

Mr. Cullen: I'd be more than happy to send the link over to the member for his review, and then he can go online and see what's online for his review in terms of the mandate letters and the directives that have been issued.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess that's part of the problem with this government's take on providing notices. They just assume everyone should just go online and find it. It seems a shame that the minister can't have one of his multiple staff undertake to provide the documents as requested.

So would the minister reconsider his answer and undertake to provide those documents?

Mr. Cullen: Well, I recognize that sometimes going on the website can be cumbersome, so, you know, we're on this side of the House aren't afraid to do some heavy lifting, and we will do the heavy lifting and provide the documents to the members opposite. We're certainly not afraid to commit to that and provide that.

I—and then maybe we could find the mandate letters from the previous government, if there was any such thing as—from the previous government as well. And maybe we could go—*[interjection]* And maybe the members opposite would dig back in

history and see if they can find the letter that was penned by the previous government that said that Bipole III should go down the west side and cost Manitobas—Manitobans \$900 million extra. Maybe they could dig around and see where that mandate letter came from or that directive letter from the previous government.

I don't know if Mr. Selinger would be privy to where that particular document is hidden or not, but maybe the members can undertake to find that particular document.

I know when the bipole line was being considered, I was actually the critic at the time, and the leader and myself, we took a tour on the east side of Lake Manitoba to visit with the First Nations communities over there, because we'd heard from government at the time that the communities on the east side were not in favour of bipole on the east side.

So we thought, what would be—do our due diligence, make a road trip, and go over and have a conversation with the communities on the east side, and, oddly, we found out there was 15 out of 16 communities were actually in favour of having the bipole on the east side of Manitoba. In fact, one of the chiefs at the time actually provided us a map. He said this is—you know, we've been consulting with our communities and we think we can agree to a map, and here's how the bipole would actually look, and we thought, well, this is a fantastic idea and, I mean, it's going to save Manitoba's money. Of course, at the time, the government of the day said, oh, no; don't worry about bipole. It's not going to cost Manitobans 1 cent, you know, it's not going to cost Manitobans any money at all. We'll just pass that on.

Well, the proof is in the pudding here last week, when the Public Utilities Board said, by the way, the west-side decision just cost you, as ratepayers, \$900 million more. That was a \$900-million decision made by the previous government. That's where I'd like to see the directive or the mandate letter issued by the previous premier in placing the bipole route on the west side of the province. I'd like to see that \$900-million directive. Would the member endeavour to find that \$900-million directive issued by the previous NDP government?

Mr. Lindsey: The minister seems somewhat confused all of a sudden as to who asks questions and who answers them.

So I'm assuming from his long, rambling answer that he doesn't really have a desire to provide that information, so yesterday, I believe, the minister alluded to the roles and responsibilities that it had been provided—those documents had been provided to Cabinet or any, so could the minister undertake to supply those documents?

Mr. Cullen: Yes. Now, just to clarify, I did say I would provide those documents to the member. I don't want him to go to any extra lengths to go on the website to have to track them down, so we will do the heavy lifting and provide those documents for you as well.

Oh, and the roles and responsibilities—yes; that particular piece of the puzzle is work that's currently in progress right now. I'd mentioned we're having discussions with the boards so we want to make sure that we're having a communication, so we're walking hand in hand with the roles and responsibilities, so those are discussions we're currently having with the board of directors. There's some draft work that's been done but nothing has been formalized at this point in time, so you will not see the roles and responsibilities on that particular website.

So you will see the mandate letters that have been posted and you will see any directives that have been issued to the Crown corporations as well and I will endeavour to provide the mandate letters and the directives to the member.

Mr. Lindsey: So the minister—the government appointed a new board. Can the minister tell us what direction, either written or verbal, that they gave this new board so that they would have some understanding of what their roles and responsibilities would be as the Crown corporations were—

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

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (14:50)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chairperson, I ask for—to be able to recess—leave to recess for the day.

Mr. Chairperson: The question is before the committee by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), a request for recess of the committee for today.

Is that agreed upon by everybody here? *[Agreed]*

The committee is recessed for the day.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply is now resuming the consideration for the Estimates for the Department of Education and Training.

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

I'll get the minister to introduce his staff as they are getting ready for the Estimates.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you. And joining me in the Chamber is Deputy Minister Jamie Wilson; Assistant Deputy Minister Rob Santos; Colleen Kachulak—I got it right this time; and Carlos Matias, ADM.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll get the honourable member from Concordia to introduce his staff.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): With me once again is Christopher Sanderson, who's one of our fantastic researchers over at the opposition caucus.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. As previously agreed, questions for this department will proceed in a global manner. And we'll be asking the minister to give us a response from yesterday's questions.

Mr. Wishart: These are responses from some of the follow-up from yesterday's questions.

So, in response to the question yesterday I had commented to the member from Concordia to follow up, committed, sorry, for the member from Concordia to follow up on enrolment increased numbers related to French education within our system. So, first, I'd like to provide a little revised information on the September 30th, 2016, French immersion number. It's 11,619.8; I haven't quite figured out how that works. As of September 30th, 2015, full-time equivalent French was 5,377, and French immersion was 11,103. So, as I indicated yesterday, French and French immersion are both showing increases in enrolment, specifically the increase in French is 1.7 per cent, while the

increase in French immersion is a 4.6 per cent increase.

And I also would like to follow up on the questions with the member of Concordia regarding adult learning and literacy to ensure that we're able to provide the member with the latest and most transparent of available information. We are following up the followed details.

For 2018-2019, the department has allocated \$20.266 million to support adult literacy programs and programming at adult learning centres, as noted on page 99 in the departments 2018-2019 supplemental information that has been tabled in the Manitoba Legislature.

Our government recognizes the important role that literacy and adult learning programs have to support people into further educational opportunities or directly into the labour market. Strong literacy skills are the foundation for a capable workforce that is able to access employment and adapt to the changing and increasingly complex demands in the workplace.

In 2016-2017, we supported 1,991 individuals in an adult literacy program through 33 agencies; 8,100 adult learners who completed 10,636 courses; and further resulted in 1,207 graduations including 550 indigenous learners. That's about 46 per cent of the adult learning that is indigenous. This work is making a difference and supporting the development of a skilled and in-demand labour force.

The member opposite suggested that our government had cut funding in this area. However, I'd like to put on the record further context around what is reflected on page 117 of the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review. The figures reported in the previous years included funding recovered from other areas of government, and based on the new departmental alignment, we are now able to simplify our funding and reduce administrative burdens by minimizing these internal transfers. Additional funding to offset the print reductions is leveraged through the fees and services on behalf of citizens for specific adult learning and literacy programming that support alignment and attachment to the labour market.

I'd like to make it clear that there are no reductions in funding for this critical programming area, and Manitobans can be ensured that we have no reduction in services in this area.

Mr. Chair, I hope that the member finds this information useful.

I'd also like to address my comments to the questions that the member had raised regarding the apprenticeship system. The member expresses concerns that our government is reducing the number of training seats available and limiting the number of training opportunities for apprentices, and that this reduction reflects a decline in demand, and it's suggested—suggestive of a slowing economy.

This is an inaccurate interpretation, as I indicated yesterday, and I would be pleased to clarify this further. On an annual basis, the—our hard-working officials in the department work to estimate the number of training seats that are required across Manitoba for all of the 55 designated trades.

As previously noted in this Chamber, there are regularly situations where whole classes are cancelled, or in other situations where students are unable to attend their scheduled seat due to individual or employers' needs. In the last fiscal year, 20 per cent of—

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave? Agreed to have leave for the minister to continue for another—okay? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate that. We're approaching the end.

In the last fiscal year, 20 per cent of apprentices were not able to attend their scheduled seat because of strong economic activity in their sector. Particularly—the example I used was construction, and 40 whole classes were cancelled. This represents a total of 1,017 seats. Again, this—often because apprentices are needed to meet the industry commitments—a sign of a strong and growing economy.

Mr. Chair, these cancellations impact overall costs, and we need to operate in a way that best ensures value-for-money for Manitobans, and sustainability to our apprenticeship system. And to do this, we have improved the way we forecast needed seats.

The Auditor General's audit—Office of the Auditor General, sorry—audit conducted on Apprenticeship Manitoba emphasized that a quality—

quantity of apprentices—sorry, that the quantity of apprentices was more valued over quality of training.

That doesn't make a lot of sense.

This government is taking steps to ensure that we have a quality training system that is responsive to the needs of the industry.

This new approach better utilizes funding and gives us a necessary flexibility to nimbly add or reduce seats as the industry requires. We are being more responsive and responsible in our approach. The strength of this relationship with our college partners further enables us to respond quickly when we are called upon by industry.

Mr. Speaker, with growing demand for skilled trades, we are not only encouraged by the ongoing strength of our new enrolments, which in 2016 and 2017 as I had noted, was 2,217. We have also taken a strategic, targeted approach to contact inactive 'apprenishes'—sorry, apprentices to re-engage.

The audit also identified that often the total number of apprentices engaged in the apprenticeship system was overstated, and so Apprenticeship Manitoba is taking steps to conduct more accurate reporting and projections.

In April this year, we sent out a total of 3,233 letters of re-engagement to any individuals registered in our system who have not had direct contact with—in the last two years. This is our first attempt to reconnect with those individuals.

We also proactively reached out by email or through phone calls to understand the individuals' specific circumstance and to offer our support to help them continue on their path for Red Seal certification. For those apprentices that we have had direct contact with, this has been a very positive response.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to conclude that—by stating that we are ensuring strong pathways for training opportunities for our apprentices to make sure that we support those individuals and the industry in a responsive way.

* (15:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): The honourable minister must be aware of the Komagata Maru incident, and the federal government already apologized for that wrongdoing. And I wonder, is

that—that incident happened in Canadian soil. Is that part of the curriculum in the history? If it's not, then why not?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. I know that he is very concerned that we have a well-balanced approach to making sure that Manitoba students are very aware of rights and freedoms that we enjoy in this country and the reasons for many of them.

I know that it is part of the curriculum. I cannot indicate what year that curriculum—it is in the curriculum. If the member desires, I can have that checked and get back to you. But I know that it is part of the curriculum. I think it's somewhere around the grade 9 year.

Mr. Saran: I thank the minister for that. Sure, he can get that information and let me know.

But I'm aware, in somewhat, it's optional. It's up to the history teacher whether he wants to include it or not. But these kinds of incidents should be compulsory so that people—students can know about the history and know what happened in the past. So I hope the minister can get that answer, and if that's not the compulsory, help to make it compulsory. Thank you.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's concern. We will find out what the status is as to where it is in the curriculum and clear up any confusions about whether or not it's an optional item in the process, and I'll get back to the member. Whether or not it's in the Estimates process, I will commit to get back to you individually.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you to the minister for providing the feedback on the questions that were—or asked yesterday.

This afternoon, I'd like to ask a few questions with regarding post-secondary education, and I wanted to start with a question about the fundraising capital campaigns of post-secondary institutions.

I'm wondering, could the minister provide me with the amount raised for those capital campaigns, broken out by post-secondary institution, and if he could also provide me with the last two years for those amounts?

Mr. Wishart: For clarification, are you talking about capital campaigns specifically as—okay. Thank you.

I appreciate the member's question. As the member knows, we are looking at this on a

case-by-case basis, as what has been done. Of course, the amount that they raise, you would have to address that question, of course, to the post-secondary institution themselves.

I know that—and we will get you a summary of this, if you prefer. I know that we have been on board regarding some work that's been done on the engineering, also with the northern observatory as part of the process at Churchill. And I know that there has been some variances with that because of higher costs than anticipated there and some different timelines around that as well. So I can get back to the member with a summary of what has been committed so far.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, that would be great, and if the minister could also provide any preliminary numbers he might have for 2018-19 as part of that, that would be appreciated, if that information is available.

The minister provides an annual report on Manitoba Student Aid. Last year, the budget for that, not including recoveries, in '16-17 was \$43.7 million. How much is the budget for this year?

*(15:20)

Mr. Wishart: I would direct the member's interest to page 98, and item (e) on that page, which is Manitoba Bursary Fund, showing a total of 13.1—or one fifty-four—\$13,154,000. And all of those—which includes the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, 6.7, which is the one that is matched by private donations at a two-to-one ratio. Graduate students year to year is the same. And also the Canada Student Grants, which are at—the next—item (f). Those are all supports for what I think you're asking for in Manitoba Student Aid.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, I may be on a different page here than the minister, and that's—maybe we won't explore exactly why that is, but that does happen, I guess, in these Estimates' process.

What I was looking at was page 8 of the Manitoba Student Aid annual report, which is the final page of that report. And the number that I was looking at here under financial information, budget '16-17 fiscal year, total \$43.719 million.

Maybe if the minister could just connect those two items for me.

Mr. Wishart: I think we'll have to get back to you on the relationship between the two. We don't have that summary—or do we here?

To do this properly, I think we'll have to do as we did yesterday—take it as something that we will return to you on. In terms of analysis, one of the reasons that we actually announced the other day that we were simplifying and consolidating the process is, as you can no doubt tell, there are a number—a large number of grants and awards on that page and we're trying to make this system easier for students to navigate. We did find, unfortunately, that there were sometimes bursaries and scholarships that went unclaimed because people were simply not aware of them or had overlooked them in the process. That's to no one's benefit, especially not to the students' benefit and certainly those that have put—you know, put up the support for an educational area that they want to see enhanced are probably very disappointed when these don't get used.

So we're attempting to put together a system that is more responsive and of greater use to the students. So I would commit to getting back to the member with a bit of a summary on that.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, hopefully, it's easier for the students to navigate than it is for the Education critic to navigate, because I continue to struggle to put these together. But I appreciate that the minister will endeavour to do that for me.

Also on page 98, can the minister provide me with the specific names of the programs listed under the Manitoba Bursary Fund as well as under the line Loans and Bursaries? If he can provide me with the amounts budgeted both last year and this year for those specific programs and if there are any of those programs that have been eliminated, could he just indicate which ones have been eliminated.

Mr. Wishart: We can do that. I can tell you in general, however, the reason for the change in numbers under Loans and Bursaries is some consolidation with the other item on that page, No. 1, which is Manitoba Bursary Fund directly so that we're not running multiple bursary situations out there.

As I'm sure the member appreciates, and I sympathize with his attempt—his concern about it being a little confusing for the students, it has certainly been very confusing and we're attempting to put this together in a much more rational and accessible form. But there is also a certain element of duplication in the process which has—comes at a cost to government and we want to make sure that the maximum amount goes towards the students'

education, which is why we are changing some of these and we're—continue to do so.

Mr. Wiebe: So, again, if the minister could provide me with a list of the specific names of those programs that would fall under the Manitoba Bursary Fund, as well as the loans and bursaries, and provide me with the amounts budgeted both last year and this year, in those specific programs, and if any have been eliminated. Could he make that clear?

Mr. Wishart: I certainly appreciate the question and we will get back to you with the consolidated arrangement that we have put together on this and indicate what has changed in terms of bursaries and which ones have been consolidated in an attempt to be efficient and clear as part of the process.

Mr. Wiebe: In the minister's press release on May 2nd, the minister announced changes to Manitoba Student Aid. It was my understanding that most of these changes, except the Manitoba bursary, are simply aligning with the changes to the program that the federal government made in 2016. Is that a fair—is that a correct assessment of the changes that we've seen?

Mr. Wishart: Yes, that certainly is. I mean, we try and align the two programs as much as possible as it is very confusing, as the critic has commented and it is even more so for the students and we're trying to make these programs align as well as possible and also to make sure that they haven't overlooked anything in the process. For instance, the student loans process automatically qualifies the student now to look at—to be screened at—in terms of the bursary programs, which before was a separate application process.

So we're trying to make this all much more rational from a student's perspective and to work as upfront, in terms of providing the support and making the pathway for them as clear as possible.

Mr. Wiebe: Well you know, Mr. Speaker it is—Mr. Chair, it's very confusing and not just to me, as the critic for Education, but I think it's confusing to those who are looking objectively at the numbers that the minister is using in his press releases and otherwise.

You know, specifically, when the minister went on to say that they were increasing the Manitoba Bursary by \$2.7 million, by my assessment here, it's not new money. In fact, it's just moving money from loans and bursaries to the Manitoba Bursary Fund.

Would that be a correct assessment of the situation?

Mr. Wishart: Certainly, the member's assessment is somewhat correct in that we have reallocated some of the—yes, reallocated some of these dollars into a program that has been heavily utilized from programs that have underutilized.

* (15:30)

It's part of the process of making sure that people are aware of all of the available funding sources that exist out there and make the best use of them. As I said earlier, and I'm sure the member concurs, it's to no one's benefit when these programs are not properly utilized. Students don't benefit, and I'm sure that the donors are disappointed in that their support for particular programs is not achieved upon.

So we're trying to make these programs work in a co-ordinated, rational manner, and so moving some of the bursary programs in particular into a fund that is used and focused on by the students makes a lot of sense, and we certainly want to make sure that these programs are used to their maximum.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, so I've—I heard the minister confirm, then, that that's not new money, and so I'd like to find out more about these programs that the minister's referencing that it has been transferred out of. One in particular, the ACCESS programs, under post-secondary education funding, have been reduced by approximately \$1 million.

So can the minister tell me what programs specifically were supported through that ACCESS program and what has been discontinued this year?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

A couple reasons for the change, and if you want to drill down for more details, we can certainly do that. One is some universities and post-secondary institutions were not eligible under that ACCESS program. So those dollars have been moved over to Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative when they were industry-related dollars and supported through that side of things through our contribution in that regard. Brandon and ACC in particular were ineligible for any money out of that area.

One of the other areas that was a bit of a concern for us on that, as the member probably appreciates and I know we've touched briefly on this yesterday, we're trying to put in place a system that allows us to track students through the program to be sure that they are achieving success through the program, and

the ACCESS program, we really had no follow-up whatsoever. It was one-time grants that we were unable to put together from year to year to see whether students were following through with their educational plans. They might actually have qualified for the grants—I think the most I had ever talked to anyone was actually three years running on the ACCESS grants, but they were all individual, separate occurrences. There was no linkages and no data generated on that.

And I think, as a government, we're—it's responsible for us to make sure that we're putting in place programs that allow us to be sure that student success is sort of the goal in the whole process and that that is a structure that we can track them through the system. We had that in place through Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, so moving the dollars over there, and expanding the range of access from other post-secondary institutions was the logical way to go on that. Some of the—and I certainly can commit to getting back with details on those that remain—some of them were—we need permission to move as part of the process, and so that's why they remain where they are.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, well, I would appreciate more detail on that, certainly, because, you know, what I'm hearing the minister tell us, once again, is this is a area where there was a lack of data; there was no data or there was a limited ability to follow up and have any kind of certainty as to the success or the uptake, and yet, you know, we see a cut. We see funding having being reduced in this area. So it's concerning that without the data, before the data is available, before the system that the minister has talked about here has been implemented, you know, the cuts are coming. So it doesn't sound like it's an evidence-based move; it sounds like it's about saving some dollars.

But, you know, if the minister can just give us more information about exactly what those programs were that were supported through the ACCESS program and which ones have been discontinued this year. I think that would be helpful for painting the picture that the minister is trying to paint.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and certainly we can get back with more details on those specific programs, but, in regards to your comment about evidence-based and wanting to use data, that is one of the reasons we're moving the dollars from the ACCESS program, where we were unable to generate long-term data in terms of trends and information and follow-ups, to a

program such as MSBI where certainly we've always had some element of that and the ability to track students through the system. And we are enhancing that as well so that we will have additional information as we move forward.

As I said earlier, I think it's very important that we are able to track students through the system so that we can help with student success as part of the program and that we know that they have access to the supports that they need. It's not complete wraparound; there are always other factors, including number of social factors that come into play. Certainly, student mental health is becoming an increasing issue in the system. We're hearing that from many of the post-secondary institutions that we need to work with more on that, and I know it's a burden for them to have to deal with that. But it becomes a factor in student success, and student success is what this is all about, that we want to make sure that we can help, at least from our side of things, in terms of tracking students and their ability to get access to programs that support them in that.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister confirm that the ACCESS bursaries are being discontinued, and can the minister explain why that would be the case?

*(15:40)

Mr. Wishart: I'd certainly appreciate why the member is wanting clarity on this one. The ACCESS bursary program actually will now be part of the bursary change here that Manitoba Bursary Fund indicated here, the increase that's part of that.

And can break that down a little bit for the member if he wants. ACCESS bursary program prior was about \$2.2 million. There was a Prince of Wales or Princess Anne Awards, which was \$211,000, and Aboriginal medical student scholarship, which was about \$210,000, and a Nurse Practitioner Education Grant, which was about \$98,000. So the total comes to about \$2.7 million, and that is part—now part of the Manitoba Bursary Fund on page 98(e)(1).

Mr. Wiebe: So, again, to be clear, this is not new money that's being provided to students. This is a reallocation of money that's already existing. And, you know, again, when we talk about, you know, confusion and concern out there by students, this is one that's come to us from—directly from students who are concerned, who are seeing that this program has been eliminated and who are wondering why this isn't available to them. So I think the minister needs to be very clear about exactly what these changes

entail and whether these changes that are being made and this moving, this shifting of money around, whether this, you know, whether this will still meet the same goals that the ACCESS bursary did and whether this will meet—still affect the same students and will still meet the same goals that they've come to rely on, because, as I said, there's a lot of concern out there, and students aren't seeing a simpler system or more clarity, they're seeing more confusion. And that's what we're hearing about.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I appreciate the member's concern—thank you, Mr. Chair—certainly, any time you make a change, there has to be a period of adjustment. But one of the reasons that we're being driven on this is because we know that there was a lot of confusion about the multiple programs that existed previously in terms of bursaries and some underutilization that occurred because people did not access them. We're trying to put this into a format where it'll be a single site where students are able to provide—able to get access to information on all of these. It's going to take a year or so to get this done because there's certainly some programs that we need to work to get agreement to do that.

But the point is, we're trying to put it in a single place where tracking will be possible, because previously that was not the case, so that we have better data ongoing in terms of where the demands are and we're able to adjust bursaries and scholarships as they become available in the future. We certainly intend to work with other jurisdictions across the province to enhance bursary scholarship initiatives moving forward in the future. That is something that our government is committed to, providing access to students early on in their education process and getting access to the dollars so that they can have a post-secondary education, not only at universities, but at colleges. So we want to be able to have a process in place that works not just on every individual grant combination but actually general across the program and that access to it is more universal than wasn't the case before.

It's certainly going to take a little while to get there. We have, with our announcement the other day, made a fairly significant move in trying to align the existing programs and the existing scholarships and bursaries with the loans programs. And as the member had mentioned, there had been change in some of the federal programs, so we're aligning all of it in the same general area so that students will be able to come to a single site and get better access.

Certainly, I'm sure he's hearing that there's confusion from some students that were looking for specific programs. What we were hearing was also that they were not aware of and they didn't have access to those programs and we're trying to provide that opportunity so that they don't have to hunt around. There are literally—especially when you come from some jurisdictions—many local scholarships and bursaries that are very confusing for students to get access to and find.

So we're trying to co-ordinate that as much as possible, and I suspect that there will be—in the long term, there will be more done in this area to try and get a co-ordinated approach. As a government, we're driven a lot by wanting to get access to data that tells us what the outcomes are and successes are and what needs are for individual students as part of the process. So we're trying to put in place something that provides us with what we want in terms of long term but also provides students with access to a more co-ordinated approach.

But it is a year of change. I know that change is never easy, not for us, not for the students, and I'm sure not for the member opposite.

Mr. Wiebe: Well it's not easy on the students, and it's not easy because there's a lack of clarity.

So what I'm hearing now the minister saying is that it's going to take a year or so to get it done. Does that mean that the ACCESS program continues for that year? Is that—is he saying there's not change for those students and how to access that \$2.7 million that's available?

And I guess I want to know—you know, the minister talks about how much this program is utilized. Well, how much of it was accessed? What percentage was accessed? How much was left on the table? Was there hundreds of thousands of dollars that weren't being accessed by students, or were—you know, how much was it?

How much was actually accessed by the students in this program?

Mr. Wishart: Well, thank you very much for the question, actually, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

The shift in the funding for the ACCESS program will include top-up access to indigenous students through other programs. It doesn't matter where they go in terms of the institutions, where before there—as I pointed out, there were some institutions that were ineligible in the progress.

The ACCESS bursary program was undersubscribed, as it existed, by half a million dollars, which was 23 per cent of the total dollars available. So undersubscribed, and it's fairly—a significant way, I certainly consider that significant. We are doing follow-up information sessions in May, actually, with the post-secondary institutions, so that they are—we have communicated to them so that—where the dollars are available under this program and that they will be in the position to communicate to students.

I think as the member knows, the students are applying now and continue right—really, into August in terms of scholarships and bursaries that are available. I know that transitions take time, but this is very focused on a client-centric approach so that we can continue working with the individual students once they come in the system.

We know that students needed these supports in an ongoing basis as part of the education program and that we weren't able to provide them with the linkages from year to year as part of the program. And I think that's very important and I'm sure that the member is as concerned as we are that we want to make sure student success is the outcome at the end of this.

*(15:50)

So we're taking an approach that will allow us to continue, on an ongoing basis from year to year, to work with students as they work their way through the post-secondary system.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, well, I guess what I'm trying to ask—and I appreciate the minister giving me some specificity on the amount of money that was not used. But what the concern that we're hearing from students is that, you know, these are students who are in year 1 in the WEC program at the University of Winnipeg, and ACCESS provides 60 per cent of their needs. And, you know, and now they're left in the lurch; they're not sure what's happening going forward. And so, you know, these are high-need, underrepresented students. These are students that certainly, you know, if this wasn't provided for them, may not be in the programs that they're in.

So what I'm wondering about is for those specific students, are they—are—can they count on this bursary to be—the ACCESS bursary to continue in the form that they've used it, and will that money be available to them?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you to the member for the question, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So if I can refer you back to the press release that you quoted from earlier, you'll find that moving down the page, the Province is increasing Manitoba scholarship and bursaries by \$2.7 million, which is the dollars that were moved from the ACCESS program as part of that, to a total of \$13.2 million for this academic year. And by redirecting the underused bursaries that we talked about here earlier, and the grants, to be distributed more equitably among students. As pointed out, there were certain institutions that were ineligible. This includes \$1 million for top-up grant, 500 to 15,000 dollars for approximately 750 low-income indigenous students for this coming year.

So, actually, more students are getting access to this program than before. And it is more—better distributed across the province. Of course, we can't show regional favouritism or institutional favouritism. The students themselves should be the one making the choice. On top of this, we're now going to be in a position where we can actually track these students in terms of what programs they have used that we have available: bursary programs in particular, student loan programs will all be part of that process and scholarships, of course, would be also something that we could track as part of that process.

So we end up with a program that is more—much more data driven and won't have gaps in it and not favour one institution over another institution. The students themselves will be in the position to make decisions on which institutions they choose to attend and what courses they choose to take.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, but I think the part that the minister hasn't addressed, and what students are wondering about is, is the level was 60 per cent for those students who were accessing the ACCESS bursary. Has that amount changed? Has that level of funding changed?

Mr. Wishart: Well, thank you for the question.

Certainly, what we've done here is—attempted to shift to a system that is based on need. And that was part of what we talked about here in the simplification process where now students previously were ineligible because, in some cases, if you were a rural student and you had a vehicle, they would require you to sell the vehicle before you would be eligible. Now we're eliminating that type of

stuff and you'll also be able to work while you're part of the system.

So, under the program as it exists now, the student would be eligible for a maximum of about \$6,500 in terms of bursaries which will certainly be a significant increase, and it's spread across the system much more broadly and much more equitably as part of the process.

Mr. Wiebe: So—but I didn't hear a percentage, so maybe I can ask this in a different way.

You know, the minister talks about need. So for those who are, you know, the highest need, what would be the maximum percentage that would be covered under the program as it's changing to now? And what would be the criteria, maybe? If he could just talk a little bit about what those criteria would be.

Mr. Wishart: Certainly, we'll talk about criteria. But to address surely, percentage of what?

Mr. Wiebe: So currently the ACCESS bursary provides 60 per cent of the assessed needs of those high-need students. Right? So, 60 per cent.

And the minister is now saying well it's actually going to be on a sliding scale based on need. You know, my understanding is these are high-need students, but the minister has different criteria now for that.

So I'd like to know what the criteria are but more importantly, what is the maximum amount of the percentage of the assessed needs of students would be covered under the ACCESS bursary as it's now being transferred into a different form?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question. As he's probably very much aware, we do what we can and have done for some years to align programs in terms of support between province and federal programs, scholarships and bursaries, as well as the loan programs.

We are trying to follow the criteria as they establish them. That—they're not, in the same sense, percentage of assessed need. It is based on what is—for the various courses—what is thought to be necessary to help the student in that process.

Now we can put together a—depending on what course the member is looking at, we can certainly put together what a student would be available—have available to them in terms of total dollars, whether that's bursary, loans, or combinations thereof,

because both of those are often—come into play on this.

So it is an assessment of the need and we try as much as possible to align with the federal government in the programs, a number of other provinces follow this same mechanism as to what they do in terms of their bursaries and scholarships as well. So we are trying to—certainly—be aligned with that so that students have access on an equitable basis.

Individual programs, as we said, there were a significant amount of undersubscription that was available there. We didn't think that was a very useful process in regards to the students not having access to dollars, and we also didn't find that the donors would be very happy with that process. So we're trying to make the best use of programs.

* (16:00)

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'll just give my colleague, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), a little break. Just ask the minister a couple of questions.

When was the last time that the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet sat?

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

Certainly, we value the whole process in Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Certainly, Healthy Child has a lot of very valuable programs. I know I have a lot of history, having had the pleasure of sitting in the House with the former member, Bonnie Mitchelson, who felt very strongly about this whole program, and I sat next to her for quite a long period of time when we were in opposition, and, certainly, she was very adamant on how important these programs are.

We have a number of very strong pilot programs in that area that certainly need additional attention. We are continuing the structure as it exists, Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. We are evaluating some of the initiatives as well and actually have a number of discussion papers circulating these days, which has been a very interesting process, as to how we can best move forward from the point we are now.

As to when the last committee meeting was, was actually almost a year ago, in last May.

Mr. Swan: So how many times in total did the committee meet in 2017?

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

So in fiscal year '16-17 we met a total of six times.

Mr. Swan: Now, the organizational chart on page 9 of the supplementary Estimates book—make sure I've got that right—yes, page 9, if the minister could just confirm that this is still correct, but to also provide the name of the new chair of the Provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee, which, at that time, March 1st, was to be appointed.

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

The structure, as demonstrated on page 9, we're still in process as to finding the right individual to be chair of the advisory committee. And as the member knows, we've been in ongoing review of many of our committees. This is one that we think is valuable and we certainly are looking for the right person to be chair.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister.

How long has that position been vacant?

Mr. Wishart: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the last meeting for that committee was October of 2015. Chair at that time was Jamie Wilson in his position as treaty commissioner, at that point. Jamie, of course, we have the luxury of having him on board as deputy minister at this point in time, so he certainly brings the experience that—from his time on that committee and a lot—and a wide range of other experience that I know I certainly appreciate.

As a new government, we are reviewing this whole structure along with some other things. We know that we certainly value the concept of Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. The focus of—or the advantage of having a child focus as part of our decision-making process when it comes to programs and policies—as I mentioned earlier, I had the luxury of sitting adjacent to Bonnie Mitchelson when she was in this House in her last term here. And I can tell you, she certainly was very vocal in expressing her desire for this program to continue, and it certainly drove home to me appreciation of the value of having this approach and the need to have this approach on an ongoing basis.

So, as a government, I know we're very committed to this and that we are looking at how best to structure this to make sure that we can deliver on the policy advantage of having a committee like this and move what has been for many, many years pilot programs and some very

worthwhile evaluations of how well these programs have worked, move forward with that so that we can actually make those programs available across the province and make sure that they have maximum impact on Manitobans.

So there are certainly a lot of issues to work with here, but we are very committed to a strong child-based focus not only at Cabinet but in terms of policy development as well.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that answer, and I would like to then ask a few questions about Healthy Child Manitoba which, of course, is directed by the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

Now the minister said in his answer that there's now a review going on of various programs. I presume the minister's talking about some of the programs operated by Healthy Child Manitoba. Who is undertaking that review? I know there's been a number of different—well, a multitude of different consultants' reports this government has obtained. Which report or which consultant is actually looking at the programs of Healthy Child Manitoba?

*(16:10)

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

In terms of review, this is all an internal review with Healthy Child people and also with staff at Manitoba Education and Training, and of course we have liaised with the Department of Families on a number of occasions.

Any consultants we have working in that area are actually in the delivery side of things. There has been Roots of Empathy and things like that that do use specific consultants in their delivery process. Those are very specific programs and, you know, attached in many ways to that particular consultant, but we have hired no external consultants to do the review on this.

Frankly, I think we have some of the best expertise in the—in this area, actually already within Healthy Child and within the department with Rob Santos, our ADM, involved in that. I think you appreciate that as well and certainly very pleased to have him at the table here today.

We are looking for ways to make this whole area work better, and as I mentioned earlier, we—the evaluations on many of these programs have been very positive and they've—in some ways, it's been a challenge to figure a way forward here because they've been in the pilot stage, a lot of them, for a

very long period of time. And we're now to the point where we have lots of data and we're comfortable that some of these are very effective programs.

How best to move them forward is a challenge for a government at any time, particularly one that is facing some fiscal challenges as well.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that response and I am somewhat comforted by the fact that the minister's put on the record that there'll be an internal review. I do very much respect the bright people that had been brought together to work on Healthy Child and those important issues.

It's my belief that investments in those—some of those innovative programs has and will continue to actually save the government money. For example, Roots of Empathy, that the minister mentioned, we know has long-standing benefits for children, as effectively they get rewired and require less interventions later on in life.

So, in terms of the finances of the Healthy Child Manitoba office on page 59, the envelope of money is remaining the same, but is the minister's intention that that money will be reallocated in the course of this year based on the review?

Mr. Wishart: As the member has pointed out, the envelope remains the same. We're certainly looking at evaluations and I think it's a little premature to predict how all of the dollars will be used during the course of the year, but I can tell you as some of the other initiatives roll out, in particular, children as a part of the whole mental health issue as it rolls out, and I know we're looking forward to working on the outcomes of the—and recommendations of the VIRGO report.

We've certainly been working with Families on their initiative to make substantial changes to the children in care and we'll look for opportunities to work with them to make sure that we're able to support families more than interventions. That's always been something that we have believed in, and I know that that's an ongoing process, and it's a little difficult to put timelines around some of those initiatives, and I'm sure the member appreciates that. I think we all want better outcomes for those children that are in care.

This whole area of early childhood development is something that we're very interested in, and the— as the member has pointed out, that is one of the best places to invest. We're about to roll out a literacy and

numeracy strategy that we have been consulting with Manitobans and educators about.

I think the member may have been aware of the summit that we had over at the RBC centre here, that was very, very well received and has led to some very creative ideas, which we are looking forward to moving forward on. And, in particular, some of the transitions for vulnerable youth, we are working with families and we already have some joint initiatives with them. We've been looking at special programs through some of our labour market initiatives, as well, to help with children that are ageing out of CFS, as one of the areas that I know that that had been gaps in the past and we want to see if we can't put something in place to help strengthen that.

I think—I always felt very strongly that it was very poor service to individuals to take them into care and then, at 18, put them back on the street, often with their belongings in a bag with them and a very—very poor prospects moving forward. We certainly don't want to continue that road. We want to put something in place to deal with that. And also, as part of the whole Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, there are a number that touch on us, and that Healthy Child is part of as well. And that—in that area, too, we want to work with the Department of Families to make sure that we're co-ordinated in that regard. So, as we move forward, there may be some changes as to how some of these dollars are invested in Manitoba families and Manitoba children, in particular, but, certainly, we, at this point in time, that's where the commitment is, in terms of dollars.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister. You know, we talked about that envelope of money for Healthy Child Manitoba. Perhaps the minister can just clarify something—I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation, but I'll wait to hear it—grants and transfer payments are declining from about \$3.2 million to just short of \$1.1 million this year, yet there's an equivalent set-off for supplies and services of \$2.1 million. If the minister can just explain what is the reason for this change? Are there now fewer grants being paid out but different things are being taken on by Healthy Child directly? It'd be helpful to understand that.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, and I appreciate the question. It's often confusing when governments change their terminology, but, basically, those are the same dollars with a different line item in regards to support for them. No significant change.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that. We know there's been more federal money announced to assist in some of the areas that Healthy Child Manitoba takes on. Is it the intention to apply any of that new federal money coming to Manitoba for the programs funded by Healthy Child, or will that be going elsewhere?

Mr. Wishart: Well—and I appreciate the member's question. Certainly, some of this probably would be better directed to the Department of Families, because, of course, they were the ones that signed the bilateral agreement with the federal government. But I can tell you that we are collaborating very well with the Department of Families, in particular, there's been some specific programs for the francophone community, and some First Nation communities.

* (16:20)

We are working very co-operatively to make sure that we get the maximum benefit for Manitoba families and children as part of these new initiatives. It's nice to have a federal government that, on these issues, is very aligned with us. We're finding that, certainly, their focus on child care fits very nicely with what we, as a government, are trying to do on child care. And in—also in the area of labour market funding, we're finding that our alignment, in terms of our focus, and the federal government is actually fitting together very nicely, and there are some efficiencies to be gained because everybody's looking for the same thing in regards to that side of things.

So, in those areas, we—as a department, we certainly enjoy working with our federal partners on that and want to continue to do so.

Mr. Swan: Yes, one of the programs that I'm sure the minister's become familiar with is the Abecedarian program that began operating several years ago. Does the minister have any hope of expanding that program to elsewhere in the city or elsewhere in the province?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. And, certainly, I value—as obviously he does as well—the value of the Abecedarian Approach and the program. I know that the pilots have worked out very, very well, and we continue to work with interested parties in regards to that. We do hope to expand this program in the future and are in some discussions around that, but any further details, of course, would be premature at this point in time. But

I think the member can be hopeful in terms of seeing more of this type of program available in Manitoba.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that, and I'm sure he'll also be an advocate to defend programs like the home visiting program, which we know provides benefits to new families and actually winds up saving our system overall.

Moving outside of the Healthy Child office, I'll end off my questioning and hand it back to the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) with one last question.

We had a really good discussion at Public Accounts Committee about a year ago about the Community Schools Program. The former deputy minister actually waxed poetic about the benefit of the Community Schools Program and how it aligns with everything that I think every member of this House wants to accomplish in terms of drawing more parents into the school, in terms of getting better outcomes for children. I presume there is no intention to reduce the Community Schools Program in the upcoming year.

Mr. Wishart: Well—and thank you very much for that question, and certainly I'll be happy to pass back your comment about waxing poetic to the previous deputy. He certainly felt very strongly that these were good types of programs and had tremendous value in the K-to-12 system. We certainly concur with that, and we continue in that direction. I know that the current deputy is a very strong supporter as well, so we certainly look forward to opportunities to do that.

These programs make great connections back with the communities, and they provide the students with the additional supports that they often need. Just makes that much little difference, but gives them an outcome. And so community schools are something that we certainly appreciate and we look for opportunities to do more with as we move forward.

There certainly would be some value. I know we tried to talk to our federal counterparts in the First Nations schools about doing some more in this area as well. And so they're—as they move forward with the—the council on Aboriginal education moves forward in their process working with the federal government, and now that there's been an agreement signed with some of them in terms of additional funding for schools, I hope that they look at this model as one of the ones that might work well for

them as well. And we are encouraging them very much to do that.

Just to touch on that, we've been providing additional resources available from our department for the First Nations schools as well, including some anti-bullying information and programs like that that we had available to our public schools that they did not have available through their system. So we are working co-operatively with them as we move forward as well. And there have been—I think the member's probably familiar with the west—Park West School Division and the agreement with Wayway and how they have been able to work together not only in the early years in the K-to-12 system but also to do some vocational work, which is something that First Nations schools often lack as the federal government does not have a policy to support vocational with—in First Nations schools, which I got to say, I frankly find very regrettable. I think there's a very significant shortfall in that area, and I would certainly encourage them to move in that direction as well.

Mr. Swan: Just like Columbo, I've just got one more question. I realized I'm going to be over at Tec-Voc High School, and I know they're going to ask me: Can I ask the minister when there will be shovels in the ground for the new aerospace and welding wing at Tec-Voc?

Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to have to get back to you on exact timing on this. The individual involved with Public Schools Finance Board was here yesterday but is not available to us at the moment. So we'll commit to getting back to you with a little more detail on where in the process that request is.

Mr. Wiebe: And that actually fits very well with the line of questioning that we started to—the road that we went down yesterday with the minister with regards to school capital and that we do have some follow-up questions. So I'll just put it on the record that, you know, we can hold off for today, but maybe that's a good place to go tomorrow and if this—the minister can make sure that staff are available.

I did want to just return, though, to the ACCESS bursary, because it is an issue, as I said, that's come to the forefront. Folks are concerned about this, and they want some clarity. So right now, we understand there's 233 people, 233 students, who are getting 60 per cent of their assessed needs met through the

ACCESS program. So it's not a big program in terms of the number of students that are enrolled in it, but it is absolutely vital for those students who are enrolled in it. And what it allows is it allows for the participation by underrepresented groups and helps meet some of the goals of institutions and of those underrepresented groups.

So, for example, the programs at the University of Winnipeg to increase the number of—or indigenous teachers that we have in our province is a program that there's been a lot of focus on. There's been a lot of emphasis put on that initiative and trying to increase the number. So this is one of those areas where we've had a number of students accessing the ACCESS bursary.

* (16:30)

So what I'm trying to get from the minister is is those students right now who are enrolled in that program are expecting to receive 60 per cent of their assessed need to be covered through the ACCESS bursary. Is that—will that amount stay the same for those students? Can they expect to have 60 per cent of their assessed needs met through the program?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question. One of the problems with us giving him a clear and direct answer on this is we're not certain that the criteria that the University of Winnipeg was using is exactly the same as the criteria, so that we will have to check to get back to you.

But I can give you what we have some information here that we have made available on the website, but we have a breakdown here in terms of the '17-18 year as applied to the indigenous top-up model that I mentioned earlier and where we are in the coming year. So I'll just kind of run through it, if you would like, so it demonstrates what we have done to improve things.

The Canada Student Loans, previous in '17-18, they would have been eligible for \$7,100, and this assumes a low-income indigenous individual, \$7,140; that remains the same in the '18-19 year. The Manitoba Student Loan was \$4,760 in the previous year, '17-18; that, too, remains the same in '18-19 year. Previous year they may have been eligible for that Prince of Wales grant that I talked about that we are discontinuing but we have the Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students, that's \$3,000 in the '17-18 year and that continues to be in place. Manitoba Bursary, up front, was \$2,000 in the, sorry—\$2,000 up front from Manitoba in the

'17-18 year. That, too, is the case in the '18-19 year. What we have now though is Manitoba Bursary indigenous top-up program which was not available in '17-18, and now is \$1,500, so that's a significant improvement from the \$250. Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students with Dependants, which does not apply in this situation, and we also have Canada Student Grant for Full-Time Students with Dependants, which would provide them now with up to \$1,600. So the total awards in '17-18 would've been \$18,750 per student; now they are \$20,000. So, as the member can see, and this'll turn up on the record, of course, and I can provide him with a copy of it as well, that we are providing additional supports.

Mr. Wiebe: Moving on, Mr. Chair, the Province was spending over four—\$43.7 million on student aid in the 2016-2017 Estimates; and that's on the '16-17 Estimates book, page 107, and that's the subtotal, not including the recovery from Health. Now, in this year's Estimates book, that is—that amount is \$35.8 million. So that's a reduction of nearly \$8 million.

Can the minister explain why there would be a reduction in that amount?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

The biggest single difference between those two numbers is actually due to the change this year as we phase out the tuition income tax rebate, and as the member knows, that we had concerns about the effectiveness of that program.

* (16:40)

There are a number of other minor changes in that, usually driven more by some of the efficiencies because we are now using the single bursary programs instead of multiple ways of delivering that, but that is the biggest single difference is the 5.5 of the—and the tuition fee income tax rebate discontinuance.

Mr. Wiebe: Maybe the minister could just explain that a little bit more, how the change in the—or, the removal of the tuition rebate would impact the student aid budget line.

Mr. Wishart: And I thank the member for the question. If the member will remember, there—at one point—was an advance that was available under that. And, because we've phased out that the rebate, now the advance is also phased out as well.

Mr. Wiebe: I don't want to spend the rest of the afternoon on this, but I'm still not quite getting it.

If a student didn't receive the income tax rebate's advance, wouldn't they need more in student aid rather than less? Wouldn't that have to be a larger budget line rather than a smaller budget line?

Mr. Wishart: As the advance was a percentage of the potential rebate as the rebate did no longer exist, it's a percentage of a number that doesn't exist any longer. You—as you know, and we have spoken about a number of times in the House during question period, we have chosen to put our money up front with Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative.

I'm very pleased that the program has rolled out very well for us—thank you—very well for us in terms of both the institutions and private donors. They're working very well with us in terms of the increase we've put in that area so that we've been able to increase the amount to \$20 million, in fact slightly in excess of that because we did get some oversubscription from the numbers of institutions.

I know there are a couple of institutions that we'll have to continue working with. Most of those were smaller ones that had little history in this area, so we're very pleased to work with them and I think they've all been very optimistic in terms of the ability to do that, to raise additional funds from their support base, whether it's past alumni or other private businesses that have an association with the institution that wish to contribute more.

So we think that that's a good way forward and we're very pleased that that has gone very well.

Mr. Wiebe: According to Manitoba Student Aid, the Manitoba bursary was budgeted for \$10.5 million in 2016-17, but it looks like the government only spent \$4.7 million of that amount.

Why was it underspent by over 50 per cent? Sorry—why was it underspent by 50 per cent?

Mr. Wishart: Well, thank you very much for the question, member from Concordia. And I thank the chairman.

Certainly, this one—I think we're going to have to come back, because what's involved here is the transition from the rebate. It was decreased and, as there's a percentage of that—some of that—those dollars were not used in that—during that transition period. I think to do this justice, we're going to have to get you a detailed statement around that particular question, as this is part of our movement from using

the tuition rebate as a mechanism of support to up-front supports, which I know the member probably appreciates that we have done, as students requested, and give them the money up front.

Mr. Wiebe: So I'll ask that the—maybe the minister—I appreciate that he'll endeavour to get that information for us. I think maybe just needs to check in Hansard and make sure we're again on the same page, because I am talking about the Manitoba bursary, which was budgeted for \$10.5 million in '16-17, but the government actually only spent \$4.7 million of that.

So, again, it was underspent by 50 per cent. So, as long as that's clear to the minister—and I see in—the head nodding, so I think we're both on the same page. That's great.

And, then, maybe just further to that, can the minister tell me the budgeted amount for the Manitoba bursary for '17-18, and maybe just give me a sense of where that—how that money is being spent, you know, how much has been spent to date or a projection of how much will be spent to the end of the—well, I guess that would include what's been spent already.

So any information that the minister has with regards to that, that'd be helpful.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for the question and, as you're asking for actual for the fiscal year that we're in, we would have to get back to you on a to-date number with that.

I hope the member appreciates that the issue of scholarships and bursaries—students are still busy applying for those, and so sometimes those numbers get—as we go from one fiscal to the other, they can get a little bit moved one way or the other in terms of fiscal years based on timing, because we certainly see applications on scholarships and bursaries right through 'til September. So the last-minute ones are certainly a challenge for everyone, including the students, because they have to be in a position, of course, to pay their tuition in the right time and, if that was dollars that they were counting on to do that, leaving it to the last minute has never turned out to be a good way to do it.

So we'll be happy to try and put that together for you so we can give you a fair estimate of the process.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate the minister taking that on.

I see that our time is getting short here for this afternoon, so I just wanted to, if I could, just quickly

switch gears again. I'm sure this makes the staff very happy, because now they have to get out a whole 'nother' set of books, I'm sure. But maybe this is a simple answer. But, when we started yesterday, the minister had given the information with regards to the French language numbers—enrollment numbers and the French immersion enrollment numbers—and today he—and I asked for the percentage change, which he has now provided, but he also came back with, I think, different numbers than he had provided yesterday, which was also a follow-up to the same question or the same information.

I'm just wondering if the minister could explain why there was a difference in the numbers that he provided at the beginning of yesterday versus the beginning of today.

* (16:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Scott Johnston): Minister of Education. I just got fired.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Wishart: Thank you. While we're changing chairmen here, the numbers that were provided today are up—corrected numbers. I'll say that when we were in the process of doing the calculations, we noticed we had given some double counts. So we corrected the number as part of that because I like to have the information accurate when it's provided to me. I'm sure you do too.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate that and I appreciate that the information—I assume, today—is correct. Although maybe tomorrow, we'll get a different number again, but I understand that the minister's doing his best to get those numbers.

I guess, just keeping on that theme, obviously, parents and educators in the French language have been very concerned. In this province, as the minister knows, there's been a lot of concern about the removal or the change in deputy minister position—assistant deputy minister position for the provision of French language services.

And I thought this might be an opportunity for the minister to just give us an update on the work that he's doing with that community and the groups that are concerned about this, and bringing their concerns forward to the minister.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, and I appreciate that, the member's question.

I know that the francophone community in Manitoba is very concerned about making sure that they have access to quality francophone education for their students and that their culture is well-represented and they have access to the minister. And I think the member also appreciates that we came in on a mandate to have smaller government.

We had made significant changes, not only in the number of the departments, and I think—I'm sure that as critic for education and training, you appreciate how much more of a range this department actually covers now. It covers most of what would have been, in a previous government, two and a half departments. So we have made significant changes in our structure.

And, certainly, we're very happy to continue working with the francophone community to make sure that they're comfortable with the access that they have, both on the K-to-12 system, and as we move forward, we're expanding the range of services that we hope to be able to provide to the francophone community, too, particularly in the area of trades and training. That's been an area that they've been actually asking—for some time, a number of years—to have better access and better services in, and we're attempting to do that with them as well.

I've got to admit, there's time or two that I've been a little concerned about what the theme is here and what—why they're so concerned, because when I talked to the BEF group which is still a very significant portion of our department, and we work with them on a daily day basis, they tell me that they have better access to the minister and through the deputy than they ever did before.

And I guess, access was the issue and making that there's a focus on providing the services that they want. We're increasing the range of services in particular, in some of the vocational areas, and the trades and training areas, which was something that they had shown concern before, about not having available to them. So we're meeting some of the—many of the needs that have been expressed to us. We're happy to continue working with them and certainly look forward to that on an ongoing basis.

But we have met many of the needs that had been expressed as shortages before. And whether or not it's a question of access, or whether it's a question of one individual, we want to make sure that they have access. The individual that was in that position is still a valued member of the department,

and often used in an advisory role, so certainly we're continuing to—that relationship as well.

I think it's important that people focus on what it is they really want from the process, and not get overly concerned about individual positions. The department doesn't look like it did 40 years ago in any way. And so the structure has changed fairly dramatically. We think it's a positive change.

We have seen a lot of value to some of the linkages that have been created in the department, you know, through the K-to-12 system, the training and trades, some of the linkages on post-secondary, and they provide us with opportunities to deal with some of the transition issues that—from one phase to the other, whether it's trades or whether it's post-secondary or whether it's colleges.

So that—there's a lot of good things in what we're doing. We talk in the department all the time about our cradles-to-career approach, which I know I had that discussion with the francophone community. They were very supportive and liked that particular model.

In fact, they build their cultural strength around the fact—they call it cradle-to-rocking-chair, which I think, frankly, is a better visual, but you know, it's theirs, it's not ours. And—but it's certainly very parallel, so we're finding that there's a lot of opportunities to work together, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Wiebe: In its budget proposal, Park West proposed eliminating its very successful vocational program. It's my understanding that Park West has reconsidered that and decided to defer maintenance and do other cuts instead. Now, I'm wondering, did the minister or his staff intervene directly with the Park West School Division?

Mr. Wishart: We certainly did not intervene as a department with that. I know that, having heard from some members of that community through the MLA up there and other members of the community, that they value the vocational program so highly that they have been working co-operatively, I guess, with the Brandon School Division to get access to some of the vocational space.

I think the member probably appreciates that access to vocational space in school divisions, especially rural school divisions that historically didn't have access to very much of it, it was a particularly challenging thing for them to do. So I'm glad that they were able to move forward on this.

The challenge that we had put out with this year funding of schools was very much focused on an administrative-cost basis, and I think when you—some school divisions have been doing better than others, in regards to this. And so it's a differential challenge for some school divisions, some over the other.

And we've been very pleased, generally, with the response from school divisions across the province—deal with their administrative costs, in terms of keeping them to a minimum and reducing them, which was the intent of the discussion.

We really want to make sure that vocational becomes part of the mainstream and—options in particular in a number of school divisions, rural ones being one, but this one in particular because of their

relationship with Waywayseecappo First Nation. They have talked a lot about how important it is to them.

We know that they didn't have much of a history in regards to that, in terms of access vocational. I talked about that earlier, when we talked about the universe—or—

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

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