

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger  
Speaker*

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	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	Assiniboia	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	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	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>	Fort Whyte	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2021**

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

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 241—The Consumer Protection Amendment  
and Farm Machinery and Equipment  
Amendment Act (Right to Repair – Vehicles  
and Other Equipment)**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 241, The Consumer Protection Amendment and Farm Machinery and Equipment Amendment Act (Right to Repair – Vehicles and Other Equipment), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt—oh, the honourable member for Elmwood.

**Mr. Maloway:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Consumers want manufacturers to make products that are easy to repair at reasonable cost and built to last 10 years minimum.

This right-to-repair legislation empowers Manitoban consumers and fosters sustainability by requiring the manufacturer to make the parts and manuals necessary to maintain and repair its farm equipment, farm machinery, motorized mobility aids, marine pleasure craft, and recreational motorized vehicles, including electronic bikes and scooters available to consumers and repair businesses at a reasonable price. If not, the manufacturer must replace the products at no charge or refund the purchase price when requested to do so by the purchaser.

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

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Standing Committee on Rules of the House  
First Report**

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Vice-Chairperson):** I wish to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Rules of the House.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House presents the following as its First Report.*

**Meetings**

*Your Committee met on October 12, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.*

**Matters under consideration**

*Amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*

**Committee Membership**

- *Hon. Mrs. DRIEDGER (Chairperson)*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. ISLEIFSON*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. LAGASSÉ*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Hon. Mr. SCHULER*
- *Mr. WASYLIW*

*Your Committee elected Mr. ISLEIFSON as the Vice-Chairperson.*

**Officials Speaking on Record**

- *Ms. Patricia Chaychuk, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*
- *Mr. Rick Yarish, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba*

### **Amendments to Rules Considered and Reported**

At the October 12, 2021 meeting your committee agreed to report the following amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

THAT the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be amended as follows:

THAT the words "his or her" be replaced wherever they occur in the English version with the word "their".

THAT the words "he or she" be replaced wherever they occur in the English version with the word "they".

THAT the words "himself or herself" be replaced wherever they occur in the English version with the word "themselves".

THAT sub-rule 1(3) be amended by

(a) removing all the paragraph references (a), (b), etc. that appear prior to each defined term; and

(b) adding the following definitions are added in alphabetical order

"Committee of the Whole House" refers to the Committee of the Whole and to the Committee of Supply;

"Critic" means a Member of a Recognized Opposition Party designated by that party as a Critic for a government department or a specific area;

THAT the fourth paragraph of sub-rule 2(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

If the day of the week on which Remembrance Day falls prevents the House from sitting for 17 days in the Fall Sittings period, the House shall begin the Fall Sittings on the last Wednesday in September.

THAT sub-rule 2(8) be repealed and replaced with the following:

#### **Specified Government Bills**

2(8) In order for a Government Bill to be identified as specified, the following actions must take place:

(a) First Reading must be moved no later than the twentieth sitting day after presentation of the Throne Speech;

(b) Second Reading must be moved no later than the fourteenth sitting day after the First Reading Completion Day for Specified Bills;

(c) the Bill has not been included on the list of Designated Bills tabled by the Official Opposition in accordance with sub-rule (9).

Opposition Bills cannot be specified or designated.

THAT sub-rule 14(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

#### **Deferral**

14(4) Despite sub-rule (3), and after consulting with the Whips from all Recognized Parties, the Speaker may direct that a division be deferred to a specific time set by the Speaker, unless otherwise stated in these rules.

THAT sub-rule 18(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

#### **Naming of a Member for an offence in the House**

18(1) The Speaker shall be vested with the authority to maintain order:

(a) by naming individual Members for disregarding the authority of the Chair, and;

(b) by ordering the withdrawal of a Member from the Chamber for the remainder of the sitting day, despite Rule 15.

In the event of a Member disregarding an order of the Chair, the Speaker shall order the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the Member out of the Chamber.

THAT sub-rules 23(7) and 23(8) be repealed and replaced with the following:

#### **Divisions during Private Members' Business**

23(7) Any division requested during Private Members' Business on Tuesday or Thursday must be deferred to 11:55 a.m. on the Thursday of the same week, and shall not be further deferred.

#### **Order for Divisions**

23(8) Except by unanimous consent, in situations where multiple deferred divisions are scheduled for the same day, the Speaker shall call the votes in the following sequence:

(a) divisions deferred from the Tuesday Private Members' Business, in the order they were requested;

(b) divisions deferred from the Thursday Private Members' Business, in the order they were requested.

For any division that takes place in accordance with this sub-rule the division bells shall ring for no more

than five minutes, and the House will not recess until all deferred divisions are completed.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 27(2):

**Including names in Hansard Transcript**

27(3) If a Member indicates that they wish to include in the Hansard transcript the names of individuals referenced in their statement, up to 50 names will be permitted and printed. Members are responsible for the accuracy of their lists, which must be in a legible form and be provided to Hansard before 5:00 p.m. on the same sitting day the Statement is read in the House.

THAT sub-rules 31(1) and (2) are repealed and replaced with the following:

**Precedence generally**

31(1) All items standing on the Orders of the Day, except Government Business, shall be taken up according to the precedence assigned to each on the Order Paper.

**Precedence of Government Business**

31(2) When Government Business has precedence, items of Government Business and Private Members' Business may be called in such sequence as the Government determines.

THAT sub-rule 34(9) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Exceptions**

34(9) The 20-minute limit does not apply to:

- (a) Leaders of Recognized Parties;
- (b) a Minister moving the Budget motion.

A Leader who has not yet spoken in this debate may, by giving written notice to the Speaker before speaking in the debate, designate one Member who may speak in the debate with unlimited time. In this instance, the 20-minute limit will then apply to the Leader.

THAT sub-rules 44(1) and (2) are repealed and replaced with the following:

**30-minute limit**

44(1) Unless otherwise stated in these Rules, no Member may speak for more than 30 minutes in any debate.

**Exceptions**

44(2) The 30-minute limit does not apply to:

- (a) the Leader of the Government or of a Recognized Opposition Party;

- (b) a Minister moving a motion;

- (c) a Member moving a motion of "no confidence in the Government", or the Minister replying to the motion.

A Leader of a Recognized Party who has not yet spoken in a debate may, by giving written notice to the Speaker before speaking in the debate, designate one Member who may speak in the debate with unlimited time. In this instance, the 30-minute limit will then apply to the Leader.

THAT sub-rule 75(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Rules observed in a Committee of the Whole House**

75(1) The Rules shall be observed in a Committee of the Whole House, insofar as they are applicable, except the Rules requiring seconding of motions, limiting the number of times a Member may speak, and requiring Members to rise to speak.

THAT sub-rule 75(3) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Speeches in Committee of the Whole House**

75(3) Speeches in the Committee of the Whole House shall not exceed five minutes and must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion.

THAT sub-rule 75(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Order in a Committee of the Whole House**

75(4) The Chairperson of a Committee of the Whole House shall maintain order and decide all questions of order, without appeal. Subject to Rule 18(2), disorder in a Committee of the Whole House may be censured by the House only after it has received a report on the disorder.

THAT sub-rule 75(5) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Officials in the Committee of Supply**

75(5) During the consideration of Departmental Estimates in the Committee of Supply, officials of the Government and of a Recognized Opposition Party as required by a Minister or a Critic may be admitted to the Legislative Chamber. They must be seated at a table placed in front of the Minister or Critic. This sub-rule does not apply during opening statements or the debate on a Minister's salary.

THAT sub-rule 76(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Business of Supply**

**76(1)** The business of supply for a fiscal year consists of:

- (a) motions to concur in interim supply, main and capital estimates and supplementary or final estimates;
- (b) motions to reduce, restore or reinstate any item in the estimates;
- (c) motions to introduce supply Bills or to pass them at any stage.

THAT sub-rule 76(5) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**When time limit expires**

**76(5)** If the business of supply to which the 100-hour limit applies has not been completed when that limit expires, the Chairpersons of a Committee of the Whole House shall immediately put all questions necessary to dispose of the remaining matters. These questions are not subject to debate, amendment or adjournment.

THAT sub-rules 77(1) and (2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Speeches in Committee of Supply**

**77(1)** With the exception of opening statements, speeches in the Committee of Supply shall not exceed five minutes and must be strictly relevant to the item under discussion.

**Opening statements**

**77(2)** Opening statements from Ministers and Critics shall not exceed 10 minutes.

THAT sub-rule 77(3) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Seating in Chamber section of the Committee of Supply**

**77(3)** During Committee of Supply Sittings in the Chamber, the Minister presenting their estimates and the Critic of that Minister's department, as well as any other Member participating in the debate, shall be permitted to speak from a place in the front row benches in the Chamber.

THAT sub-rule 77(9) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Changes to estimates sequence**

**77(9)** Changes to the estimates sequence may be made only by written agreement of the House Leaders

of all Recognized Parties. The Government House Leader shall table the revised estimates sequence in the House or in the Committee of Supply. If the revised sequence is tabled in the Committee of Supply, the Chairperson must report the change to the House on the next sitting day during Committee Reports.

THAT sub-rule 77(13) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Committee of Supply sitting on Fridays**

**77(13)** When the Committee of Supply sits on a Friday:

- (a) no request for a quorum count is permitted;
- (b) a motion for the Committee to rise may only be decided on a voice vote;
- (c) a request for a recorded vote on any question with the exception of a motion for the Committee to rise must:
  - (i) be deferred to the next Sitting of the Committee of Supply and be considered then as the first item of business,
  - (ii) not be further deferred;
- (d) after a formal vote has been deferred, that section of the Committee must rise.

After the Committee of Supply rises on a Friday, no other business may be called in the House.

THAT sub-rule 77(16) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Considering departmental estimates**

**77(16)** During the consideration of departmental estimates:

- (a) 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;
- (b) if the first resolution for the department contains the Minister's salary, that resolution shall be deferred until all other resolutions have had their questions put;
- (c) line items do not need to be passed, but they may be called for the purpose of asking questions or moving amendments.

THAT sub-rule 78(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Concurrence motion in Committee of Supply**

**78(1)** After all supply resolutions have been considered, including the resolution respecting the Capital Supply Bill, a concurrence motion must be moved in the Committee of Supply sitting as a full Committee in the Chamber.

THAT rule 80 be repealed.

THAT sub-rule 133(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Petition to be examined**

**133(4)** The Clerk must examine each petition filed by a Member to ensure that it complies with these Rules and conforms to the practices and privileges of the House.

If the Clerk is satisfied that it does, the Member's name is to be printed on the next day's Order Paper under "Petitions". If the Clerk is not satisfied, the petition is to be returned to the Member.

THAT sub-rule 139(7) be repealed.

THAT sub-rule 139(10) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Limitation on debate**

**139(10)** Members are limited to 10 minute speeches during Report Stage, except for Leaders of Recognized Parties who may speak for 30 minutes.

THAT sub-rule 139(11) be repealed and replaced with the following:

**Grouping amendments**

**139(11)** Upon receipt of a written request from an amendment's sponsor, the Speaker shall select and group amendments for consideration at Report Stage based on their content and their position in the Bill, in accordance with the following criteria:

(a) amendments which could form the subject of a single debate are grouped according to content if, once adopted, they would have the same effect in different parts of the Bill or if they relate to the same provision or similar provisions of the Bill;

(b) amendments are combined according to the location at which they are to be inserted in the Bill when they relate to the same clause or clauses.

Amendments so grouped will then be moved consecutively, be the subject of a single debate, and have the questions put and decided collectively.

THAT Appendix D is amended in the heading by adding "DAY" after "BUDGET".

**APPENDIX D**

**FINANCIAL PROCEDURE GUIDE**

**BUDGET DAY PROCEDURE**

THAT Appendix D is amended by replacing item 6. of the Budget Procedure of the English version with the following:

**6. Finance Minister** advises the Speaker that there are two messages from the Lieutenant Governor.

THAT Appendix D is amended by repealing the MAIN AND CAPITAL SUPPLY PROCEDURE and replacing it with the following:

**MAIN AND CAPITAL SUPPLY PROCEDURE**

**1. Government House Leader** moves Concurrence Motion and Committee of Supply considers it (debatable motion - 100 hour time limit does not apply).

**2. Chairperson of the Committee of Supply** presents the report of the Committee to the House and moves that it be received (not debatable).

**3. Government House Leader** moves Concurrence Motion in the House (cannot be debated, amended or adjourned).

**4. House** considers and adopts motion regarding The Loan Act (no notice required).

**5. House** considers and adopts motion regarding The Appropriation Act (no notice required).

**6. Finance Minister** moves First Reading of The Appropriation Act (may not be debated, amended or adjourned).

**7. Finance Minister** moves First Reading of The Loan Act (may not be debated, amended or adjourned).

**8. House staff** distributes copies of the The Appropriation Act, and The Loan Act, immediately after adoption of each First Reading Motion.

**9. Finance Minister** moves Second Reading of The Appropriation Act, and referral to a Committee of this House (debatable motion – may be agreed to without debate or adjourned).

**10. Finance Minister** moves Second Reading of The Loan Act, and referral to a Committee of this House (debatable motion - may be agreed to without debate or adjourned).

**11. Speaker** announces that the House will resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on The Loan Act, and The Appropriation Act, for Concurrence and Third Reading.

**12. Committee of the Whole** considers The Loan Act, and The Appropriation Act (debatable matter, but no debate if 100 hour time limit has expired).

**13. Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole House** presents report of the Committee to the House and moves that it be received (not debatable).

**14. Finance Minister** moves Concurrence and Third Reading of The Loan Act (debatable motion – may be agreed to without debate or adjourned).

**15. Finance Minister** moves Concurrence and Third Reading of The Appropriation Act (debatable motion – may be agreed to without debate or adjourned).

**16. Lieutenant Governor** gives Royal Assent to The Loan Act, and The Appropriation Act.

THAT Appendix E be repealed and replaced with the following:

## APPENDIX E

### SPEAKING TIMES

Rule	Debate	Speaking Time	Notes
34(8) 34(9)	Budget Debate	20 minutes	•Unlimited speaking time for: o Leader of Recognized Parties (may be transferred) o Minister moving the Budget motion
51(2)	Closure Motion – after adoption of motion	30 minutes	•No Member shall speak more than once in any adjourned debate
77(1)	Committee of Supply	5 minutes	•Member may speak more than once
Rule	Debate	Speaking Time	Notes
77(2)	Committee of Supply – Opening Statement	10 minutes	•Minister and Critics
75(3)	Committee of the Whole	5 minutes	•Member may speak more than once
44(1) 44(2) 44(5) 139(15)	Concurrence and Third Reading – Government Bills	30 minutes	•Unlimited speaking time for: o Leaders of Recognized Parties (may be transferred) o Minister moving the Concurrence and Third Reading motion (may speak first or at the end of the debate) •Member may divide speaking time equally with another Member of same party
2(20)	Concurrence and Third Reading – Government Designated Bills (Completion Date)	10 minutes	•Minister, Critics and each Independent Member
2(14)	Concurrence and Third Reading – Government Specified Bills (Completion Date)	10 minutes	•Minister, Critics and each Independent Member
78(3)	Concurrence Motion	10 hours	•Minimum debate of 10 hours on the Concurrence Motion moved in Committee of Supply.
62(3)	Condolence Motion	-	•Speaking time limits do not apply
135	First Reading of Bills	30 seconds	•Mover of motion
29(2)	Grievances	10 minutes	•Member may raise only one grievance per session
38(4)	Matters of Urgent Public Importance – Debate of	10 minutes	•If debate proceeds all Members have 10 minutes. •Total debate shall not exceed two hours.
38(2)	Matters of Urgent Public Importance – Explanation of	10 minutes	•Member has 10 minutes to explain why debate should proceed. •One Member from each recognized party may respond for 10 minutes.

27(1)	Member's Statements	2 minutes	•Up to five Members each sitting day
26(3)	Ministerial Statements	-	•No time limit for Minister •Replies must not exceed Minister's time
44(1) 44(2) 44(5) 60(1)	Motions or Resolutions – Government	30 minutes	•Unlimited speaking time for: o Leader of Recognized Parties (may be transferred) o Minister moving a motion o Member making a "no confidence in the government" motion o Minister replying to the "no confidence in the government" motion •Member may divide speaking time equally with another Member of same party •Right of reply for Minister who moved a substantive motion.
30(8)	Opposition Day Motion	10 minutes	•Up to three sitting days in each session •Only one designated during any week
28(3)	Oral Questions	60 seconds 45 seconds	•Questions & answers for Leader of Recognized Parties •Questions & answers for other Member & Minister •Oral Questions shall not exceed 40 minutes

Rule	Debate	Speaking Time	Notes
44(3)	Private Member's Business – Bills, Resolutions, Motions	10 minutes	•May be considered during Government Business time •Considered on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings
23(9)	Private Members' Bills – Question Period	45 seconds	•For all questions & answers •Question period shall not exceed 10 minutes •Only one question for each Independent Member •Only applicable at Second Reading
33(6)	Private Members' Resolutions – Question Period	45 seconds	•For all questions & answers •Question period shall not exceed 10 minutes and does count as part of the three hours of debate time.
139(10)	Report Stage Amendments	10 minutes	30 minutes for: •Premier •Leader of Recognized Parties
44(1) 44(2) 44(5) 60(1)	Second Reading – Government Bills	30 minutes	•Unlimited speaking time for: o Leader of Recognized Parties (may be transferred) o Minister moving the Second Reading motion •Member may divide speaking time equally with another Member of same party •Right of reply for Minister who moved Second Reading motion
137(5)	Second Reading – Government Bills – Question Period	45 seconds	•For all questions & answers •Question period shall not exceed 15 minutes
2(17)	Second Reading – Government Designated Bills (Completion Date)	10 minutes	•Minister, Critics and each Independent Member •Question period shall not exceed 15 minutes
2(10)	Second Reading – Government Specified Bills (Completion Date)	10 minutes	•Minister, Critics and each Independent Member •Question period shall not exceed 15 minutes
87(2) 92(2)	Standing & Special Committees	10 minutes	•Member may speak more than once •Presenters get 10 minutes to make their presentation •Questions from Member shall not exceed 30 seconds
47(4) 47(5)	Throne Speech Debate	20 minutes	•Unlimited speaking time for: o Leader of Recognized Parties (may be transferred)
50(2)	Time Allocation on Government Bills or Government Motions	10 minutes	•Restrictions on who can speak: o Government House Leader o Minister moving the motion o One Member from each Recognized Opposition Party may respond

## Agreements

Your Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on October 12, 2021:

- THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba come into force at the commencement of the Fourth Session of the Forty Second Legislature.
- THAT the Clerk may re-number the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and make other minor corrections that in no way alter the intended meaning of these amendments.



- *THAT the Clerk is authorized to make minor corrections to the French version of the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to ensure the equivalence of both versions of the Rules, ensuring that they in no way alter the intended meaning of these Amendments.*
- *THAT the Clerk prepare revised rule books incorporating all amendments, additions and deletions.*
- *THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are permanent.*
- *THAT the document entitled: "Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Rule Change Proposals – October 2021", be included at the end of the Hansard transcript of this meeting.*

**Mr. Isleifson:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Eleventh Report**

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the eleventh report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

**Clerk:** Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

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

#### **Meetings**

*Your Committee met on October 12, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

#### **Matters under Consideration**

- *Bill (No. 72) – The Disability Support Act and Amendments to The Manitoba Assistance Act / Loi sur le soutien pour personne handicapée et modifiant la Loi sur les allocations d'aide du Manitoba*

- *Bill (No. 232) – The Emancipation Day Act / Loi sur le Jour de l'émancipation*

#### **Committee Membership**

*As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020, amended on November 19, 2020, December 3, 2020, and further amended on May 18, 2021, Rule 83(2) was waived for the October 12, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).*

- Ms. ADAMS
- Hon. Mrs. COX
- Mr. MOSES
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière)
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES

*Your Committee elected Mr. SMITH (Lagimodière) as the Chairperson.*

*Your Committee elected Mr. PEDERSEN as the Vice-Chairperson.*

#### **Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record**

- Mr. LAMONT

#### **Public Presentations**

*Your Committee heard the following eight presentations on Bill (No. 72) – The Disability Support Act and Amendments to The Manitoba Assistance Act / Loi sur le soutien pour personne handicapée et modifiant la Loi sur les allocations d'aide du Manitoba:*

*David Kron, Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba  
Suzanne Swanton, Continuity Care Inc.*

*Alex Lytwyn, Private citizen*

*Samuel Unrau, Private citizen*

*Krista Clendenning, Private citizen*

*Whitney Hodgins, Private citizen*

*Jessica Croy, Private citizen*

*Lorna Canada-Vanegas Mesa, Private citizen*

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on Bill (No. 232) – The Emancipation Day Act / Loi sur le Jour de l'émancipation:*

*'Segun Olude, Private citizen*

*Rosemary Sadlier, Black Canadian Network*

### **Written Submissions**

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 72) – The Disability Support Act and Amendments to The Manitoba Assistance Act / Loi sur le soutien pour personne handicapée et modifiant la Loi sur les allocations d'aide du Manitoba**:

*Leanne Fenez, Abilities Manitoba*

### **Bills Considered and Reported**

- **Bill (No. 72) – The Disability Support Act and Amendments to The Manitoba Assistance Act / Loi sur le soutien pour personne handicapée et modifiant la Loi sur les allocations d'aide du Manitoba**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 232) – The Emancipation Day Act / Loi sur le Jour de l'émancipation**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

**Mr. Smith:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2020-21 Annual Report for the Social Services Appeal Board.

**Madam Speaker:** Further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery):** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Annual Report for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

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

Would the honourable Minister of Health please proceed with her statement?

### **Seniors' and Elders' Month**

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the month of October as Seniors' and Elders' Month in our province.

Acknowledging Seniors' and Elders' Month in the province provides an opportunity to recognize, raise awareness of seniors' concerns and address misconceptions about older persons and aging.

Every one of us knows a senior who has given back to their community, someone who is a vital role model and whose knowledge continues to help shape younger generations.

Seniors and elders are valued for their continued leadership, including formal and informal contributions to families and communities throughout our province.

They are diverse, with varying interests, accomplishments, values, backgrounds, and they enrich our lives by listening and sharing their extensive knowledge and wisdom.

Seniors and elders have had more time than most to share their love and wisdom with others, and when you think of the seniors in your life, you know that they have made the most of that time.

This month should remind all Manitobans of the important role seniors play in all of our lives, and I encourage all Manitobans to celebrate the energy, vitality and strength of seniors in Manitoba throughout October.

Our government is committed to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of older Manitobans and we should continue to strive toward age-friendly communities, where everyone benefits from the participation of our seniors and elders.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing October as Seniors' and Elders' Month in our province.

Thank you.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Older adults make important contributions to the cultural, social and economic fabric of our province, and are a vital part of our families and communities. A longer life brings much experience and opportunities that we all benefit from.

\* (13:40)

To that end, we should invest and advocate for more seniors to have increased opportunities for recreation and activities in their own communities that affirm and strengthen their whole identities. Like all Manitobans, seniors should be able to express and flourish in their gender identities, sexual orientation,

cultural backgrounds, languages, religion and spirituality and so much more.

The United Nations recognized October 1st as International Day of Older Persons and highlighted the importance of digital equity for all ages. This should be a relevant theme during Manitoba's Seniors' and Elders' Month as well because now, more than ever, it's crucial we work harder to ensure digital inclusion of all older persons.

One of the most urgent matters facing older adults in our province today, of course, are the conditions in personal-care homes. We've called time and time again for adequate funding, oversight and transparency from this government and its dealings with Manitoba personal-care homes and will continue to do so until we see real change that seniors in this province deserve.

We've also called for an establishment of a seniors advocate to hold government accountable for the systems that care for Manitoba seniors.

Older adults are also disproportionately affected by the ongoing surgical backlog in our province, and I call on the government to do their job and ensure this backlog is cleared as soon as possible for the good of older adults and all Manitobans.

While we celebrate Seniors' and Elders' Month, let's move towards taking concrete actions to support and affirm older adults in our province—

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

**An Honourable Member:** Leave.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the member to—

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

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

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak today in recognition of Seniors' and Elders' Month. It is extremely important to show our appreciation and respect to all seniors and elders here in Manitoba and throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, seniors and elders have contributed to our society in so many ways over the years.

They have been a focal point of community for so many of us, especially recently because of how negatively affected they have been in this pandemic.

It's hard not to reflect upon Maples Personal Care Home as an example, Madam Speaker. Our seniors and elders deserve much much better to ensure that they can live with dignity at any stage of life.

Madam Speaker, I believe that Manitoba could work with the federal government to create a more robust pharmacare program. Doing so would not force seniors to choose between shelter, prescribed medications and food on their table.

Another tangible difference for seniors and elders would be to make day programs more accessible, providing seniors with options for exercising and socializing, something that the pandemic has made more difficult.

Madam Speaker, an issue that I hear a lot about from my constituents in Tyndall Park is around home repairs. There should be a program to assist those who want to be able to remain in their homes but can't afford a small upgrade, such as a rail, or a ramp, or a bathtub seat, but they are forced to leave their homes instead.

Madam Speaker, all of these issues are the reason why Manitoba Liberals have been advocating for the creation of an independent office for a seniors advocate since 2016. We believe that having a non-partisan advocate here in Manitoba would ensure seniors—

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I ask for leave, Madam Speaker.

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

The honourable member for Tyndall Park has been given leave to continue and conclude her statement.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** It's just one more minute here.

We believe that by having a non-partisan advocate here in Manitoba would ensure that seniors are being treated with respect and care while ensuring they have access to and the understanding of the resources here in Manitoba.

And, Madam Speaker, I do also want to sincerely thank the NDP—which I don't get to do very often—for getting on board and supporting our call for an independent office of a seniors advocate here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Janis Gudrun Johnson

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations):** I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Janis Gudrun Johnson for her exceptional career in public service and years as a dedicated volunteer in our communities.

Janis, who grew up in Gimli, is a former Canadian senator representing the province of Manitoba and was the longest serving Conservative member of the upper Chamber, spanning 26 years. She served or chaired on Senate committees including Foreign Affairs, Fisheries and Oceans, Transport and Communications, Indigenous peoples and human rights.

She was one of the first women appointed to CN's board of directors, leading the establishment of the first on-site child-care facility within a Crown corporation. She owned her own consulting firm focusing on issues such as women's health and equality, Indigenous affairs, and cultural policy.

She is the founder and current board chair of the renowned Gimli Film Festival. Since 2001, the festival has brought thousands of people to Manitoba from all over the world.

Janis joined the board of Manitoba Special Olympics in 1981, later becoming a director with Special Olympics Canada. She was on the advisory board of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and boards of Prairie Theatre Exchange, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and honorary chair for women of nature.

Most recently, the University of Manitoba awarded her an honorary doctor of laws in 2018, and she was appointed to the Order of Canada in November of 2020.

Madam Speaker, please join me in recognizing and thanking the Honourable Janis Johnson for her passion and commitment to the Interlake region, the province of Manitoba and to Canada.

### Kimberly Ballantyne

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** It is my great pleasure today to highlight the achievements of an extraordinary woman, Kimberly Ballantyne, who accomplished her childhood dream and passed her flight test for her private pilot's licence on September 3, 2021, becoming the first female Indigenous pilot from her community, Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

In 2020, she was one of the eight candidates selected from hundreds of applicants for the flight program at First Nations Technical Institute. While working her full-time job and looking after her two small children, she was able to finish ground school through Zoom in the spring of 2021.

This summer, Kim travelled to Ontario in order to complete the in-person practicum phase of the flight training. She was one of the most difficult—this was one of the most difficult decisions she ever had to make because she was apart from her children for 13 weeks. While most pilots in training take at least a year to finish the required flight hours, Kim did it in three months.

Most recently, Kim was named the Manitoba Ambassador for Elevate Aviation and is the 2021 post-secondary trailblazer recipient for the Nellie McClung scholarship foundation.

Kimberly wants to thank her family and the team at Manitoba Aerospace, who have supported her throughout her dream: the journey of getting her pilot's licence. And on behalf of the members of the legislative—Legislature, I want to congratulate Kimberly and wish her all the success in her bright future.

Ekosi.

### Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière):** Madam Speaker, I rise in the Chamber today to talk about the importance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The World Health Organization recently declared that not only is breast cancer the most prevalent cancer found in women, it is also the most diagnosed cancer in the world. In 2021, it is estimated that more than 27,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone, which will make up to 25 per cent of all new cancer cases in women.

Even with all the modern technological advances in medicine that are available to us today, over 5,000 women will sadly lose their life to this form of cancer, making it the No. 2 cancer killer amongst women, only second to lung cancer. These numbers are staggering, as it means that on average, in Canada alone, 75 women per day will be diagnosed with breast cancer and, sadly, 14 women will lose their life to it.

Canadian men are also directly affected by breast cancer, as 240 will be diagnosed with it, and 55 will succumb to it, as well.

As one in eight women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetimes, it is a disease that at some point will affect most of us in some way.

It's with a heavy heart that we lost Michelle Petit only a few months ago to breast cancer. Our community support was strong for her, and she was loved by many. Over the years in our community, we have also had breast cancer survivors. Some include Irene Miller, Eileen Banjavich and, more recently, Mika Painchaud.

\* (13:50)

The key to the best chance of survival is early detection, which has saved the lives of thousands of women in our province alone. Both screening and treatment require community support.

So I commend Jenna Rae Cakes in Island Lakes for again bringing back their specialty-designed vanilla bean macaroons for the month of October, whereby \$1 is donated to CancerCare Manitoba for every macaroon sold. I hope more businesses and individuals alike will follow their example of generosity in our community and in our province as a whole.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Drop of Hope**

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** I feel so grateful that I am a part of a community that continually gives back. I am honoured to rise today and recognize Drop of Hope.

Drop of Hope is a community group that was formed in April this year. Drop of Hope aims to motivate and educate Manitobans about the importance of donating blood to the Canadian Blood Services.

Thousands of Manitobans are currently on a wait-list to receive life-changing surgeries. Many surgical procedures require blood donations, and tens of thousands of procedures are on hold. Undoubtedly, there will be an increase in demand for blood donations in the coming months and years.

Each drop of blood donated is a drop of hope for those in need of blood donations.

Officially registered and working in collaboration with Canadian Blood Services, Drop of Hope has hosted 10 blood donation drives. Their efforts are making a real difference in the lives of Manitobans. Drop of Hope recognizes the disparity that exists between the number of people in need of blood and

the number of donors. By communicating through local radio stations, newspapers and social media, they are working to reduce the existing disparity through education.

Drop of Hope is expanding and growing. They have started to collaborate and lend support to other community efforts such as—like neighbourhood clean-ups and pop-up vaccine clinics.

I commend all individuals who are a part of Drop of Hope for saving lives. Hope lies in community, and the community of Burrows is a powerful force.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing the life-saving work of Drop of Hope and all those involved.

Thank you.

### **Renaming of Ryerson Elementary School**

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate):** Madam Speaker, the discovery of 215 unmarked graves on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School last May was a pivotal moment for truth in our country. It was the undeniable evidence that verified stories that had been shared for decades previously. For many Canadians it was the beginning of an important realization of the need to be part of reconciliation actions to heal relationships.

Today I am honouring some very special young students from Ryerson Elementary School in my riding of Fort Richmond. This combined grade 5 and 6 class was moved by the heartbreak and trauma that Indigenous people endured through policies and actions taken by governments, so they decided to look for ways to help with the healing of the community.

After some research, they learned that their school was named in 1972 after Egerton Ryerson, a former minister who was instrumental in creating Canada's residential school system. This did not sit well with the entire class.

These bright young leaders set out to request a name change for their school in June of last year. With the help of their teacher, Ms. Chelsea Allen, along with the support of their entire school, the process is well on its way to achieving that goal.

It warms my heart to see a supportive learning environment where students can feel empowered to effect change. Ms. Allen, you are a teacher who truly has a vision for nurturing student success. Well done. A special shout-out as well to Principal Andrea Loepp

and Vice-Principal Shannon Shields, who have supported this important process.

The Pembina Trails School Division is now accepting suggestions for a new school name.

Madam Speaker, as a former student of Ryerson Elementary School myself, I'm incredibly proud of class 5/6 A for initiating this step for change. They listened to their hearts and acted in response to the call for action. Our future is in good hands.

I ask that my colleagues help me in congratulating class 5/6 A on this very important initiative.

Thank you.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Personal-Care-Home Beds PC Election Platform Commitment

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The PCs might want to give speeches praising older adults, but they will not take action to help seniors in Manitoba. In order to get elected, this government promised that they would build 1,200 personal-care-home beds in Manitoba. Five years in, how many have they built? Only 67 new beds.

Sixty-seven falls far short of the 1,200 promised, but the situation gets worse than that. Next year, we are going to lose 277 personal-care-home beds in Manitoba which will mean, after six years in office, we will have 200 fewer long-term-care beds.

Why has this government failed to keep its promise to Manitoba seniors?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Premier):** Madam Speaker, the member of course is again factually incorrect. Not only is this government providing additional funding and new—\$56 million of new funding to support personal-care homes—which I'm sure the member opposite will vote against tomorrow—we continue to build new personal-care-home beds.

I was pleased to be at the opening of the Boyne Lodge with the great MLA representing the area, the MLA for Midland, who was a strong advocate for that personal-care home. It is something that he should be proud of because he was such a strong advocate, but of course there are many other projects that are happening in Manitoba as well.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I'll table the information for the interim leader of the PCs. It shows that since they've come to office they've only added 67 beds.

The announcement that he's talking about is neutral in terms of adding new beds to the system because phase 1 merely replaces other beds that are going off-line. And when we think about the 277 beds that the system is going to lose next year, it is a concrete, granite-hard fact that we will have fewer personal-care-home beds in Manitoba because of this government.

Not only have they broken their promise of building 1,200 new beds, this government has actively cut, reduced, diminished the spaces for seniors in this province.

Why is the government failing seniors so badly?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member's question is a testament to why the math curriculum needs to be reformed in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, 506 new beds built under this government, and of course he calls the new beds in Carman neutral. He diminishes and dismisses these beds as nothing. Well, they're not nothing to the people of that constituency who waited decades to try to get those new beds, who didn't get the support from the NDP. Those 506 new beds in Manitoba that include Winnipeg, Carman, other parts of Manitoba, are not neutral to those who needed the beds.

He can dismiss them as nothing, Madam Speaker. I hope he brings that out onto the campaign trail someday because I think that he'll get an earful for those people who waited for those PCH beds.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, we've established that this government has only created 67 beds after almost six years in office. That means they broke their promise of 1,200 new beds.

This has a real-world impact. I'll table a document to prove the following: 810 seniors waiting for beds in Manitoba—810 people are waiting for a bed. What is this government doing? They called the House back to bring forward a budget and pass it that has no new money for personal-care homes in Manitoba and then they have the nerve to actually reduce the amount of long-term-care spaces in Manitoba.

We knew this government was a failure after the Maples tragedy, but when we see them continuing to

double down on that failed approach, the only question that remains is: How can they look themselves in the mirror?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Hundred new beds at Tabor Home in Morden; 157 beds in Winnipeg; 106 in Carman; 143 in Steinbach, Madam Speaker—looking forward to opening that early next year: 506 total beds. There's of course \$56 million more that's been added to this budget.

\* (14:00)

There's only one thing that's in common here. That member opposite and all the members of the NDP voted against each one of those 506 beds. Now they say they're nothing, they're neutral, Madam Speaker. Tomorrow they're going to vote against a \$56 million to support those beds.

I wonder how the member opposite gets up every morning and looks in the mirror with that voting record, Madam Speaker.

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

#### **U of M Faculty Association Labour Dispute Bargaining Interference Concerns**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, every morning I look into the mirror and see—I see the face of somebody who stood with a team who called for the military to be called in to save lives at the Maples Personal Care Home. I see somebody who stood with a team that stood up with seniors in Manitoba against this government that run and hid and emerged from hiding only to cheerlead for Brian Pallister. I see somebody who looks in the mirror and stands with a team each and every day that will never stop fighting for seniors in Manitoba.

Obviously, this is a question about the government's interference at the University of Manitoba.

When will they stop making life worse for the students at the U of M who simply want to get a good education and a good job?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Premier):** I see someone across the aisle who voted against 157 new beds in Winnipeg. I see someone who voted against 106 PCH beds in Carman and then said they're neutral, just dismissed them—if they were nothing—if the people who were in those beds were nothing, Madam Speaker. I see somebody who voted against 143 beds in Steinbach—I'm sure he just dismisses those as

neutral as well—who voted against 100 beds in Morden, Madam Speaker. I'm sure he doesn't care about the 100 beds that are occupied in Morden.

I see someone who is likely, although I hate to make predictions, but likely to vote against \$57 million in support for PCH beds and those who occupy those beds tomorrow. I hope the member has a good night's sleep and wakes up and sees something different in the mirror than he's demonstrated for the last few years, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Does anyone on that side of the House believe that Brian Pallister did right by seniors during the pandemic?

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Take that to the doorstep and explain—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —to Manitobans the disaster that unfolded—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —in this province during the pandemic.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** I know that we stood up for the people of Manitoba and we demanded better for seniors. This government actively made the situation time-and-time again. And even though we all stood should-to-shoulder—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —and committed that we were going to do better for people working in long-term care, this government still returned with a budget that has no new operating dollars for personal-care homes and they preside over the reduction of personal-care-home beds in Manitoba.

When it comes to the ongoing continuation of interference at the University of Manitoba, we know the situation is wrong.

Will the government please stop interfering so faculty can get back to teaching and students can get back to learning?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, 506 families who are looking for a place—an appropriate place—for their

loved ones to put them in when they needed that support most when they were in their last years, they needed those facilities. We built those facilities. Didn't happen under the NDP.

And not only didn't it happen under the NDP, Madam Speaker—and maybe, you know, they would have changed their mind and said we made a mistake by not building those facilities—they didn't even support them when the funding came forward when they were in opposition. A simple vote; they could have stood up and said, you know what, we made a mistake, we should have built those personal-care-home beds and we'll support them now. They continue in the Greg Selinger ways, Madam Speaker. They don't want to see the mistakes that they made in the past. They don't understand that they underfunded the personal-care-home system.

We built those beds. We opened those beds. We funded those beds and they keep voting against the funding and those beds. Shame on them to stand up today and be hypocrites in this House.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The interim PC Leader can defend Brian Pallister's record, but the facts that we tabled today show that there are 810 families waiting right now for a spot in a personal-care home and, at the same time, this government is set to reduce the number of beds in the province by 200. Absolute failure.

Today, dozens of Manitobans came to the Legislature to demand fairness. They asked that this government stop interfering in the negotiations with faculty at the University of Manitoba. You have tens of thousands of students who are trying to get their life started in a good way, who want to get a wonderful education and then find a rewarding job here in Manitoba, and yet time and time again the wage freeze that this government continues to double down on gets in the way, Madam Speaker. It's wrong. It's bad for the economy. This government needs to stop.

When will the government stop interfering with negotiations at U of M so students can get the education that they need?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I don't know why the member opposite continues to defend the record of Greg Selinger, Madam Speaker.

The individuals in Morden who needed those beds open, who needed them funded, Madam Speaker, and their families, they needed that support,

and yet the member opposite dismisses it; those who needed those beds in Winnipeg and who needed that support, well, the member opposite dismisses it. He defends Greg Selinger and the government who wouldn't fund it.

Those in Carman who needed the support, those in Steinbach who needed the support, maybe he doesn't think that those are important individuals. Maybe he doesn't think that they need the support, Madam Speaker. Well, of course they do.

All through Manitoba, they needed that support for PCHs. He continues to—*[interjection]* Even now, he's yelling from his seat and defending Greg Selinger, Madam Speaker. You know, if he wants to fight the 2016 election over and over again, he can continue to do that, because every time he'll lose if he continues down that path.

### **Results of Health System Consolidation Additional Investments Needed**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Dr. Alecs Chochinov is a leading doctor in emergency medicine. He's also the co-chair of this government's wait times task force.

In that report, he urged the Conservative government to take time when fundamentally altering the health-care system. His report said that if facilities are closed without shoring up the remaining facilities, the result will be huge bottlenecks in the system. Unfortunately, that's exactly what's happened.

I ask the minister: Why didn't her government listen to the concerns of Dr. Chochinov?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** I'd like to thank the honourable member for Union Station for the question.

Perhaps the member would like to talk to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), who chastised me yesterday for my department going throughout the province, listening to Manitobans, hearing their feedback, finding out what is important to them.

Madam Speaker, we have been listening. We received the report from Dr. Chochinov, a surgeon who's very highly respected in this province, and we acted.

The members opposite don't want to hear that we—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.



**Ms. Gordon:** –act, because they're a government that doesn't act. We don't want to go back to the dark days of the NDP. We want to continue to move this province forward.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** ER wait times have spiked to the highest they've been in years, and 25 per cent of those who went to Health Sciences Centre are leaving without ever even seeing a physician.

Dr. Chochinov says, and I quote, people at the most senior levels need to come out and admit there's a problem, show their faces—end quote—and that there's currently, and I quote, a profound failure of leadership in addressing problems in emergency rooms.

Since the minister refused to do media yesterday, I'll give her the chance today to publicly speak on this.

Will she admit that her government's rushed consolidation plan was a failure? And will she finally address the desperate needs in a system that her government broke?

**Ms. Gordon:** After receiving Dr. Chochinov and the wait time task force's report, I want everyone in this House to know that our government added 1,000 more hip and knee surgeries to the system, 2,000 cataracts, Madam Speaker. I know they don't want to hear any good news. They are an opposition of bad news, but there is good news.

*We—[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** –acted, Madam Speaker. We put \$90 million into redevelopment of the St. Boniface Hospital emergency department. That was to address the wait times issues at emergency that was stated in that report. I know it is very difficult to hear anything positive, but the members on this side of the House is moving—

\* (14:10)

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, I'm not sure what's positive about 25 per cent of people leaving the emergency room without ever even seeing a doctor.

There's clearly a profound failure of leadership in all aspects of the health-care system with the Conservatives in charge. Necessary investment to shore up facilities was never actually done, as recommended by Dr. Chochinov, and needed surgical investments have also not been made. As shown yesterday, only a small fraction of the promised money to reduce surgical wait times has actually even been put to use. That's despite other provinces moving aggressively to address their backlogs. The minister needs to show up and show leadership now.

When will she make these very necessary investments in our health-care system?

**Ms. Gordon:** The member for Union Station, while they were clapping and heckling, did not hear of the investments that I shared. So, 1,000 new hip and knee surgeries added to the system; 2,000 cataract surgeries; a \$90-million investment in the St. Boniface Hospital emergency department redevelopment.

We are continuing to listen to Manitobans. There's more work to do that members on this side of the House is committed to doing that work, Madam Speaker. And we ask the members for the opposition to get on board to address the issues that are so important to Manitobans in our health-care system.

### **COVID-19 Contact Tracing Contract with Private Agency**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, after contracting \$16 million on masks that don't work, Manitoba's Conservatives are at it again.

Public disclosure shows that they've made a contract for sub-par contract tracing with a phone bank company, 24-7, worth an 'astownish' \$40 million.

That money should have gone to public health nurses to shore up appropriate contract tracing, but that didn't happen.

Why did the minister choose this \$40-million contract over investments in public health?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services):** Well, as you well know, Madam Speaker, we've been going through a pandemic, trying to shore up the services that we had in public health.

They were busy doing contract tracing. They needed some help. We reached out to the Red Cross. We reached out to the private sector. We wanted to make sure that people that were contracting COVID-19 would be traced, their contacts would be traced and people could be safe in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Any Manitoban who had to isolate knows how poor contract tracing was in Manitoba. People were told to isolate much longer than they needed to and follow-up calls were infrequent. Nurses working in the public health raised the alarm about misinformation and errors that were rife throughout the contract tracing system.

In July, the Conservative government said it would consider all this as they measure whether to extend the existing payments of \$8 million. But then they turned around and increased the contract to a whopping \$40 million.

Why did the minister not invest in public health nurses to shore up appropriate contract tracing?

**Mr. Helwer:** As I'm sure you know, we went through a pandemic, and we are still going through that pandemic.

What we found through public health and through our contract-contact tracing elsewhere was that people were not giving us the information. They were hanging up on those contact tracers, they were swearing at them, they were very disrespectful. It was a very difficult place to work, Madam Speaker. And what we needed to do is make sure that we could find out who the contacts were of those people that had contracted COVID. And that's what we did.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** This government would rather blame Manitobans than take responsibility for getting rid of 18 per cent of our public civil service who know how to get the job done.

This summer, nurses warned us that the Conservative government contract-tracing system didn't work. It's obvious this contract was another mad scramble from a government that's cut our public services to the bone. The quality of service from the arrangement speaks for itself. They said they would take a second look at this, but all they did was not only double-down, they tripled-down \$40 million for this phone bank.

Why did the Conservative government not use this money to shore up public health nurses that we so desperately need?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, it seems that the opposition would want us to not contact trace at all, Madam Speaker. It was a necessary part. We used the public health system. We used the private system. We made sure that we had all the opportunities out there to find out whose—those contacts were of those individuals that had contracted COVID-19.

We want to keep our public safe, Madam Speaker, as opposed to attacking the civil servants that we see, obviously, always happens from the NDP.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Backlogs and Delays in Justice System Timeliness of Judicial Appointments**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Madam—Manitobans are waiting longer than ever to see the administration of justice occur, partly because of staffing shortages and delays in judicial appointments.

The minister announced additional new provincial court judge positions to address backlog issues. The advertisement for two positions, one in Winnipeg and one in Brandon, went out December 8th, 2020. However, announcing a position isn't the same as actually filling it. So, meanwhile, Manitobans are waiting for updates on the new judicial appointments to actually address the backlogs and delays within the justice system.

Why are these judicial appointments not being prioritized, considering the current delays in the provincial court system?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, I thank the member for actually asking a question on the subject of Justice.

Our government is very, very proud of the investments that we have made to create better access to justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges but also opportunities in the courts and in the justice system for us to be able to create better pathways for people, use technology to help, to be able to limit the time that people spend in court and to use opportunities to do things closer to home.

These are exactly the opportunities that we're taking up. We are very proud of the senior civil servant leadership that is assisting us to make these changes on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Under The Provincial Court Act, when the minister advises the chief judge on an appointment

of a judge that is required, the Judicial Appointments Committee must meet and provide the minister with a list of at least three and no more than six persons from a list of qualified candidates whom the committee 'recommends' in the appointment in question.

The judicial appointment committee met and created this list in January of 2021. However, since December of 2020, there has been at least four positions advertised in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson, and only one judicial appointment made, on February 5th, 2020, for Brandon.

Why doesn't the minister want to fix the judicial backlog?

**Mr. Friesen:** On the contrary, our government has been fixing the challenges created in the justice system by the previous government for five years, working hard to create better pathways for people through the justice system.

Just last week, I and the Minister for Families were in the North talking to leadership in Thompson, the following—and in surrounding communities about ways that we are improving pathways for justice, investments in Indigenous courts, investments in restorative justice, working with the grand chiefs and the chief justices and the chief judge in these shared areas of priority.

So we'll take no lessons from the failed former NDP government about how to create pathways to better justice.

\* (14:20)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St.—*[interjection]*—order.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** While Manitobans are waiting for their court dates and for the administration of justice, the minister is wasting time trying to figure himself out. The minister should be working expeditiously to ensure Manitobans are able to access timely and efficient services within the justice system instead of delaying the process further, like he is.

It seems strange, Madam Speaker, the Judicial Appointments Committee has met and sent over the list of appointees, and yet we still have nothing from this minister.

It begs the question why is the Justice Minister delaying these appointments? Are there some names

on the list that he doesn't like, Madam Speaker? What's going on?

Will the minister commit to prioritizing the judicial appointments to address the backlog within our Manitoba courts?

**Mr. Friesen:** I welcome an opportunity to inform my colleagues of the careful work that's going on right now.

In 2020, just in the spring, we expanded on-duty rotations for prosecution defence counsel through Legal Aid. There's now round-the-clock bail review proceedings. Court scheduling's been adapted to meet the needs of courts and stakeholders. There's been extra court sittings, extra dockets created.

While I continue to talk about what we're doing, the member continues to chirp from her seat and drive straight into the gutter. We'll continue to work on behalf of all Manitobans to create access to justice, even while that member continues to whine and complain.

#### **Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Through FIPPA, we've found that the addiction crisis is only getting worse and the demand for needles has increased. I'll table these documents.

Last year, 150,000 more needles were distributed here in Winnipeg than the year before. The problem is only getting worse; not better. Four Conservative Health ministers have all replied the same. They have a running list of speaking points, but no real action is being made and not even a dent is being made within this addictions crisis in our province.

Will the minister break from Brian Pallister and take steps to open a safe consumption site here in Manitoba today?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery):** I thank the member for Point Douglas for the question.

It gives me an opportunity to remind the member that earlier this year the member went on record introducing a bill where she stated RAAM clinics—Rapid Access to Addiction Medicine clinics—don't help anyone. Over 6,000 individuals have been helped by our RAAM clinics—who are struggling with the challenges of substance use—and the member for Point Douglas stated that they do not help anyone.

Will the member apologize to the health-care professionals working in RAAM clinics that are helping thousands of Manitobans every day who are struggling with substance use and addictions? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about RAAM clinics. RAAM clinics are only open 1.8 hours a day in this province. Somebody has to make an appointment to actually get into treatment.

Well, Madam Speaker, if a person wants to get into treatment today, they've got to go to a RAAM clinic and make an appointment for two weeks from now. That doesn't work for Manitobans. I'm not going to go to a place to make an appointment to get into addictions two weeks from now.

So if this minister wants to talk about meaningful treatment options in this province, let's talk about a safe consumption site where, actually, real resources can be put to people who need the services: they can get into treatment, they can access nurses, they can get into housing through there, they can use—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics help thousands of Manitobans.

It was also our government, Madam Speaker, who unlisted naloxone. It is now available in 145 retail establishments, over 30 First Nation communities.

We are acting to assist individuals struggling with substance use and addictions. We are going across the province listening to individuals who have lived experience with substance use and addictions so that we can build a system that responds to their needs, not a system under the opposition that is based on emotion and placing incorrect information on the—

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

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Well, these are actually people that we're talking about, people that are cared about, that actually need help and support that this government is not providing.

Insufficient support has a cost. Three dozen babies have been born in this province last year with

congenital syphilis, 21 already this year. What is this minister doing about that?

I'll ask the minister again: Will she break from Brian Pallister? Will she commit to opening a safe consumption site so Manitobans can get the support that they need from caring individuals who actually see them as humans?

**Ms. Gordon:** We're working with Dr. Roussin, our chief public health officer, and public health officials to take action to prevent the spread of STBBIs and congenital syphilis. We've increased tested-for-testing for congenital syphilis, and even testing after the baby has been delivered.

We've created new public health nurse positions supporting pre- and post-natal maternal and infant care. And, Madam Speaker we have expanded Harm Reduction Network and peer advisory councils to the tune of \$850,000.

The member needs to get on board with members on this side of the House in supporting Manitobans in their time of need.

#### **WRHA and Shared Health Health System Management Concerns**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Yet another doctor has quit the Health Sciences Centre.

Dr. Sandor Demeter has resigned from his position in nuclear medicine at HSC running a PET scanner that helps detect and tailor treatment for people with cancer.

I table what he called his exit interview. He says: The WRHA and Shared Health delayed replacement of the scanner for years, pushed for the cheapest solutions, ignored long-standing known problems—ignoring long-standing known problems for patients. Over 2,000 Manitobans a year use the PET scanner and more could get tests had there been a second machine, but that was cancelled.

What's more, quote, the wait time for PET scanning is four weeks, which is unacceptable for newly diagnosed cancer patients.

Does the Premier recognize that doctors and nurses are leaving health care because the PCs have made it impossible to work there?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Premier):** We know that when it comes to specialists there has always been a challenge in terms of recruitment and retaining specialists in the medical system. Our government has

continually done recruitment, as has the WRHA, who of course leads the recruitment process.

We also know, of course, that there is a need. There is a need when it comes to—*[interjection]* We also know that there is a need when, Madam Speaker, for additional funding, when it comes to the health-care system. And that's one of the reasons we've been working with other provincial governments to try to get the federal government to the table. We've asked Prime Minister Trudeau to come to a first ministers' meeting immediately to talk about the health-care system and to have a fair funding agreement for all provinces in Canada.

I know the member opposite will join us in that call to try to get that meeting as soon as possible to address the many issues that come when it comes to funding of health-care systems.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** Dr. Demeter says the dysfunction at Shared Health, along with cuts and freezes, are to blame.

Quote: Inability to make decisions and move forward has had a profound negative impact on staff morale. The HSC diagnostic imaging director position has been vacant for almost three years and the cyclotron and radio pharmacy director positions been vacant for over two years. This is just one department, and these shortages are happening everywhere.

He closes by saying, quote, our health-care system is certainly broken now and Shared Health leadership should be held accountable to fix it or step aside and let someone else do it.

Is anyone going to be held to account by this government for this failure, or will Manitobans have to keep paying the price?

**Mr. Goertzen:** We know, Madam Speaker, that the WRHA, Shared Health, all the different regional health authorities, are always recruiting within the health-care system. This is not just a Manitoba challenge, of course, it's a national problem. It's an international problem, in many ways, when it comes to particular specialists in the health-care system.

\* (14:30)

But we also know that Canada has to have a discussion. We have to have a discussion about a fair funding model when it comes to health care, and that requires the federal government to come to the table.

Prime Minister Trudeau, when he was first election-elected, said that he would call a meeting of first ministers and have that discussion, Madam Speaker. It didn't happen throughout his previous mandates.

Now the provinces are again united asking for that meeting, asking for Prime Minister Trudeau—and I've asked for that as well when I had my discussion with him—to call that meeting as soon as possible, to have that discussion, because we know that there are a number of issues when it comes to funding in health care that could be addressed, that could be bettered with a fair funding model and a federal government that was truly a partner in health care.

I ask the member opposite to use whatever influence he has to bring that meeting to bear, Madam Speaker.

### **Prescription Drug Affordability Federal-Provincial Cost Sharing**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** On average, one in 10 individuals who have been prescribed medication are unable to take them due to affordability. Manitobans are often having to choose between paying for rent, food on their table and the medication they need to survive or lead a healthy life.

The pandemic has intensified the issue and the calls for better support are only getting louder. There have been repeated calls to include prescription drugs in a universal health-care plan in 1997, 2002 and by several national organizations consistently over the years.

Madam Speaker, PEI has already signed on for a public drug plan cost-share with the federal government.

When will Manitoba do the same?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Premier):** The member opposite will know that Manitoba is a leader when it comes to our Pharmacare system, Madam Speaker. The—we have had a comprehensive plan that ensures that all Manitobans have coverage.

We, of course, have said that we're willing to engage with the federal government and have discussions when it comes to Pharmacare. That's been a long-standing offer, Madam Speaker, but it is also recognized—and I think it is recognized by the federal government—that Manitoba has one of the best pharmacare systems in the country.

We're obviously willing to improve that. We need the federal government to come to the table on a

number of things. I also ask this member to bring whatever influence she has—or anybody who she knows who has influence—to bring us to the table to have a true discussion on health care and funding.

#### **Northern Manitoba Communities Crime Prevention Initiatives**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Community safety and crime prevention remain a vital concern in our province and our northern communities. Providing funding and support to families in the community is an important step in enhancing safety and the overall well-being for our province.

Can the Minister of Justice please tell the House how our government recognizes the importance of investing in community safety and programming for families in northern communities?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Last week, the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) and I were in Thompson. We had excellent meetings with people in the community.

I thank the member for Swan River for that question because what we were doing in Thompson was announcing \$85,000 from the proceeds of crime for the RCMP detachment in Thompson for community safety initiatives to keep Thompson and surrounding communities safe.

Madam Speaker, these investments include \$45,000 for a new playground for youth in the community of Brochet. They include in a land-based camp experience for at-risk families where they can take part in teaching and activities to improve family relationships; \$12,000 for R. D. Parker Collegiate for new fitness equipment for youth.

Our government will continue to work with Indigenous leadership, with Manitoba stakeholders and with others to keep communities safe, invest in youth and support victims of crime.

#### **Conservation Officers Vacancy Rate**

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** In 2020, Manitoba had 106 positions for conservation officers. On Wednesday, the minister told me that number had been cut; that there are only 76 conservation officers working in Manitoba right now. That's a very large reduction when Manitobans are enjoying our parks more than ever.

Why is the government cutting positions and leaving so many unfilled?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Premier):** Of course, we know that there are many good things that are happening in Manitoba, including in our park system, Madam Speaker. There are many Manitobans who were using our parks over the summer. We continue to invest in our parks.

There are many other good things that are happening in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. I would acknowledge—although the members sitting opposite didn't ask about it this week, Madam Speaker—that this week, Statistics Canada reported that Manitoba has the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada.

As we look towards the post-pandemic recovery, we know we have a ways to go yet, Madam Speaker, but there's a number of things that are going to play a role in that. Our parks are going to play a role in that. All Manitobans are going to play a role in that.

We know, though, we're on the right path when it comes to recovery. It's going to take all the assets of Manitoba to get us not just through the pandemic but into the recovery period.

We hope the members opposite will get away from their negative views on everything and join us in promoting Manitoba and its recovery, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

#### **PETITIONS**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara)? Petitions?

#### **Health-Care Coverage**

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

Private health insurance is not a substitute for public health insurance.

Private insurance plans available to most migrant workers and international students are paid for by the worker or student. They do not provide coverage for

all of the potential health needs covered by public health coverage.

Individuals are required to pay up front for health expenses without a guarantee that they will be covered and wait weeks for reimbursement.

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

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

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

Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Brar:** —to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and give uninsured—uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to public health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without public health

insurance and the details on how necessity policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

\* (14:40)

Further petitions?

**Louise Bridge**

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

The content—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 past 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 for 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 in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds, and instead decided to fund an off-the-list, low-priority Waverley Underpass.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee 'becan' 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 bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg 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 and consider the feasibility of keeping it open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further petitions? Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business.

Pursuant to rule 78(4), this is the list of ministers to be called for questioning in the debate on the concurrence motion in the Committee of Supply beginning on October 14th, 2021: Premier (Mr. Goertzen), the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler), the Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development (Mr. Eichler), the Minister of Education (Mr. Cullen), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), the Minister of Sport, Culture and

Heritage (Mrs. Cox), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Wharton), the Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer), the Minister of Conservation and Climate (Mrs. Guillemard), the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Ewasko), the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Johnson), the Minister of Health and Seniors Care (Ms. Gordon), the Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery (Ms. Gordon), the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations (Mr. Lagimodiere), the Minister of Economic Development and Jobs (Mr. Reyes).

These ministers will be questioned concurrently.

Miigwech.

**Madam Speaker:** We would thank the honourable Official Opposition House Leader for tabling that list.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I have two leave requests for the House.

First, could you please canvass the House for leave to make the following permanent change to the Estimate sequence: move Municipal Relations from room 254 to follow Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 255?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to make the following permanent change to the Estimates sequence: move Municipal Relations from room 254 to follow Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 255.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the House for that.

Second, could you please canvass the House for leave to consider without notice a concurrence motion regarding the report that was presented today from the standing committee on the rules of the House.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to consider without notice a concurrence motion regarding the report that was presented today from the standing committee on the rules of the House.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

## CONCURRENCE MOTION

### Standing Committee on Rules of the House First Report

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that the first report of the



standing committee on the rules of the House, received on October 13th, 2021 be concurred in.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, this is the regular—although maybe not always routine—changing of the rules. Often it's involving clean up or some smaller issues that are involved in the rule changes. This is something I think that members of this House often commit to doing on a regular basis. Doesn't always work out in terms of timing, but I think we've re-committed ourselves to doing this on a more regular basis in terms of looking at rules.

I want to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I want to thank the opposition—Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) for their good work on this rule package. I know often people just see the disagreement that happens in this House, but it only works with the co-operation of all members, and that is particularly true when it comes to House leaders working together.

I want to thank your office, Madam Speaker, and thank the Clerk's office of course, who did a yeoman service—translation, as well—to ensure that we could get this done in time. There are many people behind the scenes who ensured that this rule package could be presented in time for this sitting of the Legislature.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further members wishing to speak in debate?

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** My colleague and I agree on this, everything that he said. I do just want to take a quick—*[interjection]*—okay. Pardon me, Madam—*[interjection]*

I do just want to take a quick minute. We said it in committee yesterday, Madam Speaker, and you know, just for the official record here today, I do want to thank the clerks. I think that, you know, the—our colleague, the Premier/Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights sincerely appreciate all of the work that the clerks do to allow us to do our job and to allow the Assembly to run in the most efficient way possible.

So again, to the clerks and to everyone behind the scenes that we don't see, *miigwech* to all of them for that work. *Miigwech*.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I just want to add a brief comment and thank you to Patricia Chaychuk and Rick Yarish for the tre-

mendous work that they did in preparing the background for these rules and getting everything in order, and also to thank the staff, including the translators, who worked on this. I gather it was a—work over the Thanksgiving weekend for the translators, and that is much appreciated, that it was ready so quickly.

\* (14:50)

Thanks also to the Government House Leader and to the Opposition House Leader for their contributions and the collegial way in which we were able to work together to get some improvement in our rules, which hopefully will work well as well as being a first step in continuing to improve the rules and more regular meetings of the Rules Committee in the future.

Thank you, merci, *miigwech*.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is a concurrence motion regarding the report that was presented today from the standing committee on the rules of the House.

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

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**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please resolve the House into Committee of Supply?

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY  
(Concurrent Sections)**

**ROOM 254**

**MENTAL HEALTH,  
WELLNESS AND RECOVERY**

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Mental Health, Wellness and

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** So I'd like to return to my question yesterday, where I was asking how many people were suspected of drug overdoses during the pandemic, and then if the minister also had access to what the drug was that was overdosed on.

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery):** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) for the question: 372 overdose deaths, and the main drivers of mortality in—the 372 is for 2020—and the main driver of mortality in terms of the drug was fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine use.

**Mrs. Smith:** So we do have that number from last year.

Do you have current numbers for this year up to date, or if not up to date, maybe last month or July?

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for the question.

At this time I do not have numbers to share. Perhaps as the chief examiner's office makes that information available I will be able to take this under advisement and come back to the member with firm numbers.

**Mrs. Smith:** I appreciate the minister taking—undertaking that and getting that information from the medical examiner.

My next question relates to reporting, and that other jurisdictions report publicly on overdoses. Just wondering if that is something that, you know, our Province is moving towards? Because we're vastly behind other provinces and this is information that, you know, can help guide strategy in terms of helping to stop the overdoses, identifying the drugs of use and making sure that ample support is there for people who are needing it.

\* (15:10)

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for the question.

So, my department will continue to collaborate with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and collect data, of course, to monitor the problematic substance use and related harms that is occurring in our province. As well, we will continue to report on all available data in a timely manner to the public and

other stakeholders in order to inform prevention and response activities.

Public reporting, we continue to work towards making information as transparent and as readily available as possible. As I'm sure the member is aware, it does take time after someone is deceased to determine cause of death and which substances lead to that individual's untimely passing. So we will continue to work with the Chief Medical Examiner on reporting.

Of course, COVID has also slowed many things within the health system as well as mental health, addictions, as individuals have been redirected to fight COVID. So yes, we are very committed as a department to addressing public reporting and making information available in a timely and efficient manner.

**Mrs. Smith:** I appreciate that and I do hope that we are moving towards actually publicizing those on a provincial website so that Manitobans can actually see. And, I mean, those numbers help, you know, guide our government in the direction that it needs to go in terms of supporting people and making sure that no Manitoban dies of overdose.

My next question has to do with blood-borne diseases. I've already asked this question in the House. We know that there's been 21 since July, babies born with syphilis. We're now into October. Does the minister have an updated list or an updated number on how many babies? And then I'm just going to put a couple of others in there, just for time's sake: How many were born with—or how many people have acute hepatitis B and how many syphilis cases were there this year?

**Ms. Gordon:** Wanted—want to make the honourable member for Point Douglas aware that my department has been asked to provide that information and we are looking at that information now.

If the member would like to move forward with another question—I know she has several, and we want to be able to provide as many responses as possible. So we will come back to the response, but give the member an opportunity to ask another question.

**Mrs. Smith:** Thank you, I appreciate that, that you're taking that and finding that information and allowing me to go forward with questions.

My next question is about the VIRGO report. So the VIRGO report called for 9 per cent of the Health budget to be focused on mental health and addictions. How much is it now? How much is currently being

allocated towards mental health and addiction from the Health budget?

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for the question.

We certainly appreciate the hard work that has done—been done in the past by Dr. Rush, submitted his report in 2018 to our government, and I want to highlight that since receiving his report our government has taken action in terms of dedicating fifty-two point—allocated \$52.3 million to over 30 initiatives to improve access to and co-ordination of mental health and addictions services, and we continue to move forward with ensuring that our system responds to the needs of individuals who are struggling with mental health and addictions.

Now, the VIRGO report had stated 9 per cent, and that was a gold standard percentage, and it's unclear to my department, Mr. Chair, what is included in that 9 per cent. But I can say that the Canadian average is between 7 to 9 per cent of the budget, and the national average right now is 7.2 per cent. Manitoba is in—closer to the middle and top at 5.6 per cent for 2019-2020.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister tell me how many hours a week the RAAM clinics are operating?

\* (15:20)

**Ms. Gordon:** If the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) would allow me to just clarify my previous response regarding the VIRGO report and the percentages that—it's difficult to compare across jurisdictions or even nationally because, for example, there are some services that still remain under the Ministry of Health, so haven't—for example, here's a good example, like naloxone. Naloxone is covered under Health and Seniors Care, but the operational work, working with the various organizations, comes under Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery.

And I'm sure that's the same across the jurisdictions or even nationally, where some services are under different ministries. We see the same thing here in Manitoba, where we're taking that whole-of-government approach to addressing mental health and addictions, because some services are in Justice, some are in Families, some are in Education. And so it's very difficult to say whether, in fact, the 5.6 per cent isn't actually higher.

So I just want to make the honourable member for Point Douglas aware of that, and I will respond to the question regarding the RAAM hours shortly.

**Mrs. Smith:** So the minister, while she's looking for the hours for the RAAM clinics, I'll just ask another question and then perhaps they can look for that question as well.

Can the minister tell us how many treatment beds are currently in operation in Manitoba and break that down by site?

**Ms. Gordon:** I do have a response for the honourable member for Point Douglas regarding the hours for the RAAM clinics.

I will start with the Crisis Response Centre. It's located at 817 Bannatyne Ave. The regular hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 3 p.m.

We then have the RAAM clinic at River Point Centre, located at 146 Magnus Ave. The regular hours are Mondays from 1 to 3 p.m. and Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Individuals can also call Monday to Friday at 204-944-6209 or 1-855-662-6605.

Brandon location is at 7th Street Health Access Centre and the regular hours are Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 to 1 p.m. Again, they can call 204-578-4800, Monday to Friday, 11 to 7 p.m.

Selkirk is located at the Selkirk Community Health Office, 237 Manitoba Ave. Regular hours are Tuesdays from 12:30 to 3:30, and individuals seeking assistance can call 204-785-7513. They can call Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 4:30.

The Thompson location is at Eaglewood at 90 Princeton Dr. The regular hours are Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m., and individuals seeking assistance can call Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30, three numbers: 1-866-291-774 or 204-677-7300 or 204-677-7240.

The posted clinic hours are for new walk-in patients seeking RAAM clinic service. In addition, the RAAM clinic team—physician, counsellor, nurse—provides follow-up to patients, co-ordinating medication management, making referrals to other services, supporting and consulting with other providers and informing other service providers about RAAM clinics outside of those hours.

**Mrs. Smith:** Thank you for giving me those hours.

Can the minister also tell me how many people accessed RAAM clinics and how long is the wait from

when they first accessed RAAM clinics to how long they got into detox or treatment?

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable for–member for Point Douglas for the question related to RAAM clinics, how many people were seen and the wait times.

So from 2018 to 2021, more than 5,700 individuals were seen. The wait time per individual is so unique to the individual so we don't have one global wait time. And it would be difficult to flesh that out because it depends on the site, the treatment and the intervention that each client needs, and depends on the service that they access. So that would be quite an administrative task to tease out service that is unique to an individual's presenting situation for 5,700 people.

**Mrs. Smith:** I appreciate the numbers from 2018 to 2021, but could the minister provide just 2020? And then perhaps 2021? Up to date? And then just maybe a rounded number, about how many people went into treatment in each year?

\* (15:30)

**Ms. Gordon:** For the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), I do have an updated number with respect to the number of individuals that sought treatment at RAAM clinics. Again, we have just the number for September 2018 to August 2021. We received the report, I think it was yesterday. The number is over 7,000.

In terms of the number of individuals that accessed care, so for 2020: from April 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2021—I could be off by a few, but—2,400 and around 94; and quarter 1 of this year about 920 people have already presented.

So if we look at the 2018 to August 2021, I'm informed that 1,765 people were referred to an addictions treatment program, withdrawal management and/or mental health services, and over 700 patients were started on opioid agonist treatment or therapy to treat opioid use disorder and over 300 individuals were prescribed medication to treat alcohol use disorder.

**Mrs. Smith:** So I just pulled up a FIPPA that was given to us in March, and the numbers were 4,751 people that had accessed services. So that's quite a difference. Like, that's over 3,000 people since January of 2021 that have accessed services. I hope that that number is, you know, presenting to the minister that there needs to be more supports for

people if more people are presenting with, you know, trying to access services.

I certainly heard from some of the providers that RAAM beds have been left empty and how frustrated they are that they can't fill those beds because they're held for RAAM patients, and then certain ones are held for Health Sciences Centre, St. Boniface. Those beds are being filled. I know in December that the RAAM beds were empty for the whole month, and I had several calls from several people frustrated, trying to get clients into treatment, detox, that couldn't get them in, and were frustrated because beds were left empty.

So I hope that that's something that the minister will take under advisement, that if beds are, you know, left empty because there's no RAAM clients that are needing them at that time, that perhaps those beds could be used, you know, for folks that do need them.

So, I want to go back to my other question. I had asked the minister how many treatment beds are currently in operation in Manitoba and if the minister could break that down by site; so treatment beds by site and how many.

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for raising the issue of the need for more supports, and that is why our government this year added additional funding of \$819,000 to the two RAAM clinics in Winnipeg, at Crisis Response Centre and at River Point clinic. So that was funding to address wait-time issues and the number of individuals that were presenting and we continue to go across the province list.

I'd visited, I think, all the RAAMs except one which is at River Point, talked to the clinicians there and individuals with lived experience about what needs to be done to ensure access to—timely access to services at our RAAM clinics.

I do want to clarify for the honourable member that RAAM clinics are not a bed-based service. So it's not intended to have individuals stay in—as we know it in the acute-care hospitals or in other facilities—beds. So it is to—and I think this came out in the VIRGO report—was that we needed to have greater linkages to the community and to primary-care providers for ongoing care. And so for the individuals that may not have gone directly into detox or other forms of treatments, I'm sure that they were connected to, possibly, another community facility or service, or back to their primary-care provider.

So it's not meant to be overnight stays because it's not a clinical bed-based service.

**Mrs. Smith:** I totally understand the RAAM model. It's a referral base, and there are beds held for clients of RAAM, and that's what I was referring to.

So they make referrals to, let's say, Main Street Project's detox centre. Detox has to hold those beds for RAAM clinic or RAAM clients, and if there's no referrals, those beds sit empty. So that's what I was referring. I wasn't referring to RAAM, you know, keeping folks overnight.

I know that it's, you know, two hours a day, maybe two days a week, which I think is insufficient, especially with the number of people that are presenting and the growing number of people that are, you know, turning to addictions because of their trauma. And we see this every day. Those numbers are growing. People are losing their lives, and resources are needed.

So I want to go back, the minister still hasn't answered my question about treatment beds. How many are currently in operation, and if the minister can break that down by site?

\* (15:40)

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) for keeping track of that question. I did note that it was not answered yet. I now have that information.

Let's start with withdrawal management beds. And if we go to Thompson at AFM Eaglewood, it's five beds; at hope north it is two beds. And then if we go to withdrawal management beds in Winnipeg, HSC Addictions Unit there's 11; Main Street Project women's, 26; Main Street Project men's, 29; Klinik mobile withdraw management and stabilization—it's in the community, there is eight; Marymound youth stabilization, 10. And if we go to Brandon at the Community Health and Housing Association there is six.

If we go—if we look at supportive recovery housing—let's start with AFM River Point Apartments, there is 30; at AFM community pathways men's extended residential program, there are 10; Behavioural Health Foundation, 21; Esther House there is six; Addictions Recovery Inc. there is 14; Main Street Project Mainstay Residence, 34; Two Ten men's supportive recovery housing there are 20; Two Ten women's, 12; Indigenous Women's Healing Centre there are 15; at Siloam, Tamarack, Riverwood

community health and housing association, as well as Men are Part of the Solution, that is our 100 new supportive recovery housing that are in various stages of opening. Most will be open by the end of this year. Our Riverwood, I think, is early in January 2022.

And now, if we go to primary residential treatment: AFM men's Winnipeg, 38; AFM women's Winnipeg, 36; AFM Compass youth Southport, 14; AFM substance use and gambling, Brandon, 20; AFM Willard Monson House, Ste. Rose du Lac, 22; AFM Eaglewood, Thompson, 18; Behavioural Health Foundation Breezy Point women's, 14; Behavioural Health Foundation men's, women's and family, 85; Native Addictions Council of Manitoba, 22; Northern Health Region Rosaire House in The Pas, 16; Salvation Army Anchorage in Winnipeg, 31; Tamarack Recovery Centre in Winnipeg, 12.

And, of course, I think I included, as well, the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre in my last response.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, there's a—quite a significant decrease in the amount of treatment beds from 2015.

Can the minister tell us why there's such a decrease, especially when we have an increase in addictions and treatment supports needed here in our province?

**Ms. Gordon:** I thank the honourable member for Point Douglas for the question.

We have two service delivery organizations that opted to close their facilities: Salvation Army Anchorage in Winnipeg as well as the Behavioural Health Foundation Breezy Point opted to close those facilities.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The member for Point Douglas.

The member for Point Douglas, we cannot hear you. Is you mic on?

**Mrs. Smith:** Sorry about that. So, that concludes my questions.

I'd like to move to resolutions, and I just want to remind the Chair that this is our opposition Estimates time and that we do have the next critic waiting, so I'd like to move quickly to close this section off.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions.

At this point, we will allow virtual members to unmute their mics so they can respond to the questions I will now call.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,471,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Mental Health and Recovery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

\* (15:50)

Resolution 24.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,831,000 for mental health, wellness, recovery, Wellness, for the physical year ending March 31st—*[interjection]*—resolved—

Resolution 24.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,831,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Wellness, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 24.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$62,039,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Physician Services—Psychiatry, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

Resolution 24.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$253,071,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Funding to Health Authorities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 24.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$266,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for these Estimates is item 1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 24.1.

The floor is now open for questions. No questions?

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED there—that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$935,000 for Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, Executive, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This completes the Estimates of the Department of—sorry—of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery.

**CENTRAL SERVICES**

**Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are for the Department of Central Services.

I would now ask that the honourable minister and critic of the official opposition turn on their video to indicate they are ready to proceed.

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 Central Services.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services):** Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable Minister of Central Services.

**Mr. Helwer:** It's my pleasure to be here today to discuss Budget 2021 as it pertains to the Department of Central Services. I'll give you a bit of a department overview. Central Services' mandate is to be the service delivery organization for the Manitoba government, including procurement, information technology or IT, as well as capital project delivery and asset management.

As noted, part of Central Services' mandate is to execute duties and functions related to capital management and delivery. The department's goal is to efficiently expend capital allocations on approved capital projects, consistently apply risk management to capital funding and projects and improve asset management for all government assets.

Through the central capital program areas, Central Services is responsible for but not limited to: managing negotiations of bi- and trilateral capital funding agreements and partnerships; supporting the management of Manitoba's capital framework annual capital allocation plan; delivering and managing

departments—different departments' capital projects, including the use of innovative project delivery and project financing methodologies and managing government's current cover—current capital assets; providing property services to owned capital assets; providing real estate services to government and overseeing real estate and property asset disposal.

Business transformation and technology or BTT is responsible for the delivery of centralized corporate information and communications technology and support services; the provision of strategic leadership to continuously improve Manitoba government service delivery by planning and implementing corporate ICT solutions and policies to meet current and future needs; consolidation and strengthening of Manitoba's technology investments and providing ICT risk management capabilities, business continuity capabilities, mitigation strategies and disaster and recovery strategy.

The procurement and supply chain or PSC business area provides strategic direction, policies and processes for procurement and supply-chain-related function across government. The department also represents the Province in negotiations and participates in meetings related to digital service delivery and data analytics.

The departmental mandate that we have in place now as part of the mandate: the department will continue its efforts to save taxpayers dollars by shopping smarter and working with stakeholders to expand Manitoba's procurement strategy across the public sector.

The central capital program areas seek to ensure predictable delivery of government's commitment to annual strategic infrastructure investments and expediting capital planning and project delivery through innovative project delivery process, including but not limited to design build and P3s.

Central Services is also working with federal and municipal partners to deliver funding for worthy infrastructure projects within the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, also known as ICIP, and future bi- or trilateral programs.

The provision of central co-ordination, negotiation and delivery of strategic capital infrastructure and federal-provincial infrastructure programs or projects are our key strategic priorities of the department. Central Services also provides strategic leadership to continuously improve Manitoba government's information and communication technology—

ICT—environment through planning and implementing solutions to meet current and future ICT needs.

The COVID response has, of course, been a big part of our department for the last many months, and Central Services has enhanced sourcing and distribution of critical supplies, equipment and services, including personal protective equipment—PPE—vaccines and rapid testing for our co-ordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\* (16:00)

Central Services has invested over \$460 million to acquire critical pandemic response supplies, equipment and vaccines. I'm very pleased to say that over \$241.7 million or 45 per cent of these purchase orders have gone to vendors in Manitoba. Some of that product is, indeed, produced in Manitoba.

Since the start of the pandemic, Central Services has focused on keeping Manitobans safe by ensuring our health-care system, schools and government departments have the supplies and equipment needed to keep providing Manitobans with the critical services they need, including insurance—ensuring we vaccinate Manitobans as quickly as possible, co-ordinating vaccination efforts with the federal government, as well as sourcing additional Canadian-made vaccines. This includes the rapid deployment of vaccination supplies and specialized storage to sites across the province; enabling Shared Health emergency bed expansion plans, including supplies, equipment and sites to ensure Manitoba's hospitals are able to deal with rapid increases in patient levels; and ensuring that Manitobans have the services, including increased lab and rapid testing, contact tracing and vaccination appointment scheduling that are critical to the success of our pandemic response.

Central Services have—has played a critical role in warehousing and distributing the extreme volume of items required to respond to COVID-19, including over 360,000 square feet of warehouse space to support the purchasing, receiving and distribution of PPE.

Central Services, as the leader in public sector procurement in Manitoba, quickly adapted at the start of the pandemic with staff from several Crown corporations and special operating agencies co-ordinating procurement efforts to identify, validate and procure the supplies, equipment, services and vaccines needed to keep Manitobans as safe, as we move towards reopening and keeping open our economy.

Central Services has led efforts to engage local experts in health care and manufacturing. Many local businesses have retooled their operations and shifted their focus to produce life-saving supplies. Others have provided access to their own supplies and supply channels to PPE. This approach ensures as much money as possible stays in our province supporting local employers and manufacturers.

Manitoba's investment in pandemic supplies, personal protective equipment, rapid testing and vaccines allows us to respond to this pandemic effectively and vaccinate Manitobans as fast as possible.

Our investment is not only in addressing this pandemic, but also in items like made-in-Manitoba reusable N95 masks and made-in-Canada vaccines to better prepare for future emergency. Manitoba's collaboration with local businesses in our pandemic response has assured—has ensured that as much money as possible has stayed in our province supporting local employers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

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

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** No, we don't. We just want to proceed to global questioning.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 8.1.(a), contained in resolution 8.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join—*[interjection]* Oh, no. *[interjection]*

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Wasyliv:** We're seeking a global discussion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is a global discussion satisfactory to everybody at the table?

The honourable Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer).

**Mr. Helwer:** Yes, that's acceptable, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Agreed and so ordered. Thank you. It is agreed that the questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** I'm wondering if the minister could provide a copy of the 24-7 Intouch contract and any amendments made to the initial contract.

**Mr. Helwer:** So, there are two parties to those contracts—obviously, the government of Manitoba and the private supplier—and since we don't own the contract by ourself, we have to ask the private supplier if that can be disclosed.

The member knows that he's asked this question about health contracts in the past and when he went to Bell, they chose not to disclose that contract. So we will ask 24-7.

**An Honourable Member:** Now, the original contract—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry—the member for Fort Garry, I didn't have my mic on.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** Sure. The original contract was for \$5.8 million and that was March of this year. That went up to \$13 million in April, \$27 million in June, \$34 million in July and, most recently, over \$40 million in August.

Can the minister explain these significant increases in the contract?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, public health started out with the contact tracing and they quickly found that they needed some assistance in that. We are—like all other provinces in Canada, we used a public-and-private model in contact tracing in order to make sure that we had enough capacity and that public health deal—could deal with the more complex cases; and the privates deal with the—I don't want to say easier cases, but the less complex ones.

So we moved to contact tracing with 24-7 to augment public health. We also used the Red Cross and StatsCan for contact tracing in that area as well, to make sure that we had capacity so that we were not overwhelmed with contact tracing. It was a very challenging time, as I'm sure the member will recall.

And after that, as we went into the COVID testing sites, we found a necessity to enable 24-7 to book those tests for individuals so they could go for appointments for testing, and then find out where the testing sites were available, as opposed to standing in



line for an extended period, even in the cold sometimes. So that was something we were trying to avoid, there.

And then, again, we had the historic vaccination rollout, something that's never been done in Canada before on this size. And the appointments for testing were done through a combination of 24-7's phone banks and also through our online system at—sometimes we were booking 40,000 appointments a day, and I'm sure the member will recognize that that was a tremendous undertaking to make sure that we could get people appointments in sites close to them, so that they could get that vaccination done quickly.

\* (16:10)

And then, finally, we also moved—as we moved into our proof of vaccination record, access to it, it was intended as a digital record but quickly found that people wanted a physical record, as well, and they needed some help in getting that record. So we used 24-7 to help people work through that process, both online and through the phone centre, and we also had a few people that we needed to validate their records, that maybe they had forgotten to change the address on their record or the system hadn't picked up their address change. So we made sure—we needed to make sure that, indeed, the people that were applying for that record of vaccination were the people that were on the phone and making sure that that identification was incorrect—or, sorry, was correct.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Can the minister tell us how many contact tracers that this actually paid for?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the contract with 24-7 was—allowed us to be volume-driven so we could scale up as necessary, and at one time in Manitoba, we had in total over 600 contact tracers, including all contact tracers that were able to respond to Manitobans' requests.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** How many contract tracers were hired from this specific contract, excluding all the other outside agencies like Revenue Canada, et cetera?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, from this particular contract, around 400 was the maximum that we did use through 24-7.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** And what was the cost to hire 400 contact tracers with 24-7 Intouch?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we'll have to take that one under advisement, if we can, because the contract is for all of the areas that I described, not just for contact tracing. So we would have to break out what the contact tracing was if that's something that you'll allow us to get back to.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Certainly.

I'm wondering if the minister could tell us how many contact tracers that 24-7 currently employs as of today?

**Mr. Helwer:** We still employ up to 400 because we've not stood down our contact tracing. We continue to do so. We are currently in another wave and we've continued to do contact tracing all the way through.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm wondering if the minister could provide the RFP for this contract?

**Mr. Helwer:** I believe we've found that RFP and we can provide it to the member. We had nine respondents to it. Of course, we can't disclose who those respondents were.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So, the minister indicates that there's still 400 contact tracers under employ with 24-7.

How long has this contract been extended for and how much more do they expect to spend on this contract?

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the contract expires in November and we're seeking to extend it into March 2022. Again, it's a volume-based contract and, you know, that the member can tell me when the pandemic's going to end, I can tell him when we won't need that contract any more. It is something that we can cancel when it's no longer needed.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Now, I just wonder if the minister can clarify my understanding of this. It appears that the contract's been extended on four separate occasions and you're saying there's a fifth planned, but in each of these extensions, new services are being provided.

Do I have that correct? So this wasn't the same contract from the beginning. They're doing different and more and, well, obviously, unanticipated work from the original contract. Do I have that correct?

**Mr. Helwer:** Does this microphone work okay for you or is it muffled? You want me to go back to a headset or is this microphone work all right?

**An Honourable Member:** I can hear you fine.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Hansard is recommending if you could use a headset it would be preferable, but there are times when you're sort of a little bit muffled.

**Mr. Helwer:** All right. We'll go back to—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer), we lost you there for a second.

**Mr. Helwer:** All right. Well, I'm switching back and forth from a headset to speaker so that's back in the room can hear the honourable—the member's question. So that's—if there's a hitch there, that's, you know, unfortunately, the Zoom platform doesn't allow me to use separate speakers and headset.

So in respect to the member's question, so we started with 24-7 with contact tracing and the pandemic evolved, as I'm sure he's aware, as all people are aware that it changed over time. And contact tracing was a critical part of our response to it and as public health, or as our government labs responded in the testing, we found that we had to enable appointments for those labs, as well, and expand it into other laboratory services, as well. So we expanded to testing appointments and that was a time where we didn't even consider that vaccinations might be a possibility in Canada.

I do recall a meeting I had with Minister Anand at the end of October, asking her about vaccines, and at that time she had said—so this was a year ago. I asked her, we're hearing about vaccines, can you give me any information? She said, I don't have any information I can share with you. I asked her if she could give us some information about some particulars of one that we had heard rumours that we might have to store at ultra-low temperatures, and, again, she said, I have no information for you.

So that was a year ago that there was no line of sight in the vaccine coming to Canada anytime soon. And as the member will probably know, that we received some in December, mid-December. We were able to take them with freezers that we put in place. So again, at that time, we had to find an opportunity and a way that we could have appointments for those vaccines, and 24-7 was further engaged to do that.

And then, as we looked forward yet again, we knew that we would have to have some form of proof-of-vaccination card available that was secure for Manitobans and, in developing that card, found as we rolled it out on our websites and everything else that Manitobans needed some help to get those cards, to sign up for them or to change information that was in our health database to make sure it was all accurate.

So these are all things that came up very rapidly, could not be anticipated and were not something that we could do internally to government.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** So if I hear your explanation correctly, there was only one RFP at the initial contract and the four renewals were essentially no-bid contracts, and no new RFPs, no new competitions, were issued.

Do I have that right? And then we're going into a fifth renewal, which is a new no-bid contract for this company.

**Mr. Helwer:** So this was indeed an extension of a tendered contract for additional services. I trust that the member understands that we are still in a health emergency, a pandemic, and there's certainly no time for governments to issue a new RFP and wait for people to respond to an RFP. I can't imagine managing five separate contracts for five separate providers, educating their staff on all of the things that we were doing. These were emergency responses that we had to have available for Manitobans and was an extension of that tendered contract.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** So again, I'm trying to be very clear here: the initial contract was with Finance and it was simply moved over to Central Services and there was no second contract with Central Services. There's only been one initial competition and one initial contract, which has been extended four times, and there's a plan for a fifth with this government.

I have all that correct?

**Mr. Helwer:** So the member is correct. Finance does own the contract and Central Services manages that contract.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** I'm wondering if the minister can advise the committee how much has actually been paid out to 24-7 Intouch as of today's date?

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we're to the point where we had about \$5 million left in the contract that was allocated. And then we may have to determine whether we have to go back to Treasury Board for additional funding or not.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** If the contract's extended to March, and that's the intention, wouldn't it be a foregone conclusion that you'll have to get even more money for this contract?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, you know, we have, as I mentioned, \$5 million that's left allocated for that contract. And we don't know, I don't imagine the member opposite knows, where we're going to go in this pandemic, how much longer we'll need these services.

We'll see where that gets us to in this current wave, and if we need to go back to Treasury Board for further allocation, that'll be determined at that time, but right now we're working with that current—

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So, given that this company's contract with the Province since March of this year, you obviously have an average being spent every month that's been established.

What is that average? Is it roughly about \$5 million a month that's going to this company for contract tracing and other services?

*Mr. Greg Nesbitt, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the contract has fluctuated significantly over the length of it. Wouldn't be able to give the member an average, it's sometimes very high, sometimes minimal because it's volume-based, and that's the way it was designed, so that when we have to ramp up the needed services, we can certainly do that, and when services aren't necessary we can roll them back so that there aren't that many people being working—that are working in this environment.

But there's no real average that I can provide.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Now, as the minister's aware—and I asked him a bit about it in the House today—we had some brave whistle-blowers come forward in June of this year who basically let Manitobans know that this call centre was doing a pretty shoddy job—unprofessional even—in relation to contract tracing and providing misinformation to Manitobans. That was certainly putting the community at risk.

At that time—in fact, I'm referencing a public statement your government made on June 12, 2021, where your government said that it would monitor Intouch's performance and decide whether to extend the contract by three months beyond the August 24 expiration date.

Now, I'm wondering—obviously, you've extended. Who conducted that review, what did it consist of and where can we get the results of it?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we've had complaints from—about contact tracers from all areas of government, not limited to 24-7. So we worked with—in conjunction with public health to do a review of contact tracing, and this is just regular contract management that we conducted.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

I guess one of the—to point out to the member, one of the complaints that we did hear about contact

tracing is that we needed more languages available to people that were calling in, and that's certainly something that 24-7 was able to enable, to bring in other languages to make available to Manitobans. It's—as you know, the government itself works in English and French, and this is something that we were able to expand with 24-7.

And I want to remind the member that Manitoba is one of the very, very few provinces, if not the only province, that did not have to suspend contact tracing. We were not overwhelmed like some of the provinces are. Other provinces had to spend—suspend contact tracing altogether, but they—because they just couldn't keep up.

So our mix of the public and private model allowed us to get those—that contact tracing done. We'd always like to get it done quicker. And as I'm sure you've heard Dr. Roussin talk about some of the contacts of individuals—up to 50 individuals—takes a long time to trace those contacts, and we certainly depended on public health for the more complex ones.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So despite your government's pledge to investigate the allegations against 24-7 Intouch, there was no specific review of those allegations or that specific company. Do I have that correct?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, again, you know, we worked with contract—or with public health to review and constantly look at the contacts that we had from all of our contact tracers and respond and educate and make sure that we could have the quality and the quantity available that was necessary for Manitobans.

Not once did we had to stand down our contact tracing in Manitoba as other provinces had to do. It was something that was constant. It was continuous. We had review of any complaints that came forward and we resolved those complaints.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm taking it, given that the minister is not answering a direct question, that the answer is no, 24-7 Intouch was never investigated, the allegations were never looked into, and they were not part of any sort of systemic review by official in public health. That is correct, isn't it?

**Mr. Helwer:** I'd thank the member if he wouldn't put words in my mouth. That is not, indeed, what I said. I did, indeed, say that we worked with public health to resolve any and all complaints with all of our contact

tracers, including 24-7. It was a continuous improvement exercise that we do in all of our contracts that we work with.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Was there a specific investigation of the allegations levelled against 24-7 Intouch by your department or any other branch of government, yes or no?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, I've tried to portray to the member—you know, he wants a yes or no to an answer to—indeed, we worked with public health and all of our contact tracers, including 24-7, to resolve any concerns that people had—any and all—to the satisfaction of public health.

So, if you want a yes, I guess that's as close as a yes as I can get to for the member. But it's not something that we stopped doing; we still continue to do so. When someone complains about an issue, we take it up and we resolve the issue.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** What were the findings in relation to 24-7 Intouch allegations? Were they substantiated? Were they found to be wanting? What was the results of the review in, specifically, those allegations in that company?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, again, you know, our department has responsible contract management that we continue to use all the time. We work with public health; we work with other groups that are doing the contact tracing, including 24-7. We involve public health in any of the complaints of anyone that is involved in contact tracing and we resolve those issues. And it has been to the satisfaction of public health for all of those contact tracers.

And, again, I want to reiterate that we are one of the few provinces that did not have to stand down our contact tracing in Manitoba. We were able to meet the needs of Manitobans and trace some of those very, very complex contacts and some of those complex contacts that required other languages.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Can the minister provide the names of who engaged in that review? We could certainly ask them ourselves.

**Mr. Helwer:** So, these are civil servants and public health officers. I can't disclose their names to the member. These are—I'm not looking to go on a witch hunt anywhere. If that's what the member wants to do, I certainly would dissuade him to do so. We were managing this contract with public health and 24-7, Red Cross and—as well as StatsCan. We're dealing

with issues with all of our contact tracers to the satisfaction of public health.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Who was the senior manager or the top official in charge of this review that reported to the minister?

**Mr. Helwer:** As a minister, I am ultimately responsible.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Who was the official that reported to you the results of the review and when did that report occur?

**Mr. Helwer:** I'm a little disturbed by the approach here that he seems to want to out civil servants when they make complaints. We have a culture of—an open culture in this government. I know his previous government didn't have that, it was a very closed culture and people were not encouraged to complain. So when we have complaints, we follow them up and we make sure that people's identities are discreet so that they are welcome to come forward with any complaints, and we encourage that.

Any issues that we had with contract tracing were resolved to the satisfaction of public health and to me. We continue to do so. This is a continuous improvement exercise all the way along.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm concerned this minister is attempting to mislead this committee. So I'm going to ask this again, and, hopefully, I can actually get an honest answer.

You have stated that there was some type of formal review taking place within your department about the allegations specifically coming out of 24-7 touch.

What I've asked is, what was that process? It was a formal process, you say. Who reported to you and when was that report happening?

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, I'll thank the member not to put words in my mouth. I have never said there was an individual audit or review. That is his words. This was a continuous process all the way along. It continues to be a continuous process.

When you're a receiver of complaints, we meet with the various groups that are involved. We address the concerns, we find resolutions, we take corrective action if necessary and we improve the services. This is something that we're working through all the way through this pandemic. An issue comes up, we find a resolution.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Well, with the greatest of respect, the minister's version seems to be evolving this afternoon.

So, to be absolutely clear here, there was no formal review ever taken, there is no existence of a report or a review that was ever given to the minister and what the minister's referring to is that this matter was dealt with informally, internally. Is that correct?

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, I'll thank the member not to be putting words in my mouth or on the record that aren't correct.

We dealt with many different matters that were brought to our attention with all of our contact tracers. And it is something that you do in managing contracts and managing organizations. You deal with expectations; you deal with delivery; you take corrective action and recommendations on how there can be better outcomes. It is not a conflict that we seek to engage in. We want to make sure that all of our contact tracers continue in their employment. And it is a very, very difficult world that they have been working in, as I told the member in question period today. The online telephone abuse that they've received from individuals that don't want to give them information, they have to encourage and call back and try to get that information from people that are very reluctant to give them that information.

So it is a very trying and difficult job for all of our contact tracers, and we want to make sure that we enable them to be successful. So, if the member is looking for something that is, I don't know, a conflict, that's not the way we resolve things, in our department anyway. We work with people to be successful.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm certainly willing to move on with my questioning here if I can get a straight answer from the minister.

Can you please confirm that there has been no formal review or report of these allegations and that this was an informal process and nothing has ever been sort of presented to you in the form of a review or a report?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, indeed, we do have—as I've mentioned—a formal and ongoing review mechanism that we use with all of our contracts and with all of our contact tracers. There's no single report that this produced; it's ongoing, it's continuous. We continue to get recommendations for improvements from—not only from public health but from the civil service and

from the public at large. And we review those recommendations with all of our contact tracers and public health and make those improvements to the system, if we can.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Given your informal review, has there been any changes to the training protocol or any sort of reaction to the allegations that you went back to 24-7 and new policies were put in place, new training regiments were updated? What was the fallout from those allegations and had any changes been made at 24-7?

**Mr. Helwer:** I've mentioned many times here that we do continuous improvement throughout all of our contracts and that's what we did with all of our contact tracers including 24-7. Some of it involved additional training, some of it involved additional language use.

So it was just a continuous improvement process with all the contact tracers, and sometimes some of that improvement is just making sure that they're appreciated because we know that they're very—doing a very, very, very difficult job. I don't imagine that I could do this job. I don't—wouldn't wish it on too many people that—but there are people that are very excellent at this and we had all of our contract tracers working to make sure that Manitobans could stay safe and we could find their contacts.

And, again, we are one of the very few provinces that didn't have to stand down our contact tracing. We were successful in finding those contacts and making sure that we could recommend to those individuals how they could keep them and their families safe.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Who conducted those training sessions, was it staff from public health or was it 24-7 Intouch staff internally?

**Mr. Helwer:** Yes, both and all were involved in all aspects of this, sometimes with public health, sometimes with the Red Cross, sometimes with StatsCan, sometimes with 24-7, and we involved each and everybody along the way to make sure we had the best response to Manitobans.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Could the minister provide an update as to where things are with Providence Therapeutics?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we continue to have regular conversations with Providence to be informed about their process and what they're able to do and where they are in their testing regime so that we can make sure we have what Manitoba needs should there be another pandemic.

I'm sure the member knows that we were searching all over the world to try to vaccine—find vaccines for Manitoba—Manitobans, and that included talking to all of the manufacturers that were identified by Canada to seeing if there was any access that we could add to those vaccines, if we could access vaccines from the United States or if we could make a deal with North Dakota as we did with the ability to vaccinate the truckers that were going into North Dakota.

And I think I would be remiss if I wouldn't say that we're looking ahead to what might happen down the road. We don't know if there's going to be another pandemic, but I think it's critical that a made-in-Canada vaccine of any type would be available for that future pandemic, and Providence is one of those potential providers.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Has any money been paid out to Providence to date?

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Helwer:** No.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Wondering if the minister could provide a copy of the contract or the term sheet, as been previously committed to by his government.

**Mr. Helwer:** So the term sheet was disclosed publicly in February 2021. If the member doesn't—can't find it, we can certainly make it available to him. It is a public document.

The discussions that we have had ongoing with Providence would—we'd look to make changes to that term sheet as circumstances change. One example was Providence was looking to do testing—phase 1 testing, phase 2 testing—in Manitoba and that's pretty difficult when we have 85 per cent—86 per cent of the population vaccinated, when there's only 15 per cent possibility that they could test a vaccine on.

So those are the types of conversations and changes to the term sheet that we would be enabling with Providence.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** What's the current vaccine stockpile that is present in Manitoba today?

**Mr. Helwer:** So suffice it to say that our arrangements with Canada have been very successful, that we have more vaccines than we, I guess, have arms that—have vaccine in Manitoba.

We're looking to what would happen with a third dose and how that would be rolled out. We're already

doing that, as you probably know, in some of the personal-care homes and vulnerable populations.

But in terms of an exact number, it changes all the time and we could endeavour to get that for the member.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I take it from your comments that we obviously have more vaccine than we need in Manitoba and if we needed more, we'd just simply have to request it from the federal government. Is that true?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we do work with the federal government to look at where we need to be in our current vaccine stock. We are—presently have, as I said, a plentiful supply; that was not always the case. I'm sure the member will remember when we were allocating a scarce resource or did not have any of that resource. And we don't want to be in that situation again. That is certainly why we're looking like—towards companies like Providence or other companies in Quebec or Saskatchewan that are very encouraging research in vaccinations or vaccines.

But, currently, with the approved vaccines that Canada has—mainly, of course, Pfizer and Moderna; those are the ones that are prevalent in Manitoba, the others are a little more difficult to come by depending on the demand—but those ones we do have adequate supply in Manitoba at this time. But there certainly was a time—I'm sure the member remembers that time where we did not have that supply, and going forward we want to make sure that we're not in that circumstance again.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So you would agree with me the federal government has made no indication that they will limit the supply of vaccines to any province, including Manitoba.

Given that we get free vaccines from the federal government, why would we turn around and purchase extraneous amounts of a new vaccine which Manitobans would be on the hook for? How is that good fiscal management?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we continue to evaluate and assess where we are with vaccines, and it's certainly something that I'm sure the member wouldn't want us to be in a scarce supply. We don't know what the next pandemic is going to be. It was certainly a very dark and dangerous place when we had no vaccines in Canada and no producer, no supplier at all. And we want to make sure that we're not in that environment again. We have local companies. We have local providers in Canada and Manitoba.

It's also an economic development and a jobs opportunity for Canada. I don't know that we want to export all of our abilities to other countries. It's certainly not the case of where we are in PPE. We have many, many companies that have stepped up production of PPE in Manitoba, that we depend on for our supplies and vaccinate—the vaccine is just one more of those things that we're looking at to ensure that Manitobans can be protected in future pandemics so that we don't have to depend on other countries as we did in this current pandemic.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The G4S company was awarded a contract to employ 90 staff to enforce public health orders. According to proactive disclosure, \$6.6 million was contracted.

How much has been paid out to G4S to date?

\*(17:10)

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the G4S contract that was secured through a competitive RFP, it is done—was done through our department, as we manage many of these contracts. But in terms of the expenditures, those are under Justice and you'd have to go ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) for those details.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Wondering if the minister can advise how many tickets and warnings have been issued by G4S staff to date?

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, that's a question for the Minister of Justice. They're the ones that are in charge of how G4S is used and where they're used and that would be information that Justice would have.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is the minister in a position to tell us how many enforcement officers are currently enforcing public health orders that are employed by the Province?

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, a question for the Minister of Justice. They're in charge of enforcement for the COVID rules and how that's administered.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** PetalMD was awarded initial contract in November for \$436,000, a new contract in April for \$1.7 million. Are these different contracts or are they amended ones? Could the minister explain sort of what the contract in April was for?

**Mr. Helwer:** So the initial contract was an online booking tool that was used for the testing sites so that you could find out where you could get a test done and book that test so you didn't have to wait outside in the cold.

And then, as we received vaccines into Manitoba, we also then used that same online booking site that Manitobans were used to, to go and book their vaccination appointment if they wanted to do it online.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So despite in the change in terms in the contract, a new RFP didn't go out and a second non-bid contract was issued to this company. Is that correct?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, again, in a pandemic wherein things change dramatically overnight, you need to respond quickly and this was one way in that we were able to respond quickly to Manitobans' needs. As I remind you of the conversation I had with then-Minister Anand, that she told us she had no information about vaccines and then within the space of a couple of months, we're receiving them with a day's notice in Manitoba and having to roll out vaccinations.

And you know—you well know the demand that we had for vaccinations at that time with a very, very, very limited supply. We were getting all over the place for a need to get vaccines. So, you know, we needed to stand up something very, very quickly to enable Manitobans to book appointments and to find those not only testing sites but the vaccinations that were available to be made available in Manitoba.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how much has been paid to date to PetalMD?

**Mr. Helwer:** We'll have to return with information to the member for that. We'll take it under advisement.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is the minister able to tell us when the contract will expire?

**Mr. Helwer:** So many of these contracts we can cancel within—with sufficient notice and this is one of those. The current expiry date on that one is January 31st, and we can also extend them if we need to.

You know, I do recall going to Treasury Board; I can't recall the exact month because there was a lot of things flowing together, and getting approval to book testing sites and the contracts were running into December and the question from Treasury Board members was, this was well over a year ago, and they were going, why are you booking these into December of 2021? Won't we be—we'll be done the pandemic by then.

And so, you know, I don't know when the pandemic's going to be done. We need these sites, we need these contracts to be available until we don't need

them. And when we don't need them, then we can cancel them.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is there an expectation or an intention to renew this contract?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we're looking at that contract now because of the January date, seeing if we do need to extend it. And as things are evolving, as we're looking at the possibility of third doses or vaccinations for younger children, there is a possibility that we may need that contract. But as it's a very—still a very, very dynamic environment that we're dealing with. And we'll make that determination at that time.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** In this year's Public Accounts, on page 16 under departmental highlights for Central Services, it reads the following—I'm quoting, here: Partnered with Health and Seniors Care to establish the Manitoba Emergency Response Warehouse to ensure Manitoba has a robust and sustainable stockpile of medical equipment and materials, including PPE, to reinforce the health-care system and public sector supplies in the event of a large-scale health crisis and other emergency situations. Closed quote.

\* (17:20)

Can the minister confirm, then, that there was no stockpile that existed before the pandemic?

**Mr. Helwer:** So if you think back to February of that year, people were still travelling; there was no warnings not to travel. We had our normal PPE supply in the health sector and did not have any indication at that time. Health was working under the previous pandemic guidelines from SARS, H1N1. And this particular virus is transmitted very, very differently, and we had to evolve as we discovered how it was transmitted.

So all governments were caught with just their normal supply of PPE, and we had very few suppliers in Canada. We went all over the world to find supply and brought it into Manitoba. We had many successful companies in Manitoba that stood up production of PPE. I'm very proud of all those companies that—and I can give you—we can give you a long, long list, if you wished—it would take a while in this environment of—that set aside their own manufacturing and found ways to manufacture N95 masks, procedure masks, visors, gowns, scrubs, all kinds of sanitizer that we are now producing in Manitoba.

And as part of that process of bringing this material into Manitoba and warehousing it for a very,

very high-use rate in the health-care sector, we determined that we needed to make sure that we had an emergency response warehouse available for any further emergencies that might arise in Manitoba.

So we created the MERW in order to make sure that we have this adequate supply not only for pandemics, but for other emergencies that Manitoba might face. But the challenge, of course, will—for governments will be to make sure that we—make sure that that supply is maintained and that it is cycled, it is—so we have new product coming into the MERW. When that product comes in, the oldest product goes out so that we don't have any expiry issues; we make sure that it's all used, and we will manage the volume in that warehouse to make sure that we have adequate supply for anything that we might determine Manitoba will face.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So, very sensitive about putting words in the mouth of the minister, so I want to be very clear: prior to the pandemic, we had no such emergency response warehouse in existence in Manitoba; it was created during the pandemic and we didn't keep emergency stockpiles of PPE before the pandemic. Is that all correct?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we did, indeed, have a stockpile in Health coming out of the SARS H-1-N—or, sorry—SARS H1N1 issue or pandemic, I guess you want to call it, but that was adequate for some emergency but certainly not an emergency of this volume. It ramped up all over the world, as I'm sure the member recalls, and people responded in many different ways.

So we did have a stockpile over and above our normal usage in Manitoba and we have since evolved into the MERW to make sure that we can plan for any emergencies Manitoba may face.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'd like to ask the minister some questions about the North End wastewater treatment plant.

I'm wondering if the minister can confirm that a contract has been awarded for that project?

**Mr. Helwer:** While we were—you know, I was greatly encouraged to make an announcement with the federal government and the City of Winnipeg about the North End wastewater pollution control structure. The City of Winnipeg is the municipality that would be issuing those contracts. We are a provider of funding but the City of Winnipeg is the signatory to any contracts.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Wondering if the minister can advise who's been awarded the contract for that project?



**Mr. Helwer:** So we don't comment on contracts that are tendered and awarded by another entity, be it federal or provincial. That is the role of that municipality. The City of Winnipeg would be the entity that the member should ask that question of.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Has the minister decided whether he's going to reverse his directive to the City of Winnipeg to explore public-private partnerships in order to avoid the delays in construction?

**Mr. Helwer:** So want to remind the member that this is going to be the single largest project in the province of Manitoba and the plan is for it to certainly last past my lifetime. The member may be quite a bit younger so he'll maybe still be alive when they need to revisit it.

It is very prudent to make sure that we have the best timing and the best value-for-money project available for Manitobans, that it will continue to function long into the future. And there are lots of different delivery modes that have been looked at.

We're working with the City of Winnipeg in terms of what's best for the project and what's the quickest way to help solve some of these problems that we see with the wastewater going into the lake. Obviously, that's something we all want to prevent, and make sure that it is cost-effective for Manitobans and that it has very innovative delivery mechanisms, as well, so we can make sure that we're looking into how we can best protect the lake.

\* (17:30)

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The mayor has stated publicly that if he followed your directive that there were—the insistence that there has to be a public-private partnership, that could delay the project by two years. And obviously it needs to be constructed yesterday.

So would the minister consider rescinding his directive so construction can start immediately and there won't be two-year delay? Or is the minister happy with a two-year delay?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, immediately after the mayor had made that statement, I was approached by one of the councillors that—who's on EPC and said that they have never heard that statement be made before. It was not part of any of their discussions that they had about the North End plant. We want to find the quickest and best way to build this facility and it—certainly, we're not ideologically limited to what might be the best process. We'll let the market determine what's the best way to go.

P3 partnerships have—we had very successful ones in Manitoba that have come in under budget and well ahead of any time restrictions and they're very innovative in their delivery. If that's not the model for this particular project—and I'll remind the member it's the single largest infrastructure project in Manitoba history. Let's make sure that we have to get this right for Manitobans and maybe not just for the member opposite and myself, but for any of our children in the years to come.

So we are looking at those delivery models working with the City of Winnipeg. And again, the unfortunate statement: I don't know where it came from, we've never heard that before and councillors haven't either.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm wondering if the minister can tell us which city councillor he had that conversation with?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, those are personal conversations that I had with city councillors and there's more than one that I've heard from.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So is the minister suggesting that the mayor is being dishonest or is trying to mislead the Province?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, I wouldn't wish the member to put words in my mouth, wouldn't wish to put words in the mayor's mouth either. We're working with the City of Winnipeg to find the best delivery model.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Well, I'm concerned that the minister is trying to infer that the mayor isn't being forthright when he says there's a two-year delay.

So from the Province's point of view, you're saying that's not accurate? There won't be a two-year delay if the City has to go down the route of a public partnership, is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Helwer:** That would be correct. We have heard from the market there would be no delay.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Are you in possession of the Deloitte P3 report from the City?

**Mr. Helwer:** I have not yet seen the report.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** That's certainly not what I asked. What I asked was were you or anybody in your department, or Central Services in the most general sense, in possession of the Deloitte report on P3s?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, again, with the single largest infrastructure project in Manitoba, this was something that we spend quite a bit of time on, and there's regular

meetings with provincial staff and City staff. We're aware that the City issued an RFP to Deloitte and I have not seen that report at this point. There may have been some discussions with the City on what they expect out of it, but, again, we're in regular discussions with the City, and we're going to move fairly quickly on this as soon as we find the right path.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The information that we have is that you very much are in possession of that report, and I'm wondering if you will undertake here and now to provide a copy to us of that report.

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, again, I do not have the report, and it is not the Province's report; it is the City of Winnipeg's report. When they disclose it to the Executive Policy Committee and council, then it will be made public, and is—that is their role and their ability to do so. It's not the federal or provincial government's role to divulge reports of other levels of government. That is the City's responsibility.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So the information we have is Central Services is in receipt of that report. And I appreciate you may not personally be in possession of it, but your department is.

Will you undertake to release that document to us?

**Mr. Helwer:** So any document that the City has issued an RFP for a tender and we're—in receipt of, it is their responsibility on how they wish to disclose it. If they share it with the department, they can do so, but we cannot share it with anyone. That is the City that will decide through their Executive Policy Committee and other committees of their municipality how they will disclose that document to the public. It would be entirely inappropriate for anyone else to disclose that document.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is your government's funding conditional on a P3 analysis?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, my understanding is the RFP that the City issued was for a P3 analysis.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** My question to the minister: Is your funding conditional on a P3 analysis?

\* (17:40)

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the funding that was announced for phase 1 did not have any P3 requirements. That was an agreement between the federal government, provincial government and in municipality, the City of Winnipeg. My understanding is that the City has issued an RFP for a P3 analysis.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is it the policy of this government that any funding for provincially based will be conditional on a P3 analysis?

**Mr. Helwer:** So it is the policy of this government to find the best delivery model for the citizens of Manitoba, and, indeed, we've already flowed over 50 per cent of the money for phase 2 of the North End plant. So we want to find the best and quickest way to construct this facility.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is the P3 model the quickest and most inexpensive way to do this?

**Mr. Helwer:** So that is the work that's being undertaken by the City of Winnipeg and others to determine what is the best and quickest model.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Is the minister committed to funding the other phases of the North End water treatment plant?

**Mr. Helwer:** We are the only level of government that has advanced any monies for phase 2 of the North End plant.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** That's certainly not what I asked. What I asked was whether this government was committed to the future other phases of the North End treatment plant.

**Mr. Helwer:** We are the only level of government that has committed to funding the third phase of the North End plant.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Now, in a March 30th, 2021 letter to the acting CAO, deputies Sinclair and Gray instructed Mr. Ruta to, and I quote, please proceed with the public-private partnerships—in quotations, P3—market sounding, as recommended by your consultant, closed quote.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide a copy of the consultant's report.

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, that report is the City of Winnipeg's report, it's not ours. We cannot disclose reports that were commissioned and paid for by another level of government.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Does the minister find that disingenuous? Does he find that problematic, given that the government based its decision on the consultant's report, and doesn't he believe in full accountability and disclosure, that the good people of Manitoba deserve to see what the government makes their decisions based on?

So I'll ask him again: Will he give the report that this government used to make its decision?

**Mr. Helwer:** Again, it would be highly inappropriate and possibly illegal for me to disclose a report that was commissioned and paid for by another level of government without their permission. So I'd recommend that the member go to the City of Winnipeg to ask for that report to see if they will disclose it to him; I certainly cannot.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** The City officials have warned that privatizing operations of any wastewater treatment could introduce safety risks.

Why is the minister not listening to these concerns and instead insisting on the P3 model?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we're doing our due diligence as what would be the most appropriate delivery model for this facility, the single-largest municipal and provincial infrastructure project in Manitoba's history. We want to make sure that it's done well and it's done quickly, in order to make sure that we can reduce the flow of nutrients into the watershed.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Want to direct the minister to page 16 of Public Accounts where it states, and I quote, completed work on the approval of over \$1 billion in investing in the Canada infrastructure program, ICIP, projects and played a key role in delivering capital projects within K-to-12 schools and work in municipalities' water and sewer infrastructure projects as part of the \$500-million Manitoba Restart Program.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide a list of the ICIP proposals received, how many were approved, what they were; and how many were rejected and what those were; and the amount distributed to each project, please.

**Mr. Helwer:** So can I ask the member for some clarification? Is he looking for Restart projects that were approved or—and funded, or ICIP projects that were approved and funded? They are different.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** We would appreciate both.

**Mr. Helwer:** So the approved projects are all publicly released and we can endeavour to give him a list of both the Restart projects and the ICIP projects that were funded and approved.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I really appreciate that. Thank you, Minister.

Could you also give us which projects were rejected and how much money was distributed to each of the projects that were not rejected?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we haven't rejected any projects.

As the member well knows, there is an infrastructure challenge in Manitoba and we are over-subscribed in the ICIP stream but that doesn't mean that we rejected any projects. We found ones that we were able to move to the federal government with the municipality or the proponent and the federal government decided which ones they were going to approve and they have done that so for the majority of the projects we've advanced to them but not all of them yet.

And—but again, there's—it's—this is a long-term, 10-year infrastructure program that we're working through with our proponents and with the federal government.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Wondering if the minister could provide the number of rapid COVID tests received and the number used since March 1st, 2020.

**Mr. Helwer:** So, we have received from the federal government, to date, 1.4 million tests—rapid tests, and we have shipped 1,130,700 of these tests to 616 sites in Manitoba.

\* (17:50)

**Mr. Wasyliw:** I'm wondering if the minister can give us a status update on the Xplornet contract.

**Mr. Helwer:** I'm sure the member knows we issued a binding MOU in order to enter into negotiations with Xplornet and we are in the final 'stages' of those negotiations.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Could the minister provide a copy of the memorandum of understanding?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, much like contracts, these are subject to both parties allowing the release. We would have to go back to Xplornet to see if they would allow us to release the MOU.

The member may recall that the Providence MOU was released publicly and we can do that with the agreement of Providence, but we'd have to go back to Xplornet to ask if we could do so.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Will the minister undertake today both to go to Xplornet and see if they will consent to that disclosure as well as 24-7 and disclosing their contract as well? Will you undertake to do that?

**Mr. Helwer:** Certainly agreed that we would go back to 24-7. We already took that under advisement that we could ask them and we'll ask Xplornet if they would allow the release, the MOU, and we'll see where that.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** I really appreciate that. Thank you, Minister.

What is the valuation of the Xplornet contract?

**Mr. Helwer:** So there's no value attached to this contract. The value to Manitobans is going to be 125,000 households or businesses that will have access to broadband that they currently don't have, and that is 90—what per cent—90—well over 90—92 per cent of the possible unserved households in Manitoba as well as 25,000 additional cellphone—or accesses that could be made available.

So, that's the value of the contract to Manitobans.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** Is Hydro responsible for the valuation of the contract, or is your department or government managing that process?

**Mr. Helwer:** There is no valuation of the contract, either by our department or by—nor by Hydro. It is basically an enabling contract that would allow the development of broadband to all of these houses in Manitoba, a 120—over 125,000. That is the value to Manitobans, in additional cell service that will be available to another 25,000 Manitobans.

So, in terms of a value of the contract, it's the value to Manitobans, but there is no evaluation of the contract value. It's, as I said, it's a enabling contract to make sure that we can provide those services to Manitobans.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** How many contracts were transferred over to Xplornet for access to the dark fibre?

**Mr. Helwer:** So no contracts will be transferred for the purposes of access to dark fibre.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** I'm wondering if you're able to tell us how many Manitoba-based companies, and what's the value of procurement, goods or services that is purchased by your department by them.

**Mr. Helwer:** So we do have a very open procurement process, and with all the trade agreements that we are party to, we have to make sure that there is no favouritism for solely Manitoba companies. And I already did, in my opening statement, tell the member that of the \$460 million in pandemic-response supplies, equipment or vaccines, over \$241 million or

about 45 per cent of those went to Manitoba companies.

And I'm very, very proud of those companies that stepped up to help us. And I can tell the member some of those companies that—you know, we can look at Canada Goose was part of that, and they were working on over 100,000 reusable gowns, you know, a contract value of over \$2 million. Cerebra Health's Winnipeg Ventilator was a part of that.

Deasil Custom Sewing in Morden was, again, reusable gowns. Icon Technologies that I visited the facility there with the MLA for Morden-Winkler, they retooled their entire manufacturing to supply Manitoba with 60,000 face shields, a contract value of \$498,000 there.

And when I spoke to other procurement ministers and Health ministers across Canada after we had settled on that contract and we visited Icon, we were taking, I think, just over 4,000 shields a week. And looking at their facilities with the few staff they had working there, I asked them how many they could produce a week, and they said, well, somewhere between 45 and 50 or 60 thousand. And when I told the other procurement ministers across Canada about that, I think they sold out immediately—

\* (18:00)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of Committee of Supply, pursuant to the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7th, 2021.

Item 5(d) stated that on Wednesday, October the 13th, 2021 at 6 p.m., the Chairpersons of the Committee of Supply in each section will interrupt debate and put the question immediately without debate on any remaining Estimates resolutions. The Sessional Order also indicates that for any requested recorded votes, the division bells shall ring for no more than one minute on each question, and the committee and the House shall rise following the consideration of the last resolution.

I am therefore going to call in sequence the remaining resolutions for this section on the following departments: Central Services, Tax Credits, Emergency Expenditures. I would remind all members that, in accordance with the Sessional Order, these questions may not be debated.

At this point, we will allow virtual members to unmute their mics so they can respond to the question on the resolution.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Central Services.

Resolution 8.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,262,000 for Central Services, Corporate Administration and Planning, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$220,065,000 for Central Services, Capital Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$43,266,000 for Central Services, Business Transformation and Technology, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,467,000 for Central Services, Procurement and Supply Chain, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$17,889,000 for Central Services, Public Safety Communication Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$56,200,000 for Central Services, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 8.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,790,000 for Central Services, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Central Services.

### TAX CREDITS

**Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook):** I will—the next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of

Committee of Supply is for the Department of Tax Credits.

I will now call resolution 33.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$152,759,000 for Tax Credits, Tax Rebates and Fees, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Tax Credits.

### EMERGENCY EXPENDITURES

**Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Emergency Expenditures.

I will now call on resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,000,000 for Emergency Expenditures, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This concludes our considerations of the Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply.

I would like to thank the ministers, critics and all honourable members for their work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

### ROOM 255

#### SPORT, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Len Isleifson):** Good afternoon. Will this section of the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? The honourable minister? *[interjection]*

No, we cannot hear you. We can see you, we just cannot hear you. *[interjection]* For sure. Just signal when you're ready.

Minister, go ahead. Yes, no, we still cannot hear you.

Can the minister hear us?

I'm just wondering if the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage has a headset that might work.

So to the committee, because we are having issues, could we take a recess until we get this figured out and then we can call back to order? *[Agreed]*

Okay, thank you. So the committee will now stand in recess.

*The committee recessed at 3:07 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:13 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, so good afternoon, once again, folks, and we will again call the Committee of Supply to order. As I mentioned previously, we will be considering, in this area of Committee of Supply, Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? *[interjection]*

Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd also like to welcome the members from, I believe, it is Burrows, Notre Dame and Tyndall Park that are here today, as well as, I believe, the member from Radisson.

So I am pleased to be here, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome all of my colleagues, as I said. And it really is an honour and a privilege as the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to introduce the 2021-2022 budgetary Estimates for my department.

I'd like to take a moment to introduce members from my department who are here with me today: Jeff Hnatiuk, the Deputy Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage; Mike Sosiak, the assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer for Administration and Finance; Veronica Dyck, the assistant deputy minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage; Scott Goodine, the archivist of Manitoba and Jamie Carnegie, the executive director of the Status of Women.

So from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank all of the dedicated women who provided care and compassion to all of the women in women's shelters who seek assistance at—from—who seek assistance from these really important women. And I'd also like to say miigwech to all of the grassroots organizations that provide vital resources to our most vulnerable Manitobans.

I'd also like to provide my profound gratitude to all of the front-line workers: our medical professionals, our health-care aides, our teachers and assistants, our paramedics, our first responders and all of those working with our most vulnerable population in the social services field and our entire civil service here in Manitoba, who during this very unprecedented and challenging times have made a real difference for all Manitobans.

And today, it's truly a pleasure to be able to share some of our department's achievements and initiatives that we have established that are making a really difference, again, in the lives of Manitobans.

First of all, on December 4th, we released Manitoba's framework to address gender-based violence here in our province, and this document outlines how our government is organizing itself to co-ordinate efforts to end gender-based violence, including support for addressing the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

And in March 2021, I was very excited, together with my colleagues from Justice and Indigenous and Northern Relations, to announce \$6.4 million in grants to community organizations from the Victims Assistance Fund. And that supports, again, many of the programs and priorities that are laid out in our framework.

And, as you know, the pandemic has had far-reaching economic impacts across many sectors. We also know that women have experienced the negative economic impacts of the pandemic most significantly, at a much higher rate than men, and increasing participation in the workforce for women is a key element of economic recovery from the pandemic.

Our Manitoba Status of Women has supported initiatives to encourage women to train and acquire good-paying jobs in non-traditional sectors and roles such as heavy construction, information and community—and communication technology.

Manitoba Status of Women is also working with the Manitoba Construction Sector Council on a very new and exciting initiative that will provide community-based training and mentorship programs for Indigenous women up in the North. Skilled trades, such as in the areas of framer and blast driller, have begun working already—these women in fair field and Cross Lake, respectively. And water and wastewater system installers have already started in the Dakota

Tipi area, and also as blast drillers in the War Lake–York Landing, just coming up this winter.

I am pleased to report that the first group of 16 women in Cross Lake have all completed the course and are now working on construction projects in their home community. Yes, they are actually building their own communities. I am so proud of all of them.

So, the Family Violence Prevention Program supports the operation, as well, of 10 women's crisis shelters across our province, and our program staff have worked very closely with public health officials and shelter leadership to ensure that shelters remained open—and not only open, but they continue to provide those very essential service 24-7. Even in the face of COVID, those women were there. Those angels were there working with the women.

The pandemic created unprecedented challenges for all Manitobans, but especially for those who are experiencing domestic violence or family violence. And in areas around the world, domestic violence has been noted as a shadow pandemic playing out alongside COVID-19, and I want to ensure all—want to ensure you that all Manitobans in our province have been supported, and they know where to turn if they need support.

I don't know how much time I have left, Mr. Chair, but I'm very proud of the important work that we have done in this department to lift women up, to provide them with support, even during this very challenging time.

Not only have we provided them these services, but we've also partnered with End Homelessness Winnipeg to provide a new Homeless Individuals and Families Information System—it's called HIFIS, something that shelters have been asking for for years and years and years. And this is an integrated data management system that will enable accurate information on shelter capacity and availability. It's the same system—information system that Siloam Mission and Main Street Project would use. So it really is an opportunity for all of those different shelters to work together for the betterment of women and homeless individuals in the province of Manitoba.

\* (15:20)

And this past spring I was also very proud that we've just opened up an RFP to acquire an updated crisis line for the family violence centres here in Manitoba. And this new web-based platform will not only enable calls but secure chat functions. And we

know that's so important because otherwise, you know, a perpetrator may have the ability to listen in on a phone call, but by using the chat function, it's a much safer way of reaching out for help for those individuals that are experiencing violence.

Our archives—we're working together with archives. We're actually right now scoping for \$372,000 to acquire a new system and a design phase so that individuals across the province, and really across the globe, can access very important information with regard to archives. So that's something that I'm also very proud of.

Here in Manitoba, of course, it's been a challenging year, but Sport Manitoba has continued to be able to provide programs to our athletes, especially our young Indigenous athletes. And I'm very proud that we've provided over \$400,000 from our Province alone for programming for Indigenous individuals and athletes.

I'm just going through this a little faster because I know that there's so much to talk about, so much to share with all of my colleagues around the table. And I want to make sure that all of you are aware of the very important work that's taking place in this department, here.

Of course, we have the international curling centre of excellence, which is making good progress right now.

Our Province funds \$3.6 million for the Manitoba Film and Music, which develops and promotes the film industry here in Manitoba.

And, of course, before COVID, you know, the film industry was just booming here. You know, our government recognized the importance of the film industry. Of course, it was a Conservative government under Gary Filmon who first initiated the film and video tax credit. And so we're going to make sure that we've made that tax credit even better.

We eliminated the sunset clause, making it permanent, which was just such a success for film producers to be able to reach out now and tell all of those individuals—whether they're from MGM, or Universal, or our local film producers—that they can come here with confidence and produce films without having to worry that some point in time that film and video tax credit might be—well, to make it very clear, might be axed. So that's not going to happen. We've made it permanent and, once again, we know that our film and video tax—or our film and video people, our film producers are going to be just running here to

Manitoba knowing, in fact, that we have the very best tax credit across the country.

Of course, we just made our Book Publishing Tax Credit permanent. And that's really important as well. I've talked to many book publishers across our province and they've said they need that certainty. And so this provides them that certainty. So I'm very proud of that.

With regard to libraries, I'm going to say, you know, stay tuned. We're going to have some very good news for libraries in the very near future.

And, of course, with regard to our Heritage Grants Program, you know, there has been no other government that has invested more in our heritage projects than our government here in Manitoba. And just on Friday, as a matter of fact, I was at a Selkirk Legion and we announced some additional money for a monument so that they could establish a monument to recognize the Dufferin boys—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired.

And just before we move on—I thank the minister for those comments. Just because we have people joining us virtually, I just want to make sure that you can all see the timer, that it should be showing up on the display. So I see that we are, so thank you for that.

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

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** No, I don't have.

**Mr. Chairperson:** No official statement there, thank you.

So, under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department of the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 14.1(a), contained in resolution 14.1.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or in a global discussion? Global discussion, all agreed? *[Agreed]*

Therefore—thank you, and it is agreed that questioning will—for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Brar:** Thank you, Minister, for the opening statement.

I would like to ask, the Estimates books show a planned reduction to culture and sport plan programs of \$2.6 million. Can the minister kindly explain why the large reduction is planned?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you to my honourable colleague.

You know, we cannot identify the area that you're referring to, so I would just appreciate if you could, perhaps, give us maybe more information on where you identified that decrease because, you know, here in our department, we have not decreased any funding at all. I mean, the funding has remained stable throughout the entire year.

So if you could provide me more information, it might have been an area where we actually transferred nearly that amount of money from Sport, Culture and Heritage from our festivals into the Manitoba Arts Council. So that's why it may look like a decrease, but it's really just a relocation from one area of our department into another. So can you provide me with those details, please?

**Mr. Brar:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, I will, yes. Just a quick reminder, sorry. Just a quick reminder, too, that all questions and answers, please pose them through the Chair.

So, the member from Burrows.

**Mr. Brar:** May I ask the minister if she can confirm that there is no reduction in the budget for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage in the current budget as compared to the previous year?

**Mrs. Cox:** So I'm thinking that the area that you might be looking at is expenditure summary. So I can tell you with certainty that there has been—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Excuse me, Minister. Again, I just—I really need to emphasize that we not use the word you or—because then it directs it to an individual person. It must go through the Chair, please, in a third party.

So, the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox).

**Mrs. Cox:** So, I can tell Mr. Chair that—with certainty that there has been no decrease at all in funding to any of the sport, culture, heritage, Status of Women areas within the departments of sport, culture, heritage and Status of Women.

\* (15:30)



You might see a reduction to the mental—Manitoba's Centennial Concert Hall, which is a reduction in the amount of money that they spent. But that does not impact at all the amount of money that we have provided to all of our sport, culture and heritage areas.

Our OREs, any of our Manitoba Film and Music, there has been no decrease. Just a decrease in the amount of money that they actually spent because they had a significant decrease in income and revenue that they had because of COVID.

I hope that's sufficient, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Brar:** Can the minister kindly expand on the situation at Centennial Centre? Did they spend less this time? What were the reasons?

**Mrs. Cox:** So I wanted to confirm that, in fact, the MCCC—or, the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall, because of COVID—I'm sure that all of the members are aware that all of the arts organizations, the arts sector, the culture sector were most impacted. And they were the ones that, I'm sure you've read this many times, who were the first to have to close their doors as a result of COVID.

And that certainly happened to the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. It certainly happened to the Centennial Concert Hall. It certainly happened to the Manitoba Opera. It happened to the Manitoba—who else is there? I'm sorry. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet. To all of those organizations—because of COVID, they had to close their doors.

So, as a result, their expenditures were less. And their revenue was less. We did hear from the Centennial Concert Hall, from the CEO. And, you know, they raised the concerns that they didn't have the revenue, the normal revenue that they normally had because of performances that they host. So we provided them with an additional nearly \$1 million. It was \$900,000 that we provided to them in the 2020-2021 year to ensure that they remained sustainable.

And I could provide you with, you know, a letter that would, in fact, reinforce the—how important that was to them to be able to have those—that funding, that \$900,000, nearly \$1 million, to go towards, you know, reducing any deficit that they thought they were going to experience. So, you know, I worked with Mr. Olson numerous times. We—our department worked with him to ensure that they had the resources that were necessary.

And, you know, just this week, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is hosting their first ballet again in the Centennial Concert Hall. And I know that everybody is thrilled. All of our people in the arts sector are thrilled that we can once again back—get back to some form of normalcy. Of course, it's not the same as it was before. The numbers are still reduced and people are wearing masks. But, you know, that ability, we know that arts and culture enriches the lives of all Manitobans. So just being able to do that is providing the people with some semblance, again, of normalcy.

So I hope that that answers the member's question.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Brar:** Thanks for the details. I would thank the minister for the details, actually.

And, like, it actually confused me. Can I request for clarity?

As the minister said that the centennial hall they underspent, at the same time the minister has provided \$900,000 more to them to sustain.

So, how does that work? Like, they underspent. How much did they underspend? Can I know that and details about the situation?

**Mrs. Cox:** You know, again, just referring to what I had said earlier, so Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall was not eligible for any federal funding, for no CEWS funding or anything like that. So, you know, we recognized, following discussion with the CEO, that it was necessary to provide them with additional funding to ensure that they remained sustainable as we emerged through this COVID-19 pandemic.

\* (15:40)

And, you know, I've had many federal-provincial-territorial meetings with other provinces, other jurisdictions, and every one of, you know, the arts sector areas have felt this same decrease in revenue. So when you take a look at Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall, their revenue decreased; however, their operating costs remained the same. Their operating costs to operate, you know, for security, for staff that was still necessary, hydro, all of their utilities.

So the amount that you see there in that area is a reflection of not only the decrease that they've seen from the deficit from lack of participation and bookings and things like that, but it's also as a result of the fact that they were not able to open their doors. So

while our funding remained the same, their revenue portion of it was reduced.

So, I can say again with certainty that there was no reduction at all to any of our outside reporting entities, to Manitoba Film and Music, to any of these organizations during the last year. We were there to lift them up; we were there to support them; and we did that, you know, not only based on the funding that we provide to them for their operating funding, but also the additional funding that we provided through our Arts and Culture Sustainability Fund which was a \$6-million fund. And I would say it's one of the most generous funds across the entire country.

As—again, you know, I want to refer back to those meetings that I had with other jurisdictions and other ministers. And, you know, they called me up after and they said, you know, can you share with me, you know, how you and your department and your government supported and continued to ensure that there was, you know, that sustainability as they emerged from COVID-19?

I mean, you know, we were really role models in what we did here, and not only that, but we also provided that \$5 million for that Safe at Home program, recognizing that people are hungry for the arts and the culture and for that ability to participate in arts and culture. So that \$5 million through that Safe at Home program, it provided Manitobans the opportunity to be entertained, you know, right from the comfort of their home. They could sit there and they could learn, you know, language instruction. They could learn yoga. They could learn so many different opportunities to participate in sports, perhaps even how to bake a cake, how to learn to speak Filipino or Tagalog and things like that. I mean, it was such a broad array of activities that people could participate and learn from. You know, it really supported people during those very, very dark, dark days during COVID.

And, just yesterday, as a matter of fact, I had an individual, and he was just raving about the benefits of that Safe at Home program, and I've had others who have told me about the arts and sustainability fund that we initiated here as a government, and, you know, it did so much to save, you know, those small businesses or those small, I should say, arts institutions. You know, as I mentioned yesterday in my comments, there were many, many organizations that benefited from the Arts and Culture Sustainability Fund. I believe, you know, the Winnipeg Art Gallery received \$300,000.

I'm just going to confirm; I believe that—you know, and this is not reflected in what you see here in the budget because—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time is expired.

**Mr. Brar:** Regarding the previous question that the minister wanted details on as—about the \$2.6-million cut to culture and sport programs, it's on page 12 of the Estimates book, if that helps to answer the question better.

Additionally, I would like to ask that—the grant assistance to external agencies is also reduced by \$527,000. Which agencies are going to have their funding cut and why?

Thank you.

\* (15:50)

**Mrs. Cox:** So, it is—it's a little complicated, but I'm going to explain this.

So, our government has established many endowment funds because we recognize that it's really important that these—our heritage buildings, as I said earlier in my opening comments, continue to be able to receive long-term sustainable funding. So this \$500,000 that he was referring to was actually funds that were sent into our heritage trust endowment fund, and that was a \$5-million trust fund when it was initially established. That was established so that heritage organizations could apply for funding, and it would be matched, rather than them having to just apply for money over and over again. So, this funding would be matched. It would go into an endowment fund for them, and then as it continued to grow, they could continue to be able to generate revenue so that they could be sustainable well into the future.

We did this on many, many occasions. We did \$15 million for the Manitoba Heritage resource trust, and so dividends were provided now to organizations of \$650,000, where formerly, under the NDP government, they had to reduce that funding from \$350,000 to \$266,000. So a significant increase is what we did when we established these endowment funds. So we have that one for \$15 million; we have the \$2-million military memorial endowment fund, which provides \$100,000 dividend every year, and that's the one that I was referring to out in the Selkirk region, where they benefitted from that money.

Some of these funds also went into the Signature Museums endowment fund. And that was another \$10-million endowment fund that we established and, as a result, our Signature Museums—there are seven of

them across the province—now receive long-term sustainable funding into perpetuity. They no longer have to worry that, in fact, something could happen, a new government takes over, and they say, you know what? We don't care about funding the Signature Museums; we don't care about funding heritage projects. This money is now here for long-term, sustainable funding and into perpetuity. There is no chance that they will ever, ever, ever lose funding as a result of these endowment funds that our government has enacted for these organizations.

So I hope that that explains to the member, Mr. Chair, the reason that he sees that difference. But I can tell you with certainty that we have, in fact, added many, many, many more tens of millions of dollars into our heritage organizations and our heritage sector through all of these different endowment funds that we have.

And again, that was \$10 million for the Manitoba Heritage conservation trust, \$15 million, which was—no, I'm sorry—\$15 million for the Manitoba Heritage conservation trust; \$10 million for the Signature Museums; \$5 million for the Heritage trust, which is a little different; \$2 million for the military memorial, which I just mentioned is something that's very unique and it is the only type of endowment fund of its type across the entire country. And that's because our government really recognizes the significant contributions that our armed forces have made here in our province and we want to ensure that Manitobans never forget those significant contributions that our veterans made to our province. So it was very important that we establish this fund going forward.

I mean, another one of those funds that is not noted here, but that \$25-million Bay fund which we announced just earlier this year, and that was to ensure that that beautiful historic building remains here in our province, in our city of Winnipeg forever so that it can never, ever be torn down or, you know, undesignated. It has heritage status and we—you know, we plan to ensure that it remains a very, very viable and beautiful building well into the future—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired.

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** How many times did the committee meet in 2020 and 2021 to date? I'm referring to the Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet.

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you to the opposition member for the question.

I just wanted to elaborate a little bit on the Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, and you know, again, that is the only Cabinet committee of its type right across the country. So it is very unique.

We recognize that in order to address gender-based violence that we can't work in silos. We have to work together, so we have members—Cabinet members on that committee who are from the Department of Health, the Department of Families, Education, myself, Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations. All of those members who sit together to address gender-based violence.

And you know, it's from those discussions that we have that we were able to, you know, announce that \$6.4 million for the—from the Victims Assistance Fund, and through those discussions, you know, we provided organizations like West Central Women's Resource Centre with over \$800,000 in funding, you know. Never before have they ever received, you know, that amount of funding to address gender-based violence.

We were at Ka Ni Kanichihk for that announcement just earlier in the year, and we provided them with I believe it was close to \$300,000 as well to address gender-based violence. And, you know, they were just overwhelmed with that amount of money and the significant, you know, significant effect it will have—it will have on women who are exploited here in our province of Manitoba.

So that was very important, but I did want to let the member know that we met in 2020 on June 23rd, September 22nd, November 23rd and then in 2021 we met again in February, May and July and we have another meeting, which is currently scheduled for November. So, you know, we do like to be able to meet frequently to have that opportunity to have the discussions. We quite often have presenters at that—at the meetings who really help to provide us with more information on what we can do to address gender-based violence here in our province.

We recognize that there is more to do, but we are committed to working to address this problem. You know, it was just last year, I believe it was December 4th or the 3rd, we released our gender-based violence framework. And, you know, this is a document that is going to guide us for years and years here in our province, and it was not only something that was done from, you know, the members around the table—we collaborated with many, many grassroots organizations, our Indigenous community, our

BIPOC community, people from right across the province, to ensure that we listen to them.

\* (16:00)

And this is not something that was done, you know, on the—you know, on the cuff. It was done very deliberately with a lot of work and a lot of thought.

And, you know, even the NDP government in British Columbia, they reached out to us and they said, you know what, you know, you have this framework and, you know, we think that this is a document that we would be able to look at and utilize in the development of our own framework. I mean, and that's an NDP government. You know, we need to work together to address gender-based violence not only here in this province, but across all jurisdictions. And so I was very, very honoured, to tell you the truth, when they did reach out to us and said that, you know, this document is something that they feel they would like to utilize in the development of their own framework documents.

So, you know, this is not an area that we take lightly. We recognize that it's important to work together with all of these communities, all of—with these grassroots communities, with our women's centres, our women's resource centres, our women's shelters to ensure that women have all of the resources available to them to address and combat gender-based violence here in our province, Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**MLA Marcelino:** The next series of questions will be on women's shelter services.

On page 21 of the annual report from 2019–twenty–to 2020–21, there was a significant decline in the number of residential bed nights at shelters and women's resource centres, as well as a reduction in the number of clients served by the shelters. Is this the result of COVID-19 preventing women from leaving homes and accessing the services they need?

And also, does the minister have current statistics about the number of deaths that have been attributed to domestic violence increases in 2020–2021?

**Mrs. Cox:** I appreciate that question.

You know, obviously, COVID-19 has had an impact on all of our lives, and it's had an impact on women most significantly. Because of COVID-19 we realized, or recognized, that there were a lot of women who chose not to opt for residential-care services. And so, rather than doing that, we saw a significant

increase in the use of our crisis line, the use of our texting service that we have.

And I believe that that's also because—for me, it was important that women knew that service was still available. And so services never stopped in our shelters. They never stopped in our women's resource centres. We ensured that we raised awareness right across the province. We had broadcast on radio and on, you know, other different areas, social media, ensuring that women knew that there were safe places—when home was no longer safe, that there were places that they could go to visit and to access care and resources right across our province.

We did those broadcasts in 12 different languages, up in northern and rural communities, recognizing that women, during COVID, did not want to, quite often, access services in a shelter. So we ensured that women had that opportunity to be able to go to different areas where they could access that information. So as I said, through crisis lines.

We also worked very hard—I mean, the first thing that I did when COVID hit was immediately, you know, talk to all of the shelter directors, and said to them, you know, we are here working for you. If there is anything that you need—PPE, if there's hand sanitizer, if there's any accommodation that we can do to make things easier for women to access service, you have that. And for me, that was very important and essential that all of our shelters received that message that they were a priority during COVID.

And we also ensured that we talked to the—as I said—the shelter directors, and in case that there was a need for some additional beds, you know, we reached out to hotels. We made those arrangements so that the families could be safely contained and continue to receive those resources. It wasn't as if that they were going to be left and isolated. The services would continue, those wraparound services, and we would make sure that women would continue to be cared for and receive that compassionate care that they needed.

We also had alternate isolation units for individuals who were concerned about COVID. And I can tell you that, you know, we also had provided them with rapid testing in all of the shelters, and I know that in one of the largest shelters here in the city of Winnipeg we were able to detect three cases—or, actually, to detect before these individuals had any contact with other residents in the shelters, and we stopped, you know, what could have potentially been 60 cases in a shelter by doing that rapid testing and reaching out and ensuring that people had all of those

services that they needed in a very prompt and very reliable way.

We're also working together, you know, with the federal government, because this is a problem that all jurisdictions are experiencing is the ability to identify the numbers when it comes to domestic violence and gender-based violence.

So, you know, we are working on a national action plan—all of the provinces across the entire nation—to develop a plan that can help us to learn more about domestic violence and, of course, you know, how it relates to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

\* (16:10)

And I've had, you know, the opportunity to listen to our federal representatives and to other provincial representatives and really look to developing this plan so we can work together to ensure that we have better services for women very broadly. I mean, here in the province of Manitoba, as I said, it has been my priority right from the—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time is expired.

**MLA Marcelino:** The amount of funding to external agencies that deal with domestic violence decreased this past year.

Why did the funding decrease for shelters and for women's resource centres? This is found on page 22 in the annual report.

*Mr. James Teitsma, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Cox:** So I just wanted to let my opposition critic know that there was not a decrease. What that was was as a result of the family law modernization strategy that we had developed, which is something that we were working together with the Department of Justice.

We took the money that we had delegated for the Heart Medicine Lodge, or it's known as well as the Ka Ni Kanichihk, and the Winnipeg's children's access centre. We took those funds and we moved them into Department of Justice to the family law modernization strategy because that was a better fit for them.

We were told by those organizations that—we wanted to address the concerns that a lot of families had when they had to go to court, whether it be because of violence, whether it be because of, you know, domestic issues, marital breakup, things like that.

So rather than have that money be with us in this department, which was not a good fit, we moved it over to Justice to the family law modernization strategy so that—we wanted to keep—we try to keep people out of the courts as much as possible.

We want to give them those supports, those wrap-around supports so that them and their families don't have to suffer the consequences of going before a judge and having to be in a court system which could be very cold and, you know, at times, very difficult for people who are vulnerable to have to, you know, go through another hurdle, so to speak.

So by doing this, it provides those families, those women, those children, the opportunity to avoid that court system and be involved in a different way of adjudicating a family law.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**MLA Marcelino:** Does the minister fund any programs or resources at women's shelters that aim to support and accommodate the specific needs of women from ethnic or newcomer communities, specifically language services, religious dietary needs or culturally appropriate counselling or counselling provided in other languages?

**Mrs. Cox:** Again, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

I am pleased to advise that we provide funding to West Central Women's Resource Centre and also to North End women's resource centre. And, you know, in those communities they provide funding to many, many different ethnocultural communities. They are located, both of them, in the heart of the city. And, you know, just as a matter of fact, two weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet with Lorie English, who is the executive director from West Central Women's Resource Centre.

When we talked about all of the good work that they do and we talked about that \$800,000 that they had available to them through the Victims Assistance Fund, which really allowed them the opportunity to do even more outreach in that community. I was also happy to—or, very—I was humbled to be able to provide them as well—Lorie—with funding for her community van. She was at the point where they almost thought that they would have to stop that project, and, you know, they—what they do is—with that van—is they go out and they reach out to the most vulnerable people in the community. So I was very humbled, as I said, to be able to provide them with that funding so that they could continue to do that good work.

\* (16:20)

Also with regard to the West Central Women's Resource Centre, for years and years and years, Lorie English had reached out to the former NDP government asking for sustainable funding, asking for that funding so that they could continue to do that work on a regular basis to help all of these people, these vulnerable people in the—in their community. And so it was our government who, you know, now provides them with that long-term sustainable funding so that she doesn't have to be concerned anymore about whether or not she will be able to operate that child daycare in their facility or be able to reach out to those ethnocultural communities to teach them and to provide them supports that they really need.

Same with North End Women's Centre. You know, we provide them with that support, and they have that ability to reach out to many of those ethnocultural communities. NorWest Co-op, another organization that we fund. The Healthy Muslim Families we also funded through the Victims Assistance Fund. And we provided \$5,000 to an organization called Bright Mamas so that they learned to do cooking and budgeting. So, yes, we are reaching out to all communities.

Again, when we did our awareness campaign for domestic violence, we ensured that it was in 12 different languages because we recognize that we are a very diverse province and that we have to be able to provide people that information in their own language so they feel comfortable. And so that is what we did, Mr. Chair. We made sure that individuals received the information in a language that they understood. We also printed posters in, I believe it was 12 or 13, different languages so that people who don't—that English is not their comfortable language, so that they were also informed, that they were aware of the services that were available to them.

So these are just a few of, you know, some of the funding that we provide. But, you know, I've also talked to Grand Chief Settee, and we've listened to him just recently, talked about shelters and the importance of them being, you know, relative to those in—those people, those vulnerable people who are utilizing them. And so, you know, thanks to those conversations that we've had with Grand Chief Settee and Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, we are able to make very positive changes just by listening to them, by listening to the Indigenous people, by listening to individuals who are involved in the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

And we will continue to do that because my focus is ensuring that women have the supports they need when they need them, not only during COVID, but even as we emerge through COVID we—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time is expired.

The member from Notre Dame—no, sorry, the member from Burrows.

**Mr. Brar:** Can I ask the minister about Safe at Home Manitoba?

How much has been paid out to date from the Safe at Home Manitoba program, and could the minister provide a breakdown of the various projects that received funding and the amount of funding provided?

**Mrs. Cox:** I really appreciate that question from my opposition critic.

So, that was a \$5-million program, and as I said before, it was a very innovative program because, you know, we recognized that there were many dark days, that people, that seniors, that young people, that children, that they faced during those—that dark time of COVID.

And, you know, physical activity was shut down at recreation centres. People didn't have the ability to gather as they normally would. And it's not only a culture and, you know, an issue that relates to the arts. This was a—this is something that really relates to people and to families and the impact that it had not only on people's physical health, COVID-19, but on their mental health as well.

So, you know, again, this is one of these programs that I heard from my colleagues, other ministers across the country, and they said, you know, this is a model that we want to copy. It's something that they recognized made such a difference in the lives of people during COVID. There was over 300 applications, so that's how popular it was. We initially started with one intake, and then because realizing that it was such a popular program, we expanded it and so we had a second intake. And I would love to be able to tell the member all of the different projects that—it's about half an inch thick, you know, all of the documentation that I have here, so, you know, I will just talk about—I'll name a few.

The Steinbach Arts Council, they received \$25,800. The Whitemouth River Recreation Commission, they received \$20,000. The Rat River stay at home activities for kids, they received \$6,000. Art by Annie, a virtual paint night, received \$8,000. The Bibliothèque Taché Library, they received

\$5,000 for online storytelling. The—Al Simmons—that entertainer that everybody loves—he did a project, it was called Sounds Crazy, and what it was was just a bunch of short, high-quality videos, really to entertain kids and adults as well. And so that was a \$12,000 program. The Falcon Trails Resort, they received \$13,170, and that was just about having the opportunity for people to enjoy the outdoors and really understand what Manitoba—what's so special about Manitoba, and we know that many newcomers don't have that opportunity and they've never had the opportunity to go out and really experience our great outdoors, especially in the middle of winter.

So, you know, that—there were so many successful programs. The Canadian Mental Health Association, \$20,000; the Boyne Regional Library, another \$10,000; Town of Morris, \$5,000; the Winkler Family Resource Center for lending libraries, \$10,000; the City of Morden for snowshoe rentals, which is really exciting, \$6,400; and you know the list goes on and on and on. McDonalds services for seniors for telephone bingo, like, how unique is that, right? We know that a lot of seniors don't have access to the Internet—\$2,500.

We've got the St. Andrews—the heritage centre, they did virtual museum programs and visits and events, another \$11,000; the South Interlake 55 Plus group, they did creative journaling and that was a smaller amount, but that was \$705, and to them that really made a difference in their community.

The Gimli Film Fest—they received—they had the opportunity to do home movie nights and archived movies; the Grosse Isle Memorial Park Recreation Club, they did takes a village to stay home, so they did all sorts of really exciting and unique projects to encourage people to stay home. I think they did some art for paint-by-numbers. They did—and actually a lot of these different organizations actually provided all of the art supplies. So you signed up to participate and then they had, you know, maybe it was the paintbrushes, the paints, the art supplies, whatever they needed sent to these folks so that they could participate in these awesome programs.

The town of The Pas, a snowshoe project; The Pas Arts Council, \$39,000 for their stay-at-home program. That was to encourage individuals not to—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Brar:** Mr. Chair, this is my last question, and it's about curling centre for excellence.

And MNP was identified as the successful proponent for the RFP post to develop a business plan for the ICCE. Has this business plan been completed? If not, when it will be completed? If yes, could the minister undertake to provide a copy of the report? How much was the contract with MNP and how much has been paid to date?

And, yes, that's it.

\* (16:30)

**Mrs. Cox:** Again, thank you to my opposition critic for the question. I appreciate it.

Now, I just wanted to explain to the members in that committee room that the ICCE is managed by a not-for-profit organization. So it is—it's not managed by individuals in our government. And they are the organization that undertook that business plan with Meyers Norris Penny, recognizing that this was a project that really required expertise. And, you know, while they have knowledge on that board and that not-for-profit committee, it's important that they did reach out to Meyers Norris Penny, who is renowned, you know, for—as accountants here in Manitoba and providing that kind of a service.

So they did that. That has been completed—that business model. And now, as a result of that, you know, we are—they are looking at focusing not only on what the original inception was to be a curling centre of excellence global but we are focusing—or, they are focusing as well now on ensuring that this curling centre is going to be grassroots. So it is going to be an area that is going to be utilized by new immigrants and our Indigenous people, to give them that opportunity to learn of the beautiful sport of curling.

We are working together—or, they are working together—I'm sorry, I should say that—reiterate the fact that they are. They're working with curl Canada, which—who is the federal sport organization that's responsible for curling in our country. They're also working with the provincial curling authority, CurlManitoba, because we recognize that this curling centre is not only something that is going to be available for, you know, international people to come and practice and learn the art of curling, this is a grassroots plan. This is a plan to ensure that Manitobans, that children, that students, that the seniors, people from all walks of life have the opportunity to come to that curling centre and to learn that skill of curling, because it really is a skill.

And so, as we are looking forward to the development of this curling centre—or, as they are, we recognize that we can't again just focus on one area. Manitoba is such a diverse province and, you know, I'm very proud to say that here in Manitoba, I would say that we really are the most diverse province in terms of our ethnocultural communities.

And so it's important that all members of our population have that opportunity to learn about this game, to learn about this sport. And it's also going to provide them an opportunity to get active. I mean, I'm not—I, myself, am not a curler but my one son curled and, you know, it really is an activity that does require you to be very physically fit. Of course, there is other ways of curling. You don't have to actually get down on the ice and, you know, push the rock in that way. There's broom curling. I believe that's the correct terminology. I'm not a curler, so don't quote me on that.

But, you know, this is really an opportunity for people to learn and enjoy the game—not just to learn it at a high level, but it's an opportunity to learn it at a very grassroots level. And so, you know, that's why, you know, it's important that this facility is going to open its doors to everyone and that's why it's important that we have reached out to the federal and the provincial sports organizations to have them involved in it. And I know that there's a remarkable amount of interest from many, many different sectors already; many, many different individuals in our population here in Manitoba, whether, as I said, it's the senior population or the youth or the teens.

For, you know, everyone who is able to participate—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I'd like to thank the NDP. They've given me the opportunity here to ask two questions.

I do have a lot of questions to ask about the Estimates book as well as the annual report, but just for the sake of my two questions, I'm going to ask questions that come from groups in my constituency.

The first question is: High school students have really taken the lead on the initiative of free menstrual products in public spaces and ensuring it is affordable to all women. Has there been any movement on this front, and are there any plans—ideally short-term or long-term—to achieve this?

\* (16:40)

*Mr. James Teitsma, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Cox:** —again, Mr. Chair, and thank you, as well, to my opposition critic.

And, you know, we recognize that this is an important issue for women and girls and other individuals, whether they are at school, whether they are on the field, or elsewhere, and this is an issue that has affected most of us women in our lives, you know, that, unfortunately, there's been times when you don't have that ability to have that product with you.

You know, you mention the fact that, you know, some—the NDP had mentioned this in the past. You know, we are aware that some Manitoba schools do voluntarily already provide those menstrual products available free to students, and it really is at their discretion. You know, we provided—our government provided an additional \$427 million in Education funding in the province of Manitoba. And this is more funding than, you know, the former government ever provided to Education here in the province of Manitoba. So that funding is available to them. There is that discretionary funding that they have that ability to determine, you know, how they want to spend that—those funds.

And so, if they choose to spend those funds on, as I said, tampons or cups or pads, that is at their discretion. I mean, this is not something that, you know, any of us can hide from. I mean, we recognize that products are available in some schools, but perhaps we need to nudge those schools in all of those school divisions to say, you know what? You have a responsibility; you have some additional funding available; you know, have those products available, whether in the office—I'm not sure what the process is in some of those school divisions where they do provide, you know, those products for women and for other individuals who need them.

So, you know, I would say those school divisions should, in fact, talk to those schools and, you know, listen to them and say, you know, you've got the discretion to provide those products to women and girls and other individuals that need them.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I'd like to thank the minister for her answer.

My next question is just about yesterday, actually, how we unanimously passed a resolution acknowledging the incredible volunteerism that goes behind Folklorama, past and present. I want to thank the minister for her co-operation on that resolution.



My question is: What does the department plan to do, specifically over the next year, for Folklorama?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you, again, to the member from Tyndall Park for that question.

And, you know, I just want to say to you thank you for giving me this opportunity to collaborate with you. You know, I'm introducing this piece of legislation. You know I was very, very proud to be able to speak in the Chamber about Folklorama because it's very near and dear to my heart, and I know that the member from Tyndall Park also understands the importance of our very rich ethnic cultural diversity that we have here in our province.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

As I said, you know, to be at that Polish event, when she was—raised this issue with me, I think that's very telling of the type of community that we have here in Manitoba where, you know, we're always involved in our ethnic community and ensuring that they have all of the opportunity to really promote their own traditions, their own heritage, you know, their food, their dance, all of that that really makes us so special here in Manitoba.

So with regard to Folklorama, you know, since the inception of COVID, we continue to provide them with the same reliable, responsible funding that they always received because we recognized that it's not always about the in-person events.

So this year, Folklorama hosted a weekend, a virtual weekend of Folklorama where people had the opportunity to log on and tune in to view many, many different ethnic and cultural—I wouldn't say pavilions but, you know, dance and music and singing. And I think there was even opportunity to have food delivered to your house if that was something that you were interested—I mean, for a cost. They couldn't cover those costs.

But, you know, it was so important for us that we continued to provide that funding not only for Folklorama but for other organizations or festivals like Manito Ahbee. You know, they have—usually every year they host a huge powwow at the Convention Centre. So we ensured that they continued to receive that reliable, sustainable funding well into the future.

And we also—through our Arts and Culture Sustainability Funds, Folklorama received \$121,000. So that was of great assistance to them. And also \$50,000 through our stay-at-home program.

So we realize the importance of Folklorama. We realize the importance of our heritage, of our diversity, and how much Manitobans really love that opportunity to have more insight into other ethnic communities. And Folklorama really provides us that opportunity to see all of the different ethnic communities and their traditions.

And I have to tell you that when I visited every one of those Folklorama pavilions back in 2017, you know, every one of those communities embraces all of the visitors in such a warm and—such a warm manner. I mean, I just felt embraced every time I went. And everybody was so proud of their culture and so proud of their heritage and so proud of their traditions that I think it's hard for anybody to say anything negative about Folklorama.

And that's why, for us as a government, it was so important that we continued to provide them that reliable funding so that next year, you know, as we emerge from COVID, that we're going to be ready to go again and ready to be able to provide all of that wonderful entertainment and all of that wonderful culture that people in Manitoba here just love.

So it really was an honour for me to be able to—my throat is getting dry, I'm sorry—but it really was an honour for me to be able to speak in favour of the member from Tyndall Park's resolution, and I look forward to it becoming legislation in the very near future. And I look forward to visiting some pavilions with her next year, well into the future. So, thank you for that question. I really appreciate it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are there any other questions?

Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to the consideration of resolutions. At this point, we will allow all virtual members to unmute their mics so that they can respond to the question.

I will now call:

Resolution 14.2: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$54,188,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Culture and Sport Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 14.3: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,253,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

\* (16:50)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Hearing no questions?

Proceed to resolution 14.1: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,159,000 for Sport, Culture and Heritage, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

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

Thank you.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Department of Municipal Relations.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? *[Agreed]*

We are therefore on a short recess.

*The committee recessed at 6:51 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 6:52 p.m.*

## MUNICIPAL RELATIONS

**Mr. Chairperson (Len Isleifson):** When the Minister of Municipal Relations is ready to proceed, we'll just ask you to turn your camera on and we'll call us back to order.

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 Municipal Relations.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement.

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations):** Yes, I do, but I just turned my camera on,

Mr. Chair, to let you know that we share staff at Sport, Culture and Heritage, so if you just give me a few minutes for them to make it up here, I'd appreciate that.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, thank you. Thank you.

Minister of Municipal Relations, for his opening statement.

**Mr. Johnson:** Good day, I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments on the '21-22 Estimates and discuss some of the important activities of the Department of Municipal Relations.

So before I begin, I'd first like to acknowledge the hard-working staff in my department—and some do double duty, as you heard, with Sport, Culture and Heritage—and all the professional work that they do with Manitoba municipalities and the association of—AMM, planning district, mutual aid districts, AMBM, non-profit and community development organizations and many, many other stakeholders. So, I'm committed to delivering on the mandate I've been given as Minister of Municipal Relations, and we continue to build a better, more efficient, responsive and open government that provides quality services to communities across Manitoba.

So, I guess I'll start—through the COVID-19 pandemic, our department has undertaken a number of initiatives to provide comprehensive and timely support and information to municipalities relating to public health orders and reducing the spread of COVID-19. In November of 2020, Municipal Relations launched the Municipal Enforcement Support Program, which provides municipalities with financial support, training and logistical support to enforce public health orders and leverage local capacity to help protect Manitoba communities. With public health orders still in place and as part of our government's ongoing efforts to protect Manitobans from the spread of COVID-19, this program has been extended to December 31st, 2021, at a total estimated investment of up \$2.9 million.

So, the \$500 million Manitoba Restart Program was designed to help advance economic recovery as the province moves forward through COVID-19 pandemic and—so this program includes \$230 million to municipalities in 2021 to immediately support local infrastructure projects under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program and \$50 million dedicated to address the backlog in water and sewer infrastructure improvement projects in municipalities and provincial parks.

Our COVID-19 funding support also includes a one-time top up grant of \$10,000 to municipal-sponsored handi-transit services funded under their Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program to facilitate transportation services for seniors and others with mobility issues to and from COVID vaccination sites.

\* (17:00)

We will continue to adopt and respond to the needs of our municipalities and clients as the COVID environment evolves. So, despite these challenging times, the government of Manitoba continues to make significant investments towards the operational and infrastructure needs of local government and support of economic development and the well-being of Manitobans in their communities.

Budget 2021 maintains the municipal operating basket funding of \$121.2 million to the City of Winnipeg and \$51.3 million to municipalities outside of Winnipeg. So municipalities can use this unconditional operating funding to address local priorities as they see fit—unconditional funding.

Our government also continues to deliver on commitments to provide predictability to municipalities in planning their priority infrastructure projects. So, under Manitoba's strategic infrastructure basket, Winnipeg will again receive the \$75.3 million, and \$61.7 million is targeted to communities in rural and northern Manitoba, including \$15.8 million for Manitoba Water Services Board projects. Our government will continue to provide basket funding to municipalities, providing predictability, fair say and unprecedented flexibility over the investment of provincial funds at the local level.

So, in response to the fiscal pressures resulting from COVID-19, our government increased this year's investment in Building Sustainable Communities program by over \$5 million. This increased funding has primarily been dedicated to larger scale community capital projects, increasing the maximum grant level to 50 per cent of eligible project costs, up to a maximum of \$300,000—and then this is for a significant number of projects, I might add.

I'm pleased to advise that a total of \$13.5 million has been approved for over 300 projects across Manitoba this year, providing a much-needed boost to community organizations. I'm also pleased to note that Municipal Relations has doubled the level of funding available for urban, hometown and—green team as

Manitoba recognizes the valuable support this program offers communities and non-profit organizations. Through this year's urban, hometown green team programs, Municipal Relations had approved up to \$10 million in support to six hundred *[inaudible]* projects, and they're expected to provide over 2,000 youth with the work experience they need to take advantage of future career opportunities.

Municipal Relations has continued to implement key planning recommendations from the Treasury Board Secretariat. These changes are critical to the municipal and provincial growth plan and will adopt best practices and ensure greater transparency, consistency and accountability across the province.

Our department is acting on these recommendations. Critical steps taken to date include the building designation regulation, which was adopted in January, which allowed municipalities to utilize third-party building inspectors; the planning amendment and the City of Winnipeg charter amendment act, which is Bill 37, passed on May 20th and will come into effect with the publishing of associated regulations and stakeholder support materials, including the new capital planning regulation and major development regulation.

This legislation and related regulations and guidelines create a province-wide framework that will be established to support co-ordinated approach to planning and development, reduce planning delays and enhance planning appeals.

So, once in place, the measures will address gaps in Manitoba's regulatory framework by mandating regional approaches to planning, introducing service standards for planning and permitting and expanding the appeal process in cases where differences cannot easily be resolved between proponent and municipal authorities.

So, these changes address the significant economic costs related to unnecessary permitting delays, and the report showed that up to \$17-million negative impact on GDP and \$2-million negative impact on provincial and municipal revenues. And this is each and every day. So we will ensure that the board is equipped to manage potential increased appeals or case loads.

So, Budget 2021 has increased resources for the Manitoba Municipal Board by \$333,000, or 42 per cent, and it includes two new staff to enhance the board's capacity in providing timely hearings. Manitoba is working with stakeholders to improve the

Municipal Board services and reduce costs aligned with other jurisdictions and create a simplified and fair process for the appeals.

The Municipal Board undertook the biggest challenge transformation under this government, addressing the backlog of assessment appeals that our government inherited from the 17 years of NDP. The department and Municipal Board staff took a made-in-Manitoba approach called appeal management to help clear this backlog. In 2018, the Municipal Board had 2,458 outstanding appeals that would have taken an estimated nine and a half years to complete. This transformation resulted in 1,790 appeals closing, which was 73 per cent of the outstanding appeals. Five years ago, a file could wait up to eight years to be scheduled, so I'm proud to say that we are now dealing with appeals from the current year of 2021. This is what cutting red tape is all about.

So, our government aims to improve the efficiency and transparency and accountability of planning while also enhancing opportunities for economic growth in communities across the province. This is critical to support response and recovery efforts as we begin to emerge from challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** And we thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement? No?

So, 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 13.1(a) contained in resolution 13.1.

And for the final time, does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department in chronologically or have a global discussion?

**An Honourable Member:** A global discussion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** A global discussion? Thank you. So we will proceed in a global discussion.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Chair, I'd like to begin this afternoon by asking the minister about the North End wastewater treatment plant. Maybe the minister could just give us an update on that project. I understand there was a request from the government

to explore a P3 option which, I know, went through the City process.

I wanted to know, has that part of the process been completed, and in terms of the provincial funding, is that gotten the green light? Is the project ready to go from the provincial standpoint?

\* (17:10)

**Mr. Johnson:** I don't see a clock showing up on my screen. I just didn't want to accidentally run out of time. Is there somebody there that can address that, or—like, I'm logged in on a device here, but it doesn't show the countdown. And I thought I've seen that.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes, so, just for the minister, if you could go ahead and answer the question and then we'll have the moderator get a hold of you in—you know, as soon as you're done, because it is on the screen. So, just in the lieu of—time, if you wouldn't mind.

**Mr. Johnson:** I'd like to welcome my critic and thank him for his first question and the time that he's putting in here today.

So, that question is for Central Services. They're—as you well know, I'm sure the critic knows, as well, that falls under him and the ICIP funding, and that all falls under Minister Helwer. I believe I'm allowed to say his name in committee. If not, I'll say the Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer).

But I can tell you that the officials in the departments are hard at work and collaborating with the City of Winnipeg on how to move forward, and we're there to help them get through this process. And I think the ultimate goal is to get the project done on budget and on time, and I think our government has a record of definitely doing that.

And the goal is to, obviously, reduce the nutrient load in Lake Winnipeg. I think everybody has probably been out to Lake Winnipeg at one time or another, whether it's Gimli or Matlock or Grand Beach or Victoria Beach, any of those around the lake. And it's a concern. There's times where, you know, when they want to go swimming with their family, there's warnings, E.coli warnings for the lake and the swimming and the areas along the beaches. So that's very important.

I believe the City of Winnipeg—and I'm just—these are round figures, but it's about 7 per cent of the nutrient loading in Lake Winnipeg comes from the City of Winnipeg, which is the largest point source, to

my knowledge. And it would be—if it's in our control to control that, we need to invest in projects like this.

So it is definitely something that we're interested in, in government, and I think—as people know, I don't live on Lake Winnipeg, I live on Lake Manitoba, but it's the same concern. Our largest nutrient source is through the Portage Diversion when it's operated on Lake Manitoba. The rest of its watersheds are relatively nutrient-free compared to that specific source. So, like, just from when I was a kid—which is getting longer and longer ago now—you know, I remember chasing crawfish in the lake and, you know, we could see through the bottom to the water—to the lake bottom in—you know, in a couple feet of water. It is a very shallow lake and therefore, it—with a mud bottom, so it, you know, often becomes murky after a large wind. But you can't see that now. And a lot of that I would attribute to nutrient loading.

I believe the bathymetry was taken of the mouth of the Portage Diversion, oh, a few years ago now, and that is actually—the delta is actually three feet shallower than it was when the Portage Diversion was originally built. So there's obviously a lot of silt and nutrients that comes through that, and there'd be no difference with the Red River and depositing those nutrients into Lake Winnipeg. So the North End water pollution control centre is exceptionally important to the health of Lake Winnipeg, and I think we can all relate to the commercial fisherman and anglers alike, for the health of Lake Winnipeg.

There's concerns; I'm sure you see some of the locals that, you know, they have algae that attach to their nets and it's not ideal for commercial fishing or for angling. And I think we've all seen pictures, whether they're done via satellite or locally off of boats that sadly show the algae blooms that are growing on Lake Winnipeg, and I think it's—the science shows that it's strictly due to nutrient loading.

So, again, Central Services will—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired.

Just for the benefit of the committee, we are an extension of the House, so I will ask that we do refer to other members by title or position.

And also, the—Minister, if you check your chat function on your Zoom, the moderator is trying to address with you.

So now next question for the member from Concordia.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I'm sure the minister can appreciate the fact that we're—you know, we've got 45 minutes to get through his department. So I'm just, you know—a courtesy—asking that he keep his answers as relevant, I guess, as possible. You know, talking about—well, I—a crayfish and when he was a kid, I think he said. I don't know. Anyway, it's not as helpful.

Now, I'm just going to, I guess, ask a quick follow-up to that question.

I'm getting the sense that he's not willing to answer any questions with regards to the wastewater treatment plant, the North End wastewater treatment plant. I do hope that he would just shed some light from the perspective of his department. I'm assuming they've had some conversations with the—his counterparts at the City. I know that his government, it was asking for a P3 option. I believe that that was rejected by the City wholesale, so I just want to make sure that the money is not in jeopardy, that it's still ready to flow.

And we are concerned because there are—you know, I know contracts are being awarded, and this is a perfect example of a project where a community benefit agreement could really be helpful to ensure that the project goes ahead, goes ahead quickly, and that, you know, Manitoba jobs are prioritized and that we make sure that Manitoba companies who are ready to do the work, who are ready to, you know, get their folks to work on this great project—they are champing at the bit to make this happen. But they're concerned because companies that have been awarded contracts to this point may not share those same values.

So I just wanted to gauge the minister's input on that, and if he can just—if you know, was there any conversations that he's had with his counterparts at the City, and are those negotiations and those conversations still ongoing? Is the provincial money ready to flow, or is he contemplating some of these mechanisms that could potentially jumpstart and kick-start the Manitoba economy?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I apologize. I was just reading stuff from the moderator there.

We've successfully gotten the time clock up, but I was concentrating on that. I was wondering if the critic, if he doesn't mind, and I apologize for missing his questions and his points in there, but if—again, I apologize, but if he could please repeat the question. Sorry about that.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I guess my main point was that time is short, so I hope that the minister will be quick in his answers.

But the question was: Is he prepared to answer questions about the North End wastewater treatment plant? Is—and if so—or if he can give any kind of context about the conversations that have happened between his officials and/or himself and his counterparts at the City? Is the provincial money flowing or ready to be flowed as soon as the City is ready to begin construction, you know?

And I guess the underlying question is: Is there—are there any further strings attached to that flowing of that money, or has the province said yes, go ahead, or are you guys exploring any kind of community benefit agreements or other ways that we can keep jobs in Manitoba?

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I'm most definitely willing to answer questions that fall under the Department of Municipal Relations, so I'll give you a little bit of the money that we've flowed.

So, so far we have flowed \$182.6 million. So, that is the Province's entire share of phase 1 of the project, and then the remainder is half of phase 2. So that money has actually flowed and it is in the City of Winnipeg bank accounts.

So you had a question about strings attached, and that would be an answer that would have to come from the Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer). There is a commitment on our government and our part, to ensure that this moves forward, like, we're a partner at the table, I'm sure as you're aware.

We have flowed the money far sooner than the project to encourage to get all people at the table, all levels of government. And I think it's a good collaborative approach that we take between the City of Winnipeg and the provincial government and we have a federal partner at the table as well with a significant input.

So—but now you had a question as well, and I'm—I jotted them all down here so I'll try and get to them—about P3 discussions. So, again, that is an answer that would have to be answered by Central Services. That department is the lead on this file, but I can confirm that \$182.6 million was sent to the City of Winnipeg and received, and it is in their bank account.

So I think I'll leave it at that and maybe you might want to elaborate with that information.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I think, just before I recognize the next question: just, please, a quick reminder that all questions and answers must be directed through the Chair.

So with that, the member from Concordia.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I think that is helpful.

The final question I have with regards to this project is just whether the minister could provide a copy of the report that was done by Deloitte in regards to the P3s and the water treatment plant. This was a report I believe that may have been available last quarter, but I just—if the minister could provide a copy for the committee, that would be appreciated.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I would just—if I can get the member to get a little more specific with which report he's talking about, if he could just elaborate a little bit if he doesn't mind.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, yes, and I can—you know, this is the information I have in front of me, and I have to admit that, you know, I imagine there's a lot of reports from Deloitte and other outside consultants.

I see the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) is agreeing with that. He says there's so many of them. So I'm not sure exactly—I'll see if I can get a better description of it so that the minister can sift through his file of outside consultants' reports and get back to us.

I wanted to ask the minister a little bit about analysis that his department may have done on tax rebates with regards to the education property tax.

Just wondering if the minister can explain what sorts of analysis he—their department has done with regards to those education tax rebates for commercial properties. And does the minister anticipate that—or how much does the minister anticipate commercial properties will receive in rebates once the elimination of the education property tax is complete?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I'm unmuted, I believe.

Okay. So the—I think the Deloitte report that the critic was talking about—I believe it was commissioned by the City of Winnipeg. We don't have a report that was sent here by them, but I'm guessing that's the one that the critic is talking about. And it hasn't been shared with this department.

And so maybe the—maybe that question would be for Central Services, if it was shared with them, and maybe it's en route over here, that they may—you know, they may have it, but to my knowledge, it hasn't

been shared by the City of Winnipeg to this department.

\* (17:30)

**Mr. Wiebe:** All right. Well, we'll get to the bottom of which—exactly which report we're looking for from an outside consultant.

Will the minister provide any analysis that they have done with regards to the education tax rebates for commercial property, and, specifically, how much does the minister anticipate that commercial properties will receive in rebates with the elimination?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes. So I'm assuming it was commercial across the province, not just the city of Winnipeg, so I'm going to make that assumption with the question.

So, in 2021 there's going to be a total of \$248 million, which consists of, you know, it's well publicized, but 25 per cent of that is a reduction for residential, 25 per cent reduction for farm and 10 per cent reduction for commercial, but that number will change as assessment values change.

So I think probably, I'm assuming, and I wouldn't—I shouldn't make that assumption, but, you know, if the member isn't a homeowner, I'm sure he would know somebody that is, and your assessment changes, you know, every couple years, and then the value on that property, as it goes up, you know, prudent municipalities and stuff, they often drop the mill rate, too, so then the general taxes don't go up. But if the mill rate remains the same, it—obviously, it will generate more income.

So it's pretty tough to kind of predict over the period of full elimination of what those dollar values would accumulate to. Every couple years they would change as assessment changes. And I'm sure the member's aware of, City of Winnipeg is in charge of their assessment and the Province does assessment for municipalities around the—everything outside in the city of Winnipeg.

But more directly, I believe that this is a Finance program, so this question should be directed to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). The Municipal Relations has a good, fulsome part in it, but the analysis is done by the minister—or the Finance Department, and the minister would be the one who would probably be able to give you a more fulsome answer on this.

So I'll probably leave it there in case he wants to expand on something that does fall under this department, and then we can continue that conversation.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Okay, so I'm to understand that the department itself hasn't done any of this analysis, but he—but the minister is saying that the Department of Finance has and that his department is—obviously has access to it; he's answering questions on it. So I think that's helpful.

If the minister can continue on, then, and answer the questions, what we're asking about there is: For commercial properties, how much will they receive in rebates, total figure, once the elimination is completed? And then, I guess, the same question with regards to secondary properties: How much is the minister anticipating secondary properties will receive in rebates with the elimination of the education portion of the property tax?

\* (17:40)

**Mr. Johnson:** Sorry about that, I'm just trying to get fulsome answer for you here.

So I'm sure—so the question is after the phase-out. I'll answer what is current here in a minute, but it's very hard to tell what it's going to be after the phase-out because, as the member well knows, Bill 37 is going to stimulate a lot of growth. I mean, our government has been doing outstanding. We've had a huge, huge pile of investment over the years in Manitoba. I would—I think the—we have the largest capital investment out of, I think, North America for quite a few years in a row and I'll have to get an answer for him on where we're predicting we're going to land again this year.

So, some of the variables—so just to understand why I can't give him an answer on his question entirely—is it depends on the length of time that it's phased out over. I mean, we do—we've made commitments, and this is a government that keeps our commitments, but that timeline is many assessment cycles away. So, every assessment cycle that you have will change the answer. So, it's impossible to answer the question as stated but there's assessment, there's growth.

And the question on the secondary property—and I'm assuming he means cottages or somebody owns more than one property—I'll answer that here right away and I'll get to the rest of the answer here in a second. But there's nowhere on your assessment where it says that it's a secondary property; either it's, you know, a residential or a farm or commercial.

There's even pipelines, rail, and then there's an other category. So if you don't fall into some of those, you may very well fall into the other category.

So, a cottage follows under—is a dwelling and that would fall under residential, whether it's a primary residence. And I think that's what your question was, and I just want to answer it as if that's what your question was. So the secondary—a cottage is a dwelling which is—on your tax bill, you'll see residential on it. So, it will not distinguish whether it's primary or secondary and there is no definition as a cottage at all. I mean, your driver's licence will show what's your primary residence and that's kind of more for the federal government and capital gains and all that money that—there.

So, more directly, this year is 41—this year, as in 2021—is \$41 million, is what it is—rounded of course, it's not \$41 million right to the penny—and 16 and a half per cent of that is commercial. So he can kind of do the reverse math there, I suppose, you know, where commercial is 10 per cent of that.

And so yes, so I—and I'll heed the advice of the Chair. I apologize, Mr. Chair, I'll do it before you warn me again. I'm supposed to be saying the member's question and it's my first go-around at this so you don't have to give me a lecture here right away, although I may deserve it. But I will try and refer to it as the member's question.

But, anyway, so it's 16 and a half per cent of \$41 million—oh, sorry, \$41 million is 16—let me rephrase that. There's \$248 million—get—better get this out here. So, \$41 million this year is 16 and a half per cent, and that is how much it is commercially this year, is \$41 million. So you can try and do the math and string it out and predict what it is going to be many years from now and then we'll leave it at that.

**Mr. Wiebe:** The minister mentioned Bill 37, so I do want to ask a question, before we run out of time, on Bill 37.

He mentioned that the working group is done their work, I understand, and that they are getting ready to announce what those regulations are going to be. At the same time, we heard this week—or I guess maybe it was end of last week—from Kam Blight and the AMM. And Mr. Blight was, you know, quite critical of the government and of the process with regards to Bill 37. And this was very much in line with some of the criticisms that we heard during the public hearing process for Bill 37 as well, not only from municipalities and from the AMM at that time, but

also from developers and others who were also on the working group in developing Bill 37.

So my question is, you know, I guess the timing of exactly when those regulations are to be expected, but maybe the minister can just, you know, give us some insight why he thinks Kam Blight took to write an editorial. Presumably he sits on this working group; he knows what these final regulations are going to look like. And yet he took it upon himself to go out and be critical of the minister and of the government. You know, which is, you know, probably not advantageous if you're actually at the table and actually being listened to; you'd probably want to go through that process if you're being included in some of the development of this process.

So maybe the minister can just give us some insight why he thinks Kam Blight would write an editorial like that, would express his frustrations and the timing that—the final regulations will be disclosed.

\* (17:50)

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, well, thank you for that question—or, I'd like to thank the member for that question. I said you again. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Well, first of all, I want to thank all of the stakeholders that are involved in the working group that's doing this hard work, the department along with them, and we value all their advice that they're giving us on how to shape this and move forward.

Now, all the reeves and mayors and councillors, you know, hats off to them; they're our grassroots politicians, and I think most people here know that I was a councillor for four years, and they're on the front line of—they're on the front line for elected officials, and I just want to take my hats off to them.

And so they go through a process and they—through AMM, and they elect a leader, which is Kam Blight, and he's been great. We talk lots. We're in touch quite often. And AMM is in good hands with his leadership. He's very open for communications. He's got my personal number and we chat quite often. So, I don't believe Kam sits on the working group himself, but his staff sit on the working group.

And, I mean, the working group continues to give us advice, and when these regulations are drawn up and concluded—I'm sure the member opposite is aware that we have a 45-day consultation period, which our government brought in because we value consultation. And the previous government never, ever welcomed



consultation. So it goes through that fulsome consultation before moving forward. We're a listening government. You know, we're timely and we're transparent, and we also make changes to address stakeholder concerns. So I don't know if we really need any lessons from the member opposite, but.

Then there's lots of councillors and mayors and Reeves that bring their concerns forward, and whether that's through AMM or lots of them contact me directly, and we have good, fulsome conversations about these consultations. So we do consult a lot, and I want to thank the member opposite for pointing out the working group and him recognizing the hard work that they're doing and how they're shaping this—shaping how this bill needs to move forward.

But I think the member, maybe if he has some spare time on the weekend, he needs to pick up a book by Doug Griffiths. It's called *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*. And I think the member opposite might be stuck on chapter 10, and that chapter is titled, if I'm going from memory here, but I think it's titled, reject everything new. So maybe he needs to pick up that book and get on board with, you know, with modernizing and streamlining, planning and moving our province in a direction that supports businesses and their investment in Manitoba.

And, ultimately, that's what our jobs spin from in Manitoba. We have a very diverse, very, very diverse number of businesses, and people get jobs there. They pay income tax, and then that's what—I'm not sure if the members understand this. Then your income tax goes into paying things like our health care and our education and our—all our other services, and that's how we've been able to, as a government, to invest more in those three than ever in the history of Manitoba.

So this will allow us to even up those investments even more as we move forward. So I just suggest the member picks up that book, *13 ways to Kill Your Community*. I don't know if he can buy it online and he can read it on his Kobo, but I do suggest he reads it, specifically chapter 10 on reject everything new.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I certainly hope that the minister didn't take the same condescending tone with Kam Blight when he reached out and expressed these concerns because I certainly would listen to the words of our municipal partners. And, you know, if I'm hearing that they have concerns, I think the minister's certainly hearing them as well. And, you know, we're going to continue to bring those concerns forward.

I just want to note for the minister and the committee we have four minutes left, so I'm going to make this last question very brief. I hope the minister doesn't—he doesn't run out of time, because I understand at 6:00 we're cut off, so he wouldn't be able to answer this.

Very, very straightforward question. There's a group of residents in West St. Paul concerned about the redevelopment of the St. Benedict's Monastery site. I know that they've been reaching out, certainly have been vocal in the media, been vocal in their own RM. But it does sound like there are some serious concerns not only about the development, but about some of the irregularities that they believe are happening between West St. Paul and the Red River Planning District and with regards to the Middlechurch Secondary Plan.

I just wanted to know, has the minister met with this group? You know, are there—is there any interest from this—from the minister to ensure that these irregularities are addressed?

And, specifically, when it comes to any kind of allocation of water rights that have been assigned to certain developers in agreements that they, again, have the full scrutiny of his government so that, you know, residents can be assured that any kind of development that's happening is, in fact, adhering to the Red River Planning District's guidelines and those of West St. Paul and the Middlechurch Secondary Plan?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I think the member will appreciate that this will—Bill 37 will actually give the opportunity and the voice for the people involved to have an appeal. And I do—I know he has concerns with Red River Planning.

You know, that's something that his friend at Selkirk has as well. And—but we have to recognize that there—you know, this is all at the grassroots—they're mature and responsible level of government, and Manitoba municipalities and their elected officials have the independence to govern their own internal matters. And there's a bunch of avenues that are available.

We are aware of the problem. They have not asked for a meeting—

\* (18:00)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

I am interrupting the proceedings of this section of the Committee of Supply pursuant to the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7th, 2021.

Item 5(d) states that on Wednesday, October 13th, 2021, at 6 p.m., the chairpersons of the Committee of Supply in each section will interrupt debate and put the questions immediately without debate on any remaining Estimates resolutions.

The Sessional Order also indicates that for any requested recorded votes, the division bells shall ring for no more than one minute on each question and the Committee and the House shall rise following the consideration of the last resolution.

I am therefore going to call in sequence the remaining resolutions for this section in the following: Department of Municipal Relations.

I would remind members that, in accordance with the Sessional Order, these questions may not be debated.

At this point, I will allow all virtual members to unmute their mics so that they can respond to the questions.

Resolution 13.1: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,474,000 for Municipal Relations, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.2: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,917,000 for Municipal Relations, Community Planning, Permitting and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.3: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,933,000 for Municipal Relations, Municipal Assessment and Advisory Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.4: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$312,683,000 for Municipal Relations, Financial Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.5: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,725,000 for Municipal Relations, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.6: Be it RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$85,930,000 for Municipal Relations, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

My apologies. So this concludes our consideration of Estimates in this section of the Committee of Supply in Room 255.

Committee rise.

## CHAMBER

### CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk):** Is everybody ready to continue with the Estimates? Okay.

Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply is continue global consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Conservation and Climate.

The floor is open for questions.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I'm going to start with some questioning about the North End water treatment plant, and I'm wondering if the minister and her government have decided to reverse their directive to the City of Winnipeg to explore private partnerships in order to avoid delay in construction?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate):** Appreciate the question from the member opposite on our plans for North End water treatment centre.

And as the member is quite aware, our department actually was very successful in working with the City in order to gain details on the overall plan for the upgrades, and our government was proud to partner with all three levels of government to secure funding for that phase 1 so that we can really address the health of Lake Winnipeg.

And unlike the previous NDP government, who just kept giving interim licences, we decided to go a different route, to actually encourage and achieve change and get some of these upgrades that were necessary happening in a much faster time frame.

The particular question that the member is asking actually falls within Central Services and Municipal Relations, so I would encourage her to speak to her colleagues when they are in Estimates or at some point

to get the details of those negotiations, but our government has really been focused on finding expedited processes in order to reduce the phosphorus going into the rivers and then into Lake Winnipeg. So we are really focused on achieving results, and if that's the best way to do so, then that's what our government is focused on.

But again, I would encourage the member to contact the other departments for more details on those discussions. Having said that, our department really focuses on the environmental approvals aspect of these projects, and I am happy to report that we have done our approvals for the interim phosphorus reduction plan for this facility. So that's an exciting new step and definitely a good step in the direction of keeping our lakes and waterways healthy.

**Ms. Naylor:** I am disappointed that the minister isn't prepared to address questions on this. I understand it's another department, but it is profoundly connected with the health of Lake Winnipeg and the health of our environment, and I would think that the departments could work together to answer some of these questions.

But I will move on and ask about the polar bear licence. The last year, we know that Lazy Bear Expeditions was given permits allowing it to use the Churchill wildlife management area off-road trail network, and new permits for the area have previously not been issued since 1984.

We also know the permits were given with no local consultation or input, and an independent review previously concluded that the current number of vehicles being maintained as-is due to environmental impact—should be maintained as-is due to the environmental impact.

So I'd like to ask the minister, to her knowledge, what oversight was done prior to issuing these permits and why there wasn't any consultation prior to issuing these permits?

\* (15:10)

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. And just as a little bit of a background here, this topic and issue does actually fall under Agriculture—Resource Development, and then we do also assist with the final licensing aspect.

And I will assure the member that the permits were not actually increased, there were no additional permits issued with these steps. It was that there were some permits that were being underutilized and so

they were redistributed to other companies who could use the existing permits that were allowed.

And I do want to address the other concern that the member raised about, you know, the environmental impacts, and I want to highlight that frontiers north has now put into commission a fully electric Tundra Buggy, the first in North America, and I was happy to be at that announcement. And I know that, based on the success of this first fully electric Tundra Buggy, we'll see—follow suit with other companies who will see the success there, as well as the benefits to the environment from reducing the emissions from these vehicles.

So that was an exciting announcement to attend, and I know it's going to be a first step among many towards addressing emissions reductions and hopefully investing in technology that can be cleaner and more sustainable for our environment.

**Ms. Naylor:** So, I just wanted the minister to clarify. Now, what I hear her saying is that none of these permits were new; they were—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member. If you could just put your mic down, we can't hear you.

**An Honourable Member:** My apologies. Sorry—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. The honourable member from Wolseley.

**Ms. Naylor:** Sorry. What I hear the member—the minister saying is that these weren't new permits; they were redistributed to new companies it sounds like, but I—it's still—I think it's still a reasonable question to ask about consultation in the community. If these were underused for a period of time, it stands to reason that there was less tourism in the area for a period of time, so it would naturally have an impact on the communities.

So, why no consultation, and does the minister feel comfortable with that decision?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Again, just to reiterate that there were no additional permits being issued. So there was no net impact on the industry or on the surrounding communities.

So—and I do want to point out as well that, in terms of any changes that possibly may be made or not made in the future, that would be in the department of ARD. They would be responsible for any consultation process or public engagement processes in future.

But having said that, there was no increases to the number of permits that were issued, there was no

change to the licensing there aside from redistributing the existing allotment.

**Ms. Naylor:** Thank you, Minister, for that clarification.

I'm going to ask some questions about the CanWhite Sands project. It's recently been submitted for review and approval by the Province and there's been an incomplete EAP for its proposed silica sand extraction activities.

We know that the CanWhite Sands EAP only provides information for its fourth—first four years of operation, not for the full 24 years that they intend to operate their proposed silica sand mine.

So is this acceptable to the minister, and if the minister could explain how this is acceptable having, you know, an environmental approval without a full scope of the project's longevity.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Could I get the member up to just clarify what she is referring to in terms of environmental approvals? There have been no approvals yet given to the extraction process. So if she could just clarify what is she referring to as environmental approvals, I'd appreciate that.

**Ms. Naylor:** Sorry, I'm referring to the actual submission by CanWhite Sands for review and approval and their plan only provides information for the four—first four years of operation. Is that acceptable or does the minister expect to review the full 24 hours that it's—or, sorry, 24 years that it's intending to operate their proposed silica sand mine. Would that not be expected to be part of their EAP for—that's being put forward for approval?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I appreciate that clarification and the member's right, it is under review currently. And the process for review for any proposals that come before us is we assess the data that is provided. And if there are any deficiencies, then we can absolutely be requesting more additional information from the proponents.

Our environmental process—or review process is actually one of the most thorough in the country. I would like to say it's the most thorough, I don't have evidence to suggest otherwise. So as far as that review goes, and it is under review currently, all of those elements will be looked at, and if there is a requirement for more information, we will absolutely be reaching out to CanWhite Sands or any entity that puts a proposal before us. If we need more information to

consider before making a decision, that is the process that would happen.

**Ms. Naylor:** Can White Sands also makes mention of, but didn't include, eight critical mitigation plans in their EAP for review. And comments by both the public and the government of Manitoba's Technical Advisory Committee. So how will the minister address this?

\* (15:20)

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I'd just like a clarification from the member opposite. Did she say that there are eight critical mitigation areas missing from the submitted plan? Did I hear that correctly?

**Ms. Naylor:** My understanding is that they make mention of eight critical mitigation plans, but they didn't include them. So I would say that's missing, then.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister? The honourable minister? Are you able to hear us?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Now I am. Sorry about that. Sometimes my—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Yes, so it's the same answer I had as previous question in that during this process, if there are missing documents or missing pieces of information through this review process, we would be reaching out to the proponent and asking for them to provide more documentation or to flesh out some details that we need in order to be fully satisfied that the plan is environmentally sound.

So during that review process, again, if there is missing information as it pertains to critical mitigation plans, those would be elements that the department would reach out to CanWhite Sands and ask them to submit.

**Ms. Naylor:** Minister, residents of southeastern Manitoba and several independent researchers have raised alarm bells about the safety of the drinking water and the stability of the limestone layer in the carbonite aquifer over top of the cavities created in the sandstone aquifer. They've carefully outlined multiple potential scenarios that could lead to drinking water contamination, but they do not feel heard by you and by this government.

So can you tell me, is the minister confident that this project will not impact drinking water and other aquifers?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister? The honourable minister? Can you hear me?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Sorry. Yes, I'm back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, again, the proposal is right now before the department for review. All of those questions that the member has in terms of meeting certain expectations or assuring for safety of various elements will be assessed very strictly, and at the time that all the information is present and satisfied, the review process, that—at that point that we will be indicating one way or the other how this project will go.

**Ms. Naylor:** So, just based on what the minister said and when we were talking yesterday, you know, there haven't been any, you know, independent Clean Environment Commission reviews of any substantial projects over the last five years. This seems like a time when the government should want to enact that. There is such an outcry from the community, and, you know, it seems like the govern—that the minister's fairly confident in the safety of this project as there's been such little response to the community. So why not just put these community concerns to rest by asking for that independent Clean Environment Commission review?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister. The—we have a problem with the communication because I've been asking a number of times. Can you hear me now, Minister?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I can. What's happening, Mr. Chair, is that my headset, when I turn it on, it takes a couple of seconds to connect to my device, and in order for my staff to hear the questions, I actually have to turn it off and turn it on every time I answer. So if you could just give me a second or two just for that.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sure, I was doing that, yes. There was still a bit of a delay there, too.

Okay, the honourable minister.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** So, again, you know, the member opposite continually is commenting on my confidence in this proposal. And we did discuss process yesterday, so I think that maybe it'd be a good time for a refresher on that, is that the processes—the proposal comes through the department. I, myself, have not seen the proposal because it has not been fully assessed or reviewed by the department yet.

Once the review happens, at that time the director can advise and recommend that we have a CEC hearing at that point. They can also completely put before me what the review process has found and all of the findings within that review process for a final decision on approval.

So I have not yet seen it. So the member's saying that I have full confidence is actually misinformation because I've not yet seen it, and I'm not part of the review of the proposal. I will be part of the final approvals for projects moving forward, and I will also be a part of deciding when—if and when recommendations come before me, for a CEC hearing, which, again, has not happened yet.

\* (15:30)

So we're quite early on in this process. We definitely have heard from community members and their concerns. They are being taken into account as the review process unfolds, and I think that the member opposite would agree with me that it's important that we do let the process unfold and follow its proper procedures so that we can have a fully informed decision when a decision is ready to be made.

**Ms. Naylor:** Thank you for the clarifications, Minister.

Can you also just let me know what the economic benefits are to Manitoba from this CanWhite Sands project?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Yes, so the member is asking about sort of the economic projections on this particular project, and I do want to remind the member that my department only deals with the environmental impacts. So part of the proposal—or, the proposals that will come through my department will not include economic projections or potential profits. That would be in a separate department and I would not have access to that projection.

**Ms. Naylor:** Okay. I'm going to move on to ask a few questions about the Willow Island coastal wetlands.

In—back in 2019, the community that's working to protect these very important and rare coastal 'wetline'—lands was told that the only work authorized by the department was managing the excavated material before it was potentially washing into the channel when there was development work going on there.

And they received a letter in 2021 that said, in 2019 direction regarding the plot was given to the developer, which got approval from removal in December 2020. And I've seen this correspondence.

The—I know the department told the community one thing and then their letter from 2019 said something entirely different.

So can the minister speak to when the decision was made to remove the plug and why this wasn't adequately communicated with the community?

\* (15:40)

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Yes. So, I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and just a little bit of a background on this particular project. So there was a plug, a temporary plug, that was—needed to be installed during an excavation that was happening on private land, and our department was involved in instructing for that temporary plug so that 'sediment' wasn't going to be entering the lake until after the excavation had been completed and the area was stabilized.

Our department staff did go out in the summer of 2019, and they did determine that a temporary block was necessary at that time in order to address this concern about sediment going into the lake. Another site visit was done after the excavation had been completed and the area has been stabilized, and at that point, with strict conditions, the plug was allowed to be removed.

So that, I hope, explains a little bit of that process, that there was, in fact, instructions to have a plug installed during excavations. It was always meant to be a temporary plug to prevent sediment from going into the lake, and that once the area was determined to be stabilized after the excavation that it was going to be returned to its original state and remove of that plug. So the risk of the erosion had been addressed through this process.

**Ms. Naylor:** I'm going to cede the remaining questions to the member from St. Boniface. And thank you, Minister, for your time.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Yes, I just wanted to ask some questions. One is about a review through the Clean Environment Commission. There's a Vivian Sand extraction project—I'm—the minister's familiar with it, I'm sure.

There have been a number of concerns expressed by residents as well as a number of rural municipalities, in part because the risk of an environmental impact is actually quite huge. There's a very large aquifer, and if it's contaminated, it can't be uncontaminated. And the—if you look at the area that's

covered by the potential mining, it's actually larger in surface than—in area than the entire city of Winnipeg.

So I was just wondering if the minister had had any—would—was reluctant to see a full review for the CEC or where we're at with that.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** Could I just get confirmation from the member for St. Boniface that he is talking, indeed, about CanWhite Sands? I know that they've gone by different, sort of, titles before, but I just want confirmation that that's who we're speaking about.

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, it is. Yes—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for St. Boniface.

**Mr. Lamont:** —of which there are two. There are two different CEC licences.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I'll just have the member for St. Boniface make sure that we have it on Hansard. If you could ask the question—like, the—clarify your question again.

**Mr. Lamont:** Oh, absolutely. Yes.

I'm just wondering—there's a project that it's sometimes known as the Vivian sands, because there's a place called Vivian. CanWhite Sands is the company, Alberta company, that's pursuing a sand mine. There have been a number of issues raised about it by RMs, and there have been requests for the—a referral to the Clean Environment Commission, and I'm just wondering why that's not—doesn't seem to be on the table.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I appreciate the question from the member for St. Boniface.

And if—I'm not sure if the member was, sort of, tuning in or listening in. A lot of these questions actually had come from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) as well. So I'm happy to kind of reiterate what the process is when we're considering proposals and we have to do the environmental reviews of these proposals.

First of all, the member had mentioned two separate proposals. One was for the processing facility, and that one specifically, the RM, the local municipality, did not request a hearing—that they were satisfied with what the proposal had entailed and the plans for the processing facility. It was the extractions process that they had their requests before and that we received a letter from them requesting those hearings.

The way that the process goes for environmental reviews is that the proposals come through the department. They are assessed based on the details provided, and if there are some missing details or details that don't quite meet criteria, they are requested to submit further documentation and information. And at the point at which the director decides that, potentially—for each project we either do or do not—or, we don't have—so, there are two things that can trigger a recommendation from the director for a CEC hearing.

One of the criteria is if we don't have mechanisms in place to do proper public engagement or consultation. And many cases we do have the ability, through EngageMB as well as other means, to get feedback from the public. Another trigger would be that we don't have the proper technical expertise within the department or within government to fully assess what the proposal entails. And to this point, a majority of the proposals who have come before us, we have had the in-house expertise.

Now, having said that, the proposal for the extraction currently is within the department. I myself have not seen it, because the review process has not concluded yet. If, at some point during the review process, the director feels that a CEC hearing is warranted, that will be recommended to me by the director, and at that point, a decision will be made based on the merits that call for it.

So, that's the process. It has not yet reached that point yet. And at that point, it will become public, the decision that is made, based on a very thorough environmental review process within the department.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Lamont:** Thank you very much for that.

I had a question on environmental compliance and enforcement. So the site inspections and monitoring were quite a lot lower in 2020-21, which is much lower than previous years. I know there is a pandemic, so I know that they're a bit *[inaudible]*

There was also the monitoring of well submissions dropped to zero in 2020-21 compared to, you know, previous years was from 228, 195, 178, so I was just wondering what happened with the monitoring of well submissions under environmental compliance and enforcement, and is there anything being done to catch up on inspections?

\* (16:00)

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I just want to get a clarification that we're speaking about the same wells. Is the member referring to the manure storage facility wells, specifically looking for manure leakage that are, like, not pertaining to drinking water or is he looking at some other kind of a well monitoring? Just to clarify that we're looking for the right information for the member.

**Mr. Lamont:** Yes, to be—*[interjection]*—just—oh, sorry.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont).

**Mr. Lamont:** Thank you.

To be clear, it is monitoring well submissions on page 49 of 102 of the Manitoba Conservation and Climate annual report. Yes, it was under environmental approval activities. Yes, under monitoring well submissions, in sight and under—it's right in sight. Yes, that's right—monitoring well submissions has dropped to zero. And it may be under manure, but it—manure—because it's under a whole bunch of other manure, so to speak.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** I do want to thank the member for St. Boniface for raising this question and it helped me to clarify a few things, as well.

So what has gone on is that normal practice outside of a COVID year, there would be submissions of reporting on different measurements within these manure wells; and during COVID our staff were seconded to work on COVID enforcement measures.

So the testing did continue with all of these wells. The submissions did come into the department, they just have not been inputted into the database, which is why that number looks zero. And that was just as a function of the COVID measures and not having the staffing available to input the data.

**Mr. Lamont:** I'll pass the rest of my time to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** If there is not any further questions, we'll now start—*[interjection]* Was there any more further questions?

The honourable member for 'Wolsy' you—do you want to turn your mic—unmute your mic?

**Ms. Naylor:** There is no further questions, thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, if there's no further questions, now we'll complete—starting to—calling out resolutions.

Resolution 2.2–12.2, sorry–12.2: RESOLVED that be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding thirty–\$33,707,000 for Conservation and Climate, Parks and Resource Protection, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.3: RESOLVED there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26,009,000 for Conservation and Climate, Environmental Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,416,000 for Conservation and Climate, Climate and Green Plan Implementation Office, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$48,698,000 for Conservation and Climate, Wildfire Service, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,025,000 for Conservation and Climate, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item No. 12.1 (a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 12.1. At the point we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber, or the room, okay.

The floor is now open for questions.

The honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), you have any questions?

**Ms. Naylor:** I don't, no.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay.

Now, the last resolution is resolution 12.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,573,000 for the—for Conservation and Climate, fiscal and shared services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

Shall the resolution pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The resolution is accordingly passed.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Conservation and Climate.

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply for the Department is—of Justice.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics to—the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of this next department? *[Agreed]*

So do you—how many? Like, five minutes or 10 minutes?

**An Honourable Member:** Five minutes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, we'll have five minutes recess.

*The committee recessed at 4:09 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 4:15 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? The honourable minister, can we—can you hear us? Okay, we can't hear you for some reason.

The honourable minister. Sorry, we're still not—we're not able to hear you. Just one second here. *[interjection]*

Can you make sure your mic is connected properly? Cameron, shake your head if you can hear us.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** How about now?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Right, we can hear you now. Perfectly. Okay.

**Mr. Friesen:** Good afternoon. It is an honour and privilege as Minister of Justice and Attorney General to introduce the 2021–2022 budgetary Estimates for Manitoba Justice.

Budget 2021 continues to support the department's work on a number of modernization strategies that support improved public safety and emphasize our commitment to protect all Manitobans: the criminal justice modernization strategy; the Policing



and Public Safety Strategy; the Family Law Modernization strategy; the Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan; restore justice and reintegration initiatives; and the courts modernization through the Integrated Case Management System are some of the major initiatives that are progressing and will continue to have meaningful, positive impact on the justice system.

Budget 2021 focuses on realigning resources to improve capacity and outcomes and reinvest in the areas that will have the greatest impact on public safety, and will provide the best outcomes for our province. To continue to support the very important efforts that Victim Services undertakes, Budget 2021 includes an investment of \$815,000 to continue the work of the family information liaison unit and the Family Guide–Domestic Violence Specialist area. Initial investment of \$432,000 for the Family Information Liaison Unit or the FILU, continues to support families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls as a parallel investment to the national inquiry. The FILU approach also provides a smooth continuum of support and collaborative services between community and government, and the family liaison contacts assigned to the unit work directly with family members whose loved ones have been missing or murdered.

Initial investment of \$383,000 in the Family Guide–Domestic Violence Specialist area recognized the critical services that are provided by this group. We know that separation and divorce is one of the most dangerous times for victims of domestic violence. The Province recognizes that the issue of domestic violence transcends court jurisdictions and, as such, consistency from criminal court to family court is paramount.

\*(16:20)

With family law modernization under way, the reintegration—the integration of domestic violence support is an important component of improving services and enhancing safety for families experiencing domestic violence.

As we continue to work to mitigate risks and assess challenges posed by COVID-19, including the backlog of court proceedings caused by pandemic-related delays, we are committed to accelerating strategies to help address the impacts of the pandemic and keep the justice system functioning safely and properly.

Budget 2021 includes over \$2.9 million of investments to support increased resources to address timely access to justice and court backlog. These investments include an investment of \$1.7 million in funding for the senior judge program. The senior judge program of the provincial court of Manitoba supports retired judges willing to serve as a senior judge designated by the chief judge and assigned to judicial duties.

Senior judges assist the provincial court in meeting the criminal case timeline set by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Jordan decision and address the anticipated increase in judicial workload as a result of amendments to the Criminal Code under federal Bill C-75.

Additionally, the investment of \$762,000 for judicial and court support resources and \$529,000 for prosecution services will be made to ensure we can continue to efficiently operate our justice system.

Budget 2021 also invests \$2.1 million for enhancing access to justice to support Legal Aid Manitoba. Legal Aid Manitoba has implemented a number of new duty counsel and all on-call shifts to increase access to justice for accused Manitobans. Weekend duty counsel in Thompson, evening and overnight duty counsel in Winnipeg and province-wide weekday on-call shifts were added as joint projects between LAM and the department.

COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the need for these additional services as stakeholders within the justice system attempted to manage exposure to COVID-19 against public safety. The investment includes an increase in operating funds to support continued duty counsel and on-call services across Manitoba.

In addition, this funding will provide Legal Aid Manitoba with the ability to address a long-standing issue with a tariff paid to private bar lawyers. Funds have been now allocated to ensure that private bar lawyers are appropriately compensated for legal aid work that they take on.

Budget 2021 will invest \$1.6 million to support the continued development of the new Manitoba Criminal Intelligence Centre, provide enhancements to criminal property forfeiture, provide program capacities to address policing and public safety and provide funding for citizens on patrol program.

Additional investments of \$200,000 in the Manitoba Centre for Criminal Intelligence, or MCIC, will provide strategic operational and tactical intel-

ligence services and products to Manitoba law enforcement and government through a centre of excellence where intelligence services are located in one central location. The MCIC is a unique model that brings together Manitoba's most sophisticated intelligence gathering capability and resources to strategically tackle organized and serious crime.

Once fully operational, MCIC will be responsible for the collection, evaluation and dissemination of information and intelligence, the development of information sharing and intelligence products that meet the needs of front-line police officers, provision of accurate and updated information intelligence to enforcement teams and timely strategic advice to senior police leaders and government officials on provincial threats and emerging crime trends.

Budget 2021 invests an additional \$336,000 to enhance the work that is performed by the Criminal Property Forfeiture Branch. These investments continue to support the Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan and make it easier to seize and liquidate drug money and drug dealers' assets by expanding the civil forfeiture process.

The action plan is in line with Manitoba's policing and public safety strategy and Illicit Drug Task Force recommendations and consists of three—of a three-pillar strategy to fight escalating addiction and crime rates in Winnipeg and across the province, including treatment, education and enforcement initiatives. The enforcement component of the plan focuses on targeting drug dealers and making Winnipeg and communities throughout Manitoba safer.

Budget 2021 includes \$110,000 in funding to support the Manitoba Citizens on Patrol Program. This program, of course, mobilizes citizens throughout Manitoba to participate in a community-based crime prevention initiative in co-operation with law enforcement agencies.

Over the past year, 51 Manitoba Citizens on Patrol programs consisting of over 500 members have collectively patrolled over 14,000 hours. They have volunteered more than 22,000 hours to help keep our province safe. The funding will be utilized for safety equipment like reflective identifying vests for members, additional seasonal clothing for patrol use, personal identification patrol vehicle signs, training manuals and costs associated with in-person training. Strong emphasis is placed on the integrity of the groups, crime deterrence, education and awareness as a demonstrated model to help counteract criminal activity.

Last and most importantly, I want to take the opportunity to express my gratitude and commend the efforts of all Manitoba Justice personnel, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic, we know, will forever impact how government conducts its business. This is particularly true for the Department of Manitoba Justice. It has been an incredibly difficult period, but even since my time in this role in January, I have seen how this department has experienced unprecedented levels of innovation and creativity. These have helped propel us forward towards our shared goal of developing a more modern, efficient and effective justice system in our province.

I want to cite in specific the leadership of my deputy minister, his team of assistant deputy ministers and through them to their teams for exceptional duty under the most challenging of circumstances. The unwavering commitment of our employees in their duties and dedication to serving the people of Manitoba during a period of crisis and uncertainty has been inspiring. On behalf of all Manitobans, let me say thank you for your service. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** No, I think we're going to get right into questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Go right to the questions. Okay.

Under the Manitoba practice, debate of the ministry's salary is the last item considered in the department of Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of item 4.1. contained in resolution 4.1.

Does the committee wish to proceed with an Estimates of this as a department 'chondrologically' or with a global discussion?

**An Honourable Member:** Global.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Global? Is everybody agreed with a global discussion? *[Agreed]*

Okay, we're going to go with global discussion.

Okay, the floor is open. Any questions?

**Ms. Fontaine:** An internal issues note explains that as of September 30th, 2020, overdose deaths increased by 36 per cent in comparison to the annual average over the last several years. By April, it was publicly reported by CBC that overdose deaths rose by

87 per cent in 2020. Why is this information being—not being published in a timely fashion?

As well, it's been three years since a quarterly report on the surveillance of opioid misuse and overdose in Manitoba has been posted online. Why has the minister stopped releasing these reports, and what will the minister undertake to provide copies of these reports for the last three years?

And then can the minister update the committee on the number of overdose deaths since January of 2021.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Chairperson:** I—just one quick clarification, Minister. Are you talking or are you—because we can't hear you.

**An Honourable Member:** Consulting.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Just consulting. I just wanted to clarify that. [*interjection*] Oh, sorry, we can't hear you at all.

Oh, there we go. We can hear you now.

**Mr. Friesen:** Okay, you've got audio now?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes, we can hear you now.

So, the honourable minister, go ahead.

**Mr. Friesen:** Let's start again. I was going to say, in a conventional setting, I would've had the opportunity to introduce my staff. So let me just first say that I am joined by my deputy minister, Dave Wright, today as well as my assistant deputy minister, executive financial officer, Maria Campos, as well as my SA, my special assistant and my executive assistant.

Thank you for the question from the critic on the subject of the Chief Medical Examiner's office. It gives me an opportunity to indicate that it's a busy office. Actually, investigations for cases increased by 56 per cent in the previous year over the one before.

We know that there's been concerns in Manitoba about overdose deaths compared to previous years. That is why we've made sure that we have addressed issues that were existing at the Chief Medical Examiner's office. There were vacancies in positions there that I'm happy to report that have now all been filled. We worked hard to fill those positions. That has been done. As you know, from the information I've provided, that activities remain quite high in that office.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to indicate that when it comes to reports for the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the critic will remember that in the spring session, just a matter of months ago, I did table a number of reports from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. So we were pleased to table a number of reports. It is my understanding that the one remaining report, the 2020 report, is now being worked on and will be—and will also be made public. So this is good progress as well.

We've also worked with the office for a timely tabling of those annual reports. And I think, at this point in time, what I did want to ask is the critic asked specifically about reports that were required for three years. Could the critic provide more information? We would be happy to comply with an answer, we just need a little bit more detail on which specific reports it is that she is flagging for discussion.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I will get those reports and any other details that we go back and forth in the very, very limited time that we have together today. I'll get that to you in an email because I don't want to use the time that I have to go over that report again or those questions again.

So I'm going to move on. I'm going to ask a lot of questions because, like I said, I only have very, very limited time with you.

So I'm going to get into autopsies, and I appreciate the minister starting that discussion a little bit in respect of the vacancies. So I'm going to go through a lot of here—a lot of questions here. The same internal issues note obtained explains that autopsies increased by 24 per cent in 2020 in comparison to the previous year. And as a result of these increases, autopsy backlogs in July and August of 2020 were averaging up to 10 days from date of death to autopsy. Specifically, it states that, and I quote: Process improvement were identified and implement at—implemented at hospitals and Shared Health, which have reduced the wait time average to three days from date of death to autopsy. End quote.

So could the minister provide the current average wait time for an autopsy? (b) Could the minister provide the average wait time to receive a toxicology report? (c) Can the minister explain what these process improvements were?

(2) I'm assuming some of these process improvements were made—made were the centralization of autopsy service in Winnipeg; that is, ending service in Brandon. (a) Can the minister explain how this

decision was reached? (b) Can the minister explain how closing the autopsy branch in Brandon will make things faster?

\* (16:40)

And then, to—in respect of last answer, you spoke a little bit about the vacancy, and I know that the minister, you provided information and said that all those vacancies are filled. Can you just provide an update on the number of FTEs in total? And then can you provide the number of medical examiners, the number of death investigators and the number of administrative support staff?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes, I can hear you.

**Mr. Friesen:** Do you need to recognize me?

**Mr. Chairperson:** No, I already did; the honourable minister.

**Mr. Friesen:** Thank you for your patience. We're endeavouring to get content for the questions that have been posed.

So, yes, I will begin by saying we were proud of the work that was undertaken to fill vacant positions and I can verify there are no vacancies at this point in time.

I will try to answer these responses in the same order they were asked.

Autopsy backlogs have been worked down since that point that was flagged to us by the critic. As a matter of fact, significant improvements have been made since 2020. Part of this improvement is due to the fact that there was a secondary morgue space designated at HSC and, of course, that is an important provider of those services. The turnaround time that was made—the improvement—down to three days from the point of 10 that the critic mentioned. At St. Boniface, that turnaround time and—you know, on an average day could be five days or lower. I think five represented the high mark. So, many times lower.

When it comes to wait times for toxicology, there have been improvements made. As a matter of fact, where the average previously may have been around six months in time, this has been worked down to a more—eight- to 12-week period of time to turn around toxicology. A number of process improvements have been made.

The decision of consolidation when it came to the Brandon office was made on an evidence basis, on the basis of advice provided to us by system leaders. There is a requisite number of cases that an examiner or a pathologist is said to need to do per year in order to keep up their professional abilities, and they could not manage that number of autopsies in the small Brandon office that really only saw about 100 in total. Therefore, the decision was made to consolidate that work in Winnipeg under forensic pathologists.

I can tell you that there are currently 14 FTEs in total in the OCME. There are nine investigators and the remaining staff are administration.

I believe that is the total of the questions posed to us by the critic.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech to the minister for getting to some of the questions that I asked. Actually, okay, I'm going to move on from that. Miigwech for that.

So, some questions in respect of the security at the Manitoba Legislative Building which, incidentally, I posted on social media today that it is increasingly difficult to get into the building and actually quite unsettling at how far the security measures have gone to access what is a building that belongs to Manitobans.

And so for the purposes of Hansard and for the purposes of our discussion which, of course, the Minister for Justice will know, you know, we now have barriers outside at the front of the Legislature. We have increased Leg. security at the security desk when you come in, for—I don't know how long it is—for months now, there is a Winnipeg Police Service officer, who is stationed right beside the Leg. security.

All access points to the building are closed off. Those points of access at other parts of the building are—actually have Leg. security there now, as well. There is metal detectors and ropes that rope off everybody but I think it was—I was quite shocked a couple of weeks ago coming into the building, or however long ago, I don't know—coming into the building and seeing metal detectors now.

Our staff are not allowed in the building. We have one designated—now only this week—we have one designated constituency assistant who's allowed in the building, but some MLAs have, you know, maybe two or three constituency assistants who actually help us do our work, particularly when we're in session. And now, you know, they're not allowed.

\* (16:50)

And, in fact, my constituency assistant, who is BIPOC, was—within the span of five minutes—was stopped by—repeatedly by different security when he was trying to make it to go see Jean to drop off Members' Allowances stuff—was stopped about five times asking him where he's going, who is he with.

And just this morning, I went downstairs in the basement, which I don't go there very often, but there's also a new metal detector there at one of the entrances. And I haven't even checked the other entrances.

So, I don't know what's going on. I don't know who made these decisions to, you know, create—and let me just put on the record as well—I do have permission to put this on the record—that some of our BIPOC MLAs have been stopped and harassed when they come into the building to do their jobs. And in particular, our Black MLAs have been stopped and asked to prove themselves to Leg. security and to the police.

So I'm sure that you—or, well, you wouldn't—you wouldn't, as a non-BIPOC man, you wouldn't understand what it's like for a Black person to enter their place of work, first off, to see a police officer and then to be stopped by that police officer, entering their work. And that's what's happening.

So we have BIPOC staff that are being harassed and we have MLAs—BIPOC MLAs that are being harassed coming into work.

So, I don't know who made the decision to create, essentially, a space that is a fortress to get into now and has created a space whereby MLAs—BIPOC MLAs—are getting harassed when they come into the building.

So I'd like to know from the minister: who made that decision, why that decision was made, what are the future plans for the security on the grounds and entering—building, how long will those temporary concrete bars be at the front of the stairs and how long will a Winnipeg police—city officer be stationed at the Leg. security, making things very unsettling and insecure for BIPOC members of this Manitoba Legislative Assembly?

*Mr. Josh Guenter, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Friesen:** I am pleased to provide a response to the member on the questions that she raises.

\* (17:00)

The member will be aware that there is a piece of legislation that governs security at the Legislature. It's

called the legislative security act. That act describes the responsibility for the security for the building, for the grounds and for the precinct. It describes it as a shared responsibility between the Attorney General and the Speaker of the House. I've appreciated the engagement and the interactions that I have had with the Speaker on the subject of security, and I have appreciated her personal concern for the issues around the security of her members for whom she is responsible, and through her to her Sergeant-at-Arms and her Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms.

I can assure that member—the critic—that there is a security table that was put together governed by a memorandum of understanding. It has standing by Justice officials, the Speaker, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the director of Legislature security. I have attended those meetings, as well. ADMs of mine have attended those meetings. They happen on a regular basis. I believe one is coming up in a matter of a few short days. That is where the authority is derived.

We also must remember that we have a unique public house of government in Manitoba. When you travel to other legislatures in other provinces, it's a building—probably primarily, if not exclusively—where the Speaker really has complete control of security for the building.

In Manitoba, of course, our Legislature is different in that it is the Legislature not just for members of the Legislative Assembly, not just for Executive Council, for the Cabinet and their political staff, but for the civil service. We cohabitate in this place, and that means there needs be that shared security response for the building.

I think next what I would want to say is that we have had significant security events at our Legislature in the past calendar year, and we would be naive to not recognize that. We had security issues in the weeks that followed. We had a truck try to drive up the front steps of the Legislature. We had mass gatherings on the front of the Legislature. And that has, I would say, continued to have conversations happen about the need to ensure the safety and security of all those who work at and visit the Manitoba Legislature.

I would want to make clear that I take seriously the responsibility as the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice to ensure for the safety and security of the people who visit this building, for the people who work in this building, and I think that that knowledge would come with relief to many, many

people. I want to say we would ignore these issues at our own peril.

So it's important, I think, to note, first, to the member's statements: there is no one who is precluded from entering the Manitoba Legislature. We do have new requirements that we are insisting on that people do show ID. They surrender a piece of ID in exchange for a visitor's pass, and that visitor's pass allows them to move throughout the building. So no one is precluded from entering the building who has business at the Manitoba Legislature.

We are working hard as we emerge from the pandemic so that we will understand what visitors will look like to the building, how we will do group tours and other events at the building. All of this will be important.

I want to be very clear that I am disappointed that the member would use her time to actually disclose publicly in this community-committee hearing, the individual and specific security measures that have been put in place in this building for her own security and for the security of all others in this building.

That is a disclosure-disclosure that she should not have made. It would work to put people at risk. It helps no one to share operationally where officers are placed or access points or at what hours those operate. These things are put in place for our safety, and that safety must be respected. So I please ask the member for her co-operation to do nothing that will diminish the security of this place.

In the time remaining, I would like to indicate—

**The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter):** The minister's time has expired.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I find it interesting that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) is disappointed in me—not that I really care. I mean, I'm sure he would know that I could care less what he thinks of me, but I find it ironic that you're disappointed in me that I laid out some of the security measures. First off, most people don't even understand or know what's in the building, so it's fine.

But—and I'm sure he's not going to care either that I'm incredibly disappointed, even more so, that not once in your response did you mention your colleagues in this Chamber who I told you have been harassed coming in to work. I told you in my five minutes previous that Black, Indigenous and POC members of the Legislative Assembly are being harassed when they come in to work, into the

Manitoba Legislature. And you said not a peep of that—not a peep.

And you know why you said not a peep? Because it doesn't affect you. It doesn't—how would it affect you? Those measures are put in place to actually keep out BIPOC. And something that you couldn't possibly understand, as a white man, what it's like to come into this building with—and have a police officer stationed as soon as you get into the building and have that same police officer then question you whether or not you're allowed in this building, whether or not you actually work in this building. You'd never possibly understand what that means and what that feels like and what that does to a member of the Legislative Assembly, to have to prove that they work in this building. You could care less and you just proved it now.

And so I—like I said, I could care less if you're disappointed in me. I'm disappointed in you, as Attorney General who has, like, a duty to protect everybody in here, not once did you even mention the MLAs that are being harassed when they come in here. So let's move on from there because clearly you don't care.

You know, you brought forward legislation that increased—allowed increase for tariffs for those working in Legal Aid, but as I stated and as several other folks stated at standing committee, this change only benefits folks if there's funding attached to that change, and you know that as well.

So do you have any plans to increase Legal Aid funding?

And then the review of the Legal Aid Manitoba released last year had proposed that the Public Interest Law Centre operated by Legal Aid Manitoba should move to a free-standing organization outside of Legal Aid Manitoba that continues to support the important work undertaken by this group. The briefing notes states that work, and I quote: work is underway to assess this recommendation. So, again, the recommendation to move the Public Interest Law Centre outside of Legal Aid Manitoba.

Does the minister intend to move forward with this decision?

So you have two questions there: Is there going to be an increase in funding to Legal Aid, and are you planning to move the Public Interest Law Centre out of Legal Aid Manitoba?

**Mr. Friesen:** I apologize to everyone because I'm old enough in this place—I've been in the Legislature for 10 years—not like the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), who's at the Chair of the table today—and I still remember a time when we had 10 minutes for Estimates responses. I have just come to the realization that it's five minutes now, so I'm catching up.

So I want to disabuse the critic of any notion that I was cutting short my answers or I was going to design my answers to not address the questions she raised. I was actually a little shocked when I saw the time run out after five. So here comes the end of my response on the questions that she answered.

\*(17:10)

The member asked, when will these security measures end? We will continue to take the advice of experts. We are seeking independent expertise when it comes to understanding issues pertaining to the security of the Legislature. Professional advice is being sought. We care about access to the building. We are undertaking to restore access, but we have this fundamental responsibility for safety, and we simply cannot ignore that.

We must also recognize that anecdotally and evidentially, it is really out there that the Manitoba Legislature is arguably the legislature that was most in need of security enhancements. And I would encourage that member to visit other legislatures, visit the Canadian Parliament, visit Washington, visit the State Capitol for North Dakota and assess for herself if she does not feel like those legislatures have more significant measures than ours. These things are not designed to turn our workplace into a fortress, but they are designed expressly to keep people safe. So there is a dialectic, there's a tension, between the openness and that need for security, and we must get that right. And we have very capable people leading us in giving us that guidance.

I have to say, though, I'm very, very discouraged to hear the statement that the member just made that the measures that have been put in place are measures designed to be against BIPOC people. And I would say in this committee that there is a line, and the member has crossed it. And the member should reflect this afternoon that those that she is criticizing harshly are civil servants who are listening in to this afternoon's proceedings and who will be hurt and angered by accusations by the NDP party that they are not professional.

I remind this critic that we have a diverse workforce in Protective Services at the Legislature with many nationalities, many ethnic groups all represented who work here, a director of security at the Legislature who works hard to get this right, a director of security and intelligence who would find that comment distasteful.

Now, if there is anyone who has experienced anything that they say is some kind of resistance or some kind of inequitable barrier to them entering the building, we have not heard about this. I've queried my senior staff just now. There have been no complaints on issues of access arising at our front door or our other entrances. If that member has information about anyone, I would want to receive that at the earliest opportunity so that my department could respond to that. This is a House for all Manitobans, regardless of creed, of colour, of ethnicity, of sexual orientation, and we will not stand as legislators to have some kind of differential access. That should be distasteful to all of us. And let that member not suggest for one instant that somehow that would be acceptable to members of Executive Council, of the government, to the Premier (Mr. Goertzen), Cabinet members or anyone on our side of the House. I hope I've made myself clear.

Legal Aid funding has been increased by \$2 million to enhance access to justice and support Legal Aid Manitoba. The Public Interest Law Centre is important to Manitoba. We have navigated to know if there is a different way to deliver those services, and those discussions continue to contemplate whether there is an opportunity to do things differently.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Well, there's lots to unpack in the minister's response. But let me just say this, and let me say this for the public who are watching this and who are going to watch it at some point or read about it. But the—what the minister just did right now in his response was a master class. It was a master class from the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General (Mr. Friesen), on gaslighting BIPOC. It was a master class in gaslighting when a member, an Indigenous member, an Indigenous woman, a member of this Manitoba Legislature, comes to the minister and says, hey, there's a problem with all the added security, and what the minister does is gaslight: shame on me; I'm so disappointed in the member for St. Johns; I never saw it; I haven't heard about it so, therefore, it doesn't exist.

Congratulations. Congratulations to the minister on, first off, dismissing what I'm bringing forward—

which, by the way, I have permission by the members in my caucus to do so—and secondly, what on earth makes you think that it hasn't been reported? Maybe it hasn't reached you because the people around you know that you don't care and you're going to do exactly what you just did, which is dismiss those concerns brought forward by BIPOC members of this Manitoba Legislature.

You did exactly what we expect you to do. You don't care. But those concerns have been brought forward to Nicole. Every single time it's happened, they've been brought forward. So, you know, the argument that you didn't hear about it, therefore, it's not happening, is a classic example of denial and denying the systemic racism that we deal with.

Secondly, let me just say this. You know, trying to flip the script, that somehow, I'm disparaging civil servants—I'm—that—I—let me just be absolutely one hundred per cent clear: I put this—all of these additional security measures that don't have the safeguards of protecting BIPOC MLAs when they come into this building—I put that square on your shoulder and no one else—square on your shoulder. So do not try and flip the script, that somehow I'm disparaging to civil servants. They take their direction from you, so this is on your shoulder.

And let me tell you again, unequivocally, that BIPOC members of the NDP caucus have been stopped and harassed and made to show ID and made to—that they don't belong in this space. They belong in this building as much as you do, and in fact, even more than you do.

Elections finance act. Legislation recently passed by the minister made changes to the Election Financing Act, specifically as it pertains to government advertising.

Can the minister confirm that the government is able to do unlimited advertising of a budget or a throne speech right up until election day—that is, throughout the writ? And do these changes also allow the minister to make budget or Throne Speech announcements before or during the election period?

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Friesen:** I will respond in the same manner as the critic asked, and that was to divide my time between issues of security and then the elections finance act.

So again—yes, I will take no lectures from that member on these issues. The member is reflecting on the work done by Protective Services. It could not be

more clear that she is doing so and so she can deny it, but I have a concern for the accusations she's made.

I want to say again: if there are complaints that people who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour are having because they feel they are being treated differently, that is a tremendous concern to me as the Attorney General, and that should be a tremendous concern. For that member to try to say that somehow that is a political thing or that we just don't care; that is absurd. It's an absurd statement.

But as in so many situations, the member just doesn't know where the line is, just seems to lack the judgment to know how to frame a question so as not to make it an outright accusation. We would care very much about those issues.

Why did I say that they hadn't been reported? Because I've heard moments ago from my assistant deputy minister responsible for security that it hadn't been reported. So perhaps it was reported to our director of Legislature security, we are already looking into that to see what we can learn from them.

And I want to make clear, though, that the asking for ID is done right now on a much more frequent basis. In the room today is my executive assistant. She told me that she had recently walked in and she was immediately asked for ID. She would not identify herself as belonging to the BIPOC community, but she was asked for ID.

As a matter of fact, we sent out a notice to all building personnel, telling them to be prepared to present ID, that ID would be required. Even MLAs and Mr. Acting Speaker or—I—or sorry, Acting Chair, I should say—I see that you have the official insignia of the MLA on your lapel, as do I. And this identifies us in this place as members of the Legislative Assembly. If a member of the Assembly doesn't have this clearly showing, the memo says they can also be asked for ID.

We do have Protective Services who go a long way to try to make sure that they know and can identify members of the Assembly, but because we do have people who pick up shifts and are less knowledgeable about the people who work in the building, I have been asked for ID. I went for a run the other night and stopped by the Legislature in a baseball cap, and I was asked to please identify myself and I had to lift my cap to be able to show them who I was and then to provide some corroborating information.



So I want to say that the new measures are there to protect people. If there are allegations that somehow the measures are being used to differentially somehow make it difficult for people who are Indigenous or Black or people of colour to go about their business in this building, that would be tremendously disconcerting to all of us. We would want to do everything in our power to investigate this allegation. I can't say it more emphatically.

When it comes to the election finance act, I think I will ask the member to simply—perhaps I could bring information to her in my next answer. But I can indicate of course that she's talking about the election financing amendment to The Elections Amendment Act. It was passed in August 2021—sorry, it was passed in October of 2020. It came into force just now at the end of August in 2021.

So as that member knows, you know, prior to the amendment, there were restrictions there that were just unworkable and that is why our government brought those amendments. People had criticized the act on its impact in delivering government services. But, of course, we know why blackout periods exist during the election. Those blackout periods remain in effect because it's all of our interpretation. It's the law that you cannot use the resources of government to assist a party during an election. So we proposed in past changes that make it clearer that government business can continue but that playing politics with government resources will not be allowed. And we stand by that legislation.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Well, I'm sure the minister will appreciate if the NDP don't necessarily trust the PC government at not abusing their ability during an election here. And so that's why I'm going to ask the question again, because again the minister spent the vast majority of his answer dismissing, again, and spinning the narrative of BIPOC MLAs who sit in this Chamber with him about what they've experienced. He spent the majority of his time on that, disabusing fellow colleagues of him in this Chamber of the stuff that they've gone through. But, okay, we'll leave that aside.

So I'm going to give him—I'm going to ask him this question again, because honestly, I don't care what he says about security. I really don't. He will never understand it. He'll never understand it so I could care less what he says in respect of his attempt at disabusing and dismissing what BIPOC MLAs are saying.

So, again, the questions for the elections finance act are very specific questions. Can the minister

confirm that the government is able to do unlimited advertising of a budget or a Throne Speech right up until election day, that is, throughout the writ?

Do these changes also allow the minister to make budget or Throne Speech announcements before or during the election period? So those are very, very clear questions for the minister to answer.

**The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter):** Minister, are you indicating that you're good to go?

**Mr. Friesen:** Chair, could you hear us?

**The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter):** We can hear you. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Friesen:** Okay. Thank you. Let me correct the record, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act introduced on October 14th of 2020, passed on May the 20th of 2021 and proclaimed in August of this year. I am sorry, Mr. Chair. I misspoke previously.

\* (17:30)

On the subject that the member has made clear that she does not care about my responses, my only comment would be she has spent an inordinate amount of time in Committee this afternoon seeking answers to questions that she now says she does not care about. That's disappointing. I remain unchanged in my response. If any visible minority, if any person of a diverse group is experiencing any degree of unequitable treatment entering or exiting or conducting their business in the Legislature, that is a concern, not just to people who are diverse; it should be a concern to absolutely everyone. If we take these responsibilities seriously we will care about that.

So, we care, and on the heels of this debate this afternoon, I will be personally investigating. I will be meeting with senior leaders and we will seek to understand better what is going on out there that this is being interpreted, because we want to understand. We want this to be a safe place. We want this to be a place where all Manitobans, regardless of colour and creed and background can come and can receive services, can work and to not have the kind of experiences that the critic is alleging is occurring.

The member sees me in the Legislature every day. The member has my email address. I'm the Attorney General. Regardless of what this member thinks of me personally, I occupy a role. She has the ability to go to my deputy minister. She has the ability to go to the Speaker. I'm not aware that she has, as the House Leader of the NDP party, availed herself of the ability.

If I'm a person she will not come to, she has that ability, uniquely in the Manitoba Legislature, to go to the Speaker of the House. The Speaker takes these issues seriously. I really respected the way our Speaker in this Legislature, and indeed the Deputy Speaker, have taken these issues very seriously and have sat at those tables for security and intelligence and have been part of those decision-making groups.

And so that's my statement on that.

I want to say again the reason we brought the amendments to the Election Financing Act, of course, was—and the member knows this—is that previous to those changes the law was not working the way it was meant to. Government communication decisions under the former provisions of the act were confusing, but also we were finding that it was the case that regular government communications, things that had to get conveyed publicly, were somehow inappropriately constrained. We could not do the business of government for things not pertaining at all to elections purposes.

It is no one's purpose in advancing these legislative amendments to somehow make the playing field unlevel, to somehow give the government an advantage when it comes to the resources of their office.

But let me remind this member it was not that many years ago when the former Health minister used the resources of her Health office, her special assistant, her executive assistant, and the resources of communications and staged an announcement at the—at a location in south Winnipeg to announce the creation of a birthing centre. Elections Manitoba investigated and found them to be in breach of exactly the rules.

It is exactly conduct like that by the former minister of Health that provided the rationale for our government to be able to bring changes, to clarify that there needs to be that division to understand what is the routine business of government that needs to be done at all times in order to ensure that delivery of vital government continues—services continue, at the same time taking pains to ensure that no advantage is given to the sitting government to be able to utilize their office to create an advantage such as was done by the former NDP government.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Well, once again, the minister has shown really how selective and archaic his thinking is.

Just an FYI for the minister: Nobody uses the word visible minority anymore, and certainly not Indigenous people. We're not visible minorities in our

own territory, in our own lands. And I would suggest to you that no Black person would consider themselves a visible minority, nor would any POC person consider themselves a visible minority. So just a gentle little piece of advice: Don't say that really archaic, out-of-date language.

Police Services Act. After introducing The Police Services Act this year, the minister made the decision to hold off on changes to consult with First Nations. Can the minister update the committee on how those consultations are going and who he has consulted with in respect of The Police Services Act? Because I will just share with the minister that we've heard—and I've heard from several leadership that they're—they haven't been consulted with at all. And then when does the minister plan to bring forward revised legislation in respect of The Police Services Act?

\* (17:40)

**The Acting Chairperson (Josh Guenter):** Minister, I'm not sure if you're—if you've indicated that you are ready to speak. Okay. The honourable minister, go ahead.

**Mr. Friesen:** You and I are still working out our hand signals, but we're going to make this work.

Thank you and I'm pleased to give a response to the member. I thank her for her gentle rebuke, in terms of acceptable terminologies. That's news to me so I will take that back. I try to use the proper terminologies. I don't mean for the use of those terms to insult people. So, I felt that it could have been a gentler review but as it was, I'll take what I can get from the member and so I will endeavour in the House, and in question period, to use that other—the more appropriate, the more updated term.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

And on the subject of her other questions, yes, as the member knows that we have had a very significant initiative in government to go out and undertake consultations with Manitobans to prepare our report on The Police Services Act and that very significant work, initiated under my predecessors and then continued by me after January, is informing the direction on modernizing the act, and that work goes on.

In respect of the member's question as to when—what is our intention to bring changes, I would tell the member she can expect—it is our intention to bring amendments in the next session, in the next sitting of the Manitoba Legislature, as she can understand that we are continuing to advance certain legislative pieces

through appropriate channels, but we believe we are on track to be able to present those changes in the next sitting of the Legislature.

The member made the claim that somehow there are rights-holders groups that have not been engaged at all in this work. That is false. We have been working in close collaboration with rights-holders organizations: with AMC, with the MKO, with SCO, with Manitoba Métis Federation. And we have regular meetings. There is a working group, actually, even away from the tables at which I sit, in which key civil servants and key representatives of those organizations are deliberating.

We have had excellent conversations in some specific area of anticipated changes where we've really been able to change how we present, how we hear from, how we allow those groups and those rights-holders organizations to have true and real input into the substance of the changes.

I wasn't the minister for very long—perhaps arguably for less than two weeks—when there was the public release of an IIU report—the Independent Investigation Unit report in Manitoba on the death of Eishia Hudson and, almost immediately, I realized that something wasn't right; that rights-holders' organizations essentially became aware of the report when it became public and publicly reported. And I phoned and made calls and apologized and said we had to do better to not surprise leadership in the Indigenous community when such an important report would be released to the public. And I think that that actually began, for me, a really good, I'd say, series of meetings and interactions with the grand chiefs. Those interactions continue. They're important. It is very important for me to be interacting with the grand chiefs as the Attorney General and Justice Minister.

As a matter of fact, I was really pleased to be in the city of Thompson just about a week and a half ago—could be wrong on the dates, but I'm close. And I had the opportunity at that time to march with the Grand Chief for MKO, Grand Chief Garrison Settee, in the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls march that was taking place in the city of Thompson, and with Mayor Smook and other councillors, with community-service organizations and with others. I even had my key officials with me. I was actually there as well with—oh, I can't name her—the Minister for Families—can't name her by name. But the Minister for Families, her staff, my deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers were all there. And I thought that was a really good signal, it's a

really good moment for us to be aligned and standing together on such a day.

So I've really appreciated my interactions with the grand chiefs. They continue. Meetings are upcoming. Working group continues to do their work in respect of the police—the amendments to the—proposed amendments and ongoing work to land on additional amendments. This is a large body of work, so I would want to make clear that in the next session of the Legislature, we won't get to everything that we want to do. In the future, we need to have broader conversations on other areas. I've had many briefings on this area of law in Manitoba. I've had many good interactions, as I said, with rights-holders' organizations but also with police chiefs, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police.

And that work will continue to go on.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** In a number of studies, it is now clear that there are circumstances where up to 50 per cent of crime is related to lead contamination and the exposure of children to lead early on in life leading to problems with learning difficulties, leaning—leading to problems with changes in the brain, leading to juvenile delinquency and to crime.

These studies are now numerous, and interestingly enough, in a study which documents this very carefully in South Carolina—Charlotte and the nearby county—the crime increase in kids started at levels as low as about 2 micrograms per decilitre. It increased in that study so that there was a significant increase in crime at 10 micrograms per decilitre.

Where these children were tested early and the level of lead was picked up as high and where these children were helped early on, where the lead exposure was decreased and mitigated, there was a dramatic reduction in the amount of crime caused by the children who had received the intervention. And this was compared to children who had not received the intervention who continued to have, over the course of their first 20, 25 years, an increased level of crime.

\* (17:50)

The conclusion from this, which is probably as close to a randomized study as we'll get is the study which might be similar to the study in economics, which was the reason that the Canadian, Card, won the Nobel Prize. It was a study in the environment, a natural experiment, as it were.

So I ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), what is he doing as the Minister of Justice to reduce lead exposure and to reduce the chance that such lead exposure is causing crime in Manitoba?

**Mr. Friesen:** I thank the member for River Heights for the question. I listened intently to the member's question because, as he says, there is a whole area of emerging research when it comes into the correlation between crime and exposure to environmental toxins.

So I don't dispute the claim that the member's making that there can be this correlation. I would want to be clear that when it comes to crime and factors that lead to crime, there's a correlation as well, between things like education attainment, alcohol and drugs, poor nutrition, family dysfunction. So to say there's causation, I think, probably, you know, goes too far in many—in some cases. But, clearly, there's a lot that continues to be discussed academically. There's a lot of data that continues to be looked at to further understand what this correlation is.

I think I'll make this commitment to the member and say I would be happy to converse with him personally on this subject further to understand what he believes might be the path that he's suggesting that Manitoba could pursue. I wonder if together, he and I could even recommend to the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy further work on the area of this. And we have this unique advantage in Manitoba to build on the successes of the MCHP, built, I might add, by a PC government in the 1990s. But this research group, of course, undertakes to study many different themes, and some of those themes can be informed by the government. So perhaps this is an opportunity for us in Manitoba to advance unique research here.

I would say, as well, that when he says what are we doing to take the issue seriously, I would remind the member that it was our government, probably, I'm guessing here at the microphone, in 2018—it could've been 2017—we undertook when we became aware of the—of issues of lead levels in downtown Winnipeg neighbourhoods that had never been adequately disclosed to Manitobans.

It was the previous minister in her role that undertook to get new testing taken, to look at all the old data, to receive that data, to make a plan. Mitigation efforts were undertaken, even for places like Weston School and at other locations. A lot of those things were challenging because the old locations and the determination of the locations for high levels of lead—of course, now, we use GPS and

before then, they were using landmarks that no longer exist.

But we've taken the issue seriously. We've disclosed to the public. We have tested and we have mitigated. We continue to take issues of lead levels in Winnipeg and other urban centres seriously. We know there is more work to do and I would suggest to the member there is the opportunity for he and members of our government in understanding where we could go in Manitoba.

**Ms. Fontaine:** So in the remaining couple of minutes that we have left, I'm going to ask the minister about the—oops, apologies—in respect to calls in our correctional facilities for Manitoba citizens.

How much does a phone call cost for a citizen currently housed within our correctional facility? How much has the government collected annually from phone calls made by citizens currently incarcerated over the last four years? And then how much of the monies collected is being put back into specific initiatives that will help citizens once they leave correctional facilities?

**Mr. Friesen:** I'm happy to respond in the time that's remaining to me this afternoon. We are endeavouring to pull up information about phone calls placed and the number of phone calls placed and revenue that is generated from them.

When it comes to supports in the community though that go back to people who are leaving incarceration, we have a very good story in Manitoba about initiatives that continue to be stood up and expanded when it comes to creating opportunities for people to make a successful transition back into community with supports, as to—in order to lower recidivism and to raise the prospect of the individual succeeding in their own life.

Programs like Walking Bear and other programs coalesce services around the individual and make sure that there are resources in place—a social worker, housing, addictions specialists, counselling services, employment services. And all of these are done in order to make sure the person can be successful.

And I would welcome further questions on the topic of resources that we're making available on an evidence basis, to be able to make people successful as they are leaving incarceration because that should clearly be our goal when it comes to these things.

When it comes to those programs, it's not just the Walking Bear program but we're actively expanding

programs of that kind. Youth programs—as I said, the program for females in incarceration at Headingley. We have other programs like that that we're continuing to build in this province and I would like to speak to the member more about how those are working.

When it comes to providing funding to make people successful back to the community, we know that there is much, much more for governments across Canada to do in order to focus on the success of that incarcerated person to make that good transition back. We want to make it our—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

\* (18:00)

I'm interrupting the proceedings of this section of Committee of Supply, pursuant of a Sessional Order placed—passed by House on October 7th, 2021. Item 5(d) states that on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, at 6 p.m., the Chairpersons of the Committee of Supply in each section will interrupt debate and put questions immediately, without debate, and any remaining Estimates resolutions.

The Sessional Order also indicates that at any request, recorded votes on divisional bells shall ring no more than one minute on each question, and the committee and the House shall rise following the consideration of the last resolution.

I am therefore going to call, in sequence, the remains resolutions for this section of—on the following departments: Justice, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Civil Service Commission, Legislative Assembly.

I would remind members that according—concordance with the sessional order, these questions may not be debated.

So we'll go in the first resolution.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$56,236,000 for Justice, Corporate and Strategic Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.2: RESOLVED be that—RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$51,750,000 for Justice, Crown Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Now we'll go to resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,354,000 for Justice, Legislative Counsel, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Now we'll enter resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$472,694,000 for Justice, Community Safety, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Now we'll go on to resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$74,682,000 for—for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Okay, resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,090,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

That completes Justice.

## **EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS**

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk):** Now we'll move on to Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

And resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,740,000 for the Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

That concludes Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

## **CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk):** Now we'll move on to Civil Service Commission.

And resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26,058,000 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

That completes civil servants commission.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Piwniuk):** Now we'll go on to Legislative Assembly.

We'll go on to resolution 1.1: RESOLVED be it that there be granted to Her Majesty not—a sum not exceeding \$10,789,000 for Legislative Assembly, Other Assembly Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

So we'll go on to resolution 1.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,373,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, for the 'fiscal' year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 1.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,066,000 for the Legislative Assembly, for the Office of the Ombudsman, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Okay, we'll go on to resolution 1.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,740,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Now we'll go on to resolution 1.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,637,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2022.

**Resolution agreed to.**

So the thing is we can't recess until the other two committee has—*[interjection]*—rise, we can't rise until the other two committees have actually been completed their resolutions. *[interjection]*

Yes, one has done so; we're waiting for the second one. We'll just temporarily recess until such time that we get notification.

*The committee recessed at 6:08 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 6:09 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please.

This concludes the considerations of Estimates for the sections of the Committee of Supply for the meeting of—in the Chamber. I would like to thank the ministers, the critics and the honourable members for their work and dedication during this process.

The Committee rises.

Call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Piwniuk):** The hour being after 6 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2021**

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
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**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**