

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 28, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Wehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody. Happy Friday.

Routine proceedings—is the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) standing to be recognized, or just standing to—before he sits? Okay. Just—I just wanted to check.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? We don't have any. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

All right, members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rich and Therese Houston

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize two

Southdale constituency members from Windsor Park. Rich and Therese Houston are two pillars in our community and have joined us in the gallery today.

For 15 years, the Houstons could be found at Vincent Massey Park preparing and setting off firework displays watched by the entire neighbourhood every single Canada Day. The COVID-19 pandemic almost put an end to their decade-and-a-half-long streak, but this year Rich and Therese continued making a spectacle in the sky with their fireworks, much to the pleasure of the entire community. I was honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to help them put on a great show.

Their good deeds don't end at fireworks. Rich and Therese are also very active with Winnipeg Harvest and their Tins for the Bin program. Out of the goodness of their heart and compassion for others, they have provided loads of food for the homeless and the less fortunate during the holiday season.

Rich and Therese can also be seen volunteering at Windsor Park community centre at youth sporting events and at the annual winter carnival.

Many people remarked how wonderful it was to see them in person. I can tell you they radiated vibrant energy. Whether it be fireworks, organizing food drives or just volunteering at a baseball game, you can be sure the Houstons will be there with a smile and a determination to make Windsor Park the best it can be.

Rich and Therese Houston, on behalf of the entire Southdale constituency and the Manitoba Legislature, we thank you for all that you do.

Robert A. Steen Community Centre

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Forty years ago, two groups of Wolseley citizens were brought together by a common goal, to increase opportunities for community building, recreation and child care in their neighbourhood. They spent 10 years dreaming and planning for the development of the Robert A. Steen Community Centre at 980 Palmerston Ave., which opened on October 24th, 1992, 30 years ago.

The two groups, the Laura Secord sports and recreation association and the Laura Secord home and school parent-teacher association, accomplished

many things in a short span of time, including securing community club status and creating a community club facility with a gym, office, canteen and meeting rooms; establishing a child-care facility; installing a wading pool; building a community plaza for events, with shaded outdoor seating; securing a street closure and safe passageway between the school field and the community club; replanting the Wolseley Elm; achieving heritage status for Laura Secord School, saving it from being torn down; building the first play structure on Laura Secord School grounds; and the development of the Nellie McClung Park at the corner of Wolseley Avenue and Lenore Street.

Three decades later, new community members continue to enjoy the centre, take on leadership roles coaching or serving on the board and continue to carry out the vision of those first committee members. R.A. Steen now has a catchment area that extends all the way east through west Broadway and downtown to Main Street.

The centre continues to house the Laura Secord child-care program and now one of the Gordon Bell off-campus classrooms.

From the beloved annual winter carnival to the twice-weekly farmers' market, summer camps, recreational programs for all ages and craft shows featuring local makers, the centre remains an integral part of the Wolseley constituency.

Please join me in congratulating my guests in the gallery on the 30th anniversary of Robert A. Steen Community Centre.

Events Commemorating Air Schools in Manitoba

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): This August, I was honoured to attend commemoration ceremonies that told the stories of air schools which operated during World War II in my constituency of Dauphin. Their chairperson, Al Gray, spearheaded a series of events and the erection of several memorials to recognize the contributions of the No. 10 Service Flying Training School and the No. 7 Bombing and Gunnery School, as well as the over 9,000 airmen that trained at our air schools from 1941 to 1945.

* (10:10)

A commemorative service and memorial dedication was held on August 27th at Riverside Cemetery in the veterans' section, honouring 49 Commonwealth airmen who died while in service to their countries, and 15 of them who were laid to rest in Dauphin.

A ceremony later that same day was held at the Lt. Col. William G. Barker V.C. Airport south of Dauphin. Two monuments were unveiled at the airport, giving the history of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan and listing the 29 airmen killed in service at Dauphin's Service Flight Training School, and the 20 airmen who were killed at the bomber and gunning-gunnery school near Paulson. Together, these two schools trained 9,000 out of 131,000 airmen trained as part of the entire project, which was a significant and notable World War II effort.

This formal memorial was attended by notable high-or, special guests including representatives from the British High Commission. A low-level flyover was provided courtesy of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Museum in Brandon, which featured the Harvard, Tiger Moth and Cornell aircraft.

I express my gratitude here today to Al Gray and all the committee's work and who contributed significantly to our local economy, the Canada's war effort—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Michaleski: And ultimately to the Allied victory of World War II.

Thank you.

Elder Charlie Bittern

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I rise today to share a few words about Elder Charlie Bittern.

Charlie is a residential school survivor. In his life, he's a thriver, a role model, and is truly a respected elder that shares his gifts, knowledge and life experiences in the hopes that Indigenous people can proceed along a path of health, healing and prosperity in the true spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Born and raised in Berens River, at the age of seven, Charlie attended day school at the Berens River United Church school. When he was nine years old, he was diagnosed with polio. His family was told by doctors that he was going to be confined to either braces or a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

Doctors were shocked that Charlie then made a full recovery, and he soon found that he was gifted with the ability to run. At the age of 15, Charlie was moved to the Birtle residential school. While there are many painful memories that Charlie has shared during

his time there, a few of Charlie's lived experiences stay with me the most.

To quote Charlie, quote: If you were doing something wrong, you were whipped. You weren't strapped, you were whipped. There's a difference. End quote.

Charlie was gifted with the ability to run, and that ability was exploited by the administration of the residential school. Because of Charlie's speed and endurance, he was used by the principal to chase down runaway students who were then forced to return to the school.

One of Charlie's experiences at residential school has been shared in his documentary, *Bimibattoo-Win: Where I Ran*. In there, Charlie shares a day he was disciplined for horseplay on a trip with the school principal in 1967. Charlie was thrown out of the car in a snowstorm and forced to run in front of the car along the highway—forced to run from around seven in the evening until two or three in the morning.

Charlie battled a snow blizzard and howling winds along the highway. It was only when Charlie finally collapsed and the principal struck him with the car was Charlie finally allowed to stop. His leg bleeding, he was finally allowed back into the car. It was only then that Charlie realized that his run in the blizzard along the highway lasted 80 kilometres in the dead of night.

In closing, I encourage all members to watch the *Charlie Bittern* documentary, *Bimibattoo-Win: Where I Ran*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm honoured to have Charlie and his family and his community leadership of Berens River First Nation join us here today. While there is so much more I wish to share about Charlie's life, my time here is short, so I will end with this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has—

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Bushie: Miigwech to all survivors of residential school as I stand here in my traditional clothing, in a place we were never meant to stand. I acknowledge and honour your perseverance, your determination and your will, for it is because of your strength of spirit that our legacy of Anishinaabe people will continue for generations to come.

Miigwech, Charlie, for allowing me the opportunity to share some of your life experience.

Miigwech.

Bruce Chegus

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Today I rise to recognize the accomplishments of an individual who has greatly improved the lives of the students in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division.

As a school trustee since 1988, Bruce Chegus contributed 34 years to the school division, making him one of the longest serving trustees in the division and in the province of Manitoba.

Bruce believes that in order to ensure quality education, the school division must support literacy initiatives and numeracy enhancements, particularly in early years. Bruce is most proud of the school division's innovative learning programming, particularly the remote learning, which he played an active role in initiating.

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division was the first to initiate remote learning to ensure students could continue their education. This program facilitated education for all students, including athletes playing out of province and students with disabilities.

It's no surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Bruce earned the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Bruce has many—Bruce has had many responsibilities, including acting as the chair of the school board for eight years, as well as numerous committee responsibilities. It was my honour to serve the school board with Bruce Chegus.

I would like to direct your attention to the gallery, where Mr. Chegus has joined us today with his wife, Patricia, as well as his sister, Rhonda, and brother-in-law, Clive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask that we rise to recognize and thank Mr. Bruce Chegus for his service to his community, as well as the province of Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw attention to all members to the galleries where we have with us today Joel Fingard and Regine—I hope I'm saying this right—Genido from the Robert A. Steen Community Centre, and Myrna Phillips, who was the former MLA for Wolseley and the Speaker of the House. These are the guests for the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today. And if you could just identify

yourselves so we know who we're talking about. Welcome here.

I also want to acknowledge we have seated in the public gallery from the Katimavik student group, nine students under the direction of Shea Melekna. Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature. Is that you guys up there? Well, welcome. Hope you have a great time this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Snow Clearing and Road Maintenance Sale of Heavy Equipment

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the shrinking number of PCs standing for re-election know that they've done a terrible job when it comes to potholes and when it comes to snow clearing and highway maintenance.

New data show us just how terrible the situation has become. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Since 2016, under their watch, they've sold off more than 300 pieces of heavy equipment. That heavy equipment is supposed to clear the roads. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: It's supposed to help us maintain and repair and build roads right across this province. So, when we have a year of record potholes, as we've seen under this PC government, we know it's their cuts and sales of heavy equipment that is to blame.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) stop selling off our heavy equipment?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Certainly, we are delivering for Manitobans and we're delivering on infrastructure for Manitobans.

We have got a three-year budget for highways alone of over \$500 million in each of the next three years, way more than anything the NDP ever committed to infrastructure here in Manitoba.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, record investments in terms of equipment going into infrastructure here in Manitoba, as well. We have committed to a three-year funding agreement that gives certainty for companies that want to bid on projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the NDP, it was different. It was rain, rain, rain and then parade on

election year. We are doing things different here, and our government is delivering services for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, I think the minister hit a pothole on the way in to the Legislature this morning, and the facts must have fallen out of his vehicle. Because the truth of the matter is—*[interjection]*

* (10:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —when they took office, there were more than 2,200 pieces of heavy equipment in the provincial inventory. But these documents, which I'll table for the minister to review as he drives over potholes on the way home, show that this year there are barely 1,900 pieces of heavy equipment left.

They're selling everything off. They've already sold off 300 pieces of heavy equipment.

How many more pieces of heavy equipment—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —are they going to sell off, and just how bad are our roads and highways going to get under their watch?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, record investments when it comes to maintenance on our roads, record investment when it comes to capital infrastructure—I know—I don't know what the member opposite is trying to measure.

Like, if he gets out and about across Manitoba, he will see heavy equipment operating—a lot different equipment than we ever had before, Mr. Deputy Speaker; newer, modern, bigger equipment, which—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —is more efficient than ever before.

Those are the kinds of investments that Manitobans are asking us to make. Those are the investments we're making on behalf of Manitobans, and we're getting things done.

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

Mr. Kinew: I've been to Neepawa, Pinawa, Boissevain, Deloraine, and just like the Johnny Cash song, everywhere I go, man, people are complaining

about the potholes and the lack of snow clearing under this PC—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —government. Now, I've tabled the documents that show—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the reason for this lack of attention to our roads and highways. They are—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —selling off the heavy equipment. They sold off 300—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —pieces of heavy equipment to date. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Government benches, calm down.

The honourable Deputy Premier—I'll give you a few more seconds, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kinew: The only place that the government is doing anything is in the form of press release, because anyone driving on the roads sees that they are in a rough, rough shape.

When will they stop selling off heavy equipment and finally invest in our highways and roads?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to infrastructure in Manitoba. If the member gets out and drives on our roads, he will see many miles of new roads, new pavement, new bridges, new culverts.

We're making investments—record investments—over the next three years alone: \$500 million of each of the next three years for infrastructure for roads alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's something the industry has asked for; it's something we're delivering, and we're delivering these on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Health-Care System Government Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It must be an election year if the minister got a road paved in Carberry, but everywhere

else in Manitoba, people are complaining about the terrible condition of our roads, highways. There are so many potholes.

The other thing that we are hearing time and time again—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —from Manitobans is the desperate state of our health-care system. We know that the wait times continue to increase, and according to front-line emergency room doctors, things are worse than they were a year ago, when this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) took office.

It's a record of failure. It's a crisis in the health-care system. That's a fact.

When will this Cabinet stop cutting health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen this from the NDP for decades now. They come in and they repeat the same fictitious lines over and over again, hoping that Manitobans would believe what they said.

The reality is Manitobans are not buying the rhetoric. The fact of the matter is our government has delivered record-high investments, close to \$7 billion. That's a billion dollars more than the NDP ever put into health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those are the facts.

We are making record investments on behalf of Manitobans and we're getting things done on behalf of Manitobans when it comes to health care.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, I have the facts right here in my hand, which were actually compiled by this minister's government. So he can quarrel with me all that he likes, but he's actually just throwing shade at his own government.

What the facts in hand reveal is at the Grace emergency department, at the St. Boniface emergency department and at the Health Sciences Centre emergency department, wait times continue to go up month after month after month.

The data published today—yesterday were longer than the data we saw earlier in the summer. And, of course, the summer was earlier than what we saw in the spring. Wait times in emergency rooms continue to go up.

I'll share—I'll table the documents with the minister in the hopes that he finally answers the question: When will the PCs stop cutting health care?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here we go again.

The reality is record investments in health care, the tune of \$7 billion.

And we want to talk about doctors in Manitoba. Guess what happened under the NDP? We were—in 2001, per capita, Manitoba was the fourth in the country when it came to per capita—doctors per capita.

What happened? In 2016, eight; we dropped to No. 8 in the country when it came to doctors per capita. That's the legacy the NDP left. That's the legacy that we're trying to fix.

That's why we're making capital investments, investing in human resources, and we're making historic investments in health care in Manitoba. That's what Manitobans have asked us to do. That's what we're delivering on behalf of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition Leader, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: I find it surprising that the minister would say that in this Chamber, because he comes from a health region that saw unprecedented closures of emergency departments and hospitals all summer long.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Everyone in Prairie Mountain has been—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—reaching out to us time and time again, saying that this government is making an absolute mess of our health-care system. No one believes the Progressive Conservatives when it comes to health care because this simple fact is true: health care has never been this bad in Manitoba. And their cuts are a direct contributing factor.

We know that folks are looking for improvements to health care, but the first thing that needs to happen is that the PCs need to stop with their cuts.

Will they finally do so today?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, record investments in health care, \$1 billion more than ever the NDP ever put into health care.

What is the record, though, when it comes to closing emergency rooms under the NDP? Let's talk about them. Let's name them: Emerson, Pembina, MacGregor, St. Claude, Gladstone, Vita, Erickson, Rossburn, Wawanesa, Birtle, Rivers, Baldur, McCreary, Winnipegosis, Whitemouth, Teulon. That is the NDP legacy.

Manitobans cannot—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—trust the NDP when it comes to health care.

This government is delivering health care for Manitobans. They don't want any more NDP rhetoric.

Government Transparency and Accountability Premier's Email Account

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Time and time again, we've laid out the case that this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) seems to think that there's one set of rules for her and her PC caucus and one set for the rest of Manitobans.

We've learned that the Premier is using a secret email address. Manitobans know when government officials communicate on government business, there should be transparency and accountability. But, Deputy Speaker, that's not what we're seeing from the Premier and her PC caucus.

Will the Premier tell this House why she thinks she doesn't have to follow the same rules as everybody else?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, certainly, the opposition knows a lot about secrets. If the member opposite wants to talk about secrets, she could just turn over to the member who's speaking from her left and ask about all the secrets that he has, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

However, I would ask the member opposite to perhaps leave the grassy knoll. And perhaps she wants to apologize to the member from Fort Whyte, who she brought false information to this House several weeks ago.

* (10:30)

Ms. Fontaine: Deputy Speaker, we've shown that the Premier forgot she sold—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine:—\$31 million in real estate, because who forgets \$31 million?

Now we learn that she's using a—government money to operate a secret email address. The only reason the Premier is doing that is to avoid accountability and transparency. That's just like Brian Pallister, who did the same thing when he was off in Costa Rica.

I will table the documents for the House.

Why does the Premier think that she can use a secret email address when no other person working in government is allowed to do the same thing?

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP is a house of secrets. There are so many secrets that are hidden within that caucus, it's hard to reveal them all at once, but I'm sure more will be revealed as we get closer to an election day.

However, I would say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: this particular member has a reputation—*[interjection]*—has a reputation of bringing false allegations to this House that are proven false. This is a great opportunity for her to stand up and apologize to the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, Deputy Speaker, we know that the Premier doesn't like to work on weekends and we know she forgets things like \$31 million in real estate. And now we know—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —the Premier has a secret email address set up to duck accountability from Manitobans. That's not leadership, Deputy Speaker, and that's not what Manitobans want to see. This practice should stop immediately.

So, will the Premier get up in the House today, apologize to Manitobans for using a secret email, start doing her job and get rid of the secret email today?

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, while the Premier was out listening to Manitobans all summer, the Leader of the Opposition was like Johnny Cash and was touring everywhere other than in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He had book signing tours all over the place, was having white champagne, I'm sure, and ensuring that he could meet with a lot of people who had a lot of high incomes.

But I would say to him on this, while he was touring over the last few weeks on the tour of broken dreams from NDP leaders across western Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he should have been in

Manitoba listening to those concerns from Manitobans.

But again, this is an opportunity for the member to stand up and apologize for the false accusations that she made against the member for Fort Whyte. Please stand up, do the honourable thing and apologize to that member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's—*[interjection]*

Order. Order, opposition members.

Increase in Project Nova Costs Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Manitobans deserve good online services from Manitoba Public Insurance. Project Nova was meant to upgrade MPI's online services within a couple of years, at the cost of \$82 million. Then the project grew to \$128 million. Now it has ballooned to \$300 million. We are worried that all Manitobans will be on the hook for these project overruns.

Can the minister tell us how much money taxpayers, not just the ratepayers, will have to pay for Project Nova?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the NDP were trying to raid MPI when they were in government and take that money and transfer that money to things that had nothing to do with vehicle insurance, they should have been investing in technology.

Instead, they left a computer system languish for more than 20 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's now an early 1990s technology. Kids were operating on Atari gaming systems at a time when the NDP had old technology. If it was up to them, they'd still be operating on Commodore 64s in MPI.

Yes, we have to update the technology because the NDP did nothing with it.

Mr. Sandhu: We knew the former premier, Brian Pallister, interfered in MPI to help his friends. His interference delayed the launch of Project Nova, which now costs more than double. Ratepayers will be on the hook for these overruns. But it's not—unclear how much the taxpayers will have to pay for Project Nova.

Can the minister tell us, the House, how much money that taxpayers will have to pay for the Project Nova cost overrun?

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last time that the MPI technology was upgraded, Miami Vice was the No. 1 hit TV series in North America and people were using Rubik's Cubes as a new gaming device.

I know that the member opposite would languish that again if they were ever in government, doesn't want to have new technology.

It wasn't updated for more than three decades, which is probably how long it will take for the NDP to get back in government with questions like that.

Mr. Sandhu: Project Nova is meant to be—only cost \$82 million. Then it grew to \$128 million. Now it's skyrocketed to over \$300 million.

To make matters worse, the project will take twice as long to complete. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sandhu: Manitobans are on the hook for these cost overruns. It is just not clear how much that rate-payers and taxpayers will have to pay.

Can the minister tell us, the House, how much Project Nova will cost Manitoba ratepayers and the taxpayers?

Mr. Goertzen: The last time the technology at MPI was updated, the K-car was, I think, the No. 1 selling vehicle in North America, kids were busy on their Nintendo playing Mario Kart and Phil Collins was the top-selling artist in North America.

I know the member opposite wants to live in the '80s—I actually enjoyed the '80s—but I would ask him to come with us into this new time. We're going to have new technology at MPI. If he wants to go back to the '80s, that was the land of confusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): It's clear more than ever that Manitobans need a safe consumption site.

Harm reduction advocates are saying that the people are not overdosing because they're using too much; they're overdosing because of a toxic drug supply. A safe consumption site would help people ensure the drugs that they are using are safe. It would save lives, Deputy Speaker.

Will the minister do the right thing and commit to opening a safe consumption site today?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I just want to point out that, you know, the members opposite feel that they have all the answers in this field, but they're only sticking to one particular tool in a huge tool box.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are investing in evidence-based systems of care. And we will continue to respond to the needs of Manitobans.

I know why the members opposite are a little bit nervous in terms of how they're approaching this situation. A well-known journalist actually commented on their own leader's plan, that the NDP addictions piece is not the worth the paper it's written on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: I was at Siloam Mission last week. They are concerned about the folks of Manitoba. They want a safe consumption site. Main Street Project are concerns—concerned about Manitobans. They want a safe consumption site.

They can't even keep up with how many people are dying of overdoses, and this minister's talking about, they're doing everything they can to support Manitobans and keep them alive? Why are Manitobans dying in this province? Why does this minister—why doesn't she go and visit other safe consumption sites in other provinces and listen to how they're doing it and saving lives? Manitobans deserve that.

* (10:40)

Will the minister open a safe consumption site and do the right thing and help save lives in Manitoba?

Mrs. Guillemard: This article goes on to comment on the Leader of the Opposition's plan, to say that this report that he released on an important issue like the drug addiction—is usually a good idea to source your materials, which he did not. Otherwise, your paper comes across looking like an incomplete middle-school report that would probably get a failing grade from the most generous social studies teacher.

There's nothing new or original in the paper or plan. It's largely a cut-and-paste job from the existing literature any grade 6 student could find online.

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

Mrs. Smith: The PCs refuse to listen.

Fact: Manitobans are overdosing due to the toxic drug supply. Fact: Safe consumption sites would help people, whether their—to identify whether their drugs are safe to use. Fact: Safe consumption sites save lives. Fact: Every other 'proveh' in western Canada has one but this province.

It's time for the PCs to listen to the experts, get on board and open a safe consumption site. Do the right thing and help save Manitoban lives.

Mrs. Guillemard: Including in this article, which I will table today, the author goes on to say, if addictions are a crisis today because of a lack of government spending to eliminate poverty and reduce the number of children in care, it's an extraordinary damming legacy for the NDP.

Not only did the former government create a structural deficit during good economic times and double the size of provincial debt, all that spending on anti-poverty measures, social housing and child welfare apparently didn't yield very promising results.

If the Leader of the Opposition—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: —is right in his assessment, the real story—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: —is the failed policies of his own party.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want to encourage members not to heckle their own members.

Carbon Savings Account Carbon Pricing Target

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Earlier this year, we revealed the government's own emission modelling. It showed that the PC's tiny measures on climate won't have a meaningful impact to reduce greenhouse gasses. And, in fact, emissions still will be going up.

Now this government is backing away from even the meagre goals it has put in place. Reporting on the so-called carbon savings account is nowhere to be seen. This measure expires at the end of the year.

Will the minister be renewing it, and will a carbon price be part of this measure going forward?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): An—certainly appreciate the question—the recycled question from the member from Wolseley.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know we've had this discussion before. We're working with the federal government. We know, under the leadership of our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), who continues to work with the federal government and the Prime Minister as well, we're ensuring that we're getting this correct for Manitobans.

And we'll continue to do the right thing for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary.

Ms. Naylor: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans have been so disappointed by the PC's approach to climate change.

The Conservatives don't take responsibility to reduce emissions. They backed away from reporting on Efficiency Manitoba. They aren't reporting on their own meagre carbon savings account. And the latter expires at the end of this year.

So, I simply ask the minister again: Will he be renewing his measure, or will—and will a carbon price be part of his approach going forward?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I'll just remind the member that between 2018 and 2020, our government reduced emission by 1.3 megatons, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

These numbers directly 'refract' the host of emissions reductions actions of policies undertaken by this government, not by the former NDP government.

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

Ms. Naylor: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the PCs are simply carrying on Brian Pallister's misguided approach. The government's own modelling shows emissions are projected to keep climbing in Manitoba, and on even the smallest measures they have not been reported—reporting. We're more than two years behind, now, on any reporting in this area.

The government's so-called carbon savings account ends this year, so I ask the minister: Has this government missed even its own meagre goals, and will a carbon price be part of their approach going forward?

Mr. Wharton: Our government continues to take action for Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just to name a few, we're helping Manitobans by investing in green projects and initiatives through the Conservation and Climate Fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are helping Manitobans by expanding our watershed districts to now include 109 municipalities across this province. And we're also helping Manitobans through efficiency trucking program by providing rebates to applicants who update their machinery to make it more environmentally friendly, just to name a few.

We've done more in six years than the NDP did in 17 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Physician and Nurse Shortage Recruitment and Retention Programs

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We know there are shortages of doctors and nurses in Manitoba, with both quitting, saying they have no support.

I table pages from Manitoba Health's annual report that shows over two fiscal years, from 2020 to 2022, the physician recruitment and retention program saw a cut of nearly \$1 million, from \$24 million to \$23 million. At the same time, expenditures for out-of-province physicians have increased by \$4 million, primarily to—due to case load volume.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain why, when doctors are quitting and leaving the province, this government actually reduced spending on keeping them in Manitoba?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): This morning, I was in the Southdale constituency getting my flu shot, and I want to thank Salil Prashar, pharmacist manager at the Southdale Walmart, for administering that flu shot. I encourage all members in the Chamber today to get your flu shot to reduce incidence of the flu, and to also get your bivalent COVID vaccine as soon as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has invested \$1 billion more than the NDP ever did into health care. We're working with our stakeholder groups, Doctors Manitoba. We're at the front lines. We're talking to physicians and other health-care professionals about—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplementary.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, it's not just a fund for retaining doctors that was cut. We've been getting SOSs from nurses, and we know there's a massive nursing shortage.

We're told it's everywhere, so why is it that, in Manitoba, nursing recruitment and retention initiatives, which are supposed to provide grants to nurses for bilingual and French requirement positions, personal-care-home grants, relocation assistance and continuing education funding, has also been cut? They were cut by \$174,000 from \$3.27 million in 2020-21 to \$3.1 million in 2021-22.

Why, given the nursing shortage, is the government cutting attraction and retention programs?

Ms. Gordon: The member for St. Boniface is just wrong.

We are investing in incentives to ensure our nurses stay here in the province. I look forward to, in the next week or so, bringing forward a very comprehensive plan for recruitment, training and retention, not just for our nurses but for a variety of health-care professionals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the COVID pandemic, we offered a \$6-an-hour premium to staff for all hours worked. We have an ICU recruitment and retention initiative grant, up to \$3,000; incentives for full-time employment, up to \$2,000; academic allowances; and we will be announcing more very soon.

* (10:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a final supplementary.

Assaults on Residents of Oakview Place Inquiry into Revoking Licence

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Still on the subject of health care.

In June this year, it emerged that at least 15 residents of Oakview Place were targeted by staff for abuse. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and Extendicare both admitted that policies and protocols weren't followed because the first whistle-blower was ignored, and the R-A-WRHA only acted when they were contacted.

This summer, we stood with family members of residents who'd been targeted. Some only found out that their loved ones had been allegedly assaulted after they died.

Some staff are facing criminal charges, but where is the accountability for the company that ignored warnings? If ignoring assaults on 15 residents doesn't get a licence pulled, what will?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I can assure you the—to the member that this government finds those actions as being unacceptable, and that the Department of Health has certainly gone through the—their investigation process, as well as the police investigation that has taken place. And, certainly, further considerations of those actions are being deliberated on.

And we—the considerations of those licences are certainly something that is continually being deliberated on.

New Hospital in Neepawa Government Announcement

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Manitobans in our rural communities feel their health care didn't matter after the NDP shut down the 16–16–emergency rooms and left hundreds of communities without urgent and emergency care close to home.

Can the Minister of Health please tell us what she is doing to rectify this situation created by the previous NDP government?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question.

Members in the Chamber will remember when rural health care was absolutely devastated by the NDP. That is why my department, through the clinical and preventative services plan, has announced a groundbreaking for a new \$127-million hospital in Neepawa to strengthen our health care in our rural areas.

The hospital will be four times the size of the existing site and will nearly double the amount of acute-care beds, to 63. It will also increase the capacity of surgeries, diagnostics as well as expand the emergency department to include more ambulance bays and trauma rooms.

This—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

Daily Daycare Fees Request to Decrease

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government has committed to \$10-a-day child care. Other provinces are taking action by

reducing the daily maximum fee that all daycares can charge to make care more affordable.

Manitoba isn't taking that approach, instead requiring that parents apply for subsidy rather than making this automatic and universal. The result is that funds are not being put to use, and families are missing out.

I ask the minister: Will he change his approach and bring down the maximum fees all daycares charge in Manitoba?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Well over 107 sets of questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I finally get a question on early childhood education. And we know that Manitoba was already one of the lowest child-care fees across this great country of ours.

By beginning of 2023, we're going to be at that \$10-a-day average—daycare. We're going to be three years ahead of schedule, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's good news for Manitobans. We're listening to Manitobans and we're getting it done, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$10 a day should mean a maximum of \$10 per day. That's the direction other provinces are moving by reducing the daily maximum that daycares can charge.

Manitoba is the only province in the entire country that isn't doing this and is instead using a subsidy approach. Families are being left behind as a result and funds meant for families are being left unspent. These benefits need to be universal to ensure everyone sees the benefit.

Will the minister change approach and bring down the maximum fee for all daycares in Manitoba?

Mr. Ewasko: It gives me great pleasure to stand and put some facts on the record. And something that we are doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the NDP, under 17 years, did not do. They didn't move an inch.

We're providing subsidies to over 300 per cent, subsidized spaces. We were at 6,000 subsidized spaces, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're now at 18,000. We have more work to do. We're going to be doing more work. Stay tuned.

Far more work in the last year than the NDP did over this last—over their 17 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sala: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba was to have halved its fees this year, and there are only two months left. Every other province is making benefits universal by reducing their daily maximum fees for daycare.

This ensures programming is accessible and truly universal. That's not what this government is doing here in Manitoba. These federal funds should be used to reduce the daily maximum fees for everyone.

Why is the PC government failing to ensure all Manitobans receive the benefit from the national agreement on child care? *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Oh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm listening today to the member from St. James, and he's flip-flopping like a pickerel on a dock.

We have increased the threshold for subsidies by 45 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That means, and here—I know math's hard for the NDP, but here we go. So, the average daily fee for parents are going to be \$10. The—Minister Gould, the federal minister, applauds Manitoba government for being a leader in the country in this initiative.

People of low income are going to be paying \$2 a day. The maximum fees are just—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —over \$20, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We, on this side of the House—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

The time for questions has expired. Petition—*[interjection]*—oh.

Okay, it is the opinion of the clerks that due to the amount of disorder, there should be one final question permitted by the member for Notre Dame. I will allow that; just one question, not in three sections.

Home-Care Services Care Hours Available

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Home-care workers in the Winnipeg region have approached me to report a new schedule-optimizing tool used to schedule their appointments. They are very concerned that this is not providing the time necessary to appropriately help their clients. In some cases, the

time to drive, provide morning care and provide a bath are being cut from 45 minutes to 20 minutes.

Morning care can include washing, dressing, providing medication and breakfast, catheter care, changing nitro and pain patches and administering eye drops, changing incontinence products; all of this plus bathing, plus the driving to the client's house in 20 minutes. These home-care workers are rightly concerned.

* (11:00)

Why is this minister and this government cutting home care to the bone?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the question.

This government has certainly indicated that we are going to review our home-care structuring and our home-care system, and we are in the process of doing exactly that. We're getting it done and we will continue to get it done.

Madam Speaker, our initiative to create the seniors strategy to do it was voted against the—by the NDP, so I don't know what support you're giving to seniors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: —is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —an individual's ability to perceive—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, I appreciate that many of us are morning people. I appreciate the energy and enthusiasm. But I need to be able to hear the member for River Heights, and would just request that conversations either in the loges or perhaps, if they're a little more than a few comments, in the hallways. That's just fine.

But please, if we can keep the volume at an appropriate level, that'd be great.

Mr. Gerrard: A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

A global commission on the site of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia, Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost an average of \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800.

However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the

age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all those who need them, as hearing loss—as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Signed by Raya Haaksma, Kim Bjorklund, Alanna Jelley and many, many others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other petitions?

Louise Bridge

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular

traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 110 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, becoming functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start. In—

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise Bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise Bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(10) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 111-year-old bridge is complete.

(11) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link between northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the new Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping it open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other petitions?

Seeing none, we move to grievances. Seeing none, we move to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, November 2nd, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 225, The Non-Disclosure Agreements Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, November 2nd, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 225, The Non-Disclosure Agreements Act.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Certainly. It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that we will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Call in—Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

ROOM 254

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT**

* (11:30)

Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume considerations of the Estimates for the Department of Natural Resources and Northern Development.

Questioning for this department will continue in a global matter-manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Just to kind of continue on where we ended the day yesterday in discussions with the fleet—the water bomber fleet for the fire suppression program. Was mentioned that—I don't have the exact descriptions of the plane, but it's basically 14, I guess, units that were in place.

And I was just wondering if—I asked about the age of the fleet and the minister had responded it didn't matter what the age was as long as they're well maintained. But I think for clarification, we'd like to know the age of the fleet, please.

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Good morning to the member from Keewatinook.

Yes, I certainly did endeavour to give you the number of planes we have and the ages of the planes. And, you know, as I said yesterday, aircrafts can be deceptive sometimes in terms of the age and it's all about the maintenance on them.

So, we have three CL-215 tankers. One was purchased in 1974; it's 48 years old. We have another one that was purchased in 1986; that makes it 36 years old. And we have a third one purchased in 1987, and it's 35 years old.

We have four of the CL-415 tankers. They're of newer vintage. We have one from 2010 that's 12 years old; 2011, we have two of them, so they're 11 years old. And the last one that was purchased was 2012, and it's 10 years old.

Mr. Bushie: Okay, so that's seven, is that correct? Or it's 14?

Mr. Nesbitt: No, seven is correct. I don't think we said 14 yesterday at all. There is seven of them.

Mr. Bushie: Is there any plans to update the fleet? You'd mentioned 1974, '86, '87, in terms of being the older ones in the fleet. Is there a plan to purchase any upcoming to add to the fleet or replace?

Mr. Nesbitt: Productions on these type of planes stopped in 2015, so there's been no supplier to purchase new aircraft at this point. We do have word that de Havilland is going to start production in 2029 in Calgary.

We're certainly very interested in perhaps replacing aircraft, adding aircraft, whatever. Like you say, the age of the aircraft dictates you need to replace the fleet at some point.

We are certainly in discussions with our partners in the other provinces and with the federal government to see what can be done for procurement of these, and you do have to order these planes much in advance and get your orders in.

So, discussions are underway. We know that, you know, forest fires—with climate change, there could be more forest fires moving forward and, you know, we want to be prepared. We want to have the best equipment available that we can to protect our communities from fire.

Mr. Bushie: So, the minister had mentioned about procurement, and I'm just wondering, has that process then begun for a procurement of updating the fleet.

Mr. Nesbitt: Yes. We've certainly had discussions internally about, you know, about acquiring aircraft. We've also—we'll be having discussions with the other provinces and with the feds to determine, you know, how many we need, what we need, what the other provinces are buying and, you know, working out a time frame, a price line, things like that.

So, discussions are underway. There's been nothing—no contracts signed, there's been nothing like that. It's just overall discussions. We're quite interested because, you know, quite honestly, having a plant based in western Canada that can build these type of planes is really good for the prairie provinces.

Mr. Bushie: So the minister mentioned that any potential updating of the fleet or purchasing of additional water bombers or replacement of water bombers is time consuming in terms of ordering in advance.

I'm just wondering, has the minister allocated any budget line item for replacement?

* (11:40)

Mr. Nesbitt: I'd just advise the member, I'm trying to understand how purchase of an airplane works. It's really not like purchasing an automobile, where you walk onto the lot and pick one up.

Our understanding is that the first 28 planes that they're going to build in Calgary, starting in 2029, are already allocated to Europe. We're continuing our discussions with the company in—and—internally and with the provinces and the feds on that.

In the meantime, we're certainly going to maintain these planes to Transport Canada standards so they can fly and do the job they're intended to do. Last year, we spent \$2 million on the avionics. No money will be—you know, the money is going to go into the planes to ensure that they will protect us until we can get another plane.

Now, you had mentioned about budgeting for a plane. My folks here have told me that, you know, when we place an order for an airplane next year perhaps, we might not get it 'til 2032, or whatever it might be. That amount, then, would appear in the budget of that particular year as capital cost for the entire airplane, and then be amortized over a certain amount of years.

I hope that answers the question for the member.

Mr. Bushie: Thank you for that clarification, and yes, I agree with the comment from yesterday about whether it's maintained. Obviously, the life expectancy gets to be a lot longer if it's maintained properly, and I'm sure in the avionics field it's important that everything is top-notch every day, no matter—regardless of the age.

But the question, I guess, was to ask, and it was somewhat answered, in regards to whether or not there's going to be upgrading of the fleet. Because if we're talking, you know—or for argument's sake, you know, 13, 15 years from now, the 1974 plane is also 13 to 15 years older by that point in time. And just wondering how exactly that would play out in terms of this department's financial commitment, or if it even is in this department, or whether or not it's just maintenance and whatnot that comes out of this department.

So the—so that being said, then, I do want to follow up on the question from yesterday about the contract, and the contract with Babcock Canada that initially was \$14.6 million. And my understanding, it was then now \$18.6 million a year.

I'm just wondering if the minister can confirm that the \$18.6 million a year is the accurate figure for that department.

Mr. Nesbitt: So, I'm told in the budget we're looking at here, the budget for expenditures for Babcock is \$17.6 million, for the budget that we're talking about here now.

Mr. Bushie: So, in the beginning of the contract, was the contract then \$14.6 million?

Mr. Nesbitt: Just having some problems here. The minister for Keewatinook is saying \$14.6 million. I'd just like to ask him where he got that number from. Is that from previous Estimates? Is that a number that—like, just where did that number, 14.6, come from? I told you in this year's Estimates, it's \$17.6 million.

Mr. Bushie: So, the contract initially, in 2017-2018, was at \$14.6 million and that was also a 10-year contract, and now, the minister has mentioned that now it is \$17.6 million a year. And I'm just wondering what the increase is then.

Mr. Nesbitt: Yes, I can explain that. The contract has an inflationary clause in, where there'll be increases each year, like, it's quite normal for contracts where they increase due to inflation.

This year it's \$17.6 million. So, over the past few years, it's gone up by an inflationary number. That contract is based on, you know, a certain standard number of flying hours and things. Anything that we go over that is—would be an additional cost, as well, in a heavy fire season.

* (11:50)

Mr. Bushie: Can the minister, then, undertake to provide us with a breakdown of the actual cost per year of the contract, inflationary discussions aside—\$3-million-a-year increase is pretty significant year over year. I'm just wondering if there is additional reasons why those costs are higher.

And if the minister can then break down from 2017 to 2018 up to today, then, the cost per year. Because it was initially at \$14.6 million and now we're at 17.6, so that's \$3 million in the course of the last five years increase in value. And I'm just wondering if there's a consistent increase.

And—so, for the value of the tenured contract, are we going to be looking then, 'potentially'—and I mean, we can't predict the future, but in three years from now, are we going to be looking at additional costs per year of 6, 7 million dollars or, for example?

Mr. Nesbitt: So, the contract with Babcock started December 1st, 2018. So I'm not sure where the member is getting the previous numbers.

So, in the 2018-19 fiscal year, it was just a part year; it was \$4.9 million is what we paid in the end. And I'm sure this information's all available in Public Accounts. In 2019-20, it was \$16.8 million. In 2021, it was \$17.3 million; '21-22 was \$20.8 million. And this year's budget is \$17.6 million.

Now, the anomaly in there, '21-22, it was a busy fire year. The planes flew more hours. That's built into the contract. That's why the price is higher. It wouldn't matter whether it was contracted out or we were flying it ourselves. We'd have higher costs due to a longer or a busier fire season.

Mr. Bushie: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Minister. And Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to ask some more questions.

I have a couple of questions about forestry. The minister, yesterday, had mentioned the First Nations and the MOUs that were signed on First Nations.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with a list of the First Nations that have signed MOUs with regards to forestry.

Mr. Nesbitt: Yes, it was certainly my pleasure to go up North and sign some of those MOUs in person with the First Nations. They were very welcoming, and we had a great reception on those First Nations; they were very hospitable to us. We—they treated us to lunch, formal ceremonies in front of the community and it was a very, very historic occasion to be signing timber-dues sharing agreements with First Nations.

So the—we signed them with—the one time we were up there we signed with Mosakahiken, which is Moose Lake, and Opaskwayak, OCN. We signed in Norway House. We've signed with Chemawawin, and we've signed with Minegozebii [*phonetic*] and Anishinabe, the Pine Creek First Nation. I'm sure I didn't pronounce that correctly.

But, you know—so we signed the MOUs and then following up with MOAs. The MOU was a memorandum of understanding; then we followed up with the actual agreements that are two-year agreements, to start with, as a pilot project. We certainly expect to continue that arrangement. It started back on January 1st, 2022, and will run for the next two years.

We've certainly—we've offered these—we have offered to sign MOUs with any First Nation in Manitoba that wants to, whether or not they have

forestry now or whether they're looking at forestry moving forward. These cheques should be issued later this year or early 2003 for this first year. Of those—they were just signed this summer. We feel this is certainly a show of reconciliation, and the First Nations feel the same. It's not just talk; it's action. And I'm very proud that these timber dues are going back for the First Nations to do with what they want. In terms of how they use the money on the First Nation; that's entirely up to them.

Mr. Bushie: So, in regards to the MOUs, and we wrapped up Estimates in the Indigenous reconciliation—with the Indigenous Reconciliation Minister and at that time there was still no consultation strategy or duty to consult with First Nations from his department. And I'm just wondering what consultation strategy or duty-to-consult framework was used in—with these MOUs.

* (12:00)

Mr. Nesbitt: So the previous minister had started these discussions when this department was formed in January. And when I was fortunate enough to be named minister, I continued the discussions with chief in council in these communities.

And, you know, we certainly worked with chief in council. There was really no duty to consult because this was—there—it's not a treaty issue. This was doing something that we felt was right in terms of reconciliation. Our government, our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has reaffirmed that our government wants to proceed with reconciliation right through government.

This is Natural Resources' way of reconciling with our First Nations who do have the land where the harvest is happening. So we certainly had dialogue with the chief in council, numerous chats, visits with them with our staff, my own visit with them, phone discussions and, finally, an agreement to proceed with the MOU and then, in turn, with the MOAs.

Mr. Bushie: I just want to see if the minister can clarify the comment about there being really no duty to consult. Could you maybe expand on that and how you feel there really was no duty to consult?

Mr. Nesbitt: So, the MOUs for revenue sharing, like I say, they weren't a treaty issue. But revenue sharing was raised a number of times in consultations that were done. IRNR met with chief in councils, they met with First Nations. We've heard that in discussions in the past. We felt it was the right thing to do.

So, in the spirit of reconciliation, we entered into—I'm saying discussions, you can say consultations—with chief in council, to hear what they had to say about revenue sharing, throw around numbers, come up with an agreement that works for both parties.

So, it was a collaborative discussion, 'discable'—or, collaborative consultation, whatever you might want to call it. But it arrived in agreements that the First Nations were very happy with and we were very happy to share revenues with them.

Mr. Bushie: So I'm just, again, looking for some clarification on some of the response that I'm getting here then.

So then, the minister feels there's no duty to consult if it's not a treaty issue. Is that correct?

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, we certainly realize that there's a duty to consult with our First Nations when it comes to forestry activities, whether it comes to mining activities, things like that. We have a consultation branch within our department that, you know, is busy all the time consulting with First Nations.

The difference in this is that, you know, revenue sharing was an accommodation. It was something that—an agreement we entered into with the First Nations coming out of the consultations.

As I said before, we'd heard the fact that First Nations wanted to be independent. They wanted to have their own revenue. They didn't want to be dependent on the federal government. They wanted funds from the resources on their lands, and our government has acted to do that.

And I'm—again, I'm proud to say that these First Nations were ecstatic with these agreements and we have many more in the queue here that want to sign these agreements with us.

Mr. Bushie: So again, Mr. Chair, I'm not hearing an answer to the question, then.

So, does the minister feel, then, there is only a duty to consult if it is a treaty issue?

Mr. Nesbitt: Again, I think the member is getting consult and discussions—you know, it's semantics here. We work with First Nations. We look to reset relationships with First Nations in terms of resource sharing.

You know, we certainly—like I say, we're certainly very proud of what we've done and what we're going to continue to do in working with our partners. And, you know, we certainly—I have a definition here. It

says duty to consult where a proposed decision may impact on the exercise of treaty and Aboriginal rights.

* (12:10)

We've gone above and beyond here in resetting the relationships of these First Nations. So, we discussed with the chief in council, we consulted with the chief in council, we sat around a table, we tossed ideas back and forth, we came up with an MOU that worked for both of us. There was no pressure to sign this MOU.

We're very pleased to share our revenues with First Nations. We think it's the right thing to do. I made the statement, when I was signing these with the chiefs, that this has been a long time coming and it should've happened much sooner. And we feel this is a very important part of reconciliation.

Mr. Bushie: So, again, for the third time now, I'm still not hearing a simple yes or no answer to a yes or no question.

If the minister feels that there's no duty to consult or the only responsible duty to consult is if it involves in treaty and Aboriginal rights, as the minister had quoted there. Because there's also, when it comes time to Indigenous First Nation communities, it's also about traditional territory. It's not so much about just, you know, confined to the—and again, I didn't like using the phrase yesterday—the reserve boundary. So it is a matter of entertaining and encompassing traditional territory that encompasses basically all of Manitoba.

So, again, does the minister feel, then, there is no duty to consult unless it is a treaty issue?

Mr. Nesbitt: I think to answer the member's question directly, we certainly recognize that, you know, we certainly have a duty to consult where a proposed decision may impact on the exercise of treaty and Aboriginal rights. In these cases, we engaged with chief in council based on consultations in the past on revenue sharing and the fact that they wanted to share in the resources from their land.

We feel that's the right thing to do. It's part of reconciliation. It's an act of reconciliation. It's a meaningful act. And again, like I say, this engagement, this discussion, this conversation with chief in council came as a result of consultations in the past with these First Nations.

Mr. Bushie: Okay, so, maybe I'll go about asking it in a different way, then. So does the minister, then,

agree that the forestry activity in fact impacts treaty and Aboriginal rights?

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, certainly, the member's right. You know, we have to consult with First Nations. We do consult with First Nations in terms of forestry activities. You know, because, you know, it may impact First Nations, it may not, but it's certainly something that we always—we do always consult with First Nations when it comes to forestry activities, when it comes to signing new licensing agreements with our forest products companies.

Discussions are always ongoing with First Nations when it comes to forestry.

Mr. Bushie: So, again, does the minister, then, agree that forestry activity impacts treaty and Aboriginal rights?

Mr. Nesbitt: To the member's question: we do consult to determine the potential impacts on the exercise of treaty and Aboriginal rights. We want meaningful processes that allow us to hear from communities on the potential impacts, mitigation strategies and, where appropriate, accommodation measures.

Mr. Bushie: So, out of that very eloquent definition that the minister just gave then, again, does he agree, then, that forestry activity impacts treaty and Aboriginal rights, given that definition he just gave?

Mr. Nesbitt: To the member's question: I would certainly agree that, you know, it can certainly affect treaty rights of First Nations. And that's why we do assessments and consult with First Nations. I mean, that's only proper, you know, talking to the people that are on the land there, that's the important thing to do, and consulting with them.

Mr. Bushie: So, I guess we're in agreement on that. The minister says that it can, and for the record, he is saying that it can—forestry activity can affect, 'impract'—and impact treaty and Aboriginal rights. So, by that definition, then, it also falls in the category under duty to consult, because it does, in fact, affect traditional territory and treaty rights and Aboriginal rights.

So there is, in fact, a duty to consult, then, on forestry activity, given the minister understanding that it can impact. So, there is an obligated duty to consult based on the definitions given this afternoon by the minister.

Would you agree?

Mr. Nesbitt: Could I ask the member to just rephrase that question without all the preamble. Could you just single in on the question you want me to answer?

Mr. Bushie: I've singled on it, like, four or five times now. The minister had mentioned that forestry activity can, in fact, impact treaty and Aboriginal rights.

And so, by the acknowledgement that it can, then, does the minister then agree that there is a duty to consult given the definition earlier, that there is a duty to consult when it's a treaty issue?

* (12:20)

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, I'm certainly going to say that we do assessments on every forestry proposal here in Manitoba. We see if there's any potential impacts to treaty and Aboriginal rights, and if there is, we will consult.

Mr. Bushie: So in fact, then, in regards to the MOUs, then, I mean, obviously, I think we're in agreement that forestry activity, in your definition, can—communities' definitions are it absolutely does impact treaty and Aboriginal rights.

So was there a duty-to-consult protocol followed in regards to these MOUs?

Mr. Nesbitt: I'm sure the member does understand that these MOUs are about the financial aspect of sharing revenues. This isn't about cutting down trees. This isn't about doing work on lands. That's all covered by consultation with—when operating plans are approved for forestry companies in terms of, you know, working on traditional lands. The MOUs basically just signify the government's reconciliation—or, I guess, recognition that these fees should be shared with First Nations.

And, but, you know, consultations happen all the time in the forestry industry in terms of signing operating plans and agreements with—we have Spruce Products in Swan River, we have LP in Swan River, we have CKP in The Pas. Those companies always enter into operating plans. Consultations are ongoing on these plans on the—it's just constant. They work together, they work with us. We consult, and any issues are ironed out before any licensing is done.

But the MOUs, again, are over and above any forestry operations. They're sharing government revenues that we've collected back with the First Nations where the timber comes from.

Mr. Bushie: Well, we can go back in Hansard and go over the Q and As back and forth, but I was pretty sure

we heard the minister in agreement to the fact that forestry activity can impact treaty and Aboriginal rights, so ultimately, there's a definition and a clear indication that there is a duty to consult out of that.

A little bit of a different question towards forestry is I'm just wondering if the minister can explain or let us know how many trees have and are expected to be planted this year.

Mr. Nesbitt: The—we're attempting to get the information here on how many trees were proposed to be planted this year, so if the—I'll give the member an opportunity to ask me another question if he wants, rather than just sit here with dead air.

Mr. Bushie: Okay, well, I wasn't getting any answers when I was actually asking some legitimate questions earlier on, also, so—but I still want to continue on with the tree—and I mean, we always talk about the tree canopy here in Winnipeg; I mean, I also believe there's the tree canopy across the whole province on a much broader scale.

So, the number of trees harvested from 2016 to 2020 grew when compared to the four years previous, 2011-2015. And that's in the annual forestry—the forestry annual report. Yet in the same time period, 12 million less trees were planted.

Can the minister explain why that was the case?

Mr. Nesbitt: So, 'reforestation' is certainly important. Important for the environment, important for the economy moving forward. This year, I'm very proud to say that Natural Resources and Northern Development planted 1.5 million trees this spring across Manitoba, plus any trees planted by industry. We don't have those numbers yet, but we did plant 1.5 million.

Mr. Bushie: Can the minister, then, undertake to find out the exact total from his ministry and otherwise?

Mr. Nesbitt: I would love to provide an undertaking to do that to the member, but my understanding is we won't have the numbers from industry within the required 45 days, and an undertaking has to be provided to the member that we in—undertake to take today.

So, if that makes sense to you, we can't provide the numbers because they're not going to be available until after 45 days moving forward.

Mr. Bushie: So, can the minister, then, also provide, though, then, over that course of that period the net that—it's quite apparent that it's a net loss in terms of

trees in the province, trees planted versus trees 'harvested', so can the minister, then, undertake, then, to provide us with—through his department, not through the industry side of it, the net loss. It—apparently it seems to be just a net loss in terms of trees harvested versus trees planted.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

ROOM 255

SPORT, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

* (11:10)

Mr. Chairperson (Brad Michaleski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I welcome the minister back.

We were talking about the film industry in Manitoba yesterday. I want to continue on that and I want to share that I had got a chance to visit the Big Sky Studios, which is a huge infrastructure coming up in Manitoba and it's going to create so many jobs in Manitoba.

I'm just wondering: Can the minister share if there are any plans to start some education and training courses in Manitoba to prepare Manitobans to get those jobs in that facility or beyond?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Well, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It is a—you know, we all know that there is labour challenges in all industries, including the film industry, and we are—as a government, we are working with the industry to try and address capacity issues in this space.

* (11:20)

As you know, like I said earlier, there's capacity issues or workforce capacity issues in every aspect of—in every industry. So, this is not unusual to see in the film sector.

Mr. Brar: Just a follow-up to know if the minister thinks that we need to develop infrastructure or institutions or new courses in future to prepare

Manitobans, especially our next generation, to get into employment in the film industry.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Smith: So, our government and my department, we are working with stakeholders in the film industry to address some of the more specific gaps that they are experiencing, and, of course, in conjunction with the ministers of advanced education and immigration and EDIT.

We know that—a number of departments that this touches, so we are working together with—in government and, of course, with our stakeholders to address those very specific gaps that they are experiencing.

Mr. Brar: I have two more quick questions for the minister regarding ethnic sports and libraries, so I would start with the ethnic sports.

I have met with so many of my constituents and other Manitobans beyond my constituency who are new Canadians—new Canadians, I meant to say they are immigrants, basically—especially from Philippines and India, in addition to other parts of the world, and they love their own sports. For example, Filipino people bring arnis [*stickfighting*] and sikaran [*footfighting*] with them. Indian people bring cricket and kabaddi with them.

So, I just want to know if there are any efforts of the way to promote these ethnic sports in Manitoba?

Mr. Smith: I appreciate the question and I know that member opposite has a lot of constituents that would be interested and I think are very aware of the ACSC Fund, the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund, that we've created. It's a \$100-million fund, spread over three years.

This year alone, it's \$34 million for this first intake, and the large capital component is—has a deadline of October 31st. So, Halloween—it's the deadline for this incredible initiative that the Manitoba government has undertaken.

We know that, post-COVID, a number of—or during COVID, rather, a lot of community groups were feeling the pressure, and this—the hope and the idea of this ACSC Fund is—not only is it the right thing to do, we do know that it'll help communities not just survive post-COVID, but thrive post-COVID.

And a lot of new Canadian communities, I know, will—I've been in conversations with a number of communities. I know a number of MLAs from all sides of

the House. I've been in conversations with their communities about this fund. I think it's a great opportunity to put some money into some of the arts, culture and sport sector.

And, in fact, I think that arts, culture and sport are interrelated, as the member opposite alluded to already. A lot of new Canadians do have sports that they bring from their home countries here, and that is very much a cultural aspect to the sports as well.

So I encourage all members in the House, and certainly members opposite here, to continue to remind your constituents to apply for the ACSC Fund. And this first intake, like I said, for the large capital, is coming up to a deadline here of October 31st.

Thank you.

Mr. Brar: I thank the minister for the details.

I want to ask about the new developments. Our city is growing and there are so many new developments in the city, even beyond the Perimeter also. For example, in—near my constituency, Amber Trails, Amber Gates, Aurora and so on—there are so many new developments, but there are no libraries and sports infrastructure for these people: hard-working Manitobans.

Is there a plan to invest in such projects for these Manitobans in Manitoba?

Mr. Smith: Again, I just want to point back to the ACSC Fund, because libraries are included in that. And I encourage all community groups around the city that are interested in developing and further developing their communities to apply for this.

So, I know the member opposite's quite aware of the ACSC Fund and so I do encourage him that if he has any constituents in his area—and certainly, if you get the large capital, municipalities can apply for it. So, make sure his city councillors in his area that he overlaps with, make sure that they are aware that they can contribute to this important—or, apply for this important fund.

As the member opposite has mentioned, of course, we know Winnipeg is growing and there's different demographics now in the city here, particular over the last 10 years. It's important to continue to grow our infrastructure in line with that. That's what the ACSC Fund is there for, and I encourage all members to make sure their constituents are aware of it and know how to apply for it.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there any further questions?

Seeing none, we'll move on to resolutions.

Resolution four point-14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$55,719,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Culture and Sport Programs, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Shall the resolution—[interjection]—the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Mr. Smith: I just—before we went into the—to that portion of the committee, I just want to answer two questions from the member opposite from yesterday we took under advisement, and I thought it would be appropriate to answer them now.

If I can do that, I've got—give me a few minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to pause resolution portion and return back to the comments question—or, the comments from the minister?

Mr. Brar: I have this minister's salary? [interjection] Okay, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, so we agree that we have—seek leave to return back to the minister's questions.

I'll recognize now the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

Mr. Brar: Yes, I would request the minister to answer the questions under advisement.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that and thank you to the committee for allowing this here.

* (11:30)

So, one of the questions from yesterday was the vacancy rate and the numbers we were not able to give at that time was 2016's vacancy rate. I have that now. The vacancy rate in sport, culture, heritage for 2016 was 21.2 per cent.

Yes, Manitoba Centennial Centre: we have a list here of capital funding going back from 2016.

So, from 2016-17, the concert hall electric—electronic acoustic enhancement was a hundred seventy-nine thousand dollars; 2017-2018, the marquee sign, building elevators, the MTC entrance canopy was five hundred and seven point five thousand dollars; '18-19 was the orchestra pit heating-cooling coils and parking equipment, it was four hundred and twenty-seven point two thousand dollars; 2018, fire alarm system upgrade, \$5,248,000; '19-20, sewer pump and water line replacement was five hundred and sixteen point one thousand dollars.

In 2020, the carpet replacement in the concert hall foyer, reception areas was \$750,000.

In 2021, the washroom upgrades and the handrail upgrades was four hundred and thirty-nine point nine thousand dollars.

In 2021, there was a multi-year envelope restoration and that's—expected completion is in '23-24 for twelve million seven hundred and—sorry, \$12,278,000. That's the Centennial Concert Hall building envelope restoration, includes—or, is up to—sorry—\$12.5 million; so for a total of \$20,347,000.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, minister. And is there any further questions?

Seeing none, I thank the minister for that clarification. I thank the committee for allowing this comments—these further comments of clarity to be added into the record.

So, we will return now to resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding 45 million—I'm sorry. I will start again. It must be a Friday.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$55,719,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Culture and Sport Programs, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Fourteen point three, resolution—resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,817,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$50,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 14.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 14.1.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Brar: I move that line item 14.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage's (Mr. Smith) salary be reduced to \$21,000.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chairperson: This motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on this motion?

Seeing none, the call—the question—is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour the motion—sorry—shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those in—opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it. The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We'll move on to resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,857,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

The next set of Estimates to be considered for this section of the Committee of Supply is for Agriculture.

And shall we briefly recess to allow the ministers and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? *[Agreed]*

Committee recess.

The committee recessed at 11:37 a.m.

The committee resumed at 11:38 a.m.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairperson (Brad Michaleski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Johnson: As Minister for the Department of Agriculture, I am pleased to talk today about how our budget will support the important priorities for our government, including caring for the environment, building a strong economy, providing meaningful employment and respectful and inclusive reconciliation.

I don't see a timer up here, Mr. Chair, but I'll continue along. Usually we see timer; I have to change my view probably on here. But I'll continue on, and maybe you can give me a one-minute wave or something.

Our agriculture industry will continue to experience our commitment to sustainable growth in agriculture and the agri-processing value chain through innovative programs and services. The '22-23 budget continues progress on key initiatives and programming to foster sustainable growth for agriculture producers and processors.

* (11:40)

The reorganization of the department in January has allowed for a stronger focus on agriculture and a structure to better engage and achieve client needs and government objectives.

Through a modern service delivery model, in partnership with with Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation, or MASC for short, which I'm sure the critic is well aware of, we will provide a single-point access for rural Manitobans to services provided by MASC and Manitoba Agriculture; so instead of the one-stop shop.

And I had the privilege of touring all these throughout the summer and it was great meeting all of the employees and people that are the face of government for our producers. They do such a great job and I just want to thank them for all of their hard work in ensuring that our producers and Manitobans have everything they need. And they're such a very friendly

face that comes and welcomes you, so I just want to say thanks to everybody and all the great hard work that they do on behalf of the industry.

So, the face-to-face option has been augmented by improvements in myMASC online portal. It's a new online chat option—[interjection] Oh, bless you, Deputy Chair—and modernized phone systems that allow clients to receive services in French.

So, that's something that was never done before and now that option's available, so I want to thank all the hard work that's gone into that and that's the first for our province and something to be proud of. Of course, our government supports all those initiatives. It's been many, many years—well, many years; it's been never since it was offered in French in that manner.

This initiative approach to service delivery—this innovative approach to service delivery has also resulted in alignment between the department and MASC where efficiencies have been gained and the clients' experience enhanced. So again, if somebody comes into town and they need to deal with both departments, they can just stop at the one building.

And, you know, often they're in town, maybe towing a trailer because they're maybe, you know, bringing an animal to the vet or something or just moving equipment, and it's a little awkward to get around sometimes, but this allows them to find a parking stall and then access all the business that they need in one building.

So, on the theme of a more focused approach for the department, we have a new division which leads our agriculture production and resilience programming and services. This division will oversee initiatives such as environmental farm plans, climate change and adaptation efforts, sustainable production and development of the agri-ecosystem.

So, the division will also manage ongoing investments, such as 1 and a half million dollars towards the Sustainable Agriculture Incentives Program as well as facilitate research to advance innovation and competitiveness of the sector.

So a 'priety'—a priority for this research will focus on the impacts of climate change on the Ag sector. But speaking of climate change, the percentage of normal precipitation in 2021 ranged from 30 to 70 per cent, depending on the region of the province.

I think, in the Interlake region and everybody who lives there can probably attest to, we would question

whether it was even 30 per cent. On some of the farms, it was a drought that was not in the memory of a lot of the older producers in the area.

So, our heart goes out to them. Our grain and vegetables and forages and pasture yields were reduced by anywhere from 25 to 60 per cent in 2021. And of course, all livestock sectors experienced increase in feed costs and shortages that are beyond the imagination.

So that is the 2021 drought. I will speak to the impacts of excess moisture of 2022 a little bit later. But however, whether it be drought or flood or extreme heat, Manitoba has and is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture sector. Manitoba has worked closely with Fertilizer Canada and Keystone Agriculture Producers to deliver extension programming on—for our nutrient stewardship to improve fertilizer use, efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our announcements on October 13th saw us signing our memorandum of understanding with Environment, Climate and Parks, Fertilizer Canada and, of course, Keystone Agricultural Producers. It has set the stage for the next four years for our agreement.

So, during the drought, producers were challenged to manage their winter feed supplies and, in some cases, downsize their breeding herds. Manitoba utilized a multipronged approach where we used existing and new emergency programs to meet producers' immediate needs to assist with their recovery from the drought.

So I just want to mention how hard the department worked. And the previous minister, we have to take our hats off to him and his team when he was in here, of how robust this programming is. I would argue that it's—will be probably the model that any provinces follow in the future. There's our neighbouring provinces showed their support of how robust our program was.

So, again, thank you to all the many, many hours behind the scenes that went into this program and thank everybody for—the department for their hard work and all the consulting that they did as well, through that. It was probably one of the most consulted programs to ensure that it—that we got it right, and that's exactly—exactly— what they did.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, Manitoba provides a business risk management

support to producers through AgriInsurance, AgriStability, and also AgriInvest.

AgriInsurance, delivered by MASC, provides insurance to help manage crop, hay and pasture production losses. Record level payments were made in 2021. AgriInsurance payments were the highest payout in the last 20 years—*[interjection]* One minute left? Okay—in the last 20 years, reaching \$575 million for the 2021 crop year.

A total payment of \$53.4 million for forage and related indemnities, including \$8.9 million for the Hay Disaster Benefit, provided also an additional \$44 per ton for coverage for producers for their hay.

This is the highest payout for forage hay and disaster benefits in Manitoba Agriculture's history. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada forecast higher grain prices, and crop insurance payments will be offset—will offset the impacts of drought in western Canada.

On farm income, I have so much more good news to say. I will probably have to, I guess, reiterate some of that in my answers.

And so, thank you for the time to present here.

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

We thank the minister for those questions. We thank—I thank you, for your expression of concern for the Chair, the coughing here.

And I would advise the minister, too, that you are able to change your view on your computer screen to show your timer, so if that helps. I can continue to still give you a hand signal if that's what you want, but you are able to do that.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I would be brief. I want to welcome the minister in his role, and we have a bit of time today to consider the Estimates of Agriculture.

We know that agriculture has been—has seen significant staff reductions since 2016 and the vacancy rate is still very high. I'd like to hear from the minister about the current situation.

* (11:50)

Agriculture has undergone significant staff reduction and restructuring on its service delivery as well. We've heard from producers their concerns about access. I have some questions about that as well. We've

also noticed an 11 per cent contraction in the loan portfolio; would like to hear more about why that is.

I have also heard from producers about their concerns about unseeded acres this year in Manitoba, especially in the Interlake. I would like to hear more from the minister.

We also have questions about animal welfare, Crown lands and the reorganization of Peak of the Market.

So I look forward to our discussion today.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for that opening statement.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 3.1(a), contained in resolution 3.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff—*[interjection]*—at this time, we'll invite the minister to introduce the staff he has in attendance.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. I was just pushing my mute, unmute, but I also was raising my hand, so thank you for recognizing me so quickly.

Of course, there's myself here; obviously, I don't need to give any introductions for myself. My deputy minister is not here today. She's out doing great work for Manitobans through a FPT deputy ministers meeting, and that's very important. So, that's the work she's doing today. So, I want to thank her and her staff that are there with us, representing Manitoba and doing a great job at that.

So, we have here assistant deputy minister, Dave *[phonetic]* Hunt, and, you know, he attended a lot of the tours that I've been on at my time as a minister. So, I want to thank him for all of his efforts that he's put in as well.

Assistant deputy minister, Maurice Bouvier, he's also been on many tours with me, and all the hard work that they do as assistant deputy ministers is outstanding.

Another huge important to our team here, we have Jared Munro, and he's the MASC chief executive officer. And I was pleased to tour all of our one-stop-shop buildings for MASC and Manitoba Agriculture with Jared across this past summer, and so I want to thank him for that. But he's here with us today.

We also have Ag executive financial officer, Kevin Kroeker. He's the one who will be getting all of our answers on that side, for the ones that are very technical. And, of course, we have MASC chief financial officer, Manon Pascal, and she's been a great addition to the team that's here with us today as well.

Also included in the room, I do have my special assistant, Lisa Dyck. And I guess the official term is chief of staff, I guess, but I think we all know them as SAs, or special assistants. And I also want to thank them for all of their hard work that they do to help us do our day-to-day activities.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you minister, and welcome to all those in attendance.

According to our rule 77(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Brar: Thank you, Mr. Chair—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

Point of Order

Mr. Johnson: Yes, sorry. I'm just not in the room, so I apologize for that—or, I guess I'm not even allowed to say that I'm—sorry, I'm attending virtually.

Were you going to give an opportunity for the critic to introduce his staff? Just—I'm—I can't see them on the camera, so—and maybe if there is no staff, maybe you could indicate that, as well, because I think that's only fair if you give me the opportunity to introduce my staff, you should also allow the critic to introduce his staff.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Burrows, if he chooses to use that time to introduce these people, it is his choice. Otherwise, the member for Burrows can go right into questioning.

* * *

Mr. Brar: I thank the minister for introducing his staff and I welcome the staff to this meeting. Those are my previous colleagues when I was working in the department. Happy to be with them.

Can I ask the minister to introduce me to his political staff, in addition to the ones he already did?

Mr. Johnson: Sorry, I almost started speaking with the mute button on and that would've been \$5 into our Christmas fund jar, so I apologize for that, but I caught myself just in the nick of time.

Yes, I introduced my special assistant or what, I guess, the proper term is, chief of staff. I introduced her and Lisa Dyck; she's been a huge asset for helping me get my day-to-day work done.

But, yes, you're right, there are a few other people. We have my executive assistant here, Taylor Schule, so that's a great help to the team as well.

And then we have, I believe the title might be policy analyst—no, I'm getting a shake here—but Mark Stewart. I'm not sure what his actual title is, but those of us in government side know Mark and he helps us with our day-to-day issues, and he's in the room just purely for entertainment. He's not really part of the team, but he's just here listening, maybe in case there's a riveting question from the critic.

So I will cede the floor to the critic for that specific riveting question that we're waiting for.

Mr. Brar: Thank the minister for almost introducing the details for your political staff, excluding their exact titles. I would expect the minister to know the titles of their political staff for future. Thanks once again. I would—[interjection]—thanks once again.

I want to ask the minister: Can the minister provide me with a vacancy rate for the department as a whole?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, thank you for that.

So I have now found out the title of the political staff: it's issues management specialist. So that's a very, very technical term for the guy that helps us out when we have issues.

* (12:00)

So now, you specifically asked about the vacancy rate as a whole, so I'm assuming that that's the current vacancy rate that the member's talking about. And that would be a total FTE count—I'm just looking at the sheet here. I probably should have waited for a second, but I was so eager to get the title for Mark Stewart out as issues 'manager' specialist, that I didn't quite—I'm not quite on the right page here.

I think we have a full—when we're at full complement, we have 384.5 FTEs, and what is not filled

in there—I'm just going through the chart here, number of vacant positions—so maybe I'll ask the member, did he want a percentage or the number of vacant positions? Just to be clear so I answer his question as appropriate as he's asking.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Brar: I meant to ask the vacancy rate.

Mr. Johnson: So that's vacancy percentage then, I'm assuming, right? Okay, so that is 17.14 per cent vacancy rate in Manitoba Agriculture.

So, some of these positions, as we did—hopefully the member is—remembers that we switched from Agriculture and Resource Development in the spring, when—well, spring, early spring, I guess, January—winter—as I became minister. So we're still shuffling. We have now shuffled the positions around and we are working on filling these positions as we speak.

I do recall numerous positions coming across my desk and signing, so if he goes online and is as excited about agriculture as myself, there might be some positions there that he'd be interested in. I know he used to work in the Department of Agriculture and he's passionate about it. But there's positions that are coming up daily. So thank you for the interest on that.

Oh, just hold on here, there's some—okay. So of course, that's—now, MASC is separate, so I'll just fulsomely answer his question, because, you know, to be transparent, MASC is different numbers than Manitoba Agriculture.

So, MASC is—Manitoba agriculture services corporation is 7.9 per cent. So the historical vacancy rate in the department, so as of 2021, so a year ago, was higher. The member might remember asking this last year in Estimates, so he would have gotten his answer then. But I'll just remind him of the answer; it was—so, in 2021, it was 23.6 per cent.

So, we're working hard at filling these positions. You can see that we've made substantial progress. And then also, in 2020, it was 23.3. So there's been a lot of progress made over the past year. Of course, that has a lot to do with the hard work of the department.

And there are currently 27 competitions in progress, which would reduce—if we're successful in getting all of them, that would almost put that 17.4 per cent in half. So we are—now that we're reorganized as a new department, we're very excited to get fully staffed and fill those. So with those 27 competitions, rough math—not exactly, but I don't know, we'd be around, I don't know, 10—but I'll let the

member do the math on that one, but we'd be around—almost half of that 17.4 per cent would be filled.

So we're looking exciting to—we're excited to get those competitions signed, sealed and delivered. And the number here, that would actually reduce us to 18—sorry, 10.85 per cent, if we're successful in filling all 27 of those. So that's great news. The department is working hard and filling those.

I think people can be very proud of what the department does and be part of that team. It's a huge team effort here. They work very, very well together, right from our entry-level positions all the way up to the deputy minister's office and I'm so proud of them. I just want to say thank you to all the hard-working staff.

And I cede the floor.

Mr. Brar: Can I ask the minister to share the numbers for 2016, as he did for 2021 and 2020, which was before the reorganization of the department, so that we can compare what the numbers were—numbers—I mean to say vacancy rate in 2016.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, thank you for that and thank you for the question.

So these are just—and I know my critic will know, but I'll just tell him—so these are going to be fiscal year ends that I'm going to give him the dates for, where the previous ones were not fiscal year end; it was current or equivalent pretty much to this date.

So, 2015-16, so this—as the member's well aware, but I'll just state it to put it on the record—so this is ending March 31st and starting April 1st, so this is—these numbers will coincide with our budget year. So these are as of March 30th of each year is the numbers that I'm going to relay to the member.

* (12:10)

So, 2015-16 vacancy rate was 20.19 per cent. So that's—well, I guess I'm not going to comment on when that coincided within the political change or anything like that. I'm sure we can all deduce that. So the number for 2016-17 was 22.86.

The number for—again, these are fiscal year ends. And feel free, Mr. Chair, if I'm going too fast, just raise your hand, I'll slow down a little bit here.

So the number 2017-18 is 17.25 per cent. For 2018-19, 24.95 per cent; 2019-2020 was 20.31 per cent.

So, fiscal year ending 2021—or, budget year 2020-2021—oh, the screen's going blank here on me—okay, I saved it. It's good, it's good.

So, where was I? I don't want to start over. I think I'm at 2020-2021. So that was 22.68 per cent vacancy rate, and year '21-22 was 16.83.

So I just want to reiterate to the member that those numbers will be different from the numbers that I gave him earlier because those numbers that I gave him earlier kind of coincided with today.

So the 17.14 per cent is the most current number that I could get him. So it's not last year's year-end number, it's today's number.

So today's number is 17.14 per cent. But I'll give him last year's today's number, if that makes sense. So last year, at this time, the vacancy was 23.6.

So the member needs to keep in mind that it was ARD at the time, Agriculture and Resource Development; so there's a—you know, a good percentage of those vacancies, that's the department as a whole as a percentage. So those vacancies, at that time, were also inclusive of some of the—those positions as well.

And that—I'm sure the member's aware that that change happened in January—January 5th—and it took a little while to sort out positions in how the department will split up, and I think the work that the department did was amazing on how they, you know, divided the department into the different areas. And I'm very, very happy with the staff that we are able to keep. Their area of expertise is outstanding and I just want to thank them again for all their hard work.

And we're working hard, as I mentioned a minute ago. We have some competitions out there. We are at—how many competitions? I could go through and maybe list all the competitions that we have out there, but I'll see, in my short time, I'll keep it quick.

It's—it is technologist; there's 27 of them. But there's—oh, work—from managers of climate resilience, policy specialists—I'm just skipping through the list. There's so many people that we're adding to our team of Agriculture here that it's—I'm astounded. As well, director of agriculture, marketing strategist, medical technologist—we actually have two positions that we're hiring for that; director of food safety and inspection.

Please, though, don't think that this is a complete list. I have the whole list to go through here. Maybe I'll do that in my next answer, if the critic desires.

Mr. Brar: I also want to thank the minister for the information and I also want to take a moment to thank the hard-working professionals in the Agriculture department, which is now Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development, because the situation is that we are having less and less number of people who are working more and more amounts of work, so they have to work harder and harder every single day. I can't thank them enough to serve our farming community.

May I know what's the current vacancy rate by the division?

Mr. Johnson: Okay, yes, so we have that. So I'll break it down into categories because I'm pretty sure that's what the member asked.

So I'll break those—each category down and—so I'll start with Corporate Services and Innovation. There's a—was the question actually how many positions or percentage? Maybe I should clarify that.

Sorry, can you just repeat if it was number of positions or percentage again? So far we've been going on percentage. I just want to make sure that—if he's comparing, he wants to probably keep all his data, but I don't want to make that assumption and then waste his time repeating all of this.

So please, can you clarify if that's number of positions or percentage of vacancy in each department?

Mr. Brar: Vacancy rate, I guess, is percentage.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, and thank you for that.

I just didn't want to waste his time, because I know we're getting late here in the Estimates process. Okay. So I'll start again, though, just to make sure he knows exactly what we're talking about and it's only fair.

So, Corporate Services and Innovation: that's a 22.26 per cent vacancy rate. And that consists of executive support, finance, policy and legislation, transformation, programs and permits administration. So that's the groups (a) through (e) or whatever that are underneath Corporate Services and Innovation, which is 22.26 per cent.

Now, a different category, Industry Advancement, and that has subcategories of industry development, value added, food safety and inspection, animal health and welfare. So those combined are 10.64 per cent; in Industry Advancement, 10.64 per cent vacancy rate.

* (12:20)

Agriculture Production and Resilience, which falls under Land Use and Ecosystem Resilience—this is one of the subcategories, sorry—the main category is Agriculture Production and Resilience. So the subcategory, or one of them, is Land Use and Ecosystem Resilience, and Primary Agriculture. That is a vacancy of 19.02 per cent.

So those three categories added together, Manitoba Agriculture, gives you—and again, these aren't year end, so please don't mistake those with the number that I was giving earlier with the budget year end—these are current numbers, which I assume the member would want, as of a couple days ago—I'll just get the exact date for the member.

So it's as of September 30th. So it's—as of September 30th, so we will have updated stats, I guess, at the end of this month is when it goes through, but—so these are accurate of September 30th, so for a total vacancy rate of 17.14 per cent.

So I can go through some of those subcategories—I probably don't have time here—and I can break that down a little bit further if the member wishes. But I'll probably only do that if he asks, I don't want to use up all of his time. So I'll—I think I'll leave it there with a total FTE count of 17.14 per cent vacancy rate.

But as mentioned, we have 27 competitions that are open right now, and that'll put a substantial reduction. Now that everything's kind of settled from separating Agriculture from resource development, and this'll really, really allow us to build up our team. The whole team's excited about it, as am I and as is our government. This is a great step forward.

Agriculture, as we well know, is the backbone of the province. I know it fluctuates from year to year, what percentage our GDP is of the entire provincial GDP, but it's substantial. And, you know, it's a known fact when Manitoba producers, farmers have a good year, our province has a good year.

Those are those years where it allows them to purchase those pieces of equipment that they maybe need to upgrade for a few years, but they wait for a good year for—to make that business decision. It's kind of tough to upgrade in the tough years, and I think we all can understand we've had a few tough years behind us with the drought and also with the excess moisture this spring.

But anyway, to answer the question directly: 22.26 for Corporate Services and Innovation. Industry Advancement is 10.64 per cent. Agriculture

Production and Resilience is 19.02 per cent, for a total of 17.14 per cent.

Mr. Brar: I would like to ask the minister about how many Crown land leases with the government were terminated in the last year.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, so there's a lot of subcategories in there.

I would have to ask the member maybe to clarify, like, there's some people that left their—let it go because, you know, of the passing in a family. There's people that let it go for nonpayment. There's all different circumstances of how a person comes about letting their Ag Crown lands go.

Some of them lapse, I don't like to use that word, but—so if he can just maybe expand his question so we can get him the accurate data that he's looking for.

Back to you.

Mr. Brar: I'm trying to know the number of terminated land—Crown land leases for whatever reasons last year, in total.

Mr. Johnson: So, just so the member's aware, we'll get this answered here right away, but terminated has a different meaning than somebody who's given them up wilfully.

So, does he want terminated or just ended in general?

Because terminated is actually a different term than wilfully given up or expired or—so, does he specifically want terminated?

Just so I get him the right answer. I don't want to be, you know, having the staff do a whole bunch of work and then all of a sudden it's not the answer he's working for.

And I'll give him back the floor in the interest of time.

Mr. Brar: Can I get the information on both terminated and given up wilfully?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, so in the interest of time, there were 11 that were cancelled due to nonpayment. And I'll see if that answers his question because we're very short of time, so if he wants to reiterate what his question was, but 11 for nonpayment.

Thank you.

Mr. Brar: Can I know how many young farmers were awarded Crown land leases between 2019 and now?

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

CHAMBER

JUSTICE

* (11:10)

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates on the Department of Justice.

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

Would the minister and critic like to introduce their staff?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, I have joining me again today the learned Deputy Minister David Wright; the very efficient and effective special assistant, Chief of Staff Mardi McNicholl; and the highly respected Maria Campos.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those introductions.

Does the official critic wish to introduce their staff?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I have Rylan Ramnarace with me again today.

Miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic for that introduction.

As previously noted, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner, and the floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Fontaine: I'd like to go back to the job posting for the IIU executive director.

I did get the job posting, and I notice that—and I'm wondering if the minister can elaborate on some of the conditions of employment. One of the conditions is: must be a member or eligible for membership of the Law Society of Manitoba.

And so, I'm just seeking clarification on whether or not that means that the individual—what specifically does that mean? Because I would imagine that that would cancel out several folks that would be interested in applying, particularly when we're looking at those within that—the civil service.

So, I'm just wondering more about that.

* (11:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I think staff are just sort of looking up that reference, but while they do, I want to just answer a couple of questions that the member asked yesterday that we took as notice—can provide some of those answers now.

So, the honourable member for St. Johns asked me to list all of the technical staff that are currently active. That composes two individuals, both highly respected individuals: Mardi McNicholl, who's the special assistant to the minister; and Kristan McCallum, who is the executive assistant to the minister.

There was also a question, I thought, a very good, thoughtful question regarding the John Howard Society and access to the Winnipeg Remand Centre. So, I'm advised by officials that the Remand Centre, up until to two weeks ago, was still being used as an isolation facility, which may have impacted access. However, if there are outstanding issues, we're going to look into it and address those specific circumstances.

And then, I believe, there was a question regarding IIU positions. There are currently 15 FTEs assigned to the IIU, which include one executive director, one office manager, one director of investigations, two team commanders, eight investigators, one information administrator and one manager. And as of today—which might have been yesterday, but it probably hasn't changed today—there are no vacancies at the IIU.

And then there was a question regarding public inquests under The Fatalities Inquiries Act. The chief medical examiner must review each investigation report and make a decision on an inquest. The chief medical examiner is responsible for calling inquests in the province of Manitoba. The act provides direction regarding the circumstances where an inquest may be mandatory or discretionary. Where it is discretionary, the discretion lies solely with the chief medical examiner. I think that goes to the question of who's making these decisions.

The decision to combine matters into one inquest is at the discretion of the chief medical examiner. There are currently 29 active inquests and two are completed, awaiting reports.

Ms. Fontaine: The other piece that I had asked for in respect of the IIU is a breakdown on gender of the—

what we now know is 15 FTEs and from that, how many are in-BIPOC.

Mr. Goertzen: So I believe that there's an effort to continue to get that information. I just wanted to provide as—the information that I had available today back to the member to not keep her or her staff waiting.

Ms. Fontaine: And then I asked—I started today's session with a question on the conditions of employment, so I don't know if the minister is going to get back to me on that or plans on answering that.

Mr. Goertzen: I hope that I'm understanding the member's question correctly. I think that she asked what the reference was to—must be a member or eligible for membership within the Law Society of Manitoba, which essentially means that an individual must have a bachelor of laws of a JD, a juris doctor degree with extensive practice experience. So I think, in essence, you must be a lawyer.

Ms. Fontaine: Last spring, the minister passed Bill 30, the police services amendment in law enforcement review amendment act, which the minister brought forward in an attempt to rectify issues at LIRA. At committee, we heard from presenters that the bill does not go nearly far enough and won't solve the systemic issues with LIRA.

Can the minister explain whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to properly fix issues that have been plaguing LIRA for many, many years?

Mr. Chairperson: If I may, just before I recognize the minister, I know some members are having conversations.

The—I know some members are having conversations, and staff also are wanting to hear. So, if we could maybe take conversations elsewhere like we would in another kind of committee room.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, there were concerns raised with LERA. And I know that there's, you know, concerns that have been around for a long time. I think that, you know, the essence of the structure of LERA is as it existed when the former government—being the NDP government—was in power for many years. And there were concerns at that time, too.

So, yes, there are two different sort of things that I would say that are specific when it comes to changes. One is the important, but I recognized a relatively minor amendment, that came forward with that bill in terms of the filing time and the time frame, but that was raised as a—is an issue and that it was not in line

with other jurisdictions, and that it should be extended, and so we did that through legislation.

But I also think that, and we've talked about, you know, the issue of codes of conduct as it relates to legislation that we've brought forward past, and are going to be working to implement over the next year. And codes of conduct within a law enforcement agency, and what—while many might exist, I'm not sure that they're consistent, I'm not sure that they are always readily transparent and if they are necessarily applied 'consistently.'

And so, one of the things that we want to do—and, of course, cords of conduct are things that aren't necessarily, you know, criminal in nature; things that are criminal in nature would go to the IIU. And then, you know, between that and LERA, there's an awful lot of things that perhaps could be captured with codes of conduct and that could be better solved and better addressed in that way.

So, as I stated at the time of the legislation, the extension is important because it's something that had been asked for, and probably was asked for during the time that the former government was in place, too. And I'm not sure why they didn't act upon it, but—I mean, member might have more information on that than I do—but also that I think that the move to codes of conduct within law enforcement across the province will give another avenue, and perhaps a better avenue than just LERA.

But, having said that, that doesn't mean that we won't continue to look at LERA and other things that might be beneficial, to ensure that where there are legitimate concerns, they are addressed in an appropriate way and in a transparent way.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister provide us an update on exactly where in the process policing institutions are at in developing those codes of conduct?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, so there's a number of things in terms of the bill that was introduced: codes of conduct, policing standards, that the good folks in—within our department are working on.

I think we'll be seeking some external help on some of those as well, and I think the member might hear more about that in relatively short order.

Ms. Fontaine: So then, nothing has been done up until this point in respect of actually the development of any codes of conduct—is that true?

Mr. Goertzen: It is not true.

Ms. Fontaine: One of the things about Bill 30 that I raised in the House here was, you know, codes of conduct.

There was nothing in the bill that discussed what would happen if police officers violated or were in contravention of codes of conduct. And so, you know, I put that on the record. Again, I don't think that that's strong enough when we're looking at police relations, particularly with BIPOC communities that often will have a very different experience in interactions or coming into contact with various policing institutions across the province, and certainly across the country.

And so how does the minister plan on strengthening, if it can be strengthened at all, this new kind of move towards codes of conduct, so that those—if again, if officers are in contravention of these new codes of conduct, then what's—what is the consequences of that?

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

I wouldn't want to leave, you know, a—I think a wrong impression that there exist no codes of conduct within law enforcement right now, but I think the importance of it is that it—more—that it be consistent, and that there be transparency around it.

* (11:30)

And that's the same when it comes to policing standards. It's not that law enforcement doesn't have any standards. Of course they do. But there is an importance for it to be consistent across different law enforcement because it is a bit of a—well, patchwork sounds like a negative phrase, but it's not in this situation.

There's a lot of different kinds of law enforcement in the province of Manitoba. They're not all RCMP and they're not all municipal forces and they're not all peace officers in terms of status. But the standards need to be transparent and they need to be consistent and that's—we're moving to the same way to the member's question. Codes of conduct would be something similar. I think there are codes of conduct in many agencies, but there isn't maybe a consistency and perhaps a transparency that the public rightfully would ask for.

Now, the member might be asking why was—why weren't the codes of conduct themselves in legislation. One would be, I think, the importance of consultation; two, would be the importance of flexibility, because codes of conduct probably need to be able to be changed as circumstances change faster than—as much

as I revere this institution, it's not always the fastest moving institution, like when it—the Legislature.

And I think the consultations are important, and I take the member's question to heart about the BIPOC community. Certainly, at committee we heard some concerns about, you know, maybe not enough consultation with the BIPOC community. And sometimes it's not just about the nature of the—or the amount of the consultation, sometimes it's the nature and the qualitative part of that consultation.

So I took those to heart and I think the member will, in relatively short order, see some announcements on that that indicate we took them to heart.

Ms. Fontaine: Again—and I'm not entirely sure if that answered the question, but again, you know, this move towards having codes of conduct across different policing institutions and there being a lack of consequences, I know that there's standards that policing institutions—again, whoever it may be—are supposed to adhere to.

But often, as I said, you know, we—the—that's the whole reason that LERA exists, because the public comes into contact with law enforcement and there are many opportunities or many examples of members not adhering to those standards.

And so, you know, we know that LERA almost—I don't know what it was, I can't remember, something like 95 per cent of the cases that come before—and I'm not—know if that's specifically the percentage, but it's certainly high. There is never any consequences to Manitobans' complaints against a particular police officer. And so, one could suggest or argue that if there's no consequences attached to codes of conduct, it is mainly just window dressing; it's just the same where there's not really a robust or, you know, consequential public complaints body.

We heard, again, at committee for Bill 7, The Police Services Amendment Act, so—enhancing Independent Investigation Unit operations, which obviously was regarding the strengthening of IIU and how Bill 7 didn't go far enough.

Can the minister explain whether he's had any plans to introduce legislation to further strengthen the IIU?

And I've asked questions about, you know, the breakdown of staff or investigators working in—and I'm going to specifically talk about investigators. So, talked about one of the things that can strengthen IIU is to have a representative investigative body. And so,

I know I've asked for the breakdown of—you know, a gendered breakdown and certainly a BIPOC breakdown of those investigators.

But is the minister considering any other legislation to further strengthen the IIU?

Mr. Goertzen: I think there was a few questions in that one question, so I want to try to address them.

Member started off talking about codes of conduct and a lack of consequences for codes of conduct, and I think, respectfully, she's prejudging the outcome of something that neither she nor I have seen at this point. So, there'll be appropriate and good consultation when it comes to standards and codes of conduct, but those should happen first in terms of the consultation.

So, respectfully, I don't think the member should judge something that hasn't been done yet, although it's appropriate to put it on the record her concerns of what might happen, and so she's done that. But I don't know that I would go further in and poison the well on the something that hasn't been completed yet.

The next question was regarding legislation on the IIU, and the member will know that I've indicated and have said in this House before, that when it comes to things like the IIU, it's developed over the years from its inception—talked a bit about the history of that and my own history in this House before I was minister and before I was in government. Won't repeat that for her, because I'm sure she probably doesn't want to hear it again.

But it's not—it's—we don't ever reach a point where we go, okay, I think we're in a perfect model now. And so I think there's always looking at ways that things can be bettered or improved, but I wouldn't presume to preview, you know, any legislative direction in the future in an Estimates committee, and those will be provided in different forms.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister explain why expenditures for the IIU will increase by \$49,000 in 2022-2023 compared to '21-2021-2022, which is apparently page 46 of Estimates.

Mr. Goertzen: I understand from officials it's just the scheduled salary increases.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister share how the new executive director for the IIU will be chosen?

So, who screens all the applicants, who will sit on the hiring board for that and will there be Indigenous, Black or persons of colour sitting in the hiring board

in deciding who the new executive director for IIU will be?

Mr. Goertzen: As I indicated yesterday, I believe that AMC, SCO and MKO are involved in the screening process.

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, I remember that the minister said that our provincial PTOs were involved, but are they going to be sitting on the actual hiring board, i.e. will they have some decision-making capacity in who the new IIU executive director will be?

Mr. Goertzen: They'll obviously have significant influence. I don't know that I'd want to characterize it sort of beyond that.

Ms. Fontaine: So, again, that doesn't answer who's sitting on the hiring board. Because AMC, MKO and SCO may be part of, apparently, some type of screening process, but of course, we all know that it's the hiring board that makes the final decision or the decision on who's going to be—who will be presented as that particular successful candidate.

* (11:40)

So who on the hiring board—well, who's going to be on the hiring board? I'm not sure if that can be shared. But certainly, if that can't be shared, how many BIPOC members of that hiring board will be on there?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't think I can add anything to the description that I gave.

AMC, SCO and MKO will be involved with the process and will obviously have influence.

Ms. Fontaine: On page 39 of the Estimates book, under Correctional Services, Other Expenditures are listed as \$24 million.

Can the minister break out what these expenses are for?

Mr. Goertzen: They're operational costs that would include things like food and medical services and psychological services.

We can probably provide a breakdown in categories. I'm not sure that we can provide every cheque that's issued from the department, but I think there's probably buckets or categories that we can break them into for you.

Ms. Fontaine: I guess—I would imagine—on page 42, Other Expenditures are listed at \$13,611.

Can the minister break down what these expenses are for?

Mr. Goertzen: Sure, we'll figure out the amount into the categories.

I'm told that the major categories are communications, transportations, minor capital and, you know, then a sundry of other small expenses.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister explain what the revenue from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit was over the last several years, going back from 2020, '21, '22 and what that specifically—what the money was allocated towards?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, we can provide the member the revenue and, you know, some of the expenditures that they went for. I think it's public information. Sometimes we make it public through press release and other sorts of mechanisms, you know I—it's probably worth pointing out a few of them.

I know we've provided some funding to Candace House in Winnipeg, just a great organization. The member knows the history with Wilma Derksen and Cliff Derksen, who sadly passed away this past year. Just a wonderful family, and an organization and a legacy to their daughter that they've left there.

We've seen some money go to the Joy Smith Foundation, who used to sit in this House as a MLA and then, of course, got elected as a federal Member of Parliament, and really made human trafficking her cause, I would say, in a time that many people weren't talking about it, Mr. Chairperson. Of course, the Joy Smith Foundation does just tremendous work combatting human trafficking in Canada, but there's much more work to do there. But money has been provided to them.

Member will also know that there's money that goes to various police forces, you know, throughout—not just in Winnipeg, although significantly in Winnipeg, but in Brandon, in Cornwallis. The Winnipeg Police Service helicopter also received some funding for night vision goggles, I believe.

We've seen money go to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, another great Winnipeg organization; great organization that does really difficult, difficult and hard work. But they had the opportunity, at our invitation, to make a presentation to ministers of justice across Canada a couple of weeks ago.

And I said this to them after their presentation, and I said it to the media, I think after as well: probably the most impactful presentation, when I talk

about the motion of a presentation, and what they're seeing coming out of the pandemic on online exploitation. And they do really, really good work, in a very, very difficult environment, so funding has gone to them.

Worth noting that money has gone to combat catalytic converter theft. And I know the member hasn't had the chance to ask this in question period, though I suspect she will in the next week or two, about the state of catalytic converter thefts, because her colleague from Elmwood has made a very significant issue about this.

And, at one point—I think before the House rose in June of this year—the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) had sort of hung up the mission impossible sign and said that it would be impossible to reduce catalytic converter theft in Manitoba, and was really quite critical of the government.

And I don't take these things personally because, you know, I just—it's just I don't like to internalize that sort of hurt, but I do know, I mean, he was very, very concerned about catalytic converter theft and didn't think that it could be brought down at all.

And, in combination with the Winnipeg Police Service, we made a significant bust when it comes to the sale of catalytic converters, and in combination with Winnipeg Crime Stoppers, who brought forward an initiative on VIN engraving and working with RCMP across Manitoba.

There was really an education through Manitoba Public Insurance, it was really a collective effort. And we've seen significant reductions in catalytic converter theft; I'd say 90 per cent reductions. I'll save some of the details for when the member asks us in question period, because I know this is such an important issue to the NDP that they won't let this session go without asking this question.

But, a 90 per cent reduction in catalytic converter thefts. Now, let's be clear, nobody's hanging up, Mr. Chairperson, the mission accomplished sign, while the member for Elmwood hung up the mission impossible sign.

Mr. Josh Guenter, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We also know that at any given time, the nature of theft is things could change, but it is also important even when we recognize that. That when important and good things happen, we should also celebrate that, because there have been so many individuals who've been spared the victimization of theft off of their

vehicle; whether they were leaving a movie theatre, or a house of worship, or whatever it was that they were leaving, which was tremendous frustration for individuals. So, much more work to do there, of course, but that's an example of where the money for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund is going.

I could list off many more examples, but I recognize I'm probably running short of time on this particular answer, but I look forward in question period to the member probing more on what's been done on catalytic converter theft in the province of Manitoba.

* (11:50)

Ms. Fontaine: How much of the property that was seized—and again, I'm asking for the 2019—or no, sorry, 2020, 2021, 2021-22—how much—fiscal years—how much of the property seized was donated?

And then, who decides where this goes?

And then, were there property that was destroyed, and how much does it cost to have this destroyed?

Mr. Goertzen: So, we'll endeavour to get answers where those answers are available. You know, in terms of donated property—and again, we'll get the specifics on how much property's been donated.

I know of one example that I can think of in Brandon—the Crime Stoppers program in Brandon. I was there visiting the Brandon police and their chief, Wayne Balcaen, who's doing a great job in Brandon. And Crime Stoppers brought out the—a truck that was decal'd out with their Crime Stoppers logo and such. And on the back of the window—and it probably was from a couple of years ago—on the back of the window it said that that truck had been donated essentially by criminals who had their truck seized.

And it was actually a very unique and, I thought, interesting way to advertise this Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, but then also to act as a deterrent, one would hope, for those who might be looking to commit different crimes.

So that was one example where vehicle was donated. I'm sure there are other examples of equipment or other things that were donated.

And then things that are destroyed, you know, no question, I imagine—not to speculate too much, but I'm sure there are things that are seized that are illegal, or weapons, or those sort of things that need to be destroyed in a way that's appropriate.

But really want to highlight the great work done by the Criminal Property Forfeiture folks and their

director. And I think that more can be done there. We've talked about money laundering, which often doesn't get the attention it deserves, but the Cullen Commission—not to be confused with our esteemed Deputy Premier—but the Cullen Commission in British Columbia looked at the whole issue of money laundering.

And of course, it's different in British Columbia than it is in Manitoba in the way that, you know, auto theft is an example. I remember in the 1990s hearing about auto theft in Winnipeg, which was more joy-riding as opposed to in British Columbia, which was more individuals stealing vehicles and stripping them down and then, you know, selling off the parts or selling off the vehicles. So the crime can be the same, but maybe the rationale and the way it is—it happens is different.

So money laundering in the province of Manitoba wouldn't look exactly the same as it does in British Columbia, but it wouldn't be insignificant. And we don't know exactly the depth of it, but it's one of the reasons that the Province has looked to hire two additional investigators on money laundering to ensure that we're finding out where those funds are, maybe the depth of it.

Also looking at unexplained wealth, which is something that the Cullen Commission specifically referenced, that should be looked at and highlighted in Manitoba's legislation on going after unexplained wealth for individuals because it manifests itself in different ways. When an individual is not declaring any sort of income and in—there's a suspicion of criminal activity and they own seven houses, it does cause questions. And the ability to answer those questions is important, as well.

So I really, really have grown to appreciate—although I appreciated it before—before I was Minister of Justice—but have really grown to appreciate the work of the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund.

Ms. Fontaine: I've introduced—I—maybe a couple of times now, certainly one time, I—changes to the Criminal Property Forfeiture that would see those dollars only go to those that are, you know, trying to help address and prevent certain things, like some of the things that the minister had previously mentioned, but certainly organizations and community-based organizations that are working with victims.

And so—that those property—those Criminal Property Forfeiture dollars wouldn't go to policing institutions, which already have a significant budget to

be able to get those additional things that they—I know some couple years back, they got new vests. I know many, many years ago, they got, when Tasers came on, some of the criminal property forfeiture dollars went towards getting Tasers for the WPS.

So, why does the Department of Justice not prioritize or just stop altogether giving those criminal property forfeiture dollars to different policing institutions and just not—rather, just give them to community organizations that are specifically working with victims, which is what some of those dollars are supposed to go for.

Mr. Goertzen: I think, on the one hand, this might be the, you know, the tale of two answers, but I'll start off with the part where I agree with the member opposite, you know, certainly, on issues of victims.

And the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund does provide funds to Victim Services in Manitoba, and in other ways to those who are victimized in the province. And that's very important, and that's going to continue in terms of that support. So, we're very much aligned in that thought.

And then, when she mentions community organizations, of course, we've seen community organizations like the Bear Clan in Winnipeg and in Brandon, as an example, in the past, that have received funds from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund. I had the opportunity to do a walk with the Bear Clan this summer in Winnipeg. I'm really impressed because I think that sometimes people might think of the Bear Clan—well, they might not know exactly what to think of the Bear Clan. Some might think it's something of a—something akin to a law enforcement organization. Others might not know exactly what it is, the work they do.

But what I was really impressed about, it's not just the community connections, and you could tell that people in the community had a real familiarity with people in the Bear Clan, but that they were taking food, as an example, directly to individuals on that day that we were walking—and my chief of staff, Mardi McNicholl, was with us as well. It was a very hot day, and they were bringing water to individuals in the community.

So, I would agree with the member when she speaks of the need to provide this funding to Victim Services—hundred per cent aligned with that. I agree with her when she says there's an importance to provide this money to community organizations like, as an example—but not the only example—the Bear Clan. I think that's absolutely appropriate.

I get a little concerned when the member talks about not providing funds to the police, and she indicates that they—the police—have lots of money. I suspect that—I'm not sure if she's suggesting that we defund some of the police. I'm not so sure that law enforcement or the communities would agree with you that the police are sort of flush with cash, because I know that they have needs as well.

And I would sort of point back to the issue of catalytic converter theft. So, one of the things that the RCMP in southern—southeastern Manitoba, together with others, you know, recommended that they have VIN engravers that could be provided then to auto shops to, for free, engrave the VIN number of the vehicle onto the catalytic converter. And this wouldn't have been the only reasons that catalytic converter thefts have gone down. It might not even be the primary reason, but it might be a reason.

And the member seems to be indicating that those things aren't really important and that we shouldn't be supporting those sort of things, which is concerning.

I also know, as an example, some police agencies, I think, have used the funds for licence-plate readers, as an example. Licence-plate readers is—might be considered a luxury for some—I don't know—in the community, or maybe perhaps the member feels this way.

But the number of individuals who have been found, you know, to be carrying drugs or illegal weapons because an automatic licence-plate reader has identified a vehicle that could be pulled over because, like, the plate was expired or for whatever other reason, or maybe it was attached to a warrant, is not insignificant.

And I know the member opposite has now put on the record that police, perhaps, get too much money already, and that's a concern for me, and happy to have that debate with her in other places or other forums.

* (12:00)

But I would—can say, and I'll continue to say, that the women and men of law enforcement throughout the province of Manitoba do a very difficult job in very stressful environments, and the ability to support them in sometimes small monetary but meaningful ways is important, and it's something that this government will continue to support, even if the member opposite feels that law enforcement have too much money and should be getting less money, or there should be less of law enforcement.

Disappointed in the member's comments there, on the back part of that question, but I can assure law enforcement we continue to support them and we'll continue to use criminal property funds to support them in the future.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Thank you, Minister.

I just have a few questions regarding The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and the kind of funding and structure that that is. I've been having to use this department a lot because of the different kinds of issues that we're having in the constituency of Notre Dame, and I was just wondering, you know, how well is this department funded?

And, secondly, I just wanted to bring your attention to a Winnipeg Free Press article by Erik Pindera that was published on September 22, 2022, called 'Whack-a-mole' in the danger zone. And, in that article, the Winnipeg fire prevention director—or, sorry, he's Scott Wilkinson, the assistant fire chief—he was talking about different kinds of provincial legislation that was really getting in the way of the municipal government in trying to deal with vacant and derelict buildings.

And I was just wondering if you could please, you know, take a look at that and try to address those provincial blockages. They were in The Housing and Renewal Corporation Act; the Winnipeg charter act, section 190 and 151, subsection 1-(d); and The Municipal Act, section 247.1 and 2 and 233.1(1). Again, this is about the passage of municipal bylaws that deal with vacant and derelict buildings.

This is something that I feel that the new city council is going to be really trying to address with a zeal to try to deal with these vacant and derelict buildings, and I just want to bring it to your attention that whatever kind of provincial blockages there are in these different kinds of legislation, if you 'prease' have your attention on that and work constructively with the City to help us deal with these vacant and derelict buildings, it would be very much appreciated.

But, again, my first question was about how does this Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act work in real life. Like, how much money is being put into this type of department and, you know, can you try to get it to work better with the City of Winnipeg, whether it's fire prevention services or with Winnipeg Police Service.

Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank my friend for raising these concerns on behalf of not just her community, but certainly, specifically her community, and then more broadly the city of Winnipeg.

A lot of the acts that she referenced—in fact, all the acts she referenced, I think—are not actually in the Department of Justice. But I don't want to minimize the question because it's an important question. I know that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) met yesterday Mayor-elect Gillingham and that there's going to be further conversations between myself and representatives from the City when it comes to these kinds of issues and issues around crime, and I'm sure that there'll be further conversations between the mayor-elect and the Premier in the future.

So while the concerns she raises in terms of the acts and whatever inhibitors were raised aren't actually in the Department of Justice, they are important concern, and I appreciate her raising that with me. And in my discussions with the City, I'll raise those, as well, for her.

MLA Marcelino: And, just also, I did write a letter to the minister a few weeks back about the Gang Action Interagency Network regarding a request to allow them into prisons and for maybe a request for a small amount of funding to help them do the work to do gang tattoo removal, especially for prisoners who, you know, have tried to indicate they want a new life or are leaving or will soon be leaving prison. I think it's really important. We're—been hearing from the community that, you know, having these prominent tattoos on your face, on your hands, on your neck, is really inhibiting people from being able to, you know, leave that life, that gang life.

And I would request the minister to take a look at that letter that I wrote to you about this tattoo removal program that the Gang Action Interagency Network with Ryan Beardy and Della Steinke is heading up, and request for you to take a look at that and see if you could consider supporting that worthwhile endeavour.

Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, it's a very good question. It's a thoughtful question.

And I remember for years there being concerns about removing tattoos, gang identification. The GAIN program—I think it's the GAIN program that the member's referencing—as the Justice critic many years ago when I was a much younger parliamentarian, I remember visiting them in one of their earlier meetings

and was very, very impressed by the work that they do.

So we will take a look at—and I think the member has raised two issues. One is the accessibility into jails. But the other is potential funding for tattoo removal.

And it may be that GAIN, if they're not already applying for funding through the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, might very well be eligible through that fund. So we'll take a look at that, because there might be funding availability in that way.

The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter): The honourable member for burrow—The Maples, sorry.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Thanks, minister.

And I have a question regarding Nova project. And on page 31 of the Estimates book, it said that department spent \$87,344,000 in 2022-23, and \$64,346,000 in 2021-22 on the acquisition of assets for MPI. The explanatory note states that this money was for Cityplace and Project Nova.

Can the minister break out how much of this money was for Cityplace and how much money was for Project Nova?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you for that enthusiastic welcome, Mr. Chairperson.

I—it's a little challenging for us to answer that question, because, as the member knows, I recognize that there's one line in the Estimates that it's sort of a placeholder for it.

MPI usually comes before the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations. I believe that we're going to schedule the MPI Crown corporation either in December or January, and officials from the—or, from MPI would then be there to answer those questions.

So I'm not being dismissive of the member's question, when it comes to issues around Project Nova, which I know he's got a particular interest in—heard them during question period today, but the details around MPI questions would be better placed at the Crown corporations committee, which we'll have within a month or two, I believe.

Mr. Sandhu: Maybe, Minister—this is in the Estimates book. That's why we are asking this question related to Project Nova and to Cityplace, because we really want to know where this money is spent—how much is money spent on Project Nova and also

for the Cityplace. And we also want to know where the money is spent at the Cityplace, too.

So can you please tell us how much money of this was spent on Project Nova?

Mr. Goertzen: Grateful for the member's question.

Not dismissive of it—is—because it is an important question. Lots of questions around Manitoba Public Insurance, other Crown corporations are valuable questions, they're just questions that are better placed at the Crown corporations committee, which will be held in the next two months, I believe either in December or in January. And Manitoba public official—Manitoba Public Insurance officials will be there and excited to answer your questions.

* (12:10)

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm—I had a question for the minister about—there used to be a gang—there was an anti-gang program, and I understand it was cancelled, then it's been set up again, working out of the ER at HSC. Essentially, that if an individual showed up at HSC or the ER and they'd been stabbed or had been—that there was an intervention process.

So I'm just wondering if the minister can explain, you know, why that program would have been cancelled. It was an anti-gang program where people would arrive at HSC and they would have to leave again—or—and then—but I was just wondering where that program was at and if there'd been any—it'd been reinvested in.

Mr. Goertzen: We'll endeavour to get more information for the member.

I—you know, I know it's an important question. I think sometimes the challenges—and I faced this when I was a critic some years ago for this department—is that a lot of the operational aspects of it come from policing agencies, and it's not the department necessarily creating or dissolving police operations. But I don't want to say to the member that that is what happened, but I'm just saying that most often it is what happens, because we don't operate—we don't do police operations.

However, we will endeavour to find out, because I think it's an important question that he's raised.

Mr. Sandhu: I am giving time to Mr. Lamont 'til 10—sorry, 12:20 p.m. Then put—on the resolutions.

Mr. Chairperson: Terrific.

Just on a procedural matter, we are supposed to refer to each other by—as the member for our, whatever constituency name. But that is noted, and the honourable member for St. Boniface (St. Boniface) does have the floor 'til 12:20.

Mr. Lamont: Yes, the other question I have, and this is—I recognize this is a difficult question and the minister may have to—I'm hope he can get back to me on—with greater information.

It's—we'll—often, we'll hear—I'm just trying to wrap my head around when a Crown has to make a calculation. And, again, I don't want to be interfering with Crowns but there's—so, as I understand it right now, Crowns will make a calculation on whether—and should have the discretion on whether to proceed with charges, based on whether they think it'll be successful.

Is there—are there—and I know that they'll have different things they have to balance and I don't want to tinker with that, but the one thing I'm wondering is whether it's possible—my concern about it is that whether the Crown thinks they can win the case or not, depending on whether they're going up against a client who, say, very—has tremendous financial resources, right; so obviously, even Crowns have limited financial resources to deal with.

So, is it a possibility that if you're going up against—I'm just wondering if that's one of the calculations that Crowns are—may take into consideration and whether that, if that is, that there might be some view to ensuring that that's not the case, simply because, obviously, the law should apply to everybody equally.

Mr. Goertzen: The answer is, no, that's not a consideration.

Mr. Lamont: If he—could the minister—is there a list of, or, of possible things that are taken into consideration, if that's not one of them?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, there's a policy, sort of a charging standard that involves, you know, things like public interest and, as the member mentioned, the possibility of the case being successful. So, we will provide that to the member.

It does bring up a good point. I think sometimes we don't do a good enough job of explaining that and talking about that and what those standards are, because it is independent from the Attorney General, but it's based on a series of considerations; not involving

cost, but involving things like likelihood of a success, public interest and other things.

So, we'll provide that to the member.

Mr. Lamont: And just a question around when it comes to, say, in people being interviewed, I know that there are tremendous challenges around child witnesses, issues of abuse [*inaudible*] and so on.

I'm wondering what the—and I know there have been steps towards, it was called Snowflake Place, and then now it's—is it Nova House that it's called? I'm forgetting the name.

An Honourable Member: Toba Centre.

Mr. Lamont: Toba Centre, yes.

So I'm just wondering, one of the thing that was being considered, I understand, was the possibility that witnesses would be able to testify remotely in that they—is that envisioned as something that the government is doing in terms of keeping, sort of, child witnesses safe in some of these very difficult cases?

Mr. Goertzen: It's an important question he raises, and I'm glad you referenced the Toba Centre. Just, you know, really, really important work that they do there.

But in terms of, you know, child witnesses, they're always different issues, right? I mean, capacity, the ability to provide evidence, then there's the trauma that can be involved, as the member rightly references. But the decisions in terms of how the trial progresses, is generally one that is the discretion of the judge who is running that particular trial.

But there are opportunities for, I understand, children to testify from rooms in courthouses across the province, so they're not always having to be in that location. But, of course, the judge—the trial judge is usually the individual who makes those sort of decisions.

Mr. Lamont: Because I think—well, and I thank the minister for that, because it is, I believe that in Alberta they've done a system where it's actually possible to testify from a remote location. So, essentially, that you would have a place like Toba Centre, the child would go there, so.

I guess, the last question is, it relates a bit to oversight, because I know that with the IIU, and again, this is a—it's a question. The IIU, there were a couple years where they weren't making reports. I understand that there are some structural changes that are going to be made, because individuals were being seconded to the IIU sometimes.

But, if the minister could just talk about—or, how he sees the improvements to the IIU and improvement of independent oversight taking place? Because, I mean, one of the challenges that the IIU—I just think the recommended charges in any number of cases against police officers and they haven't gone anywhere, which is a—again it's a—again, but then, that was a Crown decision saying they didn't think that they'd be able to succeed.

But, if the minister could just talk a bit about that challenge around the IIU and making sure that we are actually following through on charges, if they're warranted, when it comes to—like, everyone—no one has a problem with a good police officer, but we have to admit that not every police officer is a good police officer, so we have to figure out how to deal with that.

I'm just wondering if the—how you see that playing out in terms of improvements to the IIU.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it's a good question. The member knows that the first I in IIU is independent, and so it does operate independently.

Having said that, I mean, I think some of the changes in terms of who can serve on the IIU and having a bit more distance, obviously, from active officers is important, to provide confidence, still recognizing that individuals have to have the skills to do investigation and receive evidence and process that evidence.

It's also important, of course, we have Indigenous leadership and involvement and we do, with the new creation of a new position. So I think that can help bring confidence and also, you know, a better understanding, maybe, of why these proceedings are happening the way they are.

* (12:20)

There are community liaisons, which are, I think, a good improvement to the IIU, but I still recognize that in any—IIU proceedings are going to always be particularly emotional and complicated and almost always dealing with, you know, tragic circumstance and almost always with a family who is going to feel, in some way, that a loved one was done harm in a way that they shouldn't have been.

And the best that we can, we want to have a structure, although we're not running it, but we'll have a structure that gives an understanding that there was real consideration, fair consideration, and then try to communicate it as best they can why that decision was made in the way that it was.

That doesn't mean that people will always be happy with the decision, but in the—we're trying to put, you know, those community liaisons, Indigenous leadership within it to try to give a greater assurance that even if the outcome isn't what always—what people always want, and that's true in the justice system generally; they don't always get the outcome you want, but that the process was fair and was fulsome.

Mr. Chairperson: As previously agreed, we will now put the question on the resolutions.

The first resolution before the committee is resolution 4.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$57,941,000 for Justice, Crown Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,672,000 for Justice, Legislative Counsel, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$230,858,000 for Justice, Correctional Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$76,112,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$255,903,000 for Justice, Public Safety, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,286,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$87,344,000 for Justice, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 4.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 4.1. At this point, we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Sandhu: I move that line 4.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Goertzen) salary be reduced to \$21,000.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu), seconded by the honourable member—[interjection] There is no seconder, okay, my mistake—that the—that line item 4.1(a) be amended so that the Minister of Justice's salary be reduced to \$21,000.

The motion is in order. Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I just want to say that I believe that in my history as a minister, the resolution has always proposed to reduce my salary to a dollar. So, I take this as a great vote of confidence from the opposition that they believe my salary should remain at \$21,000. I look forward to future years when it's even higher than that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: I think the Nays have it.

The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$61,841,000 for Justice, Corporate and Strategic Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Department of Justice. Committee recess.

The committee recessed at 12:27 p.m.

—————
The committee resumed at 12:30 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The hour being 12:30, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

Have a good weekend, everybody.

CORRIGENDUM

On October 27, 2022, page 3418, first column, the sixth paragraph should have read:

I would be remiss, of course, if I didn't also congratulate Cathy Merrick, who made history in becoming the first woman grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. So, weweni [take care] to her

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