

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), on a matter—or the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a matter of privilege.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I rise on a matter of privilege. This is a serious matter, Madam Speaker, and I request an opportunity to properly lay out the facts of the matter as I understand them. This is the first opportunity I have had to rise on this matter since learning the facts and reviewing the relevant authorities.

The Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation (Mr. Fielding) and the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba made numerous public comments to media yesterday regarding a bill that has not yet been introduced in the House: bill 42. The minister initiated these media briefings while knowing full well the legislation had yet to be introduced. The responsible minister indicated this bill will be similar in detail, scale and scope as the previous legislation the PC government was forced to scrap: bill 40.

It is a long-standing tradition of the House that legislation should be put to the House first, prior to any other person or venue. It offends the authority of this House to have legislation first proposed to individuals other than those who have been duly elected by the people of the province to consider, debate and vote on such important matters.

The most important authority, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, on page 85, is clear, Madam Speaker. It notes the provision of details of legislation to the media prior to members of the Legislature is a breach of privilege.

They write, and I quote: For example, in 2001, the question of privilege was raised regarding briefing of the Department of Justice held for members of the media on a bill that was yet introduced in the House while denying members access to the same information. Speaker Milliken ruled that the provision of information concerning legislation to the media without

effective measures to secure the rights of the House constituted a prima facie case of contempt. End quote.

Members of this Chamber who are elected to represent the people of this province have a mandated role to fulfill their parliamentary functions. As such, legislation should be presented to this House first, as this Chamber is where it will be debated and voted on.

Even the Deputy Premier agrees. On May 9th, 2018, he said in this Chamber, and I quote: "The contents of legislation being shared with both the public and the media before the members of this Assembly have had a chance to review and receive shows . . . a history of disrespecting your traditions and practices of this Assembly and the rights of MLAs receiving information first before we are asked to offer comment or debate. This has been a long-standing parliamentary tradition and one that is observed by this Chamber and its members." End quote, Madam Speaker. Those are the Deputy Premier's own words.

This is, sadly, not the first time this government has violated the privileges of members by speaking about legislation before it has been introduced in the House. It is before—it is disappointing, their flouting of our practices that they continue, Madam Speaker.

As a result of these actions by the minister responsible for Liquor & Lotteries Corporation—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the introduction of bill 42 be immediately stopped and treated as being out of order until such time as this matter can be ruled on by the Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): This is something new. Generally, the government—or the opposition, I should say—waits until bills are introduced before they try to filibuster the

bill. Now, they're trying to filibuster the bill even being introduced, Madam Speaker. It's a new tactic from the opposition.

What isn't new, however, is this sort of an allegation from the opposition. They will know, and you will remember, Madam Speaker, and others will remember that it's often the case that government speaks in generalities about legislation before it's introduced. I can recall the NDP, for example, speaking about bills that they were going to bringing forward. Sometimes they would signal them in the Throne Speech and they would say in the Throne Speech, during this session, during the coming year, the government will introduce legislation that will do a variety of different things. That's not uncommon.

Madam Speaker, I recall the former minister of Justice speaking about bringing in legislation, for example, to fortify vehicles—against fortified vehicles as a anti-gang measure, and speaking about that before the details of the legislation actually came forward. It would not be unusual, of course, because government has to consult with stakeholders, for example, on legislation. Often, the criticism that comes forward from the opposition is, well, why didn't you consult with individuals before bringing forward the legislation? Then you bring forward the legislation and they say, why did you consult with people? Why didn't you tell us first?

So, of course, when it comes to general terms of legislation, there's going to be indications in the media, whether that's through a Throne Speech, whether that's through discussions because they see it on the Notice Paper, whether that's through discussions with the stakeholders involved. But I know for certain that the text of legislation has not been shared with stakeholders, Madam Speaker, and that'll be distributed if the government—or, sorry, the opposition—doesn't want to block it in the next few minutes, when the minister is able to table the legislation.

Rather than trying to put up a fight against legislation before they even see it, I would encourage them to look at the legislation, think about the legislation, talk to others about the legislation, and then, if they want to fight, they can fight it, but it's a 'premerature' fight, and it's certainly not a matter of privilege.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, when we're dealing with a matter like this of the government sharing details of a bill in advance, that there's a line here which is important, that the government may mention a bill that is coming, but to share details is inappropriate.

And in this case, we support the efforts of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) to bring this to light, to bring the discussion open, and we support the efforts of the member for St. Johns to have the introduction of bill 42 delayed until this matter is resolved.

I think it is an important matter and is—we know that the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), although he talks about the 'tactics' of the opposition, is full of his own tactics. And we want to make sure that he has not crossed the line this time.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 42—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 42, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

* (13:40)

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: Very pleased to introduce the bill which amends The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act and Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act in order to create convenience for consumers and remove red tape for locally owned Manitoba small businesses.

Manitoba current retail liquor system unnecessary restricts what type of liquor can be sold at the type of stores. What this means is many Manitobans have to make multiple stops to—in order to purchase liquor products. Bill 42, Madam Speaker, eliminates the inconvenience by allowing 482 existing liquor licence retailers the option to sell all liquor products sold by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. The amendment will be particular—beneficial to rural Manitobans, who currently need to drive extended distances to purchase different liquor products at different locations.

The proposed legislation also enables Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to adjust the rapidly changing retail landscape by creating the ability to conduct a pilot project on retail liquor. The pilot project could authorize up to five years under the conditions set by the provincial government after the mandatory public consultation period, Madam Speaker.

This initiative is another step towards the government's priority to reduce red tape for Manitoba businesses and provide more convenience, Madam Speaker, to Manitoba residents.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that I—
[interjection]

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

Point of Order

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Just on a point of order.

We've just raised a matter of privilege, and typically, Madam Speaker, as you are well aware and have routinely cautioned us, we are not allowed to speak to the issues at hand that have—are before you in respect of your consideration of a matter of privilege.

And so I'm raising that with the introduction of the minister's new bill, which is, again, the subject of the matter of privilege that I just raised.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Well, I think it's a lot of tactics and no strategy over there, Madam Speaker.

If the member opposite is suggesting that she is concerned that she's not able to raise questions now about this particular bill because it's under advisement—if that's her concern, then maybe she should've thought about that before she raised the matter of privilege.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised—
[interjection] Order. Order.

On the point of order raised by the honourable member for St. Johns, I should note for the House that there are several important aspects involved in this. First, although a matter of privilege has been raised, it has not yet been ruled *prima facie* by the Speaker and nor has the House agreed to proceed with the remedy proposed in the motion that has been raised by the honourable member for St. Johns.

Second, I should note that remarks at first reading are not considered to be debate of the bill but instead are explanatory comments to explain the purpose of the bill.

Third, I have a concern about the potential use of parliamentary privilege to prevent a Cabinet minister or a private member from introducing a bill. It could be unduly punitive for any member wishing to bring a bill forward if they are prevented from doing so until a ruling on the issue has been delivered by the Speaker.

For this reason, I will allow the first reading to proceed, and I have, but I will not allow second reading to proceed until a ruling on the issue has been delivered to the House.

Accordingly, there is no point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Routine proceedings. Moving on to committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements? [interjection]

Oh, the honourable Minister of Justice—
[interjection]

Is there will of the House to revert back to tabling of reports? [Agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I am pleased to table the revised Estimates order.

Madam Speaker: And we thank the minister for that tabling.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and 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 please proceed with his statement.

Filipino Heritage Month

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Good afternoon. Mabuhay. [Live.] I rise today to recognize and celebrate Philippine heritage month, which our province observes annually in the month of June.

This upcoming June marks the 124th anniversary of Philippine independence and the 63rd anniversary of the community's initial establishment in Manitoba. From its humble beginnings, the community has grown to become one of the largest in Canada, with more than 83,000 people of Filipino origin now calling Manitoba home.

Philippine heritage month provides all Manitobans with the opportunity to learn about the rich heritage, history and ongoing contributions of the Filipino community. Manitobans of Filipino descent have played a historic role in making our province the place we know and love, with their knowledge, skills and leadership contributing to our collective success.

Madam Speaker, the roots of Manitoba's Filipino community are deep, with over 100 groups representing the diverse interests, activities and events of the community. Whether it be the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Filipino Journal, the Pilipino Express or the CKJS, I commend all the Filipino-representing groups for their leadership in organizing over 40 years of heritage celebrations.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge and thank members of the Manitoba Filipino community who have joined us here today in the gallery, whose names I will include in Hansard.

Wherever you may find yourself in Manitoba, the contributions and accomplishments of the Filipino community are evident. In addition to the many doctors and nurses in our hospitals, 30 per cent of our nurse aides, orderlies and parent service workers are from the Filipino community.

As political representatives, our province has elected the highest number of elected officials of Filipino descent at every level of government, with the election of the first Filipino Canadian MLA in 1981, the first Filipino Canadian MP in 1988 and the first female MLA of Filipino descent in 2007.

Whether it be in health care, arts, business or in this very Chamber, the impact of Manitoba's Filipino community cannot be understated.

Madam Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I have attended events in the community over the years and can attest to their welcoming and community spirit.

I have been joined by many colleagues in this Chamber to a number of vents here in Manitoba. Some of these include the flag raising at the PCCM, the Philippine Independence Ball, Manitoba Filipino

Street Festival, Folklorama and many, many more events. In addition to Winnipeg, there's a growing Filipino community in areas around the province such as Brandon, Steinbach, Neepawa and many other municipalities around the province.

These activities are just a handful of the many Filipino celebrations around Manitoba. With a growing population throughout the province, I know that there will be even more opportunities to celebrate this amazing community in the coming years.

As we transition into warmer weather this month, I encourage all Manitobans to engage in the multiple festivals, programs and activities offered by the Filipino community organizations. On behalf of the people, the province of Manitoba, I extend my best wishes to the Filipino community in honour of Philippine heritage month.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. *Salamat po. [Thank you.]* Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Smith: I'd like to ask leave to include the names in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to include the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Roselyn Advincula, Van Valdellon Afuang, Tes Aiello, Hipolito Alibin, Manny Aranez, Dante Aviso, Jovelle Balani, Ken Borce, Rod Cantiveros, Joyce Catenza, Dan Cleto, Gemma Dalayoan, Jose Delos Reyes, Lourdes Federis, Marianne Ferrer, Paris Frangkoulis, Faith Fundal, Perla Javate, Julie Javier, Katya Labelle, Vangie Mance, Muriel Masangkay, Bryan Mesias, Clarita Nazario, Ernesto Ofiazio, Allan Pineda, Babylyn Reyes, Cynthia Reyes, Gary Sarcida, JP Sumbillo, Genalyn Tan, Randy Viray

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Mabuhay. *[Live.]*

Filipinos have been central to the fabric of Manitoba for decades. Filipinos have played important roles in our health-care system, built up our infrastructure as engineers, helped support the garment industry in this province and drafted legislation in this very Chamber. Everyone in this Legislature is united in celebrating Filipino Heritage Month and all the many ways in which Filipinos contribute to this province.

* (13:50)

There are a number of specific organizations and people who deserve special recognition today. Groups

like the Manitoba Filipino Business Council do great work to support businesses in the retail, manufacturing and restaurant industries, among others. ANAK Inc. is an award-winning youth organization working to preserve and promote Filipino culture in Manitoba.

There are also a number of religious Filipino churches and organizations like Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Sacred Heart, Santo Niño, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Piat, Our Lady of Penafancia, Lord of Pardon and Cenacle Prayer Group that have done important work supporting the Filipino community and Manitoba more broadly over the years.

But Filipinos have also faced economic hardship and racism in this province and were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 over the past few years. So today, in addition to recognizing Filipino Heritage Month, the Manitoba NDP and I reiterate our commitment to address the challenges and barriers still faced by the Filipino community. We need to work together to reduce anti-Asian racism and eliminate systemic racism. So as we celebrate Filipino Heritage Month, let's commit to taking action on these important issues.

Salamat po [*thank you*], Madam Speaker.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: June 1st, which is sneaking up quickly, marks the beginning of Filipino Heritage Month, and we just had an amazing kickoff to the celebrations just about an hour ago today in the Rotunda with all of our maganda [*beautiful*] guests who are up in the gallery here today.

Madam Speaker, four years ago, in 2018, the national government passed a resolution recognizing June as Filipino Heritage Month, and I believe this has caused a ripple effect.

Since then, the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) had a private member's resolution about the quincennial celebration of Christianity in the Philippines, and my colleague from Waverley had a bill proclaiming that provincially the month of June be recognized as Filipino Heritage Month.

Madam Speaker, I must point out that both of these individuals are Sisler Spartans.

Now, the reason these pieces of legislation are so important is because June has become a month of opportunity: opportunity to promote culture and heritage, opportunity to celebrate the many contributions that our Filipino community has made to our diversity and economy. And for myself personally, June is an opportunity to give back to the Filipino community, because they have been such a blessing in my life.

Madam Speaker, over the last few years my father and I have co-hosted events in celebration of Filipino heritage, and this year, we have a bit of a hybrid event going on which I will be providing more details of within the next couple of days.

But what I want to focus on is the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba. They have organized events beginning on June 4th all the way up until June 25th, ranging from a flag raising ceremony to MAFTI cultural events to the Philippine Independence Ball and a multicultural music and arts show for healing and reconciliation, just to name a few.

Madam Speaker, I am very excited to be able to celebrate back in person, and I just want to say *salamat po* [*thank you*] to the minister for bringing forward this statement here today, say welcome to all our guests who have joined us here at the Legislature and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements—the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure—and 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 please proceed with his statement.

Flooding Update

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, our hydrologic forecasting centre is monitoring a precipitation system that could affect south and central Manitoba this weekend; however, no significant precipitation is expected to occur over the next few days in these areas.

With the exception of the Whiteshell area, all locations north and south of Winnipeg along the Red River are declining slowly, but we are expected to remain high until early June, Madam Speaker. Water levels in the—most drains, creeks and tributaries are also declining.

The current water level at James Avenue in Winnipeg is approximately 18.6 feet. It is established—

estimated that the—without the operation of the Red River Floodway, the Portage Diversion and the Shellmouth Dam the water level at St. James Avenue would be approximately 27 feet. Madam Speaker, with water levels 27 feet, the impact to the city of Winnipeg would have been severe, devastating to the private and provincial property, would be insurmountable.

Winnipeg River in the Whiteshell area remains very high and its tributaries are expected to rise to reflect these water levels. These historical water levels continue to impact many locations within the Whiteshell Provincial Park.

In response, our provincial crews are taking proactive measures to be—based on the hydrological forecast and adjusting operations as updated—are as received—updates are received. The Department of Natural Resources and Northern Development has offered additional support by deploying personnel to assist with incidental management, security and mitigation operations throughout the Whiteshell Provincial Park, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, 33 local authorities and four northern affair communities, seven First Nation communities and one provincial park remain under the state of local emergency. In southern and central portions of the province, some evacuees are beginning to return to their homes, such as in the RMs of Morris, Ritchot, Reynolds and Emerson-Franklin.

Our provincial staff are monitoring dikes and road closures 24-7, Madam Speaker. And when it's safe to do so, we will begin to reopening these locations.

As part of the province continues to experience flooding, while others are seeing their water levels recede, I would like to encourage Manitobans to continue to support each other through this difficult time, Madam Speaker.

I am confident our provincial and municipal staff will do the same, and for that I thank them very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Manitobans in every region of this province are still reeling from the impacts of this year's flooding. Water levels continue to rise in the Winnipeg River, and farmers in the Pembina Valley are increasingly worried about how much they'll be able to seed this year.

In particular, we note with concern the devastation on Peguis First Nation, where around 500 houses have been damaged and 200 more destroyed. Pictures

shared publicly show piles of household items that have been replaced because of water damage. Particularly tragic is the loss of items of ceremonial and cultural significance, like buffalo robes and ribbon skirts.

While some areas of the province are still at immediate risk of flooding, we urge the Province to begin supporting the rebuilding efforts in those areas in which the flooding has receded. Support for and partnerships with towns, rural municipalities and First Nations in their rebuilding efforts across the province will be key to our recovery.

Community members like Robert Thomas have spent the last few weeks working around the clock sandbagging and running pumps in Peguis. They now have to clean up and rebuild, so we urge this government to continue to help them to do so.

We reiterate our appeal for them to begin a substantial flood compensation program as soon as possible so that Robert and all others with loss or damage to their homes can return home as soon as possible.

Once again, I want to thank all of those who are working around the clock to help with flood response and to all those provincial employees, volunteers and so many around this province, thank you for your efforts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: I thank the minister and everyone who's been working hard to gather and share information and to fight floods on the front lines. The—a CBC reporter noted that this is—there's a record flood on the Winnipeg River, the sixth worst ever flood on the Red, the worst flood in decades on the Fisher. Flash flooding—the Parkland, Dauphin Lake and flooded Lake Winnipeg is on the rise.

After the deadly storms in Ottawa and Toronto, the federal Environment Minister recently said that we need to do more and to have better emergency communications to warn people of dangerous weather and emergency situations.

One of the ways of doing this, clearly, is through emergency alerts on cellphones, though of course that requires people to have cellphones and to have

a functioning cellphone network, which is absent throughout much of rural and northern Manitoba.

So these are just some of the areas where we need to invest in order to make sure that Manitobans are safe and able to respond to emergencies.

Just as, for years, infectious disease experts warned that a pandemic was inevitable, we couldn't predict exactly where or when it would happen, the same is true of extreme weather events due to climate change. More heat, more cold, more storms, more damage and disruption. And we've seen 25 years of warnings and attempts to act on climate change that have faced continual pushbacks and delays.

* (14:00)

We need decisive action because this is just a sign of more to come.

Of all the jurisdictions in the world, Manitoba is one of the best placed to fight climate change and to benefit from it. And there are extraordinary success stories in Manitoba of restoration and recovery. We should be taking bold action to make Manitoba stronger and more resilient.

Thank you, Madam Speaker

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Charles Carlos

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Madam Speaker, today I have the great pleasure of honouring Waverley constituent Charles Carlos. He has been a basketball coach at Arthur A. Leach school in the Pembina Trails School Division since the 2015-2016 school year.

Charles is a true advocate for the sport of basketball but also for his students, looking for every opportunity to get them on the court through requesting as many practices and tournaments permitted.

Since 2015, he has coached nine individual teams, and on two occasions, he coached two school teams at the same time, not to mention his concurrent work with his Ignite club program and other teams in the community.

This year, the grade 9 boys basketball team went undefeated all year in league, tournament and championship games. At the end of March, they received the Pembina Trails Athletic Association banner for grade 9 boys after defeating St. Paul's High School in the finals. The Arthur A. Leach boys took home the

March Madness tournament banner, winning 60-53 in a highly competitive game.

When the junior high provincials were cancelled this year, Madam Speaker, Charles rallied the basketball coaches and community together and planned one in its place. He organized everything from referees to scorekeepers and floor sweepers. He wanted to give the athletes not only on his team but throughout the province the amazing opportunity to play for a provincial title in front of a large crowd. Coach Charles and the boys put in numerous hours of practice and showed a high level of commitment and dedication.

Charles is able to develop different skills of his athletes, provide individuals with constructive feedback while empowering them and pushing them to strive for higher levels of play. His passion for coaching has resulted in him being named the coach of the provincial team Manitoba U-15 boys team.

One of the greatest qualities that Charles has as a coach is that he works—he does outside of the sport. He develops character and community mindset with his athletes that extend greatly beyond the basketball court. He is shaping our youth to be constructive and positive members of society.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring the Arthur A. Leach grade 9 boys basketball championship team and Coach Charles Carlos for his dedication to the service in developing the lives of our kids at Arthur A. Leach through his hard work and dedication.

Thank you, Coach Charles.

Premier's Leadership Record

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Max De Pree once said, and I quote: Leaders don't inflict pain; they share pain. End quote.

So let's review the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) leadership: Forgot to disclose \$31 million—because who doesn't forget millions of dollars?—broke Elections Manitoba rules; stood up in the House to vote against the abortion protest buffer zone to protect Manitobans accessing essential health care; supported her—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —Deputy Premier after his sexist comments; in the midst of devastating waves of the pandemic, she didn't work one weekend and couldn't be bothered to meet with the federal minister; refuses to call a public inquiry into the death of Krystal

Mousseau; refuses to call a public inquiry into the corruption scandal at city hall; strategically schedules press conferences during question period and doesn't answer our questions; has failed at getting the surgical and diagnostic backlog under any significant control; told Manitobans that they were on their own; failed to commit to a living wage and is so proud to be the last province in Manitoba with the lowest minimum wage; let her MLA talk out a resolution to protect young athletes from sexual abuse from coaches; gave the same MLA \$500,000; capitulated to white nationalists; made a point of doing one of her first radio interviews with Dave Wheeler, a man who's made transphobic comments and insinuated that the pandemic was not as bad as people—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —make it out to be; tolerated anti-vaxxers in her Cabinet and continues—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —to tolerate them in her caucus; refuses to make vaccinations mandatory in personal-care homes during the fourth wave; and, Madam Speaker, continues Brian Pallister's agenda.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans must vote out each and every one of this caucus.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The honourable minister of—[*interjection*]

Order. [*interjection*] Order. [*interjection*] Order.

Reminder to members: we have a lot of guests in the gallery, including students, and I'm going to ask for your co-operation, please. You want to set a good example for them, to show where leadership can take people and that democracy does and can work.

The honourable Minister of Health, on a member's statement.

Peter Czehryn and Paulette Cote

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the contributions of Windsor Park residents, Peter Czehryn and Paulette Cote.

Peter and Paulette, or more fondly known as the Soup Fairies, have been an integral part of my constituency of Southdale by providing relief and assistance to vulnerable members of the community by partnering with multiple charities and non-profit organizations.

Just like fairies, you can say Peter and Paulette are truly magical. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and after the passing of a loved one, Peter and Paulette came up with the wonderful idea of providing soup to those affected by COVID as a gesture of solidarity, warming the hearts of those around them, one bowl of soup at a time. They raised over \$9,000 and provided 1,750 people with delicious soups and much-needed support.

This year, in light of the recent war in Ukraine, Peter and Paulette felt the need to extend their charitable efforts globally. With 40 years of experience in egg writing, Peter, alongside other artists, created beautiful Ukrainian Easter egg artwork, also known as pysanky. This is a traditional folk art using wax, dyes, etching and other techniques to decorate eggs.

Peter and Paulette also collaborated with others in the community, accepting donations of various pieces of art and auctioning them off. In total, Madam Speaker, they raised \$6,683 in support of Manitoba Operation Blue Skies, a project of the Canadian Ukrainian Institute Prosvita that is supported by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Manitoba Provincial Council. They help deliver relief to displaced Ukrainian individuals.

The donations raised through the artwork will go directly to funding bus passes for new Ukraine arrivals, helping to ease the burden of travel—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to complete her statement? [*Agreed*]

Ms. Gordon: —helping ease the burden of travel as they navigate through a new life in Canada.

Please join me in honoring Peter Czehryn and Paulette Cote and recognizing their efforts to make life better for their community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Winnipeg Pride

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Winnipeg Pride week starts tomorrow with a flag raising at City Hall. This is an exciting time for the 2SLGBTQ+ communities experiencing the first in-person Pride since 2019. Winnipeg Pride is also hosting Canada Pride's second national human rights conference.

Madam Speaker, 35 years ago, in the summer of 1987, 250 people gathered at this Legislative Building

awaiting the results of the Pawley NDP government's decision to include sexual orientation in the Manitoba Human Rights Code. The crowd was prepared to protest or celebrate, depending on the outcome.

Fortunately, the first Winnipeg Pride parade took place that day as 250 people celebrated in the streets, although some participants wore paper bags over their heads at the first Pride parade out of fear for their jobs or safety.

We've come a long way since 1987, although not always moving fast enough to ensure human rights and equity for all.

Ten years ago, the NDP government was one of the first provinces to include gender identity in the Manitoba Human Rights Code and we continue to push for non-binary and gender-diverse Manitobans to be treated with respect and dignity in this Legislature and across the province.

None of these legislative changes would have happened without the incredibly hard work and courage of countless community advocates.

* (14:10)

We all have loved ones and community members to celebrate, so I want to wish a happy Pride week to all MLAs, staff, pages and guests in this Chamber and to all Manitobans.

I will close by highlighting an event taking place in the Wolseley constituency. The evening of June 2nd, five West Broadway businesses on Sherbrook will be hosting a Pride block party. I'll be there as Tallest Poppy, Good Neighbour taproom, Roughage Eatery, Chips Vintage and Public General Store celebrate our 2SLGBTQ+ businesses and community.

Thank you.

Dates and Activities in Manitoba

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): As the Legislature prepares to rise for the summer, I want to briefly recognize some important days and exciting events coming up.

Firstly, graduations: I want to wish all of those who are farewelling and graduating a very happy celebration for the adventures to come.

Secondly, when it comes Manitoba's rich diversity, we have a lot going on. June 1st marks the beginning of Filipino Heritage Month where we have many activities celebrating all the contributions of our

Filipino community here in Manitoba. June 21st marks National Indigenous Peoples Day, and it's a day providing all of us the opportunity to reflect on reconciliation and to learn more about history and culture of Indigenous peoples. On June 27th is Canadian multicultural day, a day where we intentionally work towards furthering our values of diversity.

And July 1st, Madam Speaker, is Canada Day. And I want to extend an open invitation for all to join us this year as we restart our annual event where there will be games, face painting, cultural performances, entertainment, pizza and fireworks and a special tribute to Ukraine. Canada Day is also a time where we need to reflect on Canada's true history and recommit to real action on reconciliation and support healing.

We all must do our part and recognize that this day will bring up traumas for many across the country, and that is why we are ensuring that there will be Indigenous representation and storytelling to educate all of us in attendance. Then, of course, Madam Speaker, two weeks of Folklorama pavilions beginning on July 31st, and personally, I'm determined to get a camp trip in this summer, as well.

Madam Speaker, with a few seconds left, I want to thank everyone from our clerks to our Hansard to our pages, everyone who works inside of the Manitoba Legislature, for all of your efforts this session, going hybrid. And I want to wish all of my colleagues here in the House well over the summer break. I hope you have lots of joy-filled memories over the summer and remain safe.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have a number of guests in the gallery, and I would like to introduce them to you and just add that it is a pleasure to see so many guests that we do now have back in our Manitoba legislative gallery, so we welcome you all.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Rock Lake School, 13 grade 7 to 9 students under the direction of Tim Rempel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Piwniuk).

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where have with us today participants and leaders from the Peaceful Village Program in Winnipeg, a program which provides supports to new Canadian students to help them thrive and succeed in school. They have

also brought along participants and leaders from their sister program, Peaceful Village in Halifax. And this group are guests of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today Ms. Babylyn Reyes from Vancouver, Washington, United States, who is the guest of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes).

And also in the public gallery today, from North Bay, Ontario, we have with us Lance and Alexandra Johnson, who are the brother and sister-in-law of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson), along with their four daughters Adora, Ari, Asta and Aivy.

Also in the public gallery we have with us today grade 9 students from Murdoch MacKay Collegiate under the direction of Ms. Dudeck, who are the guests of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare). That may have been the group that had to leave.

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Now to the part where we say goodbye to two of our pages. Prior to oral questions, we always do this as our pages are leaving.

One of our pages, Quirin Stetefeld, is serving his last day in the Chamber today, and I wanted to share some of his comments with the House:

If I had to briefly summarize my experience as a page into three simple words, I would simply say it was extremely eye-opening. This is because this enlightening experience of being able to directly take part in the legislative process in a way that many young people at my age are not given the privilege to do so, allowed me to grow as a person. It also allowed me to gain valuable knowledge that without a doubt, I will carry with me as I continue to move forward in my life as well as in my studies, which I plan to continue at the Asper School of Business next year.

I just want to conclude by saying that I am forever grateful for having had this opportunity to be a page, as the many lessons I have learned have made it an extremely memorable experience.

And another one of our pages, Prabhnoor Singh, is serving his last day in the Chamber today, and I

wanted to share some of his personal comments with the House:

Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*], everyone. Being a legislative page was once-in-a-lifetime opportunity which brought with it many life-long memories, lessons and friends. I will definitely miss this place, its ambience and the small interactions I had with the MLAs, clerks, journals and Chamber branch members.

I leave this Legislature with an inspiration of making a difference in the province, whether that is through an elected position in this Chamber, being a community worker or doing small acts of kindness.

Thank you, everyone, for making this experience an incredible one. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And I would indicate that his parents are here, and I would like to introduce them to you: Tejinder Singh and Arvinder Kaur.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And as you can see, this place does have a profound effect on our pages, so we thank them for their service and wish them the very best as they go forward.

Now, to the next part. [*interjection*] Yes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Leader of the Opposition Public Gallery Acknowledgements

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, of course, you meant the best part, when you said that, Madam Speaker.

I do want to take a moment just to welcome all of our guests to the building here. This is the people's building and I hope that you know that you're always welcome here.

So, shout-out to the participants with Peaceful Village, shout-out to the students who have joined us from Rock Lake, those from Murdoch Mackay who had to depart to catch their bus, and also a big shout-out to all the guests from the Filipino community, as well as visitors from Ontario and the US.

Welcome to Manitoba, a province that we're all so proud of.

I also want to say that it's been one of the highlights of this spring sitting that we've been able to welcome people back into the people's building. And, of course, I say the same to the pages. It sounds like we have two thoughtful, inspiring young people, so I wish you all the best in what's next.

I do have a question on the situation in health-care, but wanted to just say those few words.

It's starting to feel like grad season around here, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and you see, it's not all that bad.

I, too, want to echo the comments from the Opposition Leader. Welcome, everyone, to the Chamber here today. We appreciate you being with us, and it seems like it's been a long couple of years since we've had people here.

So nice to see so many people from all over, not just Manitoba, but other jurisdictions as well.

It is nice to see family and friends of members in the gallery; that way we know for sure that those members will be on their best behaviour and that is appreciative.

To all of our pages, certainly appreciate the work that you're doing here every day and we wish you all the best in the future.

Thank you very much.

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

Nurse Shortage in Emergency Rooms Use of Paramedics as Replacement Staff

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, in welcoming our guests to the people's building, I want them to know that one of the important functions we carry out here is to ensure that the services that Manitobans rely on are defended. It just so happens it's the folks on this side of the Chamber who do that defending.

* (14:20)

On the issue of health care, our province-wide health-care system—which cares for the sick, that cares for the elderly, that cares for those folks when they have accidents—has been in crisis for a number of years. That crisis was caused by the cuts and closures of emergency rooms, particularly like at the Grace Hospital.

We know that this situation emerged before the pandemic, and it has gotten worse since.

I'm going to table a document regarding the staffing at the Grace Hospital. It shows that paramedics are being asked to pick up additional shifts, not just to fill in a paramedic role but to fill in for nurses as well, Madam Speaker.

The situation continues to 'deeriorate'.

When is this government finally going to do something to help health care?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): We certainly recognize the extra challenges that health care faces given the results of the pandemic over the last two years. Certainly, our government recognizes that.

We're responding to requests from Manitobans to strengthen health care in Manitoba. That's why we have committed, this year's budget, \$7.2 billion to health care. That is a new record investment in health care here in the province of Manitoba.

We recognize there's challenges with staffing at various levels and various capacities. Those are not unique challenges to Manitoba. Every jurisdiction in the country is facing those challenges. But we've committed resources to make sure we strengthen health care.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the challenge that this PC government has had with health care is that they cut resources in one area and then they try to draw down resources in another to backfill the issue that they themselves created.

We saw that with the emergence of the surgical and diagnostic wait times. The fact is, people are waiting longer than ever for surgeries in Manitoba today because nurses had to be taken out of the operating rooms and sent to other areas with critical needs.

The issue that I'm bringing forward today is repeating the same sort of mistakes in the emergency rooms. We have a shortage of nurses. They're now drawing on paramedics to fill in those staffing shortages on the nursing side. But then, Madam Speaker, what will that do to the situation with ambulances? We are already seeing Manitobans wait record-long times to get an ambulance, and now paramedics are being drawn in further to the ERs.

When will this government finally start to fix the staffing crisis they've created?

Mr. Cullen: Let's set the record straight here. Record investments for resources in health care: \$7.2 billion.

Madam Speaker, we in Manitoba, along with every other jurisdiction in the country, just went through two years in a pandemic. Clearly, that stretched resources.

We are investing in those resources. We want to put more nurses back here. We've committed 400 more places for education in terms of getting nurses back into hospitals to assist those patients.

We recognize the challenges the pandemic has created. We are committed to strengthening health care, and that is—been seen by a record investment of \$7.2 billion in health care, not to mention the \$110 million we've committed to the diagnostic and surgery backlogs. We are responding to the requests from Manitobans.

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

Health-Care System Management Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, Madam Speaker, the Deputy Premier's idea of responding to the needs of Manitobans is to take away from the needs that we have in other critical aspects of our health-care system. The diagnostic and surgery waits grew because they took the nurses away from the operating rooms to address the staffing crisis they created in other areas of critical care.

Now, potentially, what we're seeing with the document that I tabled, is that they're taking paramedics—the people who staff ambulances—away from the ambulances and putting them into an emergency room to address the short staffing of nurses that they themselves created when they closed the emergency rooms around Winnipeg in 2017, '18 and '19, Madam Speaker.

Again, we see a situation where the staffing crisis gets worse and worse and worse, and it's the people of Manitoba who are left to shoulder the burden.

What guarantees can the Deputy Premier provide the House today that their plan at the Grace Hospital won't increase wait times not only in the ER but—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I'd like to take a moment and remind members of this House of the failed record of the former NDP government in

an exchange that occurred in this Chamber on June 9th, 2015, where a question was posted to then-Health minister Sharon Blady: Mr. Speaker, this is—there is an ER crisis and there—also regions in Manitoba—there are regions in Manitoba that are experiencing a critical doctor shortage. Because of that, two dozen rural ERs are closed. When asked in Estimates yesterday how she was going to address this issue, this minister of Health said that she's still waiting for a, and I quote, magic health-care wand. I would like to ask her: Since last evening, did she find that wand?

That is how the former NDP government handled our health—

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

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask what the PC Party of Manitoba stands for, because they do not stand for fiscal responsibility. Health care is getting worse, and they can't even calculate the actual value of their education rebate cheques.

They certainly don't stand for personal responsibility, because every day ministers try to blame everyone else but them for the crisis that they have created in the health-care system.

And they certainly do—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —not stand for rural health care, because even as we speak, we see that this government has closed the emergency room at—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —Powerview and Pine Falls. We see also that in Ste. Anne, the emergency room there has been closed without any consultation with the community. We see that countless emergency rooms are—in the Interlake are forced to turn patients away; in many cases, it's one patient being turned away again and again and again.

So, what is it that the PC Party stands for, because certainly, they don't stand for health care in Manitoba and certainly, they do nothing—

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

Ms. Gordon: We stand for action.

I'm tabling a news release from November of 1999, where the NDP announced a five-point plan on how to end hallway medicine. They have no credibility, Madam Speaker.

Health-system leadership has acknowledged the challenges being experienced in emergency departments right now. They've implemented—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —a number of initiatives in recent weeks, and those initiatives have come right from the hospital floor, Madam Speaker.

And I thank all the leaders and staff for bringing forward the initiatives such as the \$1.2 million expansion of the physician-in-triage model of care program, improving lab turnarounds, level loading of transports and more great ideas are coming forward.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

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

Mr. Kinew: I want to thank the Minister of Health for tabling this document from the year in which I graduated high school.

The reason that I want to thank her for tabling it is that it is proof—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —it's proof for when Gary Doer fixed hallway medicine in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

And then we had this government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —come in. And what has this government done? Not only did they bring hallway medicine back to Manitoba, they brought highway medicine to Manitoba, where they see Manitoba patients sent to North Dakota and shipped out of province because we simply can't provide the care for them here that they need.

Rest assured, to the Minister of Health, that this team is ready—just like Gary Doer—to come in and fix the crisis they've created in health care, Madam Speaker.

* (14:30)

My question is simple: In advance of that, will they commit to causing no more damage to health care—

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

Uh oh, is right. I did meet with the students in the hallway when I was out in the hallway, and I did indicate to them that there should be passion in debate. But there should be respect in the debate, and we should be demonstrating that democracy works. And I told them that they, hopefully, will see that in this Chamber today.

So, let's try this out and see if we can actually show them that these things do work.

Ms. Gordon: What we are committing to is not searching under our pillows at night for magic wands.

We're not going to rely on pixie dust, we are going to rely on interventions that are coming forward from the hospital floor. Listening to nurses—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —listening to clinicians, doctors, health-system leadership; that's where the early interventions are being found.

Making changes to ambulance transport protocols; a pilot to test for COVID-19 within the emergency department for new patient arrivals; and we're refining our virtual COVID outpatient program that has helped thousands of Manitobans to stay at home and receive the care virtually.

Madam Speaker, that is what—

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

Order.

Research Manitoba Funding Concerns

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, Research Manitoba does important work.

It supports local research and helps drive talented people in Manitoba in research and innovation. Unfortunately, Public Accounts shows funding to Research Manitoba has declined over the last few years, from \$17 million, down to \$15 million, down to \$12 million. When we asked about this in Estimates, the minister seemed unaware of the cuts this government has made to Research Manitoba.

So why doesn't the PC government value research and innovation, and will they reverse their cuts to Research Manitoba?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I do appreciate the question and the line of questioning the other day from the member opposite.

Certainly, we value the work at Research Manitoba. We're committing over \$12 million this year to Research Manitoba for the good work they do. They do leverage other work and resources as well. So, we're certainly committed to Research Manitoba.

We're also committed to health care. That's why we have a record investment in health care this year of \$7.2 billion. That's Manitoba's priority, and we're responding to Manitobans' priorities.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, I'll table a letter from the—U of M president, President Benarroch, to the minister of Advanced Education.

He says: This reduction in Research Manitoba funding have meant our province is missing out on opportunities for economic growth. With additional funding, we can invest in high-quality research in impact areas for Manitobans and leverage federal funding to stay competitive in both Canada and internationally. End quote.

This government's cuts are making Manitoba less competitive and we are losing talented researchers to other jurisdictions.

When will the minister reverse course, reverse his cuts to Research Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Again, I appreciate the good work that the people at Research Manitoba are doing.

I actually just had a conversation last night with Dr. Benarroch from the University of Manitoba, and he was talking about all the money that the university was able to leverage for research. So I know he's been quite happy with the attraction of that investment.

Certainly, we are supporting the University of Manitoba with additional funding this year, and I know he's very supportive of that funding as well.

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

Mr. Moses: Madam Speaker, it's sadly clear that, under this government, Manitoba is losing talented researchers to other jurisdictions.

Research Manitoba helps to build local talent and helps to fuel economic development. Brian Pallister

cut funding to Research Manitoba, and this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has kept cutting, and it's down from 17 down to 12 million dollars. President Benarroch says that Manitoba is missing out on economic opportunities.

Why is this government carrying out Brian Pallister's failed, regressive approach and when will they restore funding to Research Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: I know the members use the term cuts very loosely, and I think if the member would go back over the last five years, the funding has been pretty constant there and—notwithstanding the increases that the University of Manitoba have had and notwithstanding the extra investments we've made in health care.

And I will say the member probably doesn't realize this, but when it comes to the bioscience industry in Manitoba, we are the second largest exporter of product in Canada—a tremendous economic development opportunity that exists here in Manitoba. And we're going to try to expand that processing here in Manitoba.

Support for Children with Epilepsy Inquiry into Purchase of ROSA Machine

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Yesterday, when I asked why this government hasn't purchased a ROSA machine to help children living with epilepsy, the Minister of Health touted additional beds in an adult epilepsy monitoring unit.

I will give the minister another chance today to answer why her government has failed to purchase a ROSA machine to help children. It can't be lack of money, because CEO Michael Schlater donated \$2 million to purchase a ROSA machine.

So, why has this government failed to purchase a ROSA machine?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I will reiterate my comments from yesterday's question.

Our government remains committed to improving health care for Manitobans, and that includes strengthening neurology services and care for patients with multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, as well as improving our stroke services. We're recruiting and retaining neurologists, and six new neurologists have been recruited: one MS neurologist, two epilepsy, two stroke and one cognitive neurologist.

We continue to support staff in terms of coming into the program, as well as equipment.

Madam Speaker, the members opposite may have missed the last two years of the unprecedented pandemic; supply chains have been interrupted and we are going to continue our—

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

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Naylor: We did hear that the Province said they had plans to purchase a ROSA machine back in December, but no timeline has been provided. But considering the Province claimed they would purchase one five years ago—well before the pandemic—it's difficult to believe them.

Neurology services in Manitoba are lacking, and you need to recruit because neurologists left. And one of them at least left the province because you didn't hire—purchase a ROSA machine. There's a high vacancy rate in the adult and pediatric neurology, and the U of M's MS clinic is on the verge of collapse.

Purchasing a ROSA machine would help support children living with epilepsy, so why has this government failed to do so for five years?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, again, our government remains committed to the neurology program, the epilepsy program, to children, to adults needing care.

I was so pleased yesterday to join Premier—the honourable First Minister at the Children's Hospital, where we were announcing the opening of the heart health centre and the incredible donation and contribution from the Price family and several other donors. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: We are going to continue to come alongside families of—that have young children and adults who need care throughout our entire health system, Madam Speaker, contrary to what the member opposite is stating today.

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

Ms. Naylor: Manitobans have figured out that many of these health announcements are just photo ops that are meaningless, because five years ago the minister of Health stood at HSC and received a \$2 million cheque for a ROSA machine and a unit that has not been purchased. It's meaningless.

* (14:40)

So, will the Province stop misleading Manitoba children and their families and commit to purchasing the ROSA machine? Will the minister commit to purchasing it this year and will she commit to telling Manitobans when she has done so?

Ms. Gordon: What a shameful comment to make, that the announcement we were part of yesterday at the Children's Hospital with the Price family, with hundreds of donors that were watching virtually and were there on unit 4 to see the opening of a new heart health centre that is going to help 6,000 children.

I met Jaxon, who received a new heart five years ago, and this member stands in the House and says that that is a photo op. The member needs to stand today and apologize to the Price family and to all the donors that contributed to that centre, Madam Speaker.

That is the right thing for the member to do.

Judicial Selection Process Legislation Request to Support Amendments to Bill 8

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last week, Bill 8 was called to committee and presenters raised serious concerns. The bill includes provisions that puts more power into the minister's hands to select judges, Madam Speaker. This is the politicization of selecting judges to sit in our courts.

Manitoba has a strong judge selection process that's worked for the last 30 years, which includes quality input from sitting judges. Bill 8 waters down that process.

Will the minister withdraw these provisions and support our amendments to Bill 8?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's the same provision that is used in Ottawa to select judges. Jagmeet Singh has joined a coalition with the Liberal government who apparently supports the same process in Ottawa, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: We heard from the Provincial Judges Association of Manitoba, the Manitoba Bar Association and the criminal defense lawyers. They all expressed concern with Bill 8.

Bill 8 dilutes the presence of judges on the judicial appointment committee with the minister's own hand-picked appointments. It removes the chief judge as the chair of the committee and it changes what

information is provided to the minister for judicial selection. Far more power is handed to the minister to turn the court into the direction that he chooses, Madam Speaker.

Will he undo this and support our amendments that withdraw these provisions?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, it's the same provision that's used in Ottawa. It's been there for many years. It's supported by the Trudeau government, supported now by Jagmeet Singh and his coalition with the Trudeau government. I will certainly let Mr. Singh in Ottawa know that he has lost the confidence of the member of St. Johns.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Presenters told us Bill 8 was introduced without the prior consultation of the judicial selection committee, nor was there consultation done with the Law Reform Commission or the Law Society or the Provincial Court. No one, Madam Speaker.

Not one single person asked for these changes that the minister is bringing forward in Bill 8. It weakens the committee's independence from government and risks undermining public confidence in the appointment of judges. This is a naked attempt by the minister to get the judges that he wants appointed in our courts. You know who else did that? Trump, Madam Speaker.

Will he commit to withdrawing these provisions and will he support our amendments—

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

Order. I think members may want to hear what their minister has to say.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I am shocked and very disappointed that the member for St. Johns compared Donald Trump to Jagmeet Singh. It is absolutely disgraceful.

I, for one, will stand with Jagmeet Singh on this particular issue. They're doing it the right way in Ottawa and we'll do it here as well, Madam Speaker.

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

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Implementation of Inquiry Recommendations

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Doris Trout. Rebecca Contois.

The last two weeks have seen—we have seen murders of both of these young Indigenous women. Community members are distraught at the loss of these women, including Doris's three children. It's clear that the PC government is not doing enough to address the ever-growing violence against Indigenous women and children in Manitoba.

What will it take for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to take action on the critical issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and two-spirit in this province?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, these are very serious issues, and we know that the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women has been something that Canada has been grappling with, that this province has been grappling with for many years.

There's been significant work that has been done when it comes to bringing light to these issues, but there's no question that the loss of any individual and one Indigenous woman, one Indigenous two-spirited individual, another Indigenous person that's been lost—anybody that's been lost, Madam Speaker, it's a tragedy. It's a tragedy to the families; it's a tragedy to all Manitobans.

And we commit ourselves, as I'm sure all members of this House commit themselves, to continue to ensure that more light is brought to these tragedies.

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

Mrs. Smith: Far too many Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or gone missing in this province, including my sister, Claudette Osborne-Tyo.

We see that this violence has continued even after the Province signed on to the MMIWG2S national inquiry calls to justice. Community and advocates are saying that this PC government is not doing enough to address this issue and actually doing the bare 'mimum'. It's clear from the recent murders of Doris Trout and Rebecca Contois that this is true.

What specific actions is the government taking to implement the calls to justice from the MMIWG2S national inquiry that will keep Indigenous women safe here in our province?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member opposite brings a very personal and important voice to this critical issue, and I've appreciated when she's expressed that here in the House. And she's done it with

compassion, she's done it with vigour and she's done it in a way that I think all of us have learned from.

I do know that when it comes to Justice, officials are working hard to ensure that, where there are individuals who continue to be missing, that information is brought to the families. They're working with the grand chiefs and others within the Indigenous community, Madam Speaker, and I think all of us are dedicating to do as much as we can to ensure that this situation not only improves in Manitoba but across Canada and more light is brought to it.

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

Mrs. Smith: The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls outlined 231 calls to justice. The Province signed on to these calls and has responsibility to follow through on them.

The recent murders of Indigenous women in Winnipeg have shown that taking action on these calls is critical. Community members want to know what the government is doing to prevent these murders from happening to Indigenous women and girls in our province.

What specific actions is this government doing to keep women and girls safe in our community and preventing these deaths from happening?

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): Well, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the government of Manitoba, I express our sincere condolences to Rebecca Contois and Doris Trout's families, friends and loved ones and communities, the Crane River and Gods Lake. We care and are with you. You're not alone in this grief.

* (14:50)

But women in Indigenous culture are sacred. They need to be treated with respect and dignity, and as a government we will continue to support 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. We will continue to speak out and take action against gender-based violence in our province, and we all have a role to play in taking action to end gender-based violence.

And we encourage anyone with information or concerns that may help to bring those responsible for these horrific deeds to justice to reach out to Crime Stoppers at 204-786-8477.

Bell-MTS Merger Service Quality and Layoffs

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's a sad history in Manitoba of broken promises around MTS.

In the 1995 election, the then-PC premier promised the publicly owned phone system would not be sold off, but it was. Prices went up, service declined and Manitoba workers were laid off.

Six years ago this month, in 2016, MTS was bought by Bell, which promised to make Winnipeg its western headquarters and made a lot of noise about new investments. At the time, Brian Pallister supported the merger even though people warned it would mean less competition, layoffs, higher prices and worse service. Those warnings have come true and the promises have not been kept.

Instead of investments, some workers at MTS have seen nine rounds of layoffs while service is worse and costs are going up.

Is this government going to do anything to challenge MTS to keep its promises, or are Bell's shareholders more important than Manitobans?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Deputy Premier): I appreciate the question being raised by the NDP—or, sorry, the Liberal leader.

Certainly, I think over the last few days we've seen some issues raised by the public in terms of service being provided by Bell MTS. It certainly appears that the federal regulator has an eye on that particular situation. Certainly, there's some oversight there in terms of making sure that Bell MTS do provide adequate and proper service to their customers. I'm sure the regulator will make sure that that happens.

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

Mr. Lamont: We all know Manitoba's telephone service is abysmal, especially in rural and northern Manitoba, and MTS reduced its investments by \$500 million. They've been cutting back, and workers and customers have both been feeling the pinch.

TEAM I-F-T-P-E, Local 161, which represents Bell-MTS workers, says there have been nine rounds of downsizing from their bargaining unit alone since the Bell-MTS merger. The most recent one was just announced May 9th, targeting 31 positions.

Since 2015, more than half of their jobs have been lost: 300 good Manitoba jobs lost in the last five years.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) join us and say, Bell, let's talk about why they're laying off hundreds of workers and breaking their promise to invest in Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Certainly, from our perspective as a government, any loss of jobs is very unfortunate. Certainly, there is competition in this field, and we certainly think that there are opportunities for competition as well.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, I think I know, from a job perspective and a labour perspective, there certainly is opportunity for Manitobans to get to work, all kinds of labour challenges across pretty well every sector and, quite frankly, across every portion of Manitoba.

So there will be tremendous opportunities for any layoffs that may have occurred with this particular company, and we certainly, from our perspective as government as well, we've committed to over \$100 million to make sure that Manitobans have the skills and talent that's required in the workforce.

Addiction Treatment at RAAM Clinics Medication Coverage for Patients

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, as I wrote to the minister, there's a need for an adjustment in the treatment for opioid 'addictions' as now provided at RAAM clinics.

In brief, addiction physicians are unable to start people on treatment with Suboxone or similar medications immediately, when a person needs it, if the person doesn't have money and doesn't have the medication coverage through EIA and IHB or private insurance.

Since addiction treatment needs to be started as soon as a person is ready and can then immediately reduce the risk of overdose, the impact of the therapy would be much better if the government would cover six months of opioid agonist therapy for such individuals.

Will the government consider this life-saving measure?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): Our government has made major investments into mental health and addictions over the last few years, and a number of those initiatives have saved lives. We will continue to invest in the data-driven treatment to help Manitobans address their addictions issues.

I'd be happy to sit down with the member opposite and further discuss some of our harm reductions and our treatment options that we are offering to Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Midland? No?

The honourable member for Midland.

Reducing Red Tape for Small Businesses CFIB's Manitoba Ranking

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): As small businesses look to economic recovery, it is more important than ever that governments commit to reducing costly red tape to make it easier to do business in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Justice expand on how Manitoba ranks compared to other provinces when it comes to making life more affordable for small businesses and their workers?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I'd like to thank the member for Midland for the question. I know he's a strong advocate for small business, Madam Speaker.

And the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently released a report on how provinces were doing in helping small businesses by reducing red tape, and they said that Manitoba got an A on their report card—the best score in all of the country, Madam Speaker, particularly important coming out of the pandemic, when small businesses were so impacted.

I know why the NDP are upset, Madam Speaker. They're upset because if they look back at their track record on the same report card, in 2011, they got an F; in 2012, they got another F; in 2013, they got to work and they got a D; in 2014, they got another D; and then they really got to work in 2015, and they got another D.

Manitobans can't afford to go back to the NDP, Madam Speaker, because what comes with the NDP is a tsunami of red tape.

Interlake-Eastern Health Region Physician Staffing Concerns at ERs

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: I'm going to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I have recognized the honourable member for Flin Flon.

MLA Lindsey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm going to table next week's schedule for the emergency departments in the Interlake, and more often than not, there's no doctor available; Pine Falls' ER's suspended.

Madam Speaker, Diane Malcolm is a resident of Lundar, and earlier this month she feared she was having a heart attack. She called Eriksdale: no ER doctor. She phoned Ashern: overwhelmed, couldn't come. Phoned Stonewall: told to go to Eriksdale. So she went there, only to be put in an ambulance that had to park on the side of the road to try and figure out where to take a potential heart-attack victim.

Madam Speaker, this is not acceptable.

So, for people like Ms. Malcolm: What is the minister doing with the mess of the Interlake health region, so that people can actually get a doctor at an ER—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

And it's unfortunate that the member did not join us for the northern health sustainability discussion that was held last week in Thompson. Many, many individuals, service delivery organizations—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —EMS, physicians—came together around the table of solutions to talk about how we address the needs of rural and northern Manitoba, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: Our government has already taken proactive steps by investing \$812 million to create 38 projects and initiatives that will form a northern hub and allow for individuals living in the North to receive care closer to home, Madam Speaker.

We will continue to sit at the table of solutions—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

* (15:00)

PETITIONS

Drug Overdose Reporting

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Encourage the member to continue.

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

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Catalytic Converter Engraving Credit

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The spike in catalytic converter thefts occurring across North America has hit Winnipeg. The price of precious metals in catalytic converters like rhodium, palladium and platinum are worth thousands of dollars an ounce. Scrap metal recyclers have catalytic converters priced to the vehicle, with some catalytic converters worth \$800.

(2) Organized groups of criminals are climbing under vehicles and cutting catalytic converters, selling them to scrap metal recyclers for cash without any record of these transactions.

(3) Catalytic converter thefts cost consumers about \$2,000 for each replacement. Manitoba Public Insurance charges a betterment fee for new replacements, so insurance doesn't cover the full cost.

(4) Catalytic converters do not have any part number or vehicle identification number, VIN, and the inability to tie catalytic converter to a specific vehicle is a major enforcement issue.

(5) Engraving of a vehicle's VIN on its catalytic converter would be a major deterrent to theft by tying the vehicle to the part and making enforcement possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to bring in consumer protection legislation directing Manitoba Public Insurance to initiate credits to Manitobans for engraving vehicle identification numbers on their catalytic converters.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose

the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

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

A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It's calculated that up to 80 per–8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

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

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

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

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health or a fixed amount for an analog device up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and for families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Gladys Neilsen, Skiler Polkowski, Josiah Polkowski and many, many others.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): On May 17th, 2022, the House unanimously passed private member's resolution No. 15, Calling on the Federal Government to Extend the Time Frame for Indian Day School Survivors.

Could you please canvass the House for leave to request that the Speaker of the House send copies of this PMR No. 15 to the Prime Minister of Canada and the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to request that the Speaker of the House send copies of the private member's resolution No. 15 to the Prime Minister of

Canada and federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please resolve the House into Committee of Supply.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: So, under orders of the day, government business, we have been told that it has been announced that the House will 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

HEALTH

* (15:10)

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

Before we begin, we have a leave request for this section of the Committee of Supply.

Is there leave for the opposition to sit on this side since the minister is doing virtually—

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now—sorry—this section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health. Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'd like to ask the minister some questions in regards to northern and rural health.

My colleagues, while in question period the last couple of days, have had the opportunity to raise concerns around Powerview pine—fine—Pine Falls, rather—and concerns in the Interlake. And we haven't gotten any clarity from the minister in any of those regards.

It was actually very concerning a couple of days ago when the minister referred to First Nations nursing stations and talked about federal jurisdiction

when our colleague, the MLA for St. Johns, I believe, asked a question about the emergency room being closed at Powerview-Pine Falls hospital.

And so first I'd like to ask the minister, kind of broadly, as the northern—we know that the northern regional health authority is referring to situations at several northern sites at facilities as very fragile. And this is something of concern. It's been of concern for quite some time. Our colleague, my colleague, the MLA for Flin Flon, has raised this in the House as well.

And so I'm wondering, with all of these concerns having been raised—and the minister is well aware of the concerns at several northern sites, and I'm sure she would agree that, you know, what's going on at these sites is not okay, that the situation is indeed very fragile.

What is the minister doing to shore up these sites and improve the circumstances?

* (15:20)

Mr. Chairperson: Before I recognize the minister, I—just wondering if the minister's staff was able to check whether or not she was—would be able to use headphones on her—headset? Just for the—

The honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for Union Station for the question. I would like to seek clarification before I respond to the member's question.

Can the member clarify the information they are needing on northern health care, because the question was packaged in—there are a number of minor questions that were part of the larger question.

So, northern health care, what is the information the member is seeking?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MLA Asagwara: There are several northern sites that are struggling and the facilities have been described as being very fragile as a result of lack of staffing capacity.

And so my question is: what is the minister doing to shore up these northern sites that are in a precarious state due to issues like staffing shortage crisis, as just one example? What steps is the minister taking to shore up these facilities so that they are no longer in a very fragile state and people are able to access health

care in these northern facilities in a timely way, in an accessible way, close to home?

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to respond to the honourable member for Union Station's question.

Our government has given \$4.3 million for 37 additional nurse training seats at the University College of the North. This is part of our larger plan to add close to 400 new nursing education seats.

In Budget 2022, our government has committed \$812 million, the largest single health-care commitment in Manitoba's history, to improve rural and northern health care. A significant portion of the \$812 million will be used in the creation of a new intermediate health-care hub in northern Manitoba, and currently teams are engaged with Indigenous leadership and stakeholders to help lead the co-plan of these projects. And we are excited, as a government, to be working with our northern partners to reduce the need to travel to Winnipeg and allow for better care closer to home.

Mr. Chairperson, I was so pleased to be in Thompson on May 19th, meeting with several stakeholders from the North and Thompson and surrounding communities. EMS was represented; a number of program areas were represented, emergency and others. And we were at the table of solutions, looking for ways to address the staffing challenges and some of the temporary closures that are occurring.

One of the things we talked a great deal about were initiatives under the clinical and preventative services plan, and this plan sets a great foundation for moving our system ahead, especially in northern areas as the member has queried about.

So, this will allow for a—building and expanding 38 health-care facilities across rural and northern Manitoba, which will improve access, quality and reliability of care; reduce our wait times; increase our nursing staff; improve diagnostics, emergency medical services and patient transport; create new hospital beds and personal-care homes. We're using an Indigenous partnership strategy that will be collaborated and co-designed with Indigenous leadership. And it's certainly to reduce the need for Manitobans to travel long distances for care by providing more care closer to home, Mr. Chairperson.

And with all of this, our government has over doubled the NDP's funding of the northern patient transport program, as well, from \$7.9 million to \$18.1 million. So we continue, while these projects

are under construction and have not fully been implemented yet, to assist nearly 20,000 patients a year, in terms of northern patient transport, to receive the care that they need.

I also want to talk about some of the projects that have already been completed: in 2016, Grand Rapids and Moose Lake, new nursing stations and residences for a total of \$18.4 million; in 2016, Thompson, the northern crisis centre for youth, \$7.8 million; in 2019, Flin Flon, new and expanded emergency department, \$27.1 million; in 2019, slow-Snow Lake and Lynn Lake, new ambulance stations in each community, \$1.5 million; and in 2021, Thompson, new and expanded medical device reprocessing department.

So I am pleased to place that information on the record to inform the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) about some of the incredible investments our government is making in rural and northern Manitoba.

And more good news to come. I see a long list of planned projects that will be announced shortly that will continue to expand on the northern intermediate hub, provide more treatment spaces, more staffing in those communities, such as Pine Falls, that the member has referenced. And we will continue to work with the leadership of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority in terms of the intermediate medium-term plans to address the increased nursing staff and challenges that they have seen since November of 2021.

So we are in talks with them and look forward to sharing some of the their plans.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: I'd like to—I'm going to keep asking questions about health care in the North and in rural communities. This is a really important area that, you know, under this government, unfortunately, hasn't seen the investment necessary.

And the minister references the clinical services prevention plan, which, you know, in conversations I've had with many folks in rural communities, they're incredibly concerned about the rolling out of that plan and the moving forward with that plan given how they've seen the government's decision making around the health-care transformation impact health care in Winnipeg. It's been devastating, and so, understandably, people are very concerned about what that means for rural and northern communities.

And we're seeing the impacts, actually, already, with these incredibly long wait times for things like paramedicine services in rural communities, folks trying to access emergency rooms and being forced to access multiple emergency rooms in order to access care in those important moments.

So, specifically now what I'd like to touch on here is the issue around obstetrics. Now, this is an area that I want to highlight and thank community organizers and advocates on this particular issue, and there's one group specifically called the We Want Birth Committee. These folks are amazing, and they have been advocating on the issue of obstetrics being in their communities, specifically I'm talking about Thompson, The Pas, as just a couple of examples. And, you know, those folks highlighting that people should be able to give birth in their own communities and access care in that manner in their own communities, and not have to be flown or drive out south for that care. And they fought really hard for this government to take their concerns and their lived experiences seriously.

I'd also like to acknowledge our colleague, the MLA for Notre Dame, for her work with this committee and her advocacy on this particular issue and drawing attention to this matter. It's really important.

So, both Thompson and The Pas were experiencing very significant staffing challenges. I know the minister is well aware of that.

Can the minister provide an update to us on the current staffing situation for obstetrics at Thompson and The Pas?

* (15:30)

Ms. Gordon: I would like to go back to the honourable member for Union Station's (MLA Asagwara) earlier question specifically about Pine Falls and what is being done. I do want to share that we have been in conversation with the leadership as well as the site, and they have provided plans in terms of immediate and medium-term plans for that hospital.

So, in terms of the immediate-term plan, they have listed: to build up emergency department access and services to next or nearest ED at Pinawa Hospital; IERHA's putting in place a medical transportation plan with Shared Health, ERS, that supports patient movement in this operating environment. IERHA's building more robust access to primary care services seven days a week, including evenings, in Pine Falls. Leadership is pursuing filling both the posted vacant positions and every shift that is currently not filled.

IERHA has developed and is implementing a robust communication plan for staff, communities and local partners. And, Mr. Chairperson, again, that were the—those were the immediate-term plans.

The medium-term plan is to build a site nursing education plan that helps support increased ED capacity; build a Pine Falls site recruitment plan with human resources and other partners. This recruitment plan will also include a longer term training and education plan for local schools and communities, and they are saying that they will engage with local communities for sustained community-driven workforce development options.

So, this is something the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority and our government takes very seriously and is a priority for us, which is why we asked the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority to work with the hospital staff—again, ideas coming from the hospital floor—to look at ways that we can support keeping that emergency room or emergency department open.

I also want to share with the member—because they had asked about our investments in rural and northern Manitoba—\$2.3 billion in our targeted health-care capital plan is for projects: \$141 million for St. Boniface Hospital emergency room redevelopment, tripling the size of its ER; \$8 million for the new acute stroke unit at Health Sciences Centre; again, the \$812 million for the clinical and preventative services plan; \$283 million for a 90-bed new hospital in Portage la Prairie; \$127 million for a 60-bed new hospital in Neepawa; \$70 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Brandon Regional Health Centre; \$32 million to enhance and add 23 additional beds at Steinbach's Bethesda hospital; \$64.4 million to enhance and add 24 beds at Boundary Trails; \$31.6 million to enhance and add 30 additional beds at the Selkirk Regional Health Centre, and that is in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority; \$5 million for a new emergency department in Dauphin; and \$10.8 million to enhance and add 12 additional beds at the Lakeshore general hospital in Ashern.

So, Mr. Chairperson, some very significant investments are going into these areas, and we have asked the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority to let our government know how we can support those immediate-term plans and the medium-term plans to ensure Manitobans in that region and in the surrounding area can access Pine Falls hospital for the care that they need.

It is not the intent of the IERHA to frivolously or—close hospitals and emergency departments. They do so with a plan. That plan is in place and we are here, as a government, to come alongside the IERHA and Pine Falls hospital to support them. Whether that is financial investments, whether that is with a recruitment plan, our goal, as a government, is to support the IERHA and the Pine Falls hospital.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Certainly, I think the vast—I think everyone, quite frankly, commends the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority for their efforts around this particular issue. They sent out a notification that did include steps that they were taking to make sure that folks could access care when the emergency room was closed ahead of the long weekend.

You know, it's an incredibly important facility and, of course, I commend the regional health authority and health-care providers on trying to find solutions to address a really concerning situation. And I've heard all of the steps that the Interlake regional—Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority is taking and the steps that these professionals are taking.

I didn't hear the minister make any mention of steps that she is taking in order to ensure that the emergency room is accessible. She has, you know, repeated old announcements around educating nurses. We know the minister is well aware that it takes years to educate those nurses in post-secondary education and get them ready for the workplace.

And I've had some really interesting conversations with new grads, who are excited to be in the workforce and are having an incredibly challenging time in the workforce because there has been a loss of expertise in our health-care system. Nurses are still leaving the health-care system, so there's a lack of mentorship due to the lack of retention because the government hasn't made meaningful efforts to retain nurses. And, you know, there's a risk there that we're going to have new grads entering the health-care system without the supports that they need to want to stay in it.

I've also talked to new grads who have left Manitoba because they have plainly seen this government fail to make any meaningful effort to recruit them into the health-care system here in Manitoba.

So I hope that the minister hears what I'm saying and just is able to actually utilize what I'm saying,

based on my conversations with new grads and with nurses. We want to retain our health-care system and, you know, put that feedback to good use in terms of a strategy to recruit and retain these nurses.

Now, specifically, the minister talked about Powerview-Pine Falls and the challenges there and what the regional health authority is doing to address it, but she neglected to talk at all about my question regards—in regards to obstetrics.

You know, the folks who are part of the We Want Birth Committee, they're in Flin Flon. I know that they would love to hear an update from the minister on this particular issue—the folks in Thompson, in The Pas, who are significantly impacted by the fact that there are staffing challenges in obstetrics and are being forced to leave their communities to have their kids. This is an important issue. The minister should, at the ready, have the information available to her to let us know currently what the staffing situation is for obstetrics in Thompson and The Pas.

So I pose that question to the minister again: What is the current staffing situation for obstetrics at Thompson and The Pas?

Ms. Gordon: I would like to add to my comments earlier about—in terms of what is our government specifically doing to support these facilities and emergency departments.

And I just want to cite one example of a solution that came from the hospital floor, the emergency department of HSC, where the idea for the physician in triage came forward, right from the hospital emergency department, and required a \$1.2-million investment. And our government came alongside that suggestion, and—to ensure the funding was available.

Also, I want to just go a little further back in time to last year, when I joined the honourable member for Beausejour and—to announce nine family physicians had started practicing in communities across the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. So, four of the new physicians were graduates of the one-year Medical Licensure Program For International Medical Graduates offered through the University of Manitoba, a program that's designed to integrate physicians who have practised internationally into the Canadian medical system by allowing them to gain a better understanding of the Canadian local health-care system.

The program has allowed physicians who have practised internationally to better understand the needs of rural patients and the variety of health-care

services people require. Those graduates would be working in rural and underserved areas of the province, and they've actually made a four-year commitment to the region.

So, our government is supporting these programs to ensure that we get health practitioners and family physicians trained and working in rural communities.

I also want to reference our undergraduate nurse educator—education program, where we're trying to ensure that new graduates or individuals that are still in their program develop roots right here in our province, by allowing third- and fourth-year students to come into our health system to begin working while they're still in their academic training. And I'm told that over 60 individuals are participating in this program.

So, our government is taking steps to help individuals to develop deep roots and to not go to another province.

And then, I'm—I will be so pleased next month when we welcome a number of graduates from the University College of the North nursing program. I understand that several will be accepting their graduation certificate right in Thompson, where they are going to continue to practise. And we—so, we are encouraging individuals to be trained in the University College of the North, and to continue to serve in that area.

With regard to obstetrics, our clinical preventative services plan knows the need to engage on women's health, and specifically, obstetrics and women's gynecology, and all the spectrum of services that women need. They want to ensure that services are provided close to home and in safe circumstances. Those discussions are under way.

I had shared before that we had asked Deloitte to do a review on our women's health program that included in the northern and remote and rural communities, and we look forward to using that information to inform the work that is being done, but through the clinical preventative services plan to ensure, just like the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) has stated, that obstetrics and a range of services for health services for women are available close to home and that they receive those services under safe circumstances.

And I look forward to hearing more about the We Want Birth Committee and the work that they're doing. I'm always willing to see recommendations and suggestions that come forward. There's no monopoly

on good ideas, Mr. Chairperson, and so if there are ideas coming forth, please send them to my office.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member's—minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister tell us how many day surgeries were conducted in the northern region last year?

* (15:50)

Ms. Gordon: I thank the honourable member for Union Station for the question.

The goal—and I've heard this from many individuals who've undergone surgeries—that they want the most minimally invasive procedure to be done. Generally, most people want to recover at home, so looking for outpatient options.

I'm—I can report that 90 per cent of surgeries are same-day cases in the region, that would include Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon. And that is the number that I can provide, Mr. Chairperson.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister take as an undertaking to provide us the number here on how many day surgeries have been conducted in the northern region as of last—or were conducted, rather, in the northern region last year?

Ms. Gordon: Thank the member for the question.

We will endeavour to try to get it during—get that information during this Committee of Supply today, and if not, we will—I will take it under advisement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

MLA Asagwara: Thank the minister for agreeing to either provide that information today or taking it as an undertaking. I appreciate that.

The minister has no doubt seen the recent concern in the media about access to health care in the Interlake. I've already raised that; I've given a couple of examples, and the minister has provided some information by way of response.

This has been a problem for some time. This is something that folks in the Interlake have raised issues and concerns about. And, certainly, we're seeing some pretty concerning challenges arise. And, you know, it's incredibly important that steps are taken now to mitigate some negative outcomes in the short term but certainly long term as well.

More often than not, we know that a doctor is not available, specifically in Eriksdale or in Arborg.

What is the minister doing to address this particular issue?

Ms. Gordon: I would like to go back to the honourable member for Union Station's question about obstetrics and access to birthing in the North.

I'm advised by the northern regional health authority, specific to the Thompson General Hospital, that no transfers to Winnipeg for birthing has occurred unless it was due to clinical assessment that the individual needed to be transferred to Winnipeg as a result of their specific birthing situation.

Of course, if it was high risk and the person needed additional care, possibly maybe even the baby, upon being born, perhaps would need, as an example, to be in the NICU. But I am told that, from the Thompson General Hospital, no transfers to Winnipeg for birthing has occurred, and if they have, they're due to clinical assessment that a transfer is required.

I also want to reference the member's comments again about Eriksdale and Arborg and the—specifically the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority or the Interlake region.

Like most rural regions in Canada, attracting and retaining family physicians has been a challenge for the Interlake and North Eastman communities. And that is why we're training family physicians in rural communities, to expose them to both the benefits and specific challenges of providing health care to smaller communities while also ensuring quality care for rural communities.

So this partnership with the University of Manitoba is so critical to our ability to train and recruit right into our communities. And so, recruitment efforts by the region and private clinics are seeing new physicians begin practice in Beausejour, Eriksdale, Lac du Bonnet, Teulon and Selkirk, among others, with internationally experienced medical graduates working in Ashern and Pine Falls. And this was last year, and Pine Falls is identified here as well as Eriksdale and surrounding communities.

And those family medicine physicians work as part of the team to provide access to primary health care and robust emergency department coverage in rural communities. And I just want to recognize the hard work of our region's physician recruitment and retention team, and our local physicians who develop—

the local physicians there who are developing relationships with physicians in training, and they're creating a welcoming environment and showcase various practice opportunities in the area.

And this really speaks, Mr. Chairperson, to the success of a rural-based training in recruiting new practitioners.

And I also want to thank the regional residents for their warm welcome to new practitioners, making sure they feel comfortable in their new home. I think it's a combined effort to align—that aligns well with our mutually agreed upon strategic goal in that region of developing health human resources within the region.

And, again, residency, as we all know, is the last stage in training for doctors following their graduation from medical school, and the family medicine residency program at the University of Manitoba's Max Rady College of Medicine includes training in a number of practice areas, including primary care, psychiatry, obstetrics, general surgery, internal medicine, emergency department care, pediatrics and seniors care.

And I just want to thank all the local doctors and staff for their support of these new students and for their support of the region where they work. And we are going to continue, as a government, to support this initiative through the University of Manitoba's Max Rady College and the physician recruitment and retention team led by local physicians in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, by working together that—we will address these issues that are occurring on the ground. But our government remains committed to ensuring not just Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority but all regions receive the support that they need.

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the minister for that response.

I can hear my northern colleagues in my ear right now demanding that I ask for clarification and telling me that Thompson is not the only place in the North.

And so: the minister referenced Thompson in her response, in terms of people not being transferred from Thompson to give birth. Can the minister also provide clarity as to whether or not people have been transferred from The Pas, from Flin Flon, from other

northern communities and—to give birth because they could not access that care in their own communities?

Ms. Gordon: For the individuals that are sitting within earshot of the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), I want to be clear that I recognize that Thompson is not the only community in the North. The member had asked about two specific communities: one was Thompson and the other was The Pas. The information was transferred to me while we were in this Committee of Supply day with regard to Thompson, and so I felt I would bring forward the information specifically for Thompson while we continue to request the information the honourable member for Union Station had asked for for The Pas.

If the member is now asking for us to expand that list, we will take that under advisement and come back with a response with regard to the additional communities they have added to the list. But certainly, my attempt was to provide, in an efficient and timely manner, information about Thompson that had become available during this session. It is in no way meant to disrespect the North by focusing just on Thompson or leading anyone to believe that I in any way feel that that is the only community.

I've travelled the North extensively in my time working for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority over 12 years, and I'm very familiar with the North. I've gone as far as Wasagamack, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake—many, many different communities—and spent time in Thompson, Pine Falls—that we've talked about today—Snow Lake, all over the North. And I'm very familiar with the various communities.

So, again, it was my attempt—no disrespect to any members that represent the northern communities—my attempt to answer a question that the member posed about two specific communities. And that can be checked on the record: it was Thompson and The Pas.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the minister for agreeing to provide further information.

To be clear, I was ensuring that my colleagues were well aware that I would advocate for greater information from more northern communities. I wasn't implying that the minister only recognized Thompson as being, you know, the only community in the North. So, just so the minister is clear that I was ensuring that I was raising this on behalf of my colleagues. As I stated previously, I could hear—I could literally hear

them in my ear making sure that I'm advocating for the information to also be brought forward for additional communities that they represent and represent very well.

So I appreciate that the minister was trying to provide information that she had available. I would ask that if the minister is able to provide more information as she receives it in this committee, that would be great. I would welcome that but certainly understand that if an undertaking is necessary to provide the fulsomeness of that information at a later time, I think that's great. I appreciate the minister being willing to do so.

So, I would like to ask a question about some of the concerns around paramedicine times that have been raised and in the media lately and that different organizations have been advocating very, very consistently on. I think about the Manitoba allied health-care professionals. That organization has been, you know, raising concerns around this particular area for quite some time and have been very vocal about this very important issue. We've raised concerns about ambulance response times in the city of Winnipeg as well as rural Manitoba. And we know that response times have increased 35 per cent. I did raise this in the House very recently as the—I'm sure the minister remembers. So it's concerning everywhere, ultimately.

In the Interlake, response times are now above 50–15 minutes, which is the clinical standard. And that's very concerning.

The question is, what is the minister doing to address these very concerning response times that are above—well above and beyond what they should be?

Ms. Gordon: I thank the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for the question about paramedicine and our paramedics.

And, of course, this is Paramedic Services Week, and I had the opportunity this week to rise in the Chamber to just thank our paramedics and first responders for the incredible work that they do to provide supports to individuals and families. Usually first—they're usually first on the scene of injuries and accidents.

I know, on a personal level, my husband's friend, in the industry that he works in, was in a tragic workplace accident last week. And the individuals that were on the scene said when the paramedics were—arrived, the amazing care that they provided and just

consoling—not just taking care of the patient but consoling those who were on site to witness the horrific, tragic workplace accident that occurred.

* (16:10)

So this week when I rose in the Chamber, it was—everything that I said was truly from my heart because I know that they're quite often on the scene of very emotional and tragic situations, and so our government wants to support them. And that is why in Budget 2022, we've included the hiring of 30 full-time primary-care paramedic positions, which is an investment of over \$4 million. And further, our government is increasing call volumes in the emergency response system with an investment of over \$3.5 million. So that's a total of \$7.5 million.

And we've also purchased 65 new ambulances to refresh approximately one third of the Province's fleet. We continue to develop our EMS infrastructure, as seen by the \$3.8-million investment for EMS stations in Portage la Prairie and Crystal City. I know that while I was announcing those—the opening of those two new new EMS stations, I spoke with a paramedic who was on site—a new paramedic to the system—and she said that what attracted her to the role was some of these new investments that we're making in terms of new equipment, new stations. So we see this as being a—an avenue or a mechanism to bring those individuals to the system.

And, of course, I refer again to Budget 2022 which continues the \$812-million investment, the largest single health-care commitment in Manitoba's history, to improve rural and northern health care through the clinical and preventative services plan.

And I know that some may be tired of hearing me talk about this, but it impacts so many different areas of the health system that I want to continue to bring us back to it. It's a historic investment. It will help emergency medical services and patient transport, and it will reduce the need for Manitobans to travel long distances for care by providing more services closer to home. So we're going to continue to look at the response times.

We want to keep our paramedics well emotionally, physically—and, again, I just want to recognize their tremendous contributions during Paramedic Services Week, and the theme is Faces of Paramedicine and is focusing on the many roles of paramedics. And truly—truly—I am just so grateful for the paramedics that are in our system and providing care, as I said, to individuals and families, consoling

loved ones. It's more than just care to the patient, it's the range of services and that—they provide is truly, Mr. Chairperson, commendable.

So, again, congratulations to all our paramedics on Paramedic Services Week 2022. I was pleased to proclaim it, as well, and the paramedic association has put that up on social media. And I will continue to be the Health Minister that stands beside you and supports you in the work that you're doing in our great province.

Thank you.

Mr. James Teitsma, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

MLA Asagwara: So I've gotten some very concerning new information in regards to the emergency room wait times, the most recent ER wait times. And what we're seeing in terms of these wait times continuing to go up is deeply concerning—deeply concerning.

I've previously asked the minister about what steps she is taking to address these ER wait times in our emergency rooms that we know are resulting in folks leaving the emergency room without ever being seen after waiting hours and hours and hours on end. For—you know, 14 per cent of all patients in March of this year who visited emergency rooms left without being seen or receiving any care; 24 per cent of all patients left the Health Sciences Centre emergency room without being seen or receiving care. Incredibly concerning.

And now we know that, for the month of April, not only did the ER wait times go up at HSC from 10.5 hours, which is historically high—astronomically high—we also now know that the wait times have gone up to almost 12 hours—11.92 hours at the emergency room at Health Sciences Centre; 12 hour wait times. I mean, this is really scary stuff that we're seeing here and has very real impacts on the staff who are trying to provide care and, of course, the folks that they care most about: the Manitobans who are trying to access emergency care.

My question for the minister is: When will this peak? Does the minister think that Manitobans should just expect that these wait times, month over month, are going to continue to go up and that the number of people we see leaving emergency rooms without being seen is also, as a result, going to go up and therefore the health outcomes for Manitobans will get worse? Is there an end in sight to this increase in these hours?

So, my question to the minister is: When does the minister see this peaking and at what number?

Month over month over month, the ER wait times are increasing. Now we know in April, 11.92 hours, 12-hour waits at HSC.

What does the minister see happening here—in coming months—here at HSC and in emergency rooms across Winnipeg?

Ms. Gordon: Can I request a five-minute break, please?

The Acting Chairperson (James Teitsma): The minister's requested a five-minute break. Is that acceptable to everyone? [*Agreed*]

I'll set the timer.

The committee recessed at 4:18 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:24 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (James Teitsma): Recess is over.

The honourable Minister, if you're ready to proceed, you can go ahead.

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to put on the record further measures that are being taken to address emergency and urgent care wait times.

I want to begin by saying that Winnipeg emergency departments and urgent-care centres continue to implement new and expanded initiatives designed to improve patient flow as Manitoba's health system responds to long wait times for many patients seeking care.

And I want to share what some of those measures are. Leveling of ambulance transport arrivals across facilities: this change to ambulance transport protocols is shifting appropriate lower acuity patient arrivals to urgent-care centres rather than emergency departments, easing patient flow challenges at acute-care facilities while improving patient safety.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Use of the physician-in-triage model of care, which places a physician in the triage area to manage and provide care for those waiting to be seen, with a particular focus on higher acuity patients. The physician-in-triage model began in late April as staffing has allowed. Discussions are ongoing on expanding the pilot program, of course, to St. Boniface and Grace Hospital.

And I also want to talk about other initiatives, new initiatives, launched this month of May: the expedited placement of alternate-level-of-care patients from hospital to long-term care. This is freeing up space in in-patient units for admissions from emergency and urgent care. Alternate-level-of-care patients are frequently long-stay in-patients that could be appropriately cared for in other settings with appropriate supports. There were 112 alternate-level-of-care patients in Winnipeg hospitals on Wednesday, down considerably from April, when the daily average was 151.

Also, another new initiative: repatriation of stable patients who live outside of Winnipeg to continue their care, when clinically appropriate, to sites in their home health region. So, as of Thursday morning, one hundred—this morning—162 patients had been repatriated to sites in their home health region this month. And this is freeing up space at Winnipeg in-patient units for others while allowing patients to continue their recovery at sites closer to home and their support network. There were 139 patients repatriated in all of April.

And then, improved collaboration between community and facility-based teams. So, as staff that support community and home care are returning to their normal work following COVID-related reassignment or redeployment, teams have prioritized the arrangement of supports at home or in the community for patients, allowing them to be safely discharged more quickly and opening up space in medicine unit for others.

And preliminary data suggests the implementation of these and other initiatives have started to positively affect patient flow at Winnipeg sites: decrease in various wait-time metrics over the past 12 days. And the health system has also benefitted from reduced sick rates over the past month, which has bolstered in-patient capacity, as well as the return of redeployed staff to community and home-care duties, which is crucial in providing hospital in-patients with the necessary supports to continue their care at home.

And, Mr. Chairperson, I want to assure the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) that system leaders from both Shared Health and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority continue to meet with staff, physicians and site leaders to discuss their concerns and share ideas on how to further improve patient flow and reduce wait times. And work also

continues to recruit and retain health-care workers including nursing staff at all the sites.

And patients are reminded—I want to put this on the record—to continue seeking help in emergency, either by calling 911 or going to an emergency department or urgent-care centre. All patients are assessed and triaged upon arrival, and care will be provided, with the sickest and most injured patients prioritized.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: I'm sure the minister can appreciate that citizens are very concerned about what is going on in our emergency rooms. Increasingly, they're seeing stories of nurses and health-care aides who are burnt out, who are leaving our emergency rooms, leaving with all of their expertise and dedication, and moving on because they simply cannot manage the overwhelming workload. They're terrified that they'll lose their licences and won't be able to practise in the field that they absolutely love. Some folks have left the profession altogether because they simply cannot practise in their chosen profession, which they do love, under this government.

All of these things are incredibly concerning for Manitobans when they read these things in the news and continue to see, despite this minister and this government making announcement after announcement after announcement, these ER wait times continue to go up and up and up, in the wrong direction. The impacts are real.

* (16:30)

Can the minister provide for us whether or not she can communicate to Manitobans what this means for them accessing emergency rooms? Does this mean that they should come to expect that ER wait times are going to go up to 13 hours? To 14 hours? To 15 hours? To 16 hours?

A 12-hour wait time, on average, for the month of April at HSC, is a really scary number. It's a really serious number, continues to trend up.

Does the minister think that this wait time at HSC has now peaked or does the minister think that this wait time and these wait times at HSC emergency room are going to continue to go up and peak at 13, 14, 15, 16 hours?

Can the minister provide her perspective as the Minister of Health on that specific point?

Ms. Gordon: You know, I just—I want to assure the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) that I am concerned, my department is concerned about the high wait times, and this is a priority. We—I take this very, very seriously, and so does our government. And it is our goal, and it is to ensure that the system leaders from both Shared Health and WRHA continue to meet with staff, and they are, and they're being very transparent.

They have just posted information on their website to make Manitobans aware of how things are progressing. They have shared the—very publicly—the measures taken to address the emergency urgent-care wait times. I understand that they were out earlier today, about an hour ago, at 3:30 p.m., speaking in person to the media, sharing the work that is being done. They continue to talk with staff, physicians, site leaders to discuss their concerns, share ideas on how to further improve patient flow and reduce wait times.

These wait times and patient flow issues are not government-specific. They're not new to our government. They existed under the NDP government's time in office. The ER wait times were referred to as a crisis.

Grace Hospital—and no disrespect or—to any of the individuals that work at that site and do incredible work on behalf of Manitobans, but—had the longest wait times in the country; that was under the previous NDP government's watch.

And our government has just come through, worked with Manitobans and health-system leaders and those on the front lines to navigate four waves—I understand it was actually six because they referred to the Omicron and the BA.2 variants as also waves—six waves of COVID pandemic.

And we know that the reason for the increased wait times at our emergency department is multi-factorial. And individuals may have waited over the time of the pandemic, didn't receive care, so now they're showing up at the emergency department, they're sicker than if they had received care during the pandemic. And we're not saying they shouldn't show up there. We are saying that we've had high sick times.

We see those numbers coming down. We had over 500 health-care workers redeployed, mostly critical-care nurses to ICU and critical-care services. We are—we've now returned all of those individuals to their program area. Everything is coming together to relieve those pressures on the emergency department.

This morning, I had the pleasure of talking to a physician assistant group. A number of individuals were from my constituency and some are working in communities, some are working in health facilities, and they're—they are, again, at the table of solutions, talking about how we can utilize the services of physician assistants to address the ER wait times.

So I'm—we're hearing at—in my office and in Shared Health, in the CEO of WRHA's office. At those working group tables, solutions from many different specialities to address the pressures on our emergency department.

It's not about blaming and shaming. It's not about making individuals feel that they're not doing enough or they're not doing anything. They are. And we appreciate, as a government, all the efforts that are being made.

And I've invited, many times, members opposite to come to the table of solutions, write to me, meet with me. My office is always open to the member for Union Station to come in and sit down and share what are some of the solutions that we haven't thought of.

The member worked in the system. I worked in the system. Let's be solutions-focused and let's get away from this blaming and shaming because that's not what Manitobans need during this critical time. What they need is harmony and collaborative approaches to addressing an issue that was not created now, but—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: The minister's response—I'm just going to be frank, here. The minister really and truly needs to recognize that what Manitobans need is a government that is accountable and a minister of Health that is accountable—the decisions that they make and that they have made that have been detrimental to our health-care system and the health outcomes of Manitobans. It is actually deeply problematic and concerning, worrisome that this minister and her caucus want to point fingers at absolutely everyone else and place blame with everyone else in terms of why our health-care system is in—is beyond a state of crisis.

This minister enthusiastically will go back almost two decades and highlight issues under former governments. This minister will point to COVID as the reason why things are so challenging in our health-care system.

This minister refuses to recognize that, since 2016, her government has made decisions, intentional strategic decisions to cut health care to the point where we could not respond to a pandemic, cut health care before COVID ever reached Manitoba to the point where morale amongst health-care workers was at a historic low. Nurses in our emergency rooms were already pleading for help, begging ministers of Health—many of which there have been, failed ministers of Health before this minister—to come and see what they were dealing with and take appropriate action.

* (16:40)

It is so concerning that this minister continues to point the finger elsewhere and refuses to look at the decisions her government has made, because if she is unwilling to do so, it means they will not learn from their mistakes. They will continue to repeat them and continue to harm Manitobans as a direct result in our health-care system.

Accountability is not about placing blame. I say that sincerely to the minister. Accountability is about being able to earnestly reflect on decision making, learn from decisions made and improve so that things get better for Manitobans.

And Manitobans recognize that, which is why this rhetoric that the minister continues to try and put on the record and spin time and time again is so tired. It is unproductive and it is, actually, just creating more and more of a disconnect for Manitobans. They don't trust this minister or this government with their health care because this government won't own up to their mistakes in health care.

There are nurses who are actively leaving emergency rooms. They cannot work there any longer. What is the minister doing to retain nurses—actively doing—to retain the nurses we still have working in our emergency rooms and working at the emergency room at HSC, where we're now seeing historically high emergency room wait times of 12 hours?

Ms. Gordon: I just want to reinforce, once again, that there is work being done.

I've shared with the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) \$1.2 million invested in the physician and triage program. That was an idea that came forward right from the hospital floor. Our government came alongside those individuals that brought forward that solution with that investment to address the wait times. And, you know, I think we go through over an hour of question period in the

Chamber every day, and the member is given an opportunity to pose these types of questions. They're answered by myself there.

This is Committee of Supply. This is an Estimates review process. We have steered completely away from the Estimates or asking any questions related to the Estimates document. We have made this into a question period session. I would be happy to answer questions from the honourable member for Union Station that are typically and generally asked in Committee of Supply. I recognize that the member is new to the political process, but, again, I'm happy to answer Estimates-related questions.

And I know that we do have several more days of question period to come. Perhaps the member could pose these questions during question period over the next few days that we will sitting in the Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister provide me with the funding amounts provided to the Winnipeg paramedic services over the last three years, so 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Ms. Gordon: I do want to go back to the honourable member for Union Station's previous question about day surgeries at the—our northern facilities. I do have that information available for the member.

Let's start with Flin Flon General Hospital: 2017-2018, 657—and these are day surgeries also by the way—657; 2018-2019, 490; 2019-2020, 487; 2020-2021, 235.

St. Anthony's hospital in The Pas: 2017-2018, 445; 2018-2019, 421; 2019-2020, 406; 2020-2021, 320.

Thompson General Hospital: for 2017-2018, 1,344; for 2018-2019, 1,434; for 2019-2020, 1,196; for 2020-2021, 869.

And I'm pleased to provide the totals by year: 2017-2018, 2,446; for 2018-2019, 2,345; for 2019-2020, 2,089; for 2020-2021, 1,424.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the minister for that response and for providing that during this committee.

I will repeat my previous question in case the minister has forgotten it.

Can the minister provide me with the funding amounts provided to Winnipeg paramedic services

over the last three years, so 2018 and '19, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021?

* (16:50)

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to respond to the honourable member for Union Station's (MLA Asagwara) question. I do want to clarify the time periods provided by the member are not the last three years. So the last three years is '21-22, it's '20-21 and '19-20.

So this information is provided by Shared Health because we do not fund them directly. So I will start with 2019-2020, \$44,931,000; 2020-2021, \$47,327,042; 2021-2022, \$48,693,542.

Is that—are those three time periods what the member is seeking? That would be the last three years.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the minister for providing that information. I apologize for misspeaking. She is correct in providing that information, and the correct years were provided. So I thank her for that.

I'd like to ask about radiology in Brandon. So, we've heard concerns that the machine, the radiology machine in Brandon, is broken. At one point earlier this year, both radiology machines broke at the same time, so they were non-operational at the same time. And scheduled appointments, unfortunately, had to be cancelled.

Can the minister tell me what plans are in place to replace the aging radiology machines there and when that might happen?

Ms. Gordon: I'm needing to seek clarification from the member for Union Station. What type of radiology machine?

MLA Asagwara: The fluoroscopy machine.

Ms. Gordon: While I request that information, I do want to put on the record that we do have a committee of radiologists that meet annually to prioritize the diagnostic imaging machines and what needs to be done, what needs to be replaced, what is dated and is no longer applicable to be used in the system. It's called the Provincial Imaging Advisory Committee.

So we are looking up the information that the honourable member for Union Station's requested for that particular machine because the decision has been made by a provincial body and we should have that information available shortly.

But, again, they meet annually to prioritize the machine and we are attempting to get the information

about the fluoroscopy machine that the member has referenced.

Mr. Chairperson: The time being 5 p.m., I'm interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Thank you.

ROOM 255

EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

* (15:20)

Mr. Chairperson (Brad Michaleski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning. Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I want to welcome the minister back.

We'll just—we're beginning to wrap up this portion of Estimates and I kind of want to continue from where I left off with equity and education and move on to the Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Circle's latest report on lack of representation of minority—or, not—or, of Indigenous and racialized newcomers in Manitoba in the teaching profession. They have outlined that, based on student populations, there are—there is certainly under-representation in schools.

And my question to the minister is: What roles does he see the—his department taking in ensuring that equity is something that we see in our schools?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'm just doing a quick little mic check here. You can hear me okay? Thumbs up?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I can.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, great, thank you.

And I appreciate the question from my friend from Transcona, going on the line of, again, equity and diversity, you know, within our—within education.

Again, pointing the member towards—oh, and I also want to thank the member for saying that we're going to be winding down this side of the Estimates

because I think that that also gives a bit of heads-up to other departments that they might be engaged today.

So, I'd like to point the member to, again, the action plan and, you know, knowing that diversity—and, again, working with equity matters because they're a—you know, a key stakeholder, a key education partner. You know, we take a look at the recommendations and some of the comments from Manitobans, you know, again, across this great province of ours, in regards to diversity.

Yesterday, we spoke about the fact that, you know, when there's students with different cultural backgrounds in the classroom and if they can, you know, attend a class or have a teacher that's standing in front of them that shows the fact that they're from, you know, the same culture or, you know, have that diversity, I think that's very important. And I know Manitobans had spoken to the commission about that.

So, within the action plan, definitely, you know—and I'll point to the section for the member: under excellence in teaching and leadership, one of the ways to try to get more diversity is, definitely, create a workforce planning framework, which focuses on the recruitment and retention of school staff in northern and rural communities and increasing French, Indigenous and Indigenous-language educators.

And, again, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question from the member because it really gives an opportunity to show once again that we're collaborating, we're working with Manitobans and our education partners to make sure that we're filling, you know, those needs, but at the same time making sure that the mosaic fabric of this great province of ours is shown also in the profession of teaching.

So, definitely looking forward to continuing that work, not only with our Indigenous partners but our many other cultural communities within this great province of ours.

Mr. Altomare: At this time, I'll pass 15 minutes from—starting now, to the member from Tyndall Park.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) for allowing me 15 minutes here. It's 3:24, so I'll keep track of that very closely.

I want to thank the minister for being here with us this afternoon and taking some questions. I'll jump right into it for the sake of time.

Internationally educated teachers—on page 21, according to the Estimates Book, the department

shortened the processing time for internationally educated teacher certification. I'm curious what spurred this change and what was the processing time prior to this shortening time and what is this now—time for it being constituted as being shortened?

Mr. Ewasko: Just being cognizant of the—of my friend from Tyndall Park's allotted time from the official opposition, I'll try to make my answers relatively short to her questions, as well.

So, I would like to thank her for bringing up this very important question. And we know that, you know, I think back to, you know, being a teacher and guidance counsellor and whenever we ended up having international students or exchange students come to the school, we'd always have to—it would take a little bit of time to check on, you know, credentials and then allocate certain credentials for their grade 9 to 12 credits, and just to see, basically, you know, which credits equal what credits and whatever.

So, you know, based on her specific question—and I'd also like to thank the member for actually bringing up the fact that, you know, about our balance scorecard content, which is in the supplement, and I think it's very important that we're transparent to not only the members opposite, but also to Manitobans, probably more so to Manitobans, but it's still good.

So, as the member might or might not know, there's a group called WES, which is World Education Services. And basically, what ends up happening is those credentials—it could take some time to get the credentials from that service so that we can see exactly what credentials they actually receive once they come to Manitoba.

The—of course, the department remains committed, working with our education partners, to help reduce those barriers for internationally educated teachers and ensure they're able to practise their profession right here in Manitoba. We're also reviewing the certification requirements for internationally educated teachers and we're going to work with our education partners to identify the opportunities to strengthen employment linkages. And I think, also, part of that target that's on the balance scorecard is also so that we have a baseline.

I sort of want to refer her, also—not refer her, but remind her of when we decided to take and start, I guess, assessing how many internationally educated nurses we actually have in the province. So, the Minister of Economic Development and Jobs at the time, working with me as Minister of Advanced

Education, Skills and Immigration and, of course, the Health Department, we launched that portal. And, you know, it's a bit of an inventory, so to speak: people inventory, skills inventory, to see what do we have already in the province, and then how can we skill them up to make sure that they've got the skills that are necessary to be working right here in Manitoba.

* (15:30)

So that—I, again, thank her for bringing up the balanced scorecard and the fact that we do have a target to get this done.

Ms. Lamoureux: So, very simply put, what is the timeline for processing internationally educated teacher certification presently?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks to the member for the question, Mr. Chair.

So, our target is to get 80 per cent of them sort of through within eight weeks, and part of any kind of new system or any kind of new scorecard or any kind of new measurement—at-sometimes, you don't quite have that baseline.

So, as the member can appreciate, these are new measures that we are actually doing to try to help with the labour shortage, much like what we did with internationally educated nurses. What we did with the increasing nursing seats—I mean, these are very important measures to try to help with the labour shortages and so, simply put, to answer the member's question is, you know, we really don't have a baseline and we're hoping as time goes on with this new measure that we will create a new baseline.

And we think that 80 per cent within eight weeks is an acceptable timeline.

Ms. Lamoureux: Will school divisions be hiring the increase in teachers, or how will internationally educated teachers actually get into the classroom?

Mr. Ewasko: So, as the member knows—well, knows partially, and then I'm going to answer some more of her question here, I guess—is the fact that, first of all, school divisions—school boards, actually—hire the teachers within the school divisions, and with this strategy, we're going to be working, partnering with those education partners—school boards, school divisions—so that there's a greater pool to draw from.

And so, once these internationally educated teachers receive their credentials and are able to teach in Manitoba, they can apply for positions and that

will just be a larger pool to draw from for school divisions.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm going to jump to page 24, just talking about mandatory diversity and inclusion training for employees. The department will begin to track the number of employees who have completed mandatory diversity and inclusion training, with a goal of 90 per cent.

So, I'm curious why the goal is 90 per cent and not 100 per cent, and will the department be tracking the data of the number of employees in school divisions completing this training?

Mr. Ewasko: As the member knows, this is something that is being asked to—you know, within the department as far as staff.

And it's a point in time where, technically, I mean, any given time, there could be somebody on leave, whether that's a mat leave or sick leave or temporary leave, or something along those lines. So, that's why it's got that 90 per cent mark, because if you said 100 per cent and you had a few people that were away due to some form of personal leave or anything else, then that would—that wouldn't work out in the math.

So, you have to leave a little bit of time for them when they come back to get that training.

Ms. Lamoureux: I've got three more minutes left, so I'm actually going to ask two questions, and I'm hoping the minister can address them the best way possible here.

The first one is on page 30 about equity and diversity, how—it's evident that the benchmarks for hiring of Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities are not being met. So what is the plan to reach the benchmark for Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities? That's my first question.

And the second question is just any information that the minister can share with respect to programs for children with autism in schools right now. I'm hearing lots from my constituents just about programs being shifted from school to school and not enough spots for children with autism.

If he can share any insight on that.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), the 15 minutes is up.

I would recognize the honourable member for Transcona.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Mr. Chair—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, do I not get to answer the member's question?

Mr. Altomare: I'm taking direction from the Chair, correct?

Mr. Chairperson: It's up to you to decide whether to—

Mr. Altomare: No, we have to move on.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Mr. Altomare: At this time, I do not have any more questions.

I'd like to move on to resolutions.

* (15:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no more questions from the committee, we will now move on to consideration of the resolutions.

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$37,959,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Student Achievement and Inclusion, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,062,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, System Performance and Accountability, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,584,784,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,211,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$435,148,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning and child care for the fiscal year ended—*[interjection]* I apologize, for Education and Early

Childhood Learning, Early Learning and Child Care, for fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$103,922,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ended March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$260,385,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the cap—fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for Estimates of this department is item 16.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 16.1.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Altomare: I'd like to move that line item 16.1(a), Minister's Salary, be reduced to \$33,600.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) that line item 16.1(a), the minister's salary, be reduced to \$33,600.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Altomare: I'd just like to put on the record that six years of underfunding, as outlined clearly in the FRAME documents, has resulted in cuts—real cuts—to teaching staff, teacher-librarians, other professional staff throughout the province. It's also 'resarted'—resulted in cuts to EAs and other support staff.

A 1.34 per cent increase in the base budget isn't going to result in taking care of these cuts and ensuring that we have services for kids. It's also resulted, Mr. Chair, in cuts to programs like reading recovery, speech-language and longer wait times for clinical services.

And this is coming up in the '22-23 budget, based on the number given to school divisions from the Province. These are the facts that are now impacting

schools in Manitoba. Therefore, the rationale for the reduction in the minister's salary.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there anyone else that wants to include—in this debate?

Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Chairperson: On division. The motion is lost on division. *[interjection]*

Order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now put the question to: Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,550,000 for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2023.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

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

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? *[Agreed]*

The committee is now recessed.

The committee recessed at 3:48 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:54 p.m.

FINANCE

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

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I do. I am pleased to be here to consider the Estimates of Manitoba Finance for 2022-2023.

Manitoba Finance is committed to a post-pandemic economic recovery strategy that protects the health and safety of Manitobans. Manitoba Finance has led government in getting Manitoba's economy back on track and helping Manitobans keep more of their own hard-earned money.

As essential agency, Finance has responsibility for fiscal and economic matters, including my role as chair of the Treasury Board. Briefly, I will introduce you to the appropriations within the department, for which I have responsibility.

Administration and Finance provides executive support and management for the Department of Finance, provides shared financial services and budget oversight for various departments. It provides centralized processing and administrative functions related to central accounts payable, central payroll services and bank reconciliation.

Crown services provides governance and accountability management functions to realize Crown corporation value to Manitobans. The department works with defined Crown corporations to enable alignment with government objectives and results.

Fiscal policy and corporate services provides research, analysis and support on local, national and international economic, fiscal and tax policies including fiscal implications and projections. It supports the department with achieving government-wide and other initiatives assigned to finance.

Communications and Engagement leads high-quality communications and engagement policy and practice across government, and it provides communications and engagement services to government departments and Crown agencies, including strategic communications planning, public information and consultation, employee communications and engagement, media engagement and support, media planning and purchasing and central contact centre operations.

Information and Privacy Policy Secretariat advances openness and transparency across government departments, agencies and local public bodies by providing legislative and policy analysis, personal information management advice and training and support services that promote compliance with The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and related legislation. It provides information resources about the public right of access to information and the protection of privacy.

Treasury manages the borrowing programs, cash resources and investment and debt activities of government and government agencies.

Compliance and Enforcement ensures the effective administration and collection of provincial tax revenues. It informs, educates, audits and investigates to promote and ensure compliance by taxpayers with tax legislation.

Treasury Board Secretariat provides analytic function or support to the Treasury Board by fulfilling its responsibilities for: fiscal management; program and organizational reviews as established under The Financial Administration Act, including the integration of policy decisions with the longer term fiscal plans of government, the analysis and monitoring of program performance measures and the fiscal position of the government of Manitoba; the planning and co-ordination of the budgetary process; undertaking strategic initiatives and targeted program reviews and co-ordination of the use of balanced scorecards across government; establishing and overseeing corporate comptrollership and financial management policies for government; provision of internal audit and advisory services to government departments and agencies regarding internal controls; the preparation of the summary Public Accounts for government in accordance with public sector accounting standards; and evaluating and overseeing accounting and financial management policies and systems across government to effectively deliver summary financial statements that reflect the actual financial position of the government of Manitoba.

And last but not least, Finance includes one additional special operating agency, the Manitoba Financial Services Agency. MFSA protects Manitoba investors and facilitates dynamic and competitive capital and real estate markets to promote economic development while fostering public confidence in those markets. It provides a regulatory framework for the insurance sector, trust and loan companies, credit unions and caisses populaires and co-operatives operating in Manitoba.

The policy and planning secretariat provides advice and support to Cabinet in advancing major government policies and initiatives.

And within Intergovernmental Affairs is federal-provincial relations, that provides advice, analysis and support in managing Manitoba's relations with the federal government and other provincial territorial governments, and international relations, that provides advice, analysis and support for Manitoba's international activities and manages Manitoba's relationships with foreign governments.

I just want to touch on a few highlights, some of our accomplishments over the past year. As you know, Manitoba's Public Accounts for the last fiscal year of 2020-2021 show that Manitoba incurred a deficit of \$2.117 billion for the year ending March the 31st, 2021. Both own-source revenue and provincial GDP decreased in this year. This resulted in the own-source revenue to provincial GDP rate remaining steady at 15.8 per cent of GDP, similar to 2019-2020.

The public debt charges to total revenue ratio—shows how much of every dollar of the government's revenue is needed to pay interest. In 2016-2017, the government used 6 cents of every dollar of revenue to pay interest. The ratio has been steadily decreasing since that time, reaching a low of 5.4 cents in 2020-2021.

In the same year, net debt-to-GDP increased to a 38.5 per cent. This indicates that the government had to undertake substantially increased borrowings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic due to decreased own source revenues and necessary COVID-19 pandemic-related spending.

As a result of the large deficit in the health and economic challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual net loss to the provincial GDP decreased from zero per cent in 2019-2020, when the net income was \$5-million surplus, to minus 3 per cent in 2020-2021.

We delivered our government's 2020 tax rollback guarantee and other ongoing tax measures, such as reducing the provincial sales tax to 7 per cent from 8 per cent; indexing the basic personal amount; indexing personal income tax brackets; eliminating the sales tax on home insurance, personal services, including haircuts; and on personal income tax return preparation, as well as starting to phase out education property taxes in 2021.

Starting in the 2022 taxation year, Manitoba is, of course, replacing the renter's component of the education property tax credit with a new tax explicitly for renters of residential properties that will fix the annual claim amount at \$525; that is \$43.75 per month and will not be income tested. Up to 45,000 Manitobans who receive non-EIA Rent Assist benefits or who live in social housing will now also be eligible to claim the credit where they were previously ineligible to do so.

We have more work to do, of course. While the focus of the last two years has been on responding to the global pandemic, our government remained committed to its long-term goal of removing unnecessary regulatory requirements and the administrative burden that they create. The past two years have also provided lessons in how meetings and documents can be better managed through technology, which are incorporated in reducing red tape for stakeholders. These reductions strengthen the provincial economy, improve services for Manitobans and they help decrease costs.

Manitoba's efforts in regulatory accountability have received positive feedback and support from stakeholders. Since 2016, the regulatory requirements have been reduced by 10 per cent. As a matter of fact, just earlier today in question period we got an updated that indicated that the Canadian Federation for Independent Business has once again given Manitoba an A when it comes to reducing that regulatory burden to businesses and we are proud to continue to be recognized in our work to streamline the experience of groups, businesses and individuals and organizations and non-profits, as they interact with government.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister's time is up. Would you have a closing remarks?

Mr. Friesen: Sure. Could I make brief closing remarks?

Mr. Chairperson: Please.

An Honourable Member: Time was up. His time is up.

Mr. Friesen: So, well, ask for leave, and it can be denied if the member wants to deny it.

Mr. Chairperson: I will.

The honourable minister.

Mr. Friesen: Apologies. I'm new to the format. I wasn't sure where to look for the time.

So, I see that my time allotted has expired. Is there leave for me to quickly conclude?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to have the minister conclude his opening remarks?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave has been denied.

We thank the minister for those—for the comments he has made.

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

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): No.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for that.

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 7.1(a) contained in resolution 7.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

I would ask for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) to introduce his staff.

Mr. Friesen: I am pleased to be joined at the table this afternoon with my deputy minister for Finance, Richard Groen; for the—by the secretary for the Treasury Board, Ann Ulusoy; also, Ryan Klos, the assistant deputy minister for Central Finance joins us; as well as Rob Marrese, executive director of Crown services. In the background, I would also want to recognize my SA—my special assistant—who is Larissa Gobert; and somewhere monitoring us on audio and video is my executive assistant, Graeme Rankin.

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

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

official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wasyliw: I just wanted to extend my thanks to the public servants who are here today and for the support that you're giving. It's much appreciated, and hopefully this will be very revealing.

So I'm wondering if the minister would provide us with an undertaking to give us the most recent financial administration manual.

* (16:10)

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I'm now up to speed, and I can see that we've got the clock over there, and that's the one that I need to watch, so apologies for exceeding my time on my opening statement.

All that I meant to also include at the end of my statement was simply to say that, you know, we continue to face headwinds as a Province, but we're giving good tax savings to Manitobans because they need it now, and I welcome our conversations in this Committee of Supply on affordability and what Manitobans are saying about the pressure on their finances as we continue to see the effect of inflation operating; that is—that's a very real factor.

And also I wanted to mention at the end of my speech, as well, that, of course, we're bringing those savings in the form of our education property tax rebate, in the form of changes to the post-secondary and education health levy, the payroll tax. And also we continue to look ahead and plan for things like the response to the Ukraine, what COVID-19 is doing and how the government must be prepared to react to that, what the geopolitical risk looks like for Manitoba, supply chain issues that we continue to monitor.

And last thing I would've added, if I would've had time in my opening statement, would simply have been to thank my staff, to thank all the staff at the Department of Finance and in the Treasury Board Secretariat and in the Crown Services Secretariat, both those senior civil servants who I indicated by name in my remarks and also through them to the very many fine people who work every day in the Department of Finance on behalf of citizens.

And then also, to my long-suffering staff in the office at 103 in the Manitoba Legislature, some of whom are here in the room but also some of whom are, of course, there—my front-office staff, my technical officers who assist me every single day, and—it's a real privilege to work in that office with people who

work that hard every day on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

To the member's question, it is a bit of an odd question; it's not one that officials can remember having—ever having before at a Committee of Supply. I can't remember ever asking such a question when I was the critic of Finance some years ago when the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) and I were first into the Legislature in 2011. I'm not certain what value it adds.

The financial manual administration is an internal document that guides senior civil servants in knowing how to perform their jobs. I would suggest to the member that, really, the proof of the pudding is in the Public Accounts, which is the public disclosure, very transparent, of what those aggregate and individual efforts are of the government to achieve its budget, to fulfill its plan, to get value for Manitobans and to make investments in the services that we know and need.

That said, I'll endeavour to take this one under advisement and give consideration to it, to consider if there's a way that we can get the member what he's seeking.

Mr. Wasyliw: I really appreciate the minister's consideration on that. Thank you.

In relation to what's forecasted for spending on strategic infrastructure for the 2021-2022 year, can the minister advise how much is going to be spent and if he could break that spending down by project?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question. I had indicated that his last question was a little surprising because it was a little out of the ordinary. If the first question was a little out of the ordinary, the second one is even more out of the ordinary, because the member actually asked for me to read in a detailed list.

Now, I don't think he actually wants me to do that, because he's talking about a list of projects that would be in the thousands. For Manitoba Hydro alone, which is listed among our strategic infrastructure investments, it would be thousands of individual projects for strategic investment, at all levels of project completion.

Projects, of course, don't all start and end within a single fiscal year. They are conceived. They are designed. They reach various levels of approval. They receive ratification at the Treasury Board—or, at least, with operating agencies and Crown corporations.

We're—you know, we're doing a better job of bringing those groups back to defend their Estimates at all parts of our government-reporting entity. For years, we've been at work to build a better, more durable government-reporting entity with that focus on summary accounting.

So, all of those projects, you can say, are referenced here. They're all listed, I would remind the member, in terms of the categories, on page 92 of the budget, 2022 budget. I can break down for him those categories.

Of course, he knows that we're making strategic investments in health care. We just updated Manitobans and talked about the almost-\$150-million expansion of the emergency department at St. Boniface Hospital; but of course, there's much, much more for health care, including the over \$800 million for capital commitments for what we're calling cornerstone rural health-care facilities, all a part of our government's Manitoba clinical services and preventative services plan—clinical and preventative services plan. That's the title of that particular area of expenditure. That includes projects for, you know, Portage, Steinbach, Winkler, Morden at Boundary Trails. It includes western Manitoba projects. Very proud of those investments.

The member knows we're making record investments in housing, in IT. Of course, he's aware of the fact that, in information—or sorry, that in highways infrastructure, we've committed to a \$1.5-billion expenditure investment over three years.

* (16:20)

Moreover, the same budget documents show, on page 91, how we are moving to a three-year capital planning cycle. Manitoba is behind on this. This—constitutes another improvement that we've been able to make in the way we are presenting strategic capital, exactly for the reasons I discussed: that the government needs to plan to get good value for taxpayers. So, this is the first year in which Manitobans will find a three-year, forward-looking plan, not just in respect of the 2022-23 plan, but adding two years on to that to give more certainty.

Just yesterday, I sat with the Manitoba heavy truckers'—trucking association at the annual Manitoba Chambers of Commerce gala and ministers' dinner, and they told me how important this advance was to them as an industry, so that they can predict what government's needs will be, they can plan for human resource, they can plan for their machinery and other

technical resource and they can bid on contracts more effectively.

Another advancement we've made here, of course, though, is also representing the requirements of Hydro on page 91. And you'll see that stacked above—the Crowns are stacked above the departments and other reporting entities, and that's important to understand. While Manitoba Hydro is ratepayer supported and other expenditures and capital are taxpayer supported, it's still important to understand the total complement of those strategic infrastructure needs.

I could go on and on, but the time restricts me. I would want to say that, of course, we're building new schools in this province and we committed to do so; we're ahead of schedule. And there's much, much more we're doing in relation to water infrastructure, participating with the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, where many, many projects are moving ahead.

And we are very proud of these investments that we are making in strategic infrastructure in the province of Manitoba through this budget.

Mr. Wasyliw: Will the minister, given his comments, undertake to provide a detailed list breaking down all projects, including spending?

Mr. Friesen: I've been discussing the member's request with my staff at the table. It's, again, not a request that we can recall receiving in the past.

We are talking about thousands and thousands of projects that are in a wide span of degrees of completion. So there's the concern we have, of course, about the sheer enormity of this request for information. Not—unlike the FIPPA process, whereby any member of the public or group can make a request for information—there is analysis even in that FIPPA process in legislation of the ability of the government to action the request reasonably or whether it would be an inordinate utilization of resources to be able to accommodate the request.

But, beyond that, I would also want to caution the member there are concerns that are actually financial in nature about the request because the member's requesting to know all of the projects, and that would mean he's asking for projects that would be even pre-tendering in nature. And to be able to provide a copy of pre-tendered projects to the member, I think he would clearly understand that financially, knowledge of those projects would have the concern in our minds of jeopardizing our ability to get competitive bids when those projects would be posted. People having

differential access to that information as industries bidding on these projects may be able to advantage themselves before that is posted. That is why the government works to post any project at a threshold of \$10,000 on a public posting.

So, maybe I could encourage the member first to actually go to where those projects are posted, and that is on MERX and there he would be able to see projects—highways, and projects in schools, health-care projects, and other strategic infrastructure, housing projects the government is undertaking. I'm even thinking now that the government will have tenders that will be—will come about as a result of the spring flooding and events that have taken place. And there will be points whereby the province's infrastructure has been damaged by these high water levels and these extraordinary moisture events, and so there will be more projects added.

But we're still tabulating what those projects will be. I know the Minister of Infrastructure is hard at work in his department to be able to do that undertaking even right now. We're still in the process by which municipalities, farms and individuals and organizations are determining damage and then checking eligibility and submitting claims through the DFA program. As a matter of fact, we received a briefing on that just two days ago to understand better how that program works.

So, I think if the member has a particular concern about one or a few projects, I would be happy to invite a conversation about those projects. I would also, though, encourage the member to go to the Committee of Supply specific to Education or Infrastructure—or Families for the housing—to be able to ask specific questions to specific ministers responsible for those assets and those investments.

* (16:30)

I will direct the member's attention to page 16 of the budget, in budget papers, where he can see that priority that our government continues to place on capital investment. And there he can see that net book value increase of tangible capital assets represented in the millions of dollars, and you can see that our government has been making steady progress in investing in the schools, hospitals, roads and other critical infrastructure that our province needs and our citizens need in order to grow the economy and seek services.

Mr. Wasyliw: It's truly disappointing to hear the minister's answers and stonewalling on this. This is certainly in the public interest to have that disclosed.

It's not his money. It's not his government's money. It's taxpayers' money in Manitoba, and to hide it from view, hide it from accountability and transparency, I think, speaks volumes of the ethical lapses of this government and the concerns that we have with the professionalism of this Cabinet.

But I'll move on. Will the minister commit to providing a technical briefing with the relevant department staff, to the official opposition in regards to the revision to Manitoba budget 2020, tabled yesterday in the House?

Mr. Friesen: Yes, thanks—you know, I'm trying to think of a way in which we could provide a satisfying answer to the member on the previous question he asked about the strategic infrastructure.

Of course, he's, you know, he's got good information in front of him in the form of the budget and the breakdown to subcategory of those areas in which we're making strategic investments. He can see the increase in the tangible capital assets in the government books, but if there's specific projects the member wants to see, then he can make those specific requests.

I always want to be reasonable about requests made on hard-working department staff, and I don't think that the member could claim that our practice in this respect is somehow out of step with other jurisdictions in Canada.

To the member's point about yesterday's revision to the Estimates of Expenditure, yes, I'm very happy to provide for him a technical briefing. I think it's a very good idea. It came up suddenly yesterday that I needed to get that done on that day, otherwise I would have actually offered that technical briefing in this—in the first day.

Let me spin through a very brief overview of how the changes work and then absolutely would be happy to offer up staff to be able to additionally walk through.

Essentially, the reason we brought the change yesterday in respect of this revision to the Estimates of expenditure—and it certainly isn't unique—this has happened before. In the past, I've seen revisions to Estimates of expenditure, but this one in particular is a consequence simply of timing, and it has to do with the timing difference between a fiscal year and a calendar year. So we vote authority for a budget on a fiscal year beginning on April the 1st and continuing 'til March 31st of the next year. But, indeed, when it comes to property taxes, those are assessed by municipality on a calendar year, and cash payments in this

case are—we're trying to make cash payments of those rebates in the calendar year.

So, essentially, what we have done in this case is because it became clear that the opposition parties were not looking like they were going to support the passage of Budget 2022 before this House rises in June, it became necessary for our government to think about an alternate means by which to vote authority for this education property tax rebate to Manitobans—households and farm families receiving 37.5 per cent of that property tax, which is increased from the previous year, and no change to commercial properties, still receiving 10 per cent rebate exactly as they did last year.

Now, the member will note that in the original Estimates of expenditure, that rebate amount we were seeking authority for was \$401.5 million.

Essentially, now he will see a change, and on the revision to the Estimates he's seeing the number \$113 million. Now, what this does is, if he adds that \$113 million that is noted now in the Estimates and then compares that to the \$349.8 million that we sought authority for through Bill 39 and achieved that authority when we passed that bill last week—Thursday, I believe, in the Manitoba Legislature—then those two announcements will add up not to 401, but to \$463 million; that's the total there.

Now, he'll say, well, what is the difference in that amount? Now we go back to the—just the conundrum of calendar years and fiscal years. So, essentially, what that member will understand—because we spoke about this during the bills debate, I think, at the Committee of the Whole or possibly second reading during the question-and-answer period—is that this 2022 budget sought authority for the three quarters of 2022. And, essentially, next January, we're into the next calendar year even though we're in the same fiscal year. And so, essentially, what we're doing now in the Estimates of expenditure is pointing forward to the amount that Bill 39 did not accommodate—don't need to because January to March can be covered off by this remainder. Think of it as a remainder for this budget.

What I would point the member to, and I'm sorry I don't believe I—yes, I might have the document right in front of me as well, exactly from that revision to the Estimates. The member will see that on that page 161 of the changes, at the very bottom of the page there is a note that indicates the—

Mr. Chairperson: Minister's time is up.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm sure the minister will finish his thought here, but I want to add to it. So, I want to make sure—*[interjection]* Well, I mean, you'll have the opportunity to fill that in a minute.

Is the \$462 million the true cost of the education property tax rebate in the current fiscal year?

Mr. Friesen: Sorry to the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv). So, obviously, I'm still a little rusty here. So, I've asked for the support of the Chair to flag to me when there's a minute left, and so I'll make sure to get my answers within the five-minute period that is assigned to me.

I remember this happened last year, as well, when I mistakenly thought that I had 10 minutes for answer and then I was promptly reminded by the Chair that it was only five. Sometimes it feels like 10, I'm sure, to the member for Fort Garry, but indeed it was only five on the clock.

* (16:40)

So, thank you, Mr. Chair, for your indulgence to me.

I was just reading at the bottom of the page there in that revision to the Estimates on page 161, there's a note that says this—there's a note referring to the \$113,000,300 that says this reflects the liability that accrues for the last quarter of this fiscal year, like I mentioned. The amount authorized to be expended in the 2022 calendar year is provided for in The Appropriation Act, 2022, School Tax Rebate, which was debated and passed last week in the Legislature.

So when the member asked the question about the 463, yes, essentially, that is the authority necessary for the calendar year of 2022, and also pointing back for the accrual that would be necessary from that previous one quarter of the year. So it's always this difference between looking forward and looking back.

I think the main takeaway, though, is that there is no change. Bottom line, there is no change to the government's commitment.

There's a page in our budget towards the end that talks about the total commitment on the tax measures—and I'm just locating it for him now. There we go. And what it shows is that in the first year of the credit, the full rebate cost was \$246.5 million in 2021. In this year, the credit \$349.9 million. And then, the following year, when fully implemented, at \$453.2 million. And that is showing on the tax year. So, think of it as a calendar year. And then, of course, you know, we've shown how that adjustment needed to take place.

I know the math is a little difficult for people if you're always translating fiscal year and calendar year. But the main point is you've always got a reference—that one quarter of the next year.

And if it wasn't complicated enough, then remember, as well, that when this budget—this \$113 million, when it references what I called the remainder, that amount that will be returned to Manitoba farm families, households and commercial businesses at 10 per cent, when it comes to that window of January the 1st to March the 31st, well, actually that will be in the next calendar year. Those municipal assessments will be in 2023, and our commitment is to deliver that rebate at 50 per cent in 2023.

And, just to finish up, I would say to the member I will absolutely make officials available to him so that he can actually have the officials himself run through these things and bring to the—bring his staff to the table to ask additional questions about how this treatment works.

Mr. Wasyliw: Okay, so by virtue of this being tabled yesterday, the government's admitting mistakes were made.

And so I'm wondering if the government could provide an explanation, like, how did the government realize the actual cost of the education tax rebate for the fiscal year had to increase by \$61 million from April to May.

So, what would explain the multimillion-dollar mistake that was obviously made here?

Mr. Friesen: So, the member is incorrect. There is no increase to the amount of the education property tax rebate.

Once again, I would just want to emphasize that he is forgetting about the fact that there is an accrual of that January-through-March last quarter of the year, and this is just because of the disalignment that happens between a fiscal year—when we operate from April the 1st to March the 31st—and how municipalities operate to assess tax on the basis of a calendar year from January the 1st to December the 31st.

So, the Bill 39, voting 300-and-almost-50-million dollars of authority was that money bill that we brought. Why did we bring it? Because we did not have certainty that the budget—that our budget would be passed, that the Estimates of expenditure would be fully considered, that the opposition party would work to allow the budget to pass in the spring.

The member and I have had conversations. I continue to say in this Legislature that I believe it is in the best interest of a government, and it is in the best interests of an opposition party, to find a way to pass a budget in the spring.

Indeed, we are the outliers in this respect in Canada. When I speak to my counterparts in other jurisdictions, they ask me if we're done the Committee of Supply by now. They ask me if I'm passing my budget next week. And I explain to them that the rules of the Manitoba Legislature give quite a lot of latitude for the process to pass a budget to be delayed.

Because of that almost-certainty of delay, and because of our government's commitment to send out those tax rebates to Manitobans who are waiting for them because they care and they are concerned about rising prices—because of those things, we had to revert to bringing a separate money bill to seek authority.

Essentially, what the adjustments to the Estimates of expenditure do is they take the initial amount that was indicated there, and they subtract out the money bill portion that now has been voted and has its own authority, passed by the Legislature, assented to by the Lieutenant Governor. We were very pleased to welcome Her Honour to the Legislature last week, who came in to proclaim the bill on Thursday.

And that now allows for those cheques to go out to time concurrently with the deadline for receipt of that tax obligation. I believe for Winnipeg and the city of Brandon, those notices of assessment go out now in the spring. But, of course, there's a schedule by which municipalities send those out. They don't all happen in June or July. They're not all due in August or September. And I would be happy to read that list of what those dates are by which municipalities require those tax bills to be paid.

In any case, what Manitobans can depend on is that this government is bringing tax relief at a time when they very much need it. And we are making sure that they have those rebate cheques to co-ordinate with the time in which their property tax bill for education will come in the mail.

Mr. Wasyliw: Right. Well, the minister didn't answer my question, which is sort of revealing in and of itself. It certainly indicates somebody who has something to hide.

I'm wondering if any of these funds authorized for spending in Bill 39 are to be used to address the accrued liability that the government incurred in the last quarter of the 2021-2022 fiscal year?

Mr. Friesen: I will endeavour to keep my answer brief.

Yes. Exactly as we've explained. There is an accrual there, exactly for the reason that I explained—because of the difference between the calendar year and the fiscal year. Part of that reference is to that one quarter of the year, and that's what the—that's what I called—it's probably not the right term, but I called it the remainder.

* (16:50)

After the requirement of Bill 39, the \$349.8 million that was voted and approved by the Manitoba Legislature and ascended to by Her Honour last week, in—of that amount, you know, it's like that part of that must go for the accrual to that last portion of the year, the last quarter.

Mr. Wasyliv: I want to be fair to the minister, so, I want to make sure that I absolutely have the facts right here.

So Bill 39, that we just passed, is going to be used to backfill tax credits from last year, from the 2021-22 fiscal year; that was the question. I appreciate he's saying it's going to happen in this upcoming budget year, but the past year, and like I said, I want to be fair to the minister.

Mr. Friesen: So, I want to assure the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) that—and he can absolutely avail himself of the opportunity to meet with technical staff who can walk him through these adjustments, and I would encourage him to do so, so that he'll have an accurate understanding, because right now, he's conflating two things. And he's conflating the supply bill and—he's conflating the supply bill that we passed last week with the issuance of cheques on a calendar year.

So, let me state this as clearly as I can: We passed a supply bill last week in the Legislature. It authorizes for cheques to be sent in the 2022 calendar year. That means three quarters of that period of time falls within the fiscal year of the Province of Manitoba, but one quarter of that calendar year falls into the previous fiscal.

Again, it's simply the misalignment of our fiscal year and the calendar year on which municipalities assess tax. If these were aligned, there would be no difference; it would be identical. But because of the misalignment, it's like this authority has to point in two directions: It points forward for three quarters; it points backward—but I do want to assure the member

the Public Accounts will clearly show—just as they showed last year—exactly what the amount was that was spent.

Bottom line for our government, we are committed to bringing tax relief to Manitobans. And let's be very clear that I believe the opposition parties tried to block this most significant tax relief initiative for Manitobans for probably six days of debate—I'm guessing here; I could be wrong, but I think it was about six days of debate.

So that is something that they will have to answer to Manitobans for. There was actually a time in the Legislature last week during debate when the member of—for Fort Garry said—and we went to check Hansard to make sure we had heard it right—he said: Nobody is asking for this. No one is asking for this tax relief. And I think I'm actually quoting him verbatim. But I would be really, really clear that if the member thinks that, he is not in tune with his constituents.

We know that, right now—there was a survey out last week, it was a Probe survey that indicated that two in four Canadian households are worried that they will not have enough money at the end of the month. And I can hear the members at the table saying, well, he meant to say businesses. But businesses were very, very hard hit during the global pandemic. Businesses closed their doors because of public health orders. Businesses were disrupted. They lost their customers. Restaurants weren't able to open. That's why our government was there to respond.

And if this member is suggesting that businesses are not expressing a need for tax relief, he's just wrong. As the Finance Minister, I can tell him, from a person who travels across the province and meets with a wide variety of stakeholders, business leaders and small-business owners, they tell me, on a regular basis, about their concern about the inordinate amount of tax they pay in this jurisdiction. They cite to me examples of tax differences with other jurisdictions, and they tell me that these measures help, especially coming on the heels of a two-year global pandemic.

That is why it is important that we are focused on the concerns that Manitobans are expressing to provide tax relief, and we are very proud to be providing that in a timely way through Bill 39, through the mechanism that I just described.

I'll just summarize by saying we will completely agree to make technical staff available for a briefing with the member. We will invite the other opposition party to be present at the same briefing.

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes, I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how much of Bill 39 appropriation is basically dedicated for the last quarter of 2021-2022 year?

Mr. Friesen: I have good news for the member of Fort Garry, and that is that at the table here we were just discussing—and, of course, because I'm referring to an accrual for the first three months of 2021—two—2022—because it's 2022 the—that year ending on March the 31st, the member won't have to wait for long for the Public Accounts to actually show exactly what that amount is. But I think, as—in terms of a planning assumption, essentially, we've made the assumption that the accrual is 25 per cent of the total amount.

So it's three months of 12 months of the year. We know that it's not exactly smooth on which municipalities provide for the deadline for receipt of tax owing for municipal property and education property taxes, but we've made this assumption of 25 per cent. And, of course, then the proof of that is—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The hour being 5 p.m., the committee is recessed and stands recessed until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

CHAMBER

INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION AND NORTHERN RELATIONS

* (15:20)

Mr. Chairperson (Andrew Micklefield): 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 Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? Honourable Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Lagimodiere: I am pleased to be able to comment on the 2022-23 Estimates and discuss some of the important activities of the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, the Dakota Oyate, the Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. I want to further acknowledge that Manitoba

is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis and that northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all of our partners and our staff. Through their hard work we have and will achieve many successes. The department's 2022-23 Estimates of expenditures total \$31.1 million and continues to provide the resources required to address the challenges and pressures of delivering on our department's far-reaching and increasingly complex mandate.

On a specific note, I am pleased to note that Budget 2022 provides the department with enhanced capacity through the allocation of funding for up to 13 additional staff positions. This enhanced staffing capacity builds on the four positions added in 2021-22, which will be directed towards enhancing engagement and reconciliatory activities.

I am also pleased to note that Budget 2022 includes a \$5-million allocation that will be made available to advance progress on reconciliation. This funding will be used for a range of activities including, but not limited to, enhancing partnerships with Indigenous communities, maintaining and strengthening support for culture and language, addressing the tragic legacy of residential schools and actions that respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Budget 2022 positions us to continue to advance our strategic priorities, and I would like to take a moment to highlight some of our other significant activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us in too many ways to count, and it has challenged us on a wide variety of fronts. We will continue to work with northern leaders, partners and stakeholders to ensure a timely and consistent response to the impacts of the pandemic. This includes maintaining communications with First Nations leadership, the Red River Métis, regional health authorities and First Nations Inuit Health Branch and Shared Health to co-ordinate information, bring awareness to localized planning challenges, demographics and available supports to the North.

We are committed to the implementation of various public health recommendations, and a variety of steps have been specifically focused on stemming the tide of COVID-19 in the North. Efforts include

regular engagement with Indigenous and northern leadership and a focused vaccination strategy targeting First Nations and northern communities who are at greater risk for severe COVID-19 health impacts.

We are pleased to be working in partnership with the health experts representing Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Southern Chiefs Organization and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in the planning and administration of vaccines to First Nations people in Manitoba. We will continue to work with all provincial counterparts to ensure that all Manitobans have access to vaccination and booster doses to protect against COVID-19.

Treaty land entitlement continues to be a priority of Manitoba. There are nine treaty land entitlement agreements in Manitoba covering 29 entitlement First Nations for a total of approximately 1.423 million acres of Crown and acquisition land. Continued progress on treaty land entitlement is one way in which we are pursuing reconciliation with Indigenous people.

As of March 31st, 2022, Manitoba has transferred 694,663 acres to Canada under all treaty land entitlement agreements in Manitoba. Canada has set up our 677,170 acres as reserve land. Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations has also allocated 500,000 as part of a renewed approach to advancing treaty land entitlement in Manitoba.

The Government of Manitoba has committed to establishing a renewed framework for respectful and productive Crown-Indigenous consultation. A key outcome of the renewed framework would include improved understanding of the Crown-Indigenous consultation process for all parties. We are following up with Indigenous communities to summarize recent feedback received on the framework and invite additional comments. We continue to welcome proposals to work together on a renewed approach to the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate with Indigenous community. We remain committed to advancing reconciliation through concrete and tangible initiatives that build on meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations and people, and we continue to carry out work to advance the process of reconciliation in Manitoba.

Our work is guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The department fully appreciates the importance of culturally relevant and healthy food systems in the North, and we continue to support these systems through our Northern Healthy Foods Initiative. I am pleased to report that we have recently provided an allocation of \$193,000 to Northern Healthy Foods Initiative partners to supplement their existing activities and help improve access to affordable healthy food in the North.

We have continued to maintain our annual funding commitments to 11 Indigenous organizations where there are co-operating grants. Of specific note, I am happy to announce that Manitoba Inuit Association will become a recipient of one of our core operating grants. In addition to core operating grants, we have also continued to provide financial support for a wide variety of community-based initiatives including but not limited to healing, commemorative and educational initiatives connected to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day.

Addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, particularly incidences of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, is a priority of Manitoba. We are committed to working together to keep women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people safe and to supporting families who have been impacted by these tragedies.

We have taken a variety of steps to fulfill this commitment, including engaging with approximately 42 individual community organizations to solicit their perspectives and—on priorities as related to the national inquiry's Calls to Justice. We are providing \$130,000 to the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre for the co-development of a provincial implementation plan to raise awareness and end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples in Manitoba. We are continuing to work with the federal government and other provinces and territories in relation to Canada's efforts to respond to the Calls to Justice.

The tragic identification of potential unmarked graves of children who died attending Indian residential schools across the country has sparked a nationwide conversation on the tragedy and lasting impacts of Canada's residential school system. Addressing the tragic legacy of residential schools is a priority for Manitoba, especially with respect to supporting Indigenous-led searches to locate the missing children who attended these institutions.

We know that Indigenous communities must take the lead on this work, and we continue to meet with Indigenous leadership, knowledge keepers, elders, and residential school survivors to guide a response that reflects and advances their priorities. To support this work, we have committed \$2.5 million to begin the work of supporting the identification, investigation, protection and commemoration of Indian residential school burial sites across the province.

First Nations, Inuit, the Red River Métis council on residential schools has also been established to support Indigenous-led searches for burial sites of children who attended residential schools. The council is also co-chaired by the province's Southern Chiefs' Organization and has representation from Indigenous organizations and governments, including the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Southern Chiefs' Organization, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Manitoba Inuit Association.

In conclusion, we remain committed to working positively and respectfully with Indigenous northern communities across Manitoba to make decisions and directing resources to areas that will make a true difference.

* (15:30)

I wish to reiterate our commitment to working with Indigenous northern peoples to advance shared goals and promote truth and reconciliation. We are fully committed to listening and learning, and look forward to the meaningful dialogue, engagement and co-development approaches that are to come.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you to the minister for those opening comments this afternoon.

Just a few short things before we start, because I do want to get into the questions.

Reconciliation seems to be the—a buzzword, almost, if you want to say that, in regards to this government's response to a lot of issues that are raised by First Nation and Indigenous people here in Manitoba. But it really seems that that's all it is—it's just the word

that they want to use, and the action's not really following that up.

In terms of even the minister's appointment—and, of course, we all know the minister was appointment under the former premier, Brian Pallister—and it's very well known how his feelings were towards Indigenous people and in regards to reconciliation here in the province.

So what we really want to be able to see and what we haven't seen so far is, truly—and you've heard this word also, the all-of-government approach—and we're not seeing that on Indigenous issues, in the Indigenous ministry.

In fact, when issues are raised—and there's a wide variety of issues from—excuse me—infrastructure, health care, education, transportation, connectivity, across a number of different ministries and a number of different departments—that still, it's referred to the Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations even though that may not be the file that's best suited to be able to address the concerns and answer the questions.

So that just goes to, kind of, the thought process of the government and the siloes that they seem to be working in on Indigenous issues and the Indigenous file from this government.

And we were hoping that that would change, and I'm hoping the minister has been open to that. And we are seeing kind of, hopefully, some bright spots to be able to work together, to work collaboratively on not only across the aisle here in the Chamber, but for the minister and this government to work with Indigenous communities, and more specifically and more importantly, on these files to which they can truly answer those questions and not just refer them to a different department that really has nothing to do with the issue at hand.

So I'm hoping that across these next few hours, few days of Estimates, we can bring some clarity to the minister's role and the voice that, actually, this department has in government to be able to take those issues forward and not just kind of talk the talk without having any kind of backup to that or any kind of real commitments to be able to do that, per se, just, you know, using the words reconciliation and working in collaboration, and those types of phrases that this government seems to address on this file on a regular basis without any real action.

So I'm hoping going forward that we can have that discussion, we can have that openness. And I know

the minister's been—we've had a couple of chats kind of offline on a number of different issues. So I'm hoping we can bring that to be more than just offline chats, but actually bring some of those things to fruition here in the province and in the government and be able to actually have those issues that are being raised. Because we are hearing not just different issues, but we're hearing the same issues. And when I say we, I say me as well as the minister are hearing those same issues. So we're hoping we can bring forth those issues on behalf of Indigenous people here in Manitoba and be able to come up to some kind of concrete, long-lasting solutions to the issues that have been generations in the mix here.

So with that being said, Mr. Chair, the—I'll conclude my comments there and get into the questions.

Miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. So, accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 19.1(a) contained in resolution 19.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and I would ask the minister and critic to please introduce their staff in attendance.

I'll just add, Minister, as I cannot see when your staff have arrived, if you could signal to me, I will give you the floor to introduce your staff once you would like to do so. Just give me a wave or say hello and we'll move forward with that.

Minister, I'm sorry, I cannot hear you.

The honourable minister?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Can you hear me now?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I can. Go ahead, Minister.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Okay. Thank you. I'm joined here today by Michelle Dubik, my deputy minister; by Mike Sosiak, the ADM, executive financial officer; by George Bugoa [*phonetic*], acting director of financial services; Scott DeJaegher, director of policy and strategic initiatives; Paul Doolan, executive director of the Northern Affairs branch; and Chelsea Silva, executive director of the consultation and reconciliation branch.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister. We certainly welcome those staff to this afternoon.

Would the opposition critic like to introduce their staff?

An Honourable Member: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister—sorry, honourable member for Keewatinook.

Mr. Bushie: We'll get there, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to introduce Rylan Ramnarace, he's our legislative researcher for our caucus.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

In accordance with subrule 77(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put on the resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

The honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), you have five minutes.

Mr. Bushie: Just a couple of, hopefully, just simple housekeeping questions. Can the minister undertake to give us a list of all the technical appointments in his department, including their names and titles?

Mr. Chairperson: Minister, are you ready?

Honourable Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, I have two technical individuals in my department: special assistant to the minister, Eric Edwards; and I have an executive assistant to the minister, Maia Bacchus.

Mr. Bushie: Can the minister undertake to give an organizational chart that lists all of the employees and program areas in his department?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Yes, we can endeavour to provide that. Would you like us to have somebody walk it down?

Mr. Bushie: Sure, as long as it's not the minister himself, that doesn't take from Estimates process.

Can the minister also provide us with a list of current vacancies in the department?

* (15:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Minister, go ahead, and just as a technical formality, I think your picture on my screen is quite small, but when you say something, you get

maximized on the screen. So just feel free to say Mr. Chair or something like that, and then I'll be able to recognize you. But honourable Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, as of February the 22nd, we had 23 vacancies. Ten of those have been filled since then, and we are in the progress of filling five more, and seven are still vacant. If the member would like more details, we would have to do another report with a new update for him.

Mr. Bushie: Yes, if the minister can take that under advisement to be able to bring that chart to the committee.

I have a couple of questions and some comments about the residential school and the residential school process and system here in Manitoba. And, of course, the minister did not start off in his role on the best of terms and the best of abilities that came out in regards to the day of actually when the minister was sworn in and the comments on the residential schools, and they're widely denounced as harmful and false and inaccurate and insensitive to Indigenous people here in Manitoba and across Canada.

Can the minister tell us if he's taken any kind of reconciliation training or any kind of informational sessions to further educate himself on the residential school system here in Manitoba?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Yes, I am thinking the member opposite knows that since my swearing in, I was on a listening and learning journey throughout Manitoba. I immediately set out to meet with the Indigenous communities, First Nations communities throughout northern Manitoba and met with the elders. I met with survivors. I've met with their families and met with knowledge keepers.

In particular, I went to OCN in The Pas on part of my journey and we attended the Guy Hill Residential School site and listened to the survivors' stories on the site, a very heart-wrenching, very concerning in a sense—you know, a sense of the beginning of my journey. I continue to meet with elders, with leadership, with survivors and continue to hear their stories. I have given my deepest apologies to the first member—First Nations peoples on my remarks that were made initially.

With those, I wish I would have had time to finish my comments, but I was starting to make there, by myself, and the son of a—an Indian day school survivor. And knowing that I now understand a lot more about the man he was and what shaped him to become the man that he was. He was not an easy man. He had

difficulty showing affection to anyone and including anyone close to him. And he did have issues.

I myself went to a—it's called the Sacred Heart school in The Pas, and the same individuals that taught at the Guy Hill school—residential school—taught in my school, and I'm sure that they used the same techniques in my school as they did in the residential school. I was given the strap one day because my pencil was too short. It caused my wrist to swell, that I had difficulty writing. So on a spelling test, the teacher couldn't read what I had written. So that resulted in another strap.

I'd been made to stand against the blackboard, looking at bodies burning in hell as penance for wearing a pair of moccasins one day; moccasins that I was so proud of, but they were new and there was an odour and the teachers didn't think that that was acceptable.

So hearing the stories from the elders and the survivors brought back those painful memories, and I could relate to what they went through in their days in the residential school. And I was lucky. I got to go home in the evening. The residential school students didn't. They had to endure that same group in the evening and endure even more mental and physical abuse.

There's no justification for what happened in the residential school system, and we need to learn from that, hoping it builds a better future for our children and all Canadians.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

* (15:50)

Mr. Bushie: I'd like to thank the minister for sharing his story and showing that vulnerability that a lot of people are afraid to show or—for fear of retribution or fear of being kind of isolated for just being human. So, I thank the minister for sharing those comments, his family story of his own family as well as his own experience, which isn't—while every story is unique, we know the stories are very similar.

So I'd like to thank the minister again for sharing that. And it's—I realize, a lot of times, those kind of things are difficult to get perhaps caught up in, in the moment and not even realize you're sharing your story and being vulnerable and exposing yourself. So I really want to show appreciation and thank the minister for sharing that. And it also goes to show the importance of moving forward in the true spirit of reconciliation for all involved.

A couple weeks ago now, we passed the opposition day motion, and I'm very grateful for the House for being able to unanimously pass that motion that called for the Pope to—on his visit to Canada to include Manitoba as part of his visit which specifically in the motion called for him to bless the graves of residential school children here in Manitoba including the grave of Louis Riel.

So we understand the importance of that visit and what that would mean to Indigenous people here in Manitoba. And it's—in some cases, it's met with a lot of different emotions. Some people and some individuals and some families don't want to see that and some do want to see that in terms of moving forward. And we've seen it—we've—I think most members have seen a copy of the motion itself, including the letter from the Speaker.

So, I would ask the minister if he, in fact, has received any communication back from the Vatican as to whether or not the Pope is going to, perhaps, include Manitoba on his visit and if there was any further advocacy that either the minister was doing or the government was doing to make this visit to Manitoba a reality.

Mr. Lagimodiere: I hadn't worked with the delegations that went over to meet with the Pope previously. And they had delivered the message that we were trying to encourage the Pope to include Manitoba on part of his visit to Canada. I know we had talked about sending a letter, but when the resolution came through, I believe that just the resolution was going to be sent to the Pope for consideration.

I have not had an opportunity to talk to the individuals from the Métis delegation that went over as to the response that the Pope gave when they were there. I did have an opportunity, though, to meet with our Assembly of First Nations Chief Cindy Woodhouse when she returned. Actually, Chief Woodhouse, when she returned, came to the Legislature and wanted to know if there was an opportunity for her to meet with me without being announced, and with the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), at which we both agreed to.

And when Chief Woodhouse came, she had actually brought with her rosaries that were sent from the Pope and personally blessed from the Pope to give to both of us to encourage us to continue on our efforts at reconciliation in the province. It was a very touching moment to receive these directly from the Pope himself, you know, specifically to give to both the Premier and myself.

So, you know, when—I have tried to follow-up a little bit with the church, and I understand that the Pope's health is not very good, his mobility is not very good. We had talked about, if we could get him to Manitoba, was there an opportunity that we might be able to bring him out to Portage la Prairie for the day. The individuals I talked to told me that the Pope is very limited in his mobility and a trip like that would be far more than he could handle, which was why they decided just to go to, I believe, it's Edmonton in the Prairies here. I think there's a stop in Quebec and the Prairies and in the Northwest Territories. I think he's only making three stops—all areas that he can fly into and get around very easily in.

Mr. Bushie: It's Quebec City, Edmonton and Iqaluit that are the visits. But obviously, that would be disappointing for a number of First Nations and Indigenous people here in Manitoba that, if there wasn't any kind of further advocacy on that part.

And, not to speak to anybody's health, but at the same time, I mean, he can also fly into Winnipeg, so that's something that's a little bit difficult to comprehend.

Can—the minister mentioned that the \$2.5 million that was earmarked for the search for unmarked gravesites. Can the minister tell us how many residential school sites have been examined for unmarked graves and where?

Mr. Lagimodiere: I thank the member for that question. Currently, in Manitoba, there are 18 locations of former Canadian government Indian residential schools, and I'm currently getting a list of the ones that are being actively searched with ground-penetrating radar.

* (16:00)

Addressing the tragic legacy of the residential schools is a priority for Manitoba, especially to support Indigenous-led searches to locate the missing children who attended these institutions and to memorialize them. We know that Indigenous communities must take the lead on this work, and we continue to meet with Indigenous leadership, knowledge keepers, elders, residential school survivors, to guide our response that reflects and advances their priorities.

Manitoba recognizes that First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended residential schools across the province and supports distinction-based discussions to guide the way on finding the children who died at these institutions. The searches are providing—or proving to be very complex, and the process, we need to

recognize that multifaceted Indigenous-led approach is required, involving the collaboration of various levels of government and through meaningful discussions with Indigenous leadership, communities, elders, survivors and their families. We have heard the high-quality searches, guided by the families of missing children and survivors, is a priority.

Our government remains committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities, the elders, the knowledge keepers, the survivors and families to commemorate and protect the unmarked graves of children who died attending residential school. Some examples of our work include a provision, as the member had said, of \$2.5 million to support Indigenous organizations and governments to enable a distinction-based, Indigenous-led process, placing survivors, families and communities at the centre of this work; the establishment of a First Nations, Inuit, Red River Métis council that meets biweekly with Indigenous organizations and governments, federal and municipal counterparts and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to share information and co-develop principles, structures and resources to support community; the provision of technical assistance to communities requesting this kind of support during their searches and ongoing interdepartmental work to reduce barriers and to develop policies and potential legislation that will advance community efforts.

We are partnering closely with Indigenous-led organizations to provide healing through traditional Indigenous ceremonies, safe mental health approaches, and holistic community-based care. This is why we're investing \$500,000 in funding for 10 residential school healing centres across the province to provide emotional, cultural, spiritual and mental health supports to former residential school survivors and their families.

The current sites with active ground-penetrating radar are Brandon residential school, Fort Alexander, St. Joseph's at Cross Lake, the MacKay Residential School in The Pas, Sandy Bay and Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Bushie: So can the minister say how much of the \$2.5 million that was announced for the residential—the unmarked graves, how much of that has been expensed so far?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Yes, with respect to the \$2.5 million, there were discussions at tables with a number of groups and an Indian residential school council was developed with First Nations, Métis and

Inuit representation; and as of now, all of the \$2.5 million has been flowed to the organizations.

When the blackout lifts, we will be working in partnership with MKO, SCO, the MMF, MIA, AMC and Sioux Valley to make an announcement. And I look forward to speaking further with the member opposite on this, and I would like to see him at the announcement when we have a chance to do it following the blackout period.

Mr. Bushie: So the minister's mentioned that the \$2.5 million has now been expensed and flowed to the organizations and the groups that are going to be overseeing this.

Will there be additional funds earmarked for this search also, if the \$2.5 million is not enough—and I think, clearly, at this point in time, we're seeing that it is most definitely not enough if it's already been, kind of, flowed through already, and we still have a number of communities that are still looking and searching and looking for assistance to search sites themselves.

So, is the minister willing to commit additional funds, and if so, how much?

* (16:10)

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, with respect to the monies that are being forwarded: We felt that we owed it to the children who were forced to attend the Canadian residential schools across the nation, to remember the tragedies of the past and to use the 'leshon'—lessons learned to build a better future.

With that, as a government, our immediate goal was to understand Manitoba's role and responsibilities, and the priorities of those that were affected. So with that, we actively engaged in dialogue with Indigenous leadership—the communities, the families, the survivors, elders, the knowledge keepers. And from our discussions, it was clear that those we engaged with desired an Indigenous-led process; and we respect these wishes and agree with that approach.

Will additional funds be allocated? I'm sure the member opposite understands that this is a very complex and ongoing process, and it's not something that's going to be completed in a year; you know, it could take ten years for this process to be completed. And during that time period, we are committed to working collaboratively with our partnerships with survivors, with the families, with the communities. And we'll work with them on identifying priorities, and we will also be working with our federal counterparts to address this very serious concern.

Thank you.

Mr. Bushie: I thank the minister for actually making the point, though, that the fact that the \$2.5 million is nowhere near enough.

He mentioned how long this process could take, and I mean, it's going to be a generation or generations, even, to be able to rectify and complete this kind of work, which may never reach completion to the full satisfaction of all the families and the communities that are affected.

So, I thank the minister for making the point of the fact that, you know, there will in fact be further investments needed on behalf of this government to be able to do that.

I wanted to touch on Orange Shirt Day. September 30th is Orange Shirt Day here in Manitoba, and it's a day to reflect on the impact of the residential school system. It's a day for mourning. It's a day for healing for many Indigenous people here in Manitoba. But it's also a day of—to educate, and it's important to have the time and have the ability to take that time to have those conversations.

And if we want to truly stand in solidarity with survivors—excuse me—and honour the lost children, there was many—and there is continuous, to this day, and hopefully, even more so—additional Orange Shirt Day events in the communities, in the urban areas. And we need to take that as an opportunity to learn more about the residential school system, and what Orange Shirt Day truly means.

However, I mean, on the federal level, it's been recognized as a holiday, but we still have not done that here in the province. And that's why we brought forth Bill 200, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act, to be able to give people that time to have those conversations.

There was a lot of confusion, for example, this past September 30th, as to what that may entail for people having to go to work. Schools—some schools still had school; some schools didn't. Some schools took the time to have a lot of Orange Shirt Day-focused events and residential school informative sessions in their school.

But there—it's also a time to be able to truly educate. It's not simply a matter of a day off for individuals to be able to have as a non-working day. It's about education.

So, I'm wondering: Is the—minister believe that making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday would

help educate Manitobans on the history and adverse impacts of residential school, and not have the confusion of saying, I'd like to have these conversations; I'd like to be able to attend these events; I'd like to be able to show solidarity, but in fact, because I work in a certain area—whether it be provincial or federal—I, in fact, can't take that time to do that and have those conversations.

So does the minister believe that making Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday would help this process?

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, I thank the member for his comments and I appreciate everything he's saying and bringing forward, and want to reaffirm that the government of Manitoba is committed to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Manitoba. And the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is an important part of this journey and we will be honouring that day.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which is a new federal statutory holiday, was introduced through the passing of Bill C-5. It is observed on September 30th, which is also known as Orange Shirt Day. The establishment of this day was recommended in Call to Action No. 80. This is a day to recognize and reflect on the tragedies in the history of the ongoing legacy of residential schools, honour their survivors and remember the children who did not return home.

The Manitoba public service recognized the federal statutory holiday through the closure of non-essential government services and offices for the day. This provided the public servants with the opportunity to recognize the history and impacts of residential schools. And the flags were lowered to half-mast on all provincial government buildings, and the Manitoba Legislative Building was lit in orange.

So, September 30th also—is also classified as a non-instructional day under The Public Schools Act. Schools were closed and no classes were held. Teachers were required to spend the day at school learning about truth and reconciliation. The day applies to federal workers and those in federally regulated employers, for example, banks and federal public service, air transport, radio, television.

* (16:20)

But the federal government does not have the authority to implement statutory holidays within provincial regulated industries. So, employers who are subject to collective agreements that guarantee the federal statutory holidays will be adopted regardless

of any provincial action are also required to observe the holiday. Such employers include the four Manitoba public service Crown corporations, health-care agencies, post-secondary institutions and school divisions.

Other employers in Manitoba choose to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in ways tailored to their environments. Numerous businesses adopted or opted to close in observance of the day, while others donated proceeds from the day's sales to various funds to support residential school survivors.

I want to let the member know that the—Minister Helwer and myself have been actively engaging with MKO. I—we've had conversations with every group, and lately, we've been meeting with—we've met with MKO, treaty relations; we've met with SCO, with the Sioux Valley; we've met with 'survivage'—survivors and 'knowlerdge' keepers at Wa-Say Healing Centre to get their perspective. We did have a meeting with MKO and AMC set up; however, it had to be re-booked. But we continue to engage with all Indigenous leadership with this.

It appears that, in Manitoba, legislation would need to change for this. So, with our ongoing engagement, this is not an easy process and it's important to make sure we commemorate, memorialize and have the day as an education day. We are focused on this and we are focused on getting it right.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister, and a friendly reminder to all participating that we must refer to ministers by their portfolio or constituency, or other members by their portfolio—or, I guess, members don't have a portfolio—by their constituency, not their last name.

Mr. Bushie: I absolutely agree. Manitoba legislation has to change and that's exactly why I brought forth Bill 200, to be able to change that legislation and make that a statutory holiday.

And it's a little disheartening that the Minister for Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations still refers Indigenous issue here in Manitoba to the federal government. And it's a very kind of convenient toss back and forth to be able to say that, well, those are federal issues and the federal—the feds will do this, the federal government will do that for Indigenous communities and Indigenous leadership. But at the same time, there is a provincial responsibility and a provincial duty to be able to carry that forth, also.

And, in terms of the legislation—and the minister himself, just in the description of the complexities, just made it all that much more confusing as to why this legislation, Orange Shirt Day statutory holiday, needs to, in fact, be in place here: so there is no confusion; so it can be a recognized day, not just from the federal perspective but also from the provincial perspective.

And the minister had talked about speaking to leadership, communities, and I fail to see how any member of leadership, communities that the minister has talked to—I highly doubt any person in that whole realm of discussions ever said, do not make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday.

So, I'm sure the minister is hearing time and time again in those discussions the need for—to, in fact, make this a statutory holiday here in the province, not just from the federal perspective.

So I think I want to just be very blunt with my question: does the minister support Orange Shirt Day being a statutory holiday here in Manitoba?

Mr. Lagimodiere: So it certainly was not my intent to imply that recognition, the Orange Shirt Day, or September 30th is a federal responsibility. Issues and concerns were brought up by leadership and communities, and during our discussions for how to best commemorate this day and recognize the importance of the day here in Manitoba. Concerns were raised over noting the day as a statutory holiday, and I think I have talked to the member opposite about this before. Statutory holidays traditionally in Manitoba have implied that this is a day off, and that's certainly not what we want to happen here. We want it to be a day to memorialize, a day to commemorate, a day to educate Manitobans on the—you know, what Orange Shirt Day mean and what September 30th means.

So with that, you know, issues around and brought up by a leadership—issues around their concerns about what should remain open, what should stay closed and the Indigenous leadership has invited further conversation on these matters, which we have agreed to.

So with that, last year the government of Manitoba provided a total of \$294,000 to groups and organizations such as Anish Corporation, Wa-Say Healing Centre, Keewatin Tribal Council, which I attended their ceremony last year.

* (16:30)

And for the member opposite's information, the chiefs and I that were at the event were concerned because a lot of effort was put into this event and we noticed that there were not very many non-Indigenous individuals who attended the event. So when I reached out to individuals following the event to ask—individuals from the community that I knew, as to why they never attended, they were of the belief that this was a sacred day just for Indigenous people and they didn't feel that they would have been welcome, which is the exact opposite of the intent of—on September 30th.

So other areas that we helped with funding were the southeast resource development council, and Fox Lake, a Mamaway, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and the Manitoba Museum.

And I look forward to working more collaboratively again with our grand chiefs and our First Nation leaders on the plans to recognize the importance of this day again here in Manitoba and work together in, like I said, getting the legislation right when we do bring it in.

Thank you.

Mr. Bushie: Again, the minister has just proven the point as to why this needs to be made a statutory holiday, so these kind of discussions can happen in a meaningful way and there's no confusion.

And, perhaps, I would beg, one of the reasons why the only—in the minister's words—really the majority of people that attended events were, in fact, only Indigenous people—is not a matter of people felt they couldn't necessarily attend. There was also a lot of confusion and miseducation as to why they could attend. And also, the fact of the matter is there are people that perhaps couldn't attend because they had to go to work because this, in fact, wasn't a statutory holiday.

In December, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) stated that her government will consult with business and Indigenous leaders before deciding whether in fact Orange Shirt Day becomes a provincial statutory holiday. And last October in Estimates the minister claimed that they had started engagement, quote, a while ago.

Can the minister explain when these consultations began and when he expects this consultation will be completed on this matter?

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, with respect to when did consultations begin, I believe that, you know, following

the introduction of Bill C-5 that conversations were started. But with myself, it wasn't 'til after my appointment in July that I was actively involved in informal discussion. And the more formal discussions around how to best commemorate September 30th for me started late in the last fiscal portion of the year and early on this year.

And more formally, the active engagements, the meetings we've actually been having, have been over the last month or two. These are the meetings either through Zoom or in-person meetings. Prior to that, a lot of them were by phone call as to how should we proceed, what do you see as the importance of the day, who should be involved in the discussions.

So one thing that I will say is that the labour groups were very strongly in favour and very supportive of having an official recognition of September 30th. It's—it fell back on us in our discussions, as I had said, that there were other issues that were brought forward that we thought that we needed to spend a little more time to get it right before we bring it in.

With respect to the day, I will leave it up to the member from Brandon West to provide more clarity and detail with respect to the date and the legislation.

Mr. Bushie: Okay. It's rather unfortunate that the minister responsible is referring me to another member who's, in fact, not a minister in the House to be able to go and seek information from.

But I will point out that, in fact, that the minister is, in every response so far on the issue of the Orange Shirt Day statutory holiday and making it such, has actually proven the point as to why it's necessary and why it's necessary today—not to wait and not to wait, perhaps, to use it as a campaign issue later down the line.

But I'll move on, maybe, to another line of question here, and in April, the Auditor General, the AG, released a scathing—and I will use the word scathing—report into this government's lack of action on its legislated—and again, legislated—responsibilities towards reconciliation. The AG found that in the five years since The Path to Reconciliation Act was passed, no reconciliation strategy was developed, even though it was mandated by law.

Can the minister explain why they haven't developed a strategy so far, as it's required by law?

Mr. Lagimodiere: I want to start by addressing a comment made by the member opposite that the

member from Brandon West is not a minister. Unless he knows something that I don't know, he is a minister in our government. So, just to clarify that point on the record for the member.

* (16:40)

I also want to state that the member opposite knows that reconciliation is the responsibility of all Manitobans. I've said this over and over in the House again. And, as a government, we could've told everyone what the reconciliation strategy would be.

However, this would have been a unilateral approach and not consistent with the spirit of reconciliation. The OAG report itself states the strategy needs to foster the involvement of all sectors of society in the reconciliation process. So, in doing so, we are actioning the recommendations of the OAG report of section 2, and I look forward to continuing our work with all Manitobans, First Nations, the Inuit, the Métis and members opposite to develop a made-in-Manitoba reconciliation strategy.

I would like to thank the office of the Auditor General for its review of Manitoba's 'implementation'-implementation of The Path to Reconciliation Act. The recommendations offer an opportunity to renew our focus on working with Indigenous leadership, communities, residential school survivors, elders and knowledge keepers and all Manitobans as we seek to advance truth and reconciliation. I think it's important for the member opposite to realize or to acknowledge that the Auditor General's report is a picture of a specific point in time and that many of the items that were noted in the Auditor General's report were already actioned by the previous minister, and I also want to acknowledge that our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has given us specific direction in actioning these items and moving them forward. In the coming days and weeks I said we would examine the Auditor General's report in depth, and I look forward to continuing to work with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit leadership and communities across the province.

So when we—we're taking the steps to work in collaboration with Indigenous leadership and communities to ensure that we are being guided by the priorities of Indigenous peoples across the province. Now we want to hear the public's perspective as well and how best to advance truth and reconciliation, and we will continue to meet with First Nations, Métis and Inuit representatives to confirm the timing and approach of this. Alongside these conversations, we will continue our efforts to 'advance' reconciliation, using

the Call to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the calls to justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as our guide.

Thank you.

Mr. Bushie: I apologize to the member from Brandon West for oversighting that error earlier on. But the point of that comment was that, in fact, the lead minister on this file should've, in fact, had these answers in front of him.

And the minister alluded to kind of the AG report being a—almost like a snapshot in time, like it was a matter of a day or a week or a month. It was actually over a five-year period to develop this strategy. So it's not like it was just something that was—that just happened yesterday or was overlooked over the course of the last month or so or even the last year, for that matter, as in fact, done over the five years or not done over the five years, I should say.

So the minister talked about having these discussions in place and development of a strategy that's developed over a period of time and a period of discussions. But can the minister provide us with a timeline for when that strategy will be developed, implemented and, in fact, shared with all of us?

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, as I said, the member opposite needs to understand that the OAG as presented is dated, and it's a historical review of a point in time. And now that is not to say it's not important; it is to show us where we were at a specific point in time.

And having said that, I think it's also important to note that many important areas glossed over in the report were already actioned even before the ink was dry on the report.

And second, I would like the member opposite to acknowledge that reconciliation cannot be summed up as a box to be checked off. Reconciliation is an on-going process of established—establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Manitoba in order to do a number of things: build trust to affirm historical agreements, to address healing and to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

So, with that, I'd just like to put on the record that with respect to the recommendations, with respect to recommendation 3, we recommended that the Civil Service Commission work with the department to use

the learnings from recommendation 2 to develop a mandatory course on how to show regard for the four principles of reconciliation.

With respect to recommendation 4, we recommended that the Civil Service Commission make training on the history of Indigenous peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous and Aboriginal Crown relations, mandatory for all public servants.

And I'd also like to put on the record that once I was made Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations for the Province, we did hold a blanket ceremony for MLAs, where all MLAs in the government were invited to attend, to learn of the blanket ceremony and the impacts of colonialism in Manitoba.

* (16:50)

I would like to put on the record that this was very, very well attended by members from our side of the House and, unfortunately, no matter how many invites we sent out we were unable to get buy-in from any members from the opposite side, which was fairly disappointing for me.

We have also been in contact as a government with the circles of healing group. I also attended a one-day event with many civil servants on the spirit and intent of treaties in Manitoba.

So a lot has been going on even before we saw this report.

Mr. Bushie: Initially, I do have to comment that it's very disrespectful of the minister to call out why members opposite or, in particular, Indigenous members opposite, did not want to attend or the reason or having to explain the reasons why we didn't want to attend the ceremony put on by the minister. That is absolutely disrespectful and very disgusting of the minister to put that, and to, in fact, make a point of putting that on the record, which is very shameful to be able to do that and do that in terms of trying to make even just the ceremony itself partisan in that way. And that's just shameful to do that. And we would not do that.

While the invite would—if for myself, for example, if we were involved in ceremony and that invitation went out and the minister or members opposite choose to decline, then that's their prerogative to be able to do that and not be able to be called out or attempted in shaming that ability.

As Indigenous people, culture is—culture and ceremony is very important, and it's very important to the individual. It can't be painted on just, you know, here's a ceremony. And it's interesting the minister talked about checking a box, which, in fact, that's almost what he seemed like he was doing there by checking a box, saying, I held a ceremony and you didn't attend, shame on you. That's shameful on the minister to be able to bring forth that in that way and to be able to call that out in that way.

As an Indigenous person myself, the reasons why I may or may not attend ceremony are entirely mine and entirely me and my family and my community's. And it's nobody else's concern or place to judge why I may or may not attend. So that is just shameful on the behalf of that minister to bring it forth in that way and to actually make a point of putting that on the record to be able to say that.

So I will get into my question. In last year's Estimates, the minister claimed that his department was developing a First Nations consultation policy. Can the minister tell us if this policy was developed and what it is?

Mr. Lagimodiere: So, under section 35 of the Constitution Act, the government has a legal obligation to consult with Indigenous communities whenever a government decision or action may infringe upon or adversely affect the exercise of Aboriginal or treaty rights.

The 2009 interim provincial policy guides Crown-Indigenous consultation in Manitoba. The interim policy requires an update to reflect recent court cases, and provide clearer direction for government staff and clarify the role of proponents to engage with Indigenous communities and participate in consultation.

So, between 2017 and 2018, IRNR engaged with Indigenous organizations as well as proponents and industry representatives to guide the development of the first draft of the framework. Government departments, including Manitoba Justice, reviewed the draft and provided feedback. IRNR also made further amendments to the framework based on external legal review.

And under Manitoba's 100-Day Action Plan of 2019, IRNR conducted further engagements on the draft framework with specific Indigenous communities and key proponents. Now, some of the feedback received was included in the most recent draft of the framework.

And I want to say that in March of 2022, this year, I sent a letter to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and to each of the 63 First Nations, accompanied by the most recent draft of the framework, inviting feedback on the framework and proposals from First Nations to work together on a renewed approach to the Crown's duty to consult.

The department is working to incorporate feedback, and we invite further discussions prior to finalizing the policy.

Mr. Bushie: Could the minister provide us with the list of the key proponents he's speaking of, as well as the Indigenous communities and stakeholders that were involved in this process?

Mr. Lagimodiere: We can provide a copy of the letter that was sent out, and to reassure the member that it was sent to all 63 First Nations.

Mr. Bushie: So, I'm a little unclear then, what is the date that the minister expects to have this consultation policy finalized?

Mr. Chairperson: The time being 5 p.m., I'm interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Call in the Speaker. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker—*[interjection]*—no; committee don't rise. We're recessed; nobody rise.

The time being 5 p.m., I'm interrupting proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow at 10 a.m.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is—oh, we have to wait for staff to leave—my apologies.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

Have a nice evening, everybody.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2022

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>