

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

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authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Oh, the honourable member for Assiniboia.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a matter of privilege.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): The debate that goes on—this place is critical to free dialogue. Yesterday I received a letter from a western Canadian law firm by the name of Aikins. They have said some very troubling things in their correspondence to me.

First, it is a blatant attempt of intimidation. Trying to intimidate a MLA because of the discussion or debate in this Chamber is absolutely against everything this place stands for.

Madam Speaker, the issue revolves around the conflict-of-interest legislation that I introduced just before Victoria Day long weekend. The letter from Aikins makes all sorts of 'inndoendo' and suggestions that I and, as far as I know, no one in this place made during the debate. In their correspondence to me, and please, wait for it because it is unbelievable—can I see that one on top there—they have suggested that that debate that we had just two weeks—next letter—ago was deeply concerning to them.

The—referred to two tweets that were made under my name while I was in the Chamber.

Good conflict-of-interest legislation protects the public interest and elected representatives from innuendo and other suggestions of impropriety. We don't have updated legislation in Manitoba. It falls short. The commissioner's report agrees that the legislation needs to be changed.

That's the first tweet.

The second tweet is: Strange that Delta 9 stock price went up from 20 cents in October '17 to \$3.20. That is over 1,000 per cent increase in the stock price overnight. Those in the know could have made a fortune. I guess we'll never know. All we do know is that proper conflict-of-interest legislation is overdue.

So these tweets have provoked a response—can I see the letter of response—that is over the top. But it makes these points. It says that these tweets and our debate somehow suggest that it's—that Delta 9 and its shareholders are engaged in insider trading or other 'improply' financial gains. The statement goes on that their reputation has been impinged upon. It goes on to say that unless these tweets and my comments are retracted, that they are going to—well, it goes on, they're going to do all sorts of terrible things to me personally.

But the point is, and you'll see it in my letter, not only is it a form of intimidation, they mischaracterized the tweet, but also the debate. They missed the point. Their legal representatives missed the point.

Why—why—Madam Speaker, I have a motion. But before I get to that I would just like to say, my reply to these intimidating letters—and there wasn't just one, there were two since that time—is I am sending a letter to the Ontario Securities Commission, the Manitoba Securities Commission and any other jurisdiction where Delta 9 stock has been traded.

I am not suggesting that Delta 9 has done anything wrong. In fact, they could be a great success story. But Delta 9 does not have control of who buys and sells their shares. Though Aikins claims to represent this—the shareholders, how do they even know who the shareholders are? And I would suspect that the shareholders would be very interested to know if what Aikins, this large law firm, has suggested is true. Is it true?

* (13:40)

The law firm representing Delta 9 has, in effect, implicated Delta 9 in activities they probably have no involvement in. But it's their lawyers. That's why it's going to the Securities Commission.

Madam Speaker, I am going to table the letters, the stock price, all the other relevant information.

My motion, seconded by the member from The Maples, is that the Speaker utilize her full powers under the Manitoba legislative act and The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act, specifically sections: 1(2) registered common-law relationships; 2(1) 'subsidiary'—subsidiary corporations; control, section 2(2); section 2(3); section 3(1) indirect pecuniary interests—so this includes not only MLAs, but their spouses and their dependents—section 3(2); section 3(4) indirect benefit; 3(6) and 3(8) and 4(1) of the Manitoba legislative act.

I would also ask the Speaker to pass on the material to any other appropriate bodies and to ensure that the rights of MLAs and their ability to speak in this place is preserved as per the Manitoba Legislature act.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your time on this serious issue.

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.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I do just want to take this moment to acknowledge the member from Assiniboia's matter of privilege, and just to say that, obviously, on this side of the House we take very seriously any attempt to intimidate or bully a member of this House. We take it very seriously, either by way of heckling or physical proximity to another MLA or aggressive mannerisms or via social media and, certainly, as the member has brought up today, by legal means.

And so I would—we look forward to your rendering, Madam Speaker, and I would suggest to you that this is a prima facie case. Miigwech.

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.

Madam Speaker: Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sustainable Development, 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 her statement.

Pride Winnipeg Festival

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the—that Pride week is here in Winnipeg and to recognize the activities associated with the accompanying festival that began last week.

There was a flag raising at the University of Winnipeg and it will continue for the rest of the week with a variety of cultural events celebrating the LGBTTTQ* community here in Manitoba. As always, the festival will conclude with the colourful and spirited Pride rally and parade this Sunday, starting right here on the steps of the Legislature, and I look forward to seeing many of my colleagues at that event.

The Pride Winnipeg Festival is part of a global movement where festivities will occur throughout the summer in various cities across the world. One of the focuses for this year's Pride Winnipeg festival is My First Pride. Attending one's first pride can be a significant milestone and being a part of such a positive and supportive community can have lasting effects on anyone struggling with their sexual identity.

Pride is about sharing experiences, celebrating diversity and bridging the gap between first-time Pride attendees and those who have paved the road for them.

Some of the original Pride attendees began this movement years ago, more as a means to speak out about human rights violations, and while it is important to note that the struggle for human rights for the LGBTTTQ community here in Winnipeg has come a long way, there are many communities

around the world where the community is not as fortunate. We must press on in respecting and promoting human rights for all.

I encourage all Manitobans to be part of the Pride Winnipeg festival by joining the march, the rally and parade at the Legislature, taking part in the Pride Festival at The Forks, or joining one of the many community events happening all week to celebrate Pride across Winnipeg.

Let's help make this Pride one to remember.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and happy Pride.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Last Friday marked the beginning of the thirty 'frith'-31st annual Winnipeg Pride Festival, helping to create awareness of the progress needed and celebrate the LBGT2SQ+ community victories and diversities.

Yesterday, the member of St. Johns and I attended the lesbian lube wrestling at Club 200, where all the proceeds were donated to Nine Circles Community Health Centre, a centre that helps provide-prides themselves on providing social support, primary care, education and preventative-prevention services for and in the LBGT2QS+ community.

For the second year, the festival will hold a two-spirited powwow, which many members of our NDP caucus are proud to be attending on Saturday at The Forks. This event welcomes indigenous and non-indigenous people that identify within the community to express themselves through dance in a shared circle.

By working towards a more inclusive and supportive Manitoba, we work towards ending stigmatism and discrimination towards LBGTQ2S+ people. Our team has worked to ensure a more inclusive Manitoba by extending full marriage and adoption rights to same-sex parents, prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and making it easier for transgendered people to change their government-issued IDs.

Though the-though these are all examples of progression, the LBGTQ2S+ community, particularly non-identifying individuals, continue to face systemic oppression which it comes to their right to self-identify.

Our Bill 226, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, would provide a gender-neutral option for

government-issued ID. We hope this government respects individuals' freedom to self-identify and can see this bill as an important step towards rectifying.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker, and I thank you for this opportunity to uplift our LBGTQ community.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, Winnipeg's Pride celebration, which officially kicked off in Winnipeg last Friday with a flag-raising ceremony at the University of Winnipeg, is one of many that will take place across the province this summer, including in Portage, Brandon, Flin Flon and Steinbach.

I'd like to recognize this year's Pride Parade grand marshal, Brielle Beardy-Linklater. She's a 24-year-old two-spirited transgender queer woman from the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. She's a fighter at heart who follows her traditional knowledge and practices.

In a recent media interview she has said, and I quote: I know there's a crisis on First Nations communities with two-spirited LBGTQ kids, in part because they don't know their identity, and what I'm trying to do is to help bridge that gap. End of quote.

Pride week is a time that we must all stand together against discrimination, racism and intolerance. All of these work against our hopes of an accepting and diverse society.

* (13:50)

I urge other MLAs to make every effort to attend Pride events in their communities.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to end my statement with a final quote from Brielle: When I speak, I tell it like it is and I say truth to power.

Miigwech, thank you, merci.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Music Month in Manitoba Schools

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you, Madam Speaker and honoured members of the Manitoba Legislature. It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to invite all Manitobans to celebrate this month as Music Month in Manitoba.

Celebrating Music in Manitoba Schools month provides us with the opportunity to produce four concerts each May in the Legislative building to showcase the musical skills and accomplishments of school groups and their musical educators from across Manitoba to celebrate the importance of music education in our schools.

Today's Music Month concert also featured two schools from my home community of Portage la Prairie, and I was honoured to introduce them earlier today.

We all know that many benefits of music—the sorry, we all know the many benefits of music as a powerful form of personal, social and cultural expression and identity. Throughout history, the arts have played a significant role in human life, transmitting culture across time and place.

Through music, students of all ages can explore unique and powerful ways of knowing themselves and the world around them. In today's society and contemporary schools, students need multiple ways of making and communicating meaning. Through music, students can express themselves in creative and compelling ways that are exclusive to the arts.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba has a reputation for hamming—having some of the finest public music education in Canada. This government values music educators in Manitoba who contribute to the success of our quality music education, so I am pleased to invite all of us to take this opportunity to extend appreciation to those involved in this year's Music Month concert series and the music education in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, our government recognizes that music education is part of a strong, quality education system in this province. A wealth of 'research'—research points to the benefits of music education for all learning and for student engagement, well-being, creativity, collaboration, discipline, success in schools and in life.

These benefits are important for our young people now and in the future of our province. That is

why we supported arts and music education initiatives to enrich the lives of all our students and to support their successful learning.

Madam Speaker, some highlights include: we have supported a complete recent renewal of all kindergarten-to-grade-12 music, dance, dramatic arts and visual arts curriculum frameworks, we support ongoing kindergarten-to-grade-12 arts education implementation and are currently working on projects to design grades 9-to-12 courses in music and arts education.

We also, of course, collaborate with Manitoba Music Educators' Association to ensure music education implementation and to produce various Music Month projects.

We support music education through collaboration between schools and local community and local community artists who develop creative student music projects through all regions of Manitoba with an annual \$10,000 Music Month grant.

We support the much loved Music Month concert series held each May in the Manitoba Legislature that we've all been enjoying, and by the end of this season, we will have had close to 10,000 students from across Manitoba share their music-making with us on the steps of the Legislative Building grand staircase.

These are just some of the highlights of how our government and our staff in Manitoba Education and Training are working in partnership with educators and education stakeholders to support quality education in Manitoba. I encourage all Manitobans to take this opportunity to thank our students and teachers contributing to their personal, social and cultural creativity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I am going to take us out of sync just a little bit because we have a group of students in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you, and they are going to be leaving the gallery in just a couple of minutes, so I would like them to have the opportunity to be recognized.

We have seated in the public gallery from Woodlawn School 55 grade 4 students under the direction of Wendy Buhler and Jerilyn Koslowsky, and this group is located in the constituency of the

honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen).

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

* * *

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the minister for his statement in appreciation for Music Month.

As I previously stated when I did my member's statement on Music Month earlier this month, Plato once said that music, quote, is a more potent instrument than any other for education, end quote.

We would find many teachers would agree with Plato. Recent research has found that music uses both sides of the brain, a fact that makes it valuable in all areas of development. Music affects the growth of a child's brain academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

We on this side of the House believe music education helps students create meaningful relationships with others. Music education has the potential to build a sense of community within a school as well as create connections in the wider community. We believe that collaborations among music educators and between educators, parents, music industry, educational leaders and other stakeholders are fundamental to the future advancement of music education initiatives.

Second graders who were given music lessons scored 20 per cent higher on proportional math and fractions tests than children who received no special instruction. Research indicates that musical training permanently wires a young mind for enhanced performance. These are among the many reasons why we believe the government should be investing in music education at our schools. Instead, this government has backed out on plans to fund a music room expansion at Gimli High School, and last year the Premier (Mr. Pallister) forced Sturgeon Heights Collegiate to cut a music teacher and two band programs.

We believe music education should be available to all students in our public schools.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: First and foremost, happy Music Month, everyone. It's great to rise today and brag about all the children who have come down to our Legislature to perform and share their talents every single Wednesday this month. I know we have all heard their beautiful voices echoing through the halls.

Madam Speaker, music and the arts bring our communities together, and they play an essential role here in our province. Economically, as one of the fastest growing sectors, it is not surprising that almost 70 per cent of Manitobans have attended a performing arts event or a cultural festival. This includes everything from the children performing here at the Legislative Building to Folk Festival to local bands playing at our local venues.

Madam Speaker, this is telling and exciting, but most importantly, we need to do our part as elected officials by supporting our arts organizations, our music and art teachers and those who contribute to Manitoba's rich legacy of music.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and in the words of Stevie Wonder, music is a world within itself with a language we all understand, with an equal opportunity.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Wildfire Update

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): The safety and security of all Manitobans is a top priority of our government. As such, I wish to provide the Manitoba Legislature with an update on the current wildfire fighting activities in the province of Manitoba.

I will start today by expressing our thanks to all of those who have been involved in managing the fires and ensuring that all Manitobans at risk have been protected from these fires and their consequences. The management of the wildfire situation in our province is an example of the great

things that can be accomplished when everyone works together. As all members will know, this effort has been—has involved multiple levels of government as well as a wide variety of agencies and volunteers.

Manitoba Sustainable Development Wildfire Program has provided us with the following update: total fires to date: 200; average for this day: 117. Precipitation is expected to continue this week. Wildfire response and suppression activities are continuing by firefighters and water bombers who are dealing with new fires that were either lit by lightning or human-caused fires across the province.

* (14:00)

Indigenous Services Canada has engaged the Canadian Red Cross to manage evacuations from the following communities.

In Little Grand Rapids First Nation, no serious issues have been reported. CRC is working with stakeholders in the City of Winnipeg to ensure continuity of health care, provision of social services and evacuation supports for evacuees. Manitoba Hydro has reported significant fire damage to the hydro line into the community. Damage assessments will continue once it's safe to do so.

Pauingassi First Nation, Madam Speaker, there has been an increased fire behaviour observed on parts of the fire yesterday afternoon. Manitoba Sustainable Development and the Office of the Fire Commissioner crews have completed work setting up sprinklers to protect homes in the community. And Bell MTS has deployed technicians to the Pauingassi First Nation and critical communications that service the region have been restored using backup power.

Sapotaweyak Cree First Nation: only emergency response personnel will remain in the community. Fire control efforts co-ordinate—are co-ordinated by the SD Wildfire Program. Manitoba Hydro reports that power has been restored to the community, and the CRC has advised that re-entry planning is underway. Currently, no dates to return to the community have been approved.

Madam Speaker, in Pelican Rapids, 49 people were evacuated by INR due to fires near the community, and evacuees have been sent to Dauphin. INR has advised that re-entry planning is underway. Currently, no dates to return to the community have been approved.

In the RMs of Grahamdale and West Interlake, or Ashern, the fire's now under control. SD Wildfire Program suppression efforts will continue on hot spots around the fire.

In the northeast region, in Shamattawa First Nation, good progress is being made by crews on two fires in the community. Manitoba EMO will continue to monitor this ongoing situation across the province, and co-ordinate teleconferences with the agencies involved.

In closing, Madam Speaker, we wish to remind everyone to obey all fire bans and to keep your property clear of any combustible materials to reduce your risk.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): With nine new fires beginning yesterday, we continue to thank and think about the many first responders on the ground and in the air that have been braving the wildfires and ensuring the preservation of people's homes and communities.

Though Pauingassi remains threatened, many fire suppression efforts have been successful. We need to ensure that the evacuees from the affected communities can return home safely as soon as possible.

A few people have lost their homes, but many evacuees will be returning without essential services like electricity and running water unless this government ensures prompt restoration efforts.

The government, particularly the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen), need to be working closely with Manitoba Hydro to ensure power is restored so residents aren't returning in the dark.

We also hope the government will work co-operatively with Indigenous Services Canada and affected First Nations by providing support in clean-up and restoration of the communities, as well as ensuring access to services.

Our thoughts continue to be with all the communities that might affected by the fires and the evacuees from Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation, and we hope that you all can return to your homes with all services soon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for his updates on the fire situations at fires at or near the communities of Little Grand, Pauingassi, Sapotaweyak, Pelican Rapids, 'shamattakowa' and Ashern.

It—thanks are due to all those who are involved: the emergency personnel, the volunteers and the many who have come from Ontario and the additional support from water bombers from Quebec.

In this time when we are, sort of, in the beginning cleanup phase for some communities like Little Grand Rapids, it's going to be very important to be working closely with the communities. I anticipate and hope that the minister has spoken with members of the chiefs and councils of the communities, and that the co-operative effort is going to proceed well.

I have—I'm still waiting for the fire plans, which I asked the minister for, for Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Shamattawa. I hope that those can be provided soon. One would think that they would be very rapidly available when there's fire situation ongoing.

So I appreciate the minister's taking attention to that and say thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Selkirk & District Seniors Resource Council

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to bring recognition to a very special group of volunteers that are involved with Selkirk & District Seniors Resource Council.

These volunteers spend many hours assisting seniors, the disabled or those who are convalescing. They help provide community programs and services that make independent living possible. The programs are provided at the highest standards to ensure each client's needs are met with caring, compassion, understanding and confidentiality.

Our volunteers are ordinary people with extraordinary hearts who give the gift of their time to teach, to listen, to help, to inspire, to grow and to learn. They expect no pay, yet the value of their work knows no boundaries. They have both known and experienced the unexpected joy of a simple hug. They've planted tiny seeds of love in countless lives.

Volunteers are just ordinary people who reach out and take a hand and together make a difference

that lasts a lifetime. The Selkirk and district resource council's volunteers share a common purpose, which is to help others. Their motives often come from different places: the appreciation that comes from assisting others, the joy that comes from meeting new people, the satisfaction that comes from helping others or the simple joy of making someone smile.

Our current and past volunteers have had a tremendous impact on our community and its constituents. In the course of a year, these volunteers help over 2,400 individuals with the services and programs necessary for independent living.

Community programs delivered by the volunteers include: Meals on Wheels, friendly visiting, assistance with forms and resource information, Lifeline installation and driver/escort. On average, more than 1,800 volunteer hours are donated in a year.

I ask my Chamber colleagues to please rise and recognize Mr. Howard Shiels, who's not only representing the Selkirk & District Seniors Resource Council, he is also our volunteer of the year.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to include a more complete list of the Selkirk and district resource council volunteers.

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

Selkirk & District Seniors Resource Council volunteers: Ray Anderson, Joanne Boryskavich, Chad and Marlene Bosko, Ella Chenkie, Leona Christiansen, Tammy Dicks, Ann Dixon, Fran and John Domitruk, Henry Fast, Jack Froese, Dave Georget, Irene Hamm, Betty Hawrysh, Ken Henschel, Heather and Robbie Hogg, Lesly Johnson, Ade Marcotte, Devin Morin, Briauna Noble, Lynda Plunkett, Margaret Russell, Betty Schofield, Howard Shiels, Karen Starke, Donna and Terry Tillett, Bailey Truss, Bernarditta Valenzuela, Diane Van Wart

Graffiti Art Programming

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I rise today to pay tribute to Graffiti Art Programming, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

Graffiti Art Programming, also known as GAP, is a not-for-profit organization serving youth in the inner city and surrounding areas. It is headquartered in Winnipeg's historic Point Douglas neighbourhood

and has six additional sites throughout the North End and downtown area.

GAP is dedicated to supporting creative endeavours among young people by providing free after-school art classes and programs that encourage self-esteem, community engagement and practical skill development.

Founded in 1998, Graffiti Art Programming began out of a need to address issues surrounding the graffiti problem in Winnipeg. GAP invited youth to give up graffiti in exchange for supplies to create their graffiti style on canvas and a chance to exhibit their work in the Graffiti Gallery.

Graffiti Gallery is a devoted gallery space operated by GAP, free to the public and committed to showcasing young emerging artists and those working outside institutional expectations. In its 20 years, the gallery has shown the work of over 700 artists and performers.

Recently, Graffiti Gallery became a co-producer of the Wall-to-Wall Mural Festival, which sees multiple public art works created every year with the goal of increasing foot traffic and development in Winnipeg's inner city.

Over the years, Graffiti Art Programming has begun to offer more visual art workshops alongside music and dance to accommodate the growing number of youth wanting access to after-school arts programming. Currently, the organization provides over 2,000 hours of free art workshops and mentorship to over 4,000 youth every year.

* (14:10)

Today in the gallery we have Stephen Wilson and Pat Lazo, co-founders of GAP and constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview.

On behalf of all members, I want to thank Stephen and Pat for their vision and everyone at GAP for their dedication and contribution to our communities. Stephen and Pat, congratulations on your 20th anniversary.

Karen Wiebe

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): It is with great pride that I rise today to acknowledge Ms. Karen Wiebe. Karen and her late husband Floyd are the founders of TJ's Gift Foundation in honour of their son Tyler [*phonetic*], who died on January 5th, 2003. TJ had planned on being an

underwater welder but sadly never got to see his dream become a reality.

TJ's Gift Foundation was created so TJ's story can be shared and so that youth can learn about the many dangers of drug use. TJ's Gift gala started in 2006 to support local schools and incorporated in 2009 to support schools across Manitoba. I have had the pleasure of attending TJ's gala over the last few years.

Madam Speaker, the Wiebe family have worked tirelessly to promote drug awareness through various school projects, leadership workshops, concerts and resources for educators.

Karen Wiebe is also the executive director of MOVA, Manitoba organization of victim assistance. MOVA offers support to family survivors of homicide victims. Over the weekend, MOVA held a march from The Forks to the Legislature grounds in support of families. Shrubs were planted at the Legislature to honour those family members who were taken too soon.

Karen's long-time commitment to helping families and youth and increasing public awareness about victims' rights makes her a Manitoban worth celebrating. Thank you, Karen, for your compassion, strength and dedication to the community.

I ask my colleagues to rise and honour Ms. Karen Wiebe.

Dr. Roberta Bondar

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Today, I would like to recognize the work of Roberta Bondar. Not only is Roberta a brilliant neurologist and the astronaut who was the first Canadian woman to fly in space, but she is also a hero to my granddaughter, Scarlett, as well as many other young girls throughout our country aspiring to do great things.

Throughout her career, Dr. Bondar headed an international research team that helped forge new connections between astronauts recovering from the microgravity of space and studied many neurological illnesses right here on Earth. She expanded the horizons for Canadian women and girls when she joined the Space Shuttle Discovery for its 1992 mission and is the co-founder of The Roberta Bondar Foundation, which is dedicated to helping people reconnect with their natural environment.

This summer, Roberta will be speaking at the 73rd annual Midwestern legislators' conference here in Winnipeg on the subject of The Art of Leading

Through Continuous Change. It will be a great opportunity for Manitobans to learn from her incredible research and experience.

On behalf of all Canadians, I want to thank Roberta for her hard work as a pioneer, a trailblazer and an example to all Canadians. She is an inspiration to many girls such as my granddaughter Scarlett, who has learned from Roberta that there are no limits to what young girls can achieve and who are empowered to fill the space that she has created.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Youth in Philanthropy Program

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Teaching the rewards of giving back at a young age is the goal of a program available under the auspices of the Thomas Sill Foundation.

Students at three schools in the Park West School Division—Birtle, Hamiota and Shoal Lake—participated in the Youth in Philanthropy program for the first time this school year.

The three-year program involves funds from the Thomas Sill Foundation being transferred to a local foundation who then work with students at the school to decide which community project should be supported.

Designed to give high school students first-hand experience in philanthropy and community development, the program did exactly that.

Teacher Candace David said five grade 9 students at the Shoal Lake School quickly embraced the concept, were briefed by a representative from the Thomas Sill Foundation and then worked with a local foundation member over the year.

Students created an application form, distributed it to groups in the community and then reviewed the applications to decide how the \$2,500 in funds should be dispersed. The program helped the students develop critical thinking skills and required them to evaluate applications and to prioritize community needs.

The Shoal Lake emergency response team, garden club, school snack program and the Prairie Mountain Regional Museum were the successful groups who received funding, and all were recognized at a recent celebration evening, also organized by the students.

Madam Speaker, today I want to salute the students, teaching staff, local foundation members

and the Thomas Sill Foundation for helping to create an awareness among our young people in the power of giving back to our communities.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the names of participants in Youth in Philanthropy in Shoal Lake included in Hansard.

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

Youth in Philanthropy participants. Students: Alex David, Alyssa Manuliak, Carley Purdy, Sierra Smith, Megan St. Amand. Candace David, teacher. Deb Wowryk, foundation member.

Introduction of Guests

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

In the public gallery we have with us some of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba pages who will be joining us this fall and they began their orientation today, and we welcome them here to the Manitoba Legislature.

We did have some other students who were here earlier, but they had to leave. They were in the public gallery from Yellowquill School and Portage Collegiate Institute. We had 38 grade 8-to-12 students under the direction of James Reynolds and Teph Clink, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart).

And also in the loge to my right we have former MLA Mavis Tallieas-Taillieu who represented Morris and former MLA Bonnie Mitchelson who represented River East.

We welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Speaker: And as per our saying goodbye to our pages, we have one more that is going to be leaving us after today.

Gabby Lawrence is graduating from Kelvin High School this year as an international baccalaureate student.

In the fall she will be enrolled in the senior professional program of School of Contemporary Dancers at the University of Winnipeg, pursuing a

bachelor of arts honours degree with a major in dance.

Throughout high school, when she wasn't taking dance classes, Gabby undertook a large leadership role in organizing Kelvin's holiday breakfast. This event hosts an entire inner-city elementary school each year for a festive celebration.

This year she was also a member of Kelvin's mentorship program which works to help grade 9 students with their transition into high school.

Gabby has greatly enjoyed the opportunity to be part of the page program this year. She has valued being able to absorb the different perspectives of each party and has been impressed by the hard work put in by all members. She will carry the things she's learned at the Legislative Assembly with her for the rest of her life and will seek opportunity to be continually involved in Canadian politics in the future.

On behalf of all of us, Gabby, we wish you the very best in your future.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ERs and EMS Stations Request to Stop Closures

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So we know that the government is moving full speed ahead with their plan to close emergency rooms and EMS stations right across the province, and we also know that they don't want to debate these health-care changes here in the Chamber; that's why they're waiting right to the end of this setting-session before releasing phase 2 of their plan for closures.

Now, instead of modernizing health care with a focus on prevention, we know that this Premier wants to go back to the future with the same sort of cuts that Filmon brought in—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in the 1990s.

* (14:20)

The people of Seven Oaks, Concordia, the Interlake and many other areas in Manitoba are asking for this government to put these plans on hold and to back off.

Will the Premier back off his plans to close emergency rooms and EMS stations?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, you know, while the NDP had a chance to modernize and improve the system to reduce the number of wasteful bargaining units, for example, other provinces were moving ahead. But they chose not to act. When other provinces were moving ahead to concentrate their resources intelligently in fewer emergency rooms within major centres like Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto, the NDP just sat back and did nothing.

Madam Speaker, we realize that we've inherited a mess, but it's modern days now and it's time to close Jurassic Park.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Stop ER Closures

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, notwithstanding the summer movies that the Premier is looking forward to seeing once we're done sitting here, a lot of people in northwest Winnipeg, northeast Winnipeg, the Interlake are very concerned about the planned closures, and they know that the reason that their ERs are being closed is not to improve the care in their communities; it's because the Premier cares about the—only about the bottom line, and that's the sole reason why he's jamming through these changes without, you know, ensuring proper debate for phase 2 of this plan.

Now, for more than a year, patients and front-line workers in these areas have been telling the Premier to back off these plans. We also know that the residents—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —of northeast Winnipeg, of northwest Winnipeg, have been rallying, have been holding town halls, have been coming out and saying very clearly, do not close the emergency departments in our areas.

Now, will the Premier listen? He still has an opportunity here, when he brings forward phase 2 of his health-care closure plan.

But will that new plan, that new phase 2, include a plan for him to back off the closures of the emergency rooms in Concordia and Seven Oaks?

Madam Speaker: The honourable leader—the honourable Premier.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): And there he goes again, and it's déjà vu all over again, eerily reminiscent of what? Groundhog Day. And he's telling us to go back. He wants us to go back to a time, an old days' time when everybody waited longer than everybody else in Canada for emergency care, when everybody waited longer to get care, Madam Speaker, that wasn't a good time. And Manitoba families have communicated with every member on this side of the House and, I expect, with many on the other side, so they need to listen.

We're listening to Manitobans. We're listening to experts. We're adapting to the need to change because we have the courage to change a system that was broken. They broke it. We're fixing it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, you know, sometimes courage means having the strength to listen, and right now what people are saying to the Premier is back off the plan for cuts and back off the closures.

We know what his record is so far. Sleep apnea machines have been cut. Outpatient physiotherapy has been cut. Coverage for epilepsy, HIV, heart conditions, so many drugs covered by the special drug program, those things have all been cut.

But now we know that there are many people in northeast Winnipeg, in northwest Winnipeg, saying this phase 2 plan better not include a closure for emergency departments in our areas.

So, again, it's time for the Premier to stop his cuts.

Will he show good faith by including in his next phase 2 announcement the abandonment of his plan to close the ERs at Concordia and Seven Oaks?

Mr. Pallister: Well, thank goodness the courage of our Health Minister has resulted in a shortening of our wait times by 16 per cent year over year, Madam Speaker, and I would say also, tremendous commendation should go to all of the workers in our health-care system who want to work in a system, not that is broken, but in a system that works for the patients of Manitoba. And that's what we're working towards.

The member needs to listen not only to patients, but the people who work in the health-care system.

And if he really listens, he'll hear the sound of hope and healing and improvement. It's a great sound, Madam Speaker. It's a sound we're going to hear more of in the days ahead.

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with oral questions, I would just like to indicate to members in the gallery that there is to be no applause from members in the gallery, that the proceedings down here are proceedings of the Chamber, and we ask all members in the public to adhere to our rules of attendance in the gallery. And we appreciate everybody's co-operation with that.

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

Carbon Pricing Revenue Transition to Low-Carbon Economy

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So we heard again today that the Premier's lack of a plan for climate change action is concerning working people, the middle class, it's concerning those who want a better environment for our kids in this province.

We've also heard from companies in the transportation sector that they are pulling up stakes from Manitoba because of the misguided plan that this Premier is bringing forward. Again, in other jurisdictions, these companies will have an opportunity to grow their businesses while also being able to transition to lower carbon operations.

The same holds true for families. There is nothing in this government's plan that will help the average Manitoba family switch to a lower carbon lifestyle. Instead, we see the carbon-pricing cash grab that this Premier is bringing in and nothing that is going to help the average family or the average business owner transition.

So will the Premier take the summer months to ponder a new plan and bring forward a new carbon-pricing approach that will be revenue neutral and bring forward real supports to help families and businesses in our province?

Madam Speaker: Before we go too much further with oral questions, I would just like to urge members again—and I know I've had to do this a number of times this week—I would urge all members that while we have agreed that smart heckling is something that has been acknowledged over a lot of, you know, decades within our system, persistent heckling is not something that is allowable.

And I would ask the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) to please show the respect that we are wanting to show to all members in the House and respect the questions that are being asked and the answers that are being given.

And this pertains to everybody in the House; I'm asking for everybody's co-operation. It's important. We've got lots of guests in the gallery. And I would ask for everybody's co-operation as we move forward with the rest of oral questions.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): As the member knows, or should know, we have developed a made-in-Manitoba plan that is, frankly, much better for our economy and for our environment, but I would remind him to consider the reality of the NDP record.

There was an Auditor General's report released last October that commented on the previous administration's so-called environmental strategies, Madam Speaker, by saying—and I'm sad to have to say this, but it says right in the report: We noted that past plans were not supported by comprehensive analysis. They lacked implementation details; they lacked estimated costs. We noted that progress monitoring was weak. Without targets, adequate plans and suitable monitoring processes, the likelihood of success in reducing emissions is greatly reduced.

Madam Speaker, that was the Auditor General commenting on the lack of an NDP plan. They didn't have one. We do.

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

Mr. Kinew: The test for any carbon plan that's going to be successful should be whether every single dollar collected is returned to Manitobans either to help with the affordability challenge or to help them transition to a lower carbon lifestyle. And yet the Premier is not doing that. Instead, there is a cash grab at the heart of his carbon tax regime.

Again, independent analysis showed that nearly \$100 million from these new carbon tax revenues will sit in government coffers. Now, this was not some left-leaning organization. This was a right-wing columnist who came up with this analysis. So again, that's \$100 million that is not going to be in the pockets of the average Manitoba family.

Meanwhile, there's no program. There's no assistance for the average business owner or the average Manitoba family to transition to a lower carbon lifestyle. It's a fundamental flaw at the heart of this Premier's carbon tax plan.

Will he take the summer to revisit his plans and instead return in the fall with a new approach that will see every dollar collected returned to Manitobans to help them deal with affordability and the environment?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, Madam Speaker, I believe the member doesn't mean to do it, but he's being incredibly disrespectful to the literally thousands of Manitobans who gave input in the development of this made-in-Manitoba plan.

* (14:30)

We're talking about people all across the spectrum, not just right-wing columnists, but many, many others who care deeply about our environment, about our future and about our economy as well and who wanted a balanced plan.

And we have decided to embark on a plan based on that listening, which the previous government failed to do, which they never did. In fact, they knew in 2008 that their 2007 targets could not be reached, but they failed to change the targets for six years thereafter.

That is how insincere the previous administration was about making Manitoba the greenest of jurisdictions.

We are sincere in our efforts, Madam Speaker, and we'll pursue with diligence the goal of making Manitoba Canada's greenest jurisdiction.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier ought to listen to the very committed, intelligent, non-governmental organizations who are dismissing this carbon plan.

Again, this misguided approach that the Premier is proposing has united the Green Action Centre with the Trucking Association. They actually stand together and say that this plan won't work. Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, for example, backed up our approach to delay the carbon-tax plan.

Can you imagine the CTF backing the NDP? And I apologize to everybody that it snowed that day as a result of the Taxpayers Federation backing up our position, but at the heart of the matter is the

realization by everybody except for this Premier's Cabinet that every dollar collected with the price on carbon has to be reinvested either in helping people with the affordability challenge, or helping people transition to a lower carbon approach.

So will the Premier take this advice? Will he take the time to listen to the many organizations who are speaking out and bring back a real plan that's revenue-neutral, helps lower income folks deal with the affordability challenge, and helps the rest of Manitoba families and business owners transition to a carbon-free future?

Mr. Pallister: Well, there's your difference. Madam Speaker, two things. I mean, the member references special interests. We're not so concerned about special interests or catering to them as the NDP has always been. We're more interested in the public interest today and tomorrow, and going forward we'll have a better plan than virtually any other jurisdiction, made in Manitoba for Manitobans. So Madam Speaker, I think that continues to be the principal goal we're focussed on.

But when the member speaks about returning dollars to Manitobans' pockets, he needs to understand the sad tradition and the sad reality of the NDP. No one out there in this province believes the NDP will return anything back to them that they take from them.

The only green the NDP has ever cared about, Madam Speaker, is the green in Manitoba working families' pockets.

Safe Injection Site Recommendation Timeline for VIRGO Report Release

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, well, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health keeps denying his interference with the mental health addiction strategy report that he commissioned.

We all know that just a few weeks ago, the government released the VIRGO report which included a recommendation for safe injection sites. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Then the government released a different version without that recommendation.

I'll give the minister one more opportunity: Will he admit that he received the final report, including the recommendation for the safe injection site, at the end of March?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, my friend from Minto continues on a dangerous path of accusing a renowned expert in the area of mental health and addictions, Dr. Rush, who has worked in this area for 40 years, who's recognized from coast to coast for the work that he does.

Of course, Dr. Rush came out and said very clearly that he chose to remove that particular recommendation because it lacked evidence, Madam Speaker. Ever since then, the member for Minto has questioned the integrity of that author, thereby questioning the integrity of the report, and I think both of those are dangerous paths.

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

Mr. Swan: What's dangerous for this minister is the freedom of information documents which reveal the draft report was delivered to the minister in December and the final report was delivered at the end of March, and I table this information today.

The minister had the final report, not another draft, at the end of March. The report that contained the recommendation for safe injection sites was dated March 31, 2018. It's clear, the expert that this minister speaks about submitted his final report as required in March and then the minister decided it had to change for his own world view.

Why did this minister interfere with and alter the VIRGO report?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, again, the member opposite is questioning the integrity of Dr. Rush. Dr. Rush was here on the day of the release. He said, clearly, why he chose to remove that particular recommendation.

Of course, there were other changes in the report as well, as is a normal process when it comes to ombudsmans' reports or auditor generals' reports, Madam Speaker, when there's back and forth with department officials to validate things, to look for certain pieces of evidence.

But Dr. Rush himself said that he chose to remove that particular recommendation. I believe that he's a man of integrity. I believe he's an expert, and I stand with him and his report.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, actually, I'm questioning the integrity of this minister, because this minister's—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Swan: —this minister's own department now confirms that this minister continues to put false information on the record.

The final report from VIRGO was to be provided to the minister by March 31st—that's how the government characterized it—and that report was delivered to the minister by the expert. This minister and this government didn't like the final version, so they retroactively decided it was just a draft.

Will this minister apologize for putting false information on the record, and will he just admit he requested the change because it didn't fit his world view? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, what doesn't fit my world view is legislators, politicians taking potshots at experts. It doesn't fit my world view for someone—for the member—like the member for Minto to be beneath contempt, Madam Speaker, to say these sort of things about an expert.

And it's fine if he wants to question my integrity, as he said that he did. I've grown a thick skin over the last 15 years; I can take it. But to say that an expert, a renowned expert in addictions and mental health, Madam Speaker, was lying to the public at a press conference is absolutely ridiculous. This member is trying to find a new bottom and I think he's almost found it.

Construction of Cross Lake Health Facility Request for Provincial Commitment

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Manitoba's 10th largest community, Cross Lake, is in dire need of a medical facility. Cross Lake is one of the largest First Nations in Canada with a population bigger than The Pas, Flin Flon and Stonewall, but it doesn't have a 24-hour in-patient health care. Women in childbirth as well as patients with acute-care needs have to fly out of their own home community to get the care they need.

The 1964 agreement establishes that the Province has a role in the delivery of health care for Cross Lake.

Will the Province partner with the federal government to bring forward this important community investment?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, I have and officials from my department have had discussions with representatives from Cross Lake. We've had some discussions with the federal government on this.

We're always looking for different ways to deliver health care better not just in the North, but particularly in the North because there are specific challenges when it comes to delivering health care in the North. But it is true that we've had some challenges with sustaining a long-term partner when it comes to the federal government who also shares responsibility in this as well.

The member opposite knows the challenge that we've had in getting long-term funding support from the federal Liberal government, but that won't stop us from continuing discussions with Cross Lake and others, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Lathlin: This government is saying one thing, but doing the complete opposite.

The Throne Speech stated that access to quality care is the most important pillar in the delivery of health-care services for Manitobans, including those that live on reserve. That is a direct quote from this government's Throne Speech. It went on to say that this government will work to provide services that are needed on-reserve.

Despite the federal commitment in 2016 to a health facility in Cross Lake, the Province has not even come to the table in good faith, let alone made a commitment of any kind.

I ask the minister: Why is he ignoring access to health-care services for the people of Cross Lake?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the Throne Speech commitment was absolutely correct and is being fulfilled.

* (14:40)

We've recognized that there are challenges when it comes to providing health care in the North. That's been true for many years, Madam Speaker, certainly during the entire time that the NDP was in government. But it's one of the reasons that our government, led by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), made specific efforts that when it comes to the federal government to get additional funding for things like

chronic disease, particularly for those who have end-stage kidney disease, those who need dialysis.

That effort was made particularly on behalf of those living in the North, not just for them, but in particular for them. We had some success, but we need more success with the federal government and we'll continue that.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Today we have here with us in the gallery Ashlyn Haglund and Helga Hamilton, the health director for Cross Lake.

The federal government set aside funding for this new health facility in their 2016 budget. Cross Lake has significant health-care needs, including the recent suicide crisis that swept through the community. A 24-hour in-patient health-care facility is important for Cross Lake. Unfortunately, the Province has not even come to the table.

Why is the minister ignoring the needs of people in Cross Lake, and when will he meet with the people of Cross Lake?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I'll touch on first something that the member mentioned in her question. And certainly, suicide of young people and others is one of the most tragic things that are happening in Canada, and it is affecting every province in Canada and it is infecting many, many different communities.

We've certainly seen some individuals—we recognized one yesterday, Robb Nash—who are trying to take specific effort to prevent suicides in many different communities, Madam Speaker, but, of course, more needs to be done, and I don't think there's a Health minister in Canada that doesn't recognize that.

When it comes to the federal government's commitment, Madam Speaker, not to be overly political, but I have seen the federal government's commitment on a number of different things when it comes to health care fall like sand through one's fingers. They say something one day and it's gone the next.

Public Services Sustainability Act Request to Repeal Bill 28

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Yesterday the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Finance Minister both flippantly dismissed the legitimate challenge to

bill 28. In doing so, they were also dismissing the right of over 100,000 workers to meet and negotiate with the government and workers in general to meet and negotiate collective agreements with their employers.

Will the government step back from an expensive and unnecessary legal battle, avoid further embarrassment for themselves and just repeal bill 28?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, that member references expensive, and I'll tell that member what's expensive. What's expensive for Manitobans is a debt that doubles in the space of six years. What's expensive for Manitobans is a \$1-billion debt-service charge each and every year because of NDP over-expenditure. What's expensive is a PST that goes up by an NDP government after promising Manitobans that they would not go up.

Madam Speaker, where was that member's interest in expensive when it really counted for Manitobans?

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this government is, in fact, the definition of acting in bad faith. The government did not engage in discussion or good-faith consultation. The die was cast. There was no open mind. Workers were ready and willing to work with the government, but no; the Premier had already made up his mind. The government hasn't even proclaimed bill 28, but workers are still paying the price since employers are already operating within the dictates of bill 28.

Will the government do the right thing by Manitoba workers, repeal bill 28 and actually step up to the bargaining table and bargain in good faith?

Mr. Friesen: So, Madam Speaker, in the wake of a complete NDP spending debacle, running up deficits and breaking their word to Manitobans, we're doing the right thing, which is taking the line, the tough line of saying no new taxes, tax reductions for Manitobans, expenditure management that is better to get results, deficit reduction. And in that context, bill 28 has a place. It is reasonable. It is moderate. It respects the bargaining process.

Manitobans more and more grasp that this is a reasonable measure. As a matter of fact, one reporter

yesterday called it a very reasonable step in the context.

Madam Speaker, we say this is a reasonable way for us to get value for all Manitobans. Labour must be a part of this.

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

Mr. Lindsey: This Premier (Mr. Pallister) wouldn't admit that he was seeking a wage freeze when everyone knew that he was. He failed to protect front-line workers after he said that he would. He failed to protect front-line services. He brags about his skill as a negotiator, but tell that to the University of Manitoba.

Now he expects Manitobans to believe that bill 28 isn't unconstitutional.

Will the Premier just acknowledge what the Supreme Court has pretty much made clear already: bill 28 violates workers' rights—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —and should be repealed?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we are fixing the finances so that Manitobans will have more stability after years of NDP mismanagement of the finances. In this context, short-term wage constraints are appropriate. Negotiations and bargaining goes on, and today we understand that arguments continue to be made in the injunction brought by labour. Government is making its arguments today.

We look forward to receiving that work, we look forward to going on and we look forward to continuing to get progress for all Manitobans.

Health-Care Services Use of Agency Nurses

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, when the NDP government wanted to change health care, they hired someone from Nova Scotia. When the Pallister government wanted to change mental health in Manitoba, they hired Dr. Rush from Toronto.

One of the most consistent concerns raised with me at community after community in Manitoba is the Pallister government's practice of hiring higher

cost agency nurses—sometimes doctors, too—from elsewhere instead of supporting local nurses and building local capacity.

Why is the Minister of Health so enamoured about bringing in people from St. Elsewhere? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I didn't watch St. Elsewhere. I did watch Saint Tender, and we tender things, Madam Speaker. We put out a call across the country, it's called a tender. And we asked people to come forward and give us their best pitch about who would be best to look for a mental health and addictions strategy, and Dr. Rush won the tender.

Now, I know that the former government didn't tender for Dr. Peachey—and I won't comment on that because I appreciate the work that he did—but we actually believe in tendering, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for River Heights, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, in Grandview I was told that the Prairie Mountain Health region spent \$7.26 million last year primarily to hire nurse locums, usually agency nurses.

Yet while a local nurse knows the needs of individuals in a personal-care home, agency nurses from elsewhere on one-day or one-night shifts don't have the same personal knowledge.

Agency nurses usually get higher salaries, often get hotel expenses and usually get travel expenses to and from the community, including, I understand, a taxi from Winnipeg to Grandview.

* (14:50)

Why is the minister operating a system which spends so much money on agency nurses when training and employing locally is so possible?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, this is actually an important issue, and the issue of agency nurses is being looked at by Shared Health Manitoba, which is being chaired by Dr. Brock Wright, a Manitoban. And he is looking into the issue of the services around Manitoba and trying to ensure there were—they're not just co-ordinated, but issues where there are things like agency nurses or overtime where it doesn't have

to be expended in that way, Madam Speaker, that can be provided in a better way, a lower cost way and a more predictable way for patients.

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

Mr. Gerrard: In Portage La Prairie we heard that because agency nurses get paid more, some local nurses who work locally are also on an agency list. I was told that sometimes when a nurse who is scheduled to work locally on a given day gets a call to work elsewhere as an agency nurse, he or she may sometimes take the agency job because it pays more.

The result is her local shift becomes open and the local institution has to bring in another nurse, sometimes on overtime, perhaps even an agency nurse, to fill in the local vacancy created when a local nurse chooses an agency job.

Why is the system putting a greater priority on agency nurses than on local nurses?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member began his first preamble by making some vague reference to the problems of asking for advice, Madam Speaker. Asking advisors for advice is something that I think is a normal course of action for prudent managers, not only of their own finances but in government as well, to seek outside advice, as we have done, as the previous administration did.

They didn't listen to the advice, Madam Speaker, and we are and we're acting on it, but perhaps we would have a better country if the federal Liberal government would have listened to Canadians before it decided to cut health-care transfers to the provinces, or if it had listened to some expert before it decided to campaign and call all small-business people tax evaders and jack up small-business tax rates.

Perhaps we'd have a better country if they wouldn't have sped into the process of legalizing cannabis and trying to promote its availability without doing the necessary studies and, most importantly, Madam Speaker, without doing the necessary listening.

We'll continue to listen. We'll work with experts and advisors. We'll strengthen the province where previous administrations chose to weaken it instead.

Red Tape Reduction Task Force Report Recommendations

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): It's estimated that in Manitoba small- and mid-size businesses spend \$1.2 billion annually to comply with government regulations. It's estimated that 30 per cent or \$360 million is spent on red tape.

That is why I was pleased to co-chair our government's Red Tape Reduction Task Force, where Manitobans shared literally hundreds of situations where regulatory requirements not only created additional burdens, but created more problems than they were supposed to solve.

Our PC government was elected on a promise to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild our economy.

Can the Minister of Finance please inform members of this Chamber how our PC government will use the recommendations of this report for the benefit of all Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for Morris for that question, and also for co-chairing the Red Tape Reduction Task Force. I also thank the thousands of Manitobans who shared their views, and their input will help make life easier for municipalities, non-profits, businesses and ordinary citizens.

The report recommends top priorities for reducing red tape and we're getting the job done. We're also the first Canadian province to legislate a one-for-one rule when it comes for capping the growth of future red tape.

We inherited a mess. Madam Speaker, everyone knows it, but we're making progress and we're making progress on red tape as well, getting Manitoba back on track.

Rent Assist Benefit Rate Reduction Concern

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): This Premier and his ministers think cutting is a virtue, but they also want to stand in this House and claim that giving less is actually more. Though through freedom of information request, which I table, we got the real truth on this minister's Rent Assist record.

Between March 2017 and March 2018, families on Rent Assist saw the average benefit shrink by \$10 a month and seniors' benefits fall by \$22 a

month. For low-income Manitobans, cuts like this mean skipping meals or prescriptions in order to pay the rent. Manitoba families shouldn't have to make these tough choices.

How can this minister possibly defend a record where families and seniors are getting less for Rent Assist than ever before?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): And we know the track record the NDP has when they support vulnerable individuals. We know that use of food banks spiked under the NDP government. We know that increasing the PST is something that hurt low-income individuals more than anything else.

We also know that the child poverty capital of Canada was a landmark of the NDP administration.

Our government has done a variety of things in terms of supporting vulnerable Manitobans. Over 3,000 more people will be supported under the Rent Assist program under our government than under the NDP government. We think that's progress. We're not done, Madam Speaker. We want to provide tax support for people. There's 31,000 more people under the basic—will have more supports under basic personal exemption than when we took office.

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

Mrs. Smith: And I'll say it again in this House: this minister has failed to build any new social housing since they've become government.

Manitobans deserve a Rent Assist program that's actually going to give them the supports that they need. From April 2016 to March 2018, the average amounts received by seniors only went up by 32 cents—that's not even enough to buy a coffee. For families the average amount decreased by \$8. That's a meal.

After this government froze minimum wage more people were put on Rent Assist. Then this minister cut Rent Assist rates for families and seniors. They increased the amount of people on EIA, that they have to pay more rent.

Will the minister stop the rhetoric and actually invest and make real investments in the Rent Assist program that work for Manitobans?

Mr. Fielding: And don't listen to just what politicians say.

Let's look at what Stats Canada says in terms of the amount of people living in poverty. In fact, child

poverty rate has dropped. We were last under, of course, the NDP administration; now we've gone to fifth. We think that's a improvement. That's a most improved province.

The member also talks about people being supported by the Rent Assist program. I'm not sure if the member does know, but there's over 353 more families supported on the Rent Assist program under this government. There's close to 1,578 more people—that's families—that are supported under the Rent Assist program in Manitoba, and for the member, just so she's local in terms of dealing with her local area, there's more than 113 more people in the Point Douglas area that are supported under this government's positions on the Rent Assist program.

All Saints' Anglican Church Location of Tent City Residents

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): The story of tent city right across the street from us here at the Legislature has captured the hearts and attention of many Manitobans.

As we all know, the congregation at All Saints' has been through a lot and I hope all of us will join right now in thanking the leadership there, Mr. Brent Neumann, and his entire congregation for the very ethical way that they have tried to help people in need. They've done a really wonderful job.

As we also are probably all aware, the wedding is coming up and the tent city is being temporarily moved.

Could we please have assurances from this government that they will join with our caucus and welcome the residents of tent city here on the Legislative grounds and support them appropriately should they need to come here after the wedding is done?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I had an opportunity to sit down with Reverend Brent Neumann just a few days ago to see how we can co-ordinate services better for the province of Manitoba in terms of addressing the issue and the tent city that has popped up. I can tell you the Manitoba Housing staff, Manitoba Health staff, the groups from social services agencies that are run through the Winnipeg BIZ, the CHAT organization, has been there providing social services suggesting to individuals there is support.

* (15:00)

I can guarantee the member that if there is emergency shelter services that are provided, I can guarantee you that all members will have those emergency services supported to them.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House.

At the beginning of routine proceedings on May 17th, 2018, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) raised a matter of privilege, contending that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) does not respect the rulings of the Speaker, preventing all members from fulfilling their duties.

The member concluded his remarks by moving, and I quote, that the House request the Premier apologize to the Speaker and to all members for the disregard he showed to our House yesterday by his actions, end quote.

I took the matter under advisement to consult the authorities. As members know, there are two conditions which must be met to demonstrate a prima facie case of privilege. First, the member must establish that they raised the issue at the earliest opportunity, and, second, the member must provide sufficient evidence to prove that the privileges of the House have been breached.

Regarding the first condition, the honourable member for Flin Flon indicated that after having taken sufficient time to review Hansard and relevant materials, that this was his earliest opportunity to raise this matter of privilege.

At this point, I must note a problem with the member's submission. Nowhere in his comments did he actually identify the specific infraction of which he was accusing the Premier. He referenced that the infraction occurred on the previous sitting day, which would've been May 16th, but he never stated the nature of the infraction.

As your Speaker, this leaves me in a very difficult position. I could attempt to infer which incident was being referenced by the member, but that forces me to make certain presumptions about the member's submission, something which would not be appropriate for a Speaker to do.

In the absence of further clarity from the member, I cannot presume the infraction to which he

referred. Accordingly, timeliness is difficult for me to determine in this case.

This brings me to the second condition: whether there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the privileges of the House have been breached. After careful review, I did not find that the member demonstrated which specific privileges, either his personally or the House's collective privileges, were breached. The member did not demonstrate how the actions in question interfered with members' ability to do their jobs.

Not knowing with certainty which incident is the focus of the privileged submission and not being able to identify which privileges were breached, I must therefore rule that the honourable member has not demonstrated a prima facie case of privilege.

Finally, I must note the ambiguity in this privilege submission created challenges when considering this matter. I urge all members to be mindful that clarity matters when raising privilege in this House.

I thank members for their careful attention to this ruling.

PETITIONS

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Three—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

I would urge members that are having conversations in the House, there's a member that is attempting to read a petition. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

Mrs. Smith: Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Sandra Gilley, *[phonetic]* Trevor Gilnick, *[phonetic]* Barry Procter *[phonetic]* and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Vimy Arena

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

The background to this petition—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —is as follows:

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

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as the St. Boniface industrial park, the 200–or 20,000 acres at CentrePort or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

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

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the Department of Health had no role in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.

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

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

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

* (15:10)

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

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

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

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purposes of park land and recreational activities—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fletcher: —for public use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current designation of PR2 for 255 Hamilton located at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to continue to be designated for parks and recreation active neighbourhoods and communities.

This has been signed by Ken Enns, Raymond Rougeau, Sandy *[phonetic]* Zeid and many others, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

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

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

our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Committee of Supply?

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

The House will now—*[interjection]*

It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence this afternoon. The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

We have now before us the consideration for the concurrence motion moved by the Government House Leader (Mr. Cullen) on May 28, 2018.

The Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine) previously tabled the following list of

ministers to be called for questioning in the debate on concurrence motion: the Premier (Mr. Pallister), the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) and the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton). The ministers are to be questioned concurrently.

And the floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Crime Prevention Branch of the Minister of Justice department works to provide children and youth with alternatives to gangs through programs like Lighthouses and Turnabout. The minister actually cut 14 per cent of the staffing complement in this branch just this year.

Can the minister explain her decision?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, I—the member opposite will know that we've said time and time again that we've been reviewing various programs throughout government and certainly throughout the Department of Justice. We will continue to do so. We will find ways to provide better services to Manitobans at more—in more efficient and effective ways, and that's exactly what we're doing.

If you look at our crime statistics when it comes to youth, and certainly if you look at the number of youth who are incarcerated, those numbers are down significantly. And, when we look at youth crime overall, the total crime rate is down for youth 5 per cent; sexual assault is down 27 per cent; breaking and entering, down 21 per cent; motor vehicle theft is down 31 per cent; property crime, down 11 per cent and drug crime, down 22 per cent.

So we know that there's much more work to be done, but we are certainly pleased with preliminary results.

Ms. Fontaine: So I know when the minister refers to her modernization strategy she often talks about prevention and intervention, and certainly I think that an argument could be made that Lighthouses and Turnabout programs are—fundamentally contribute to prevention and intervention. And so it doesn't seem to kind of jive with what the minister repeatedly talks about in question period about her modernization strategy.

So I'm trying to get a little bit of understanding on cutting 14 per cent of her staffing complement in that branch when she's attempting to look at

prevention and intervention, and again, coupled with, you know, the use of restorative justice and all of those types of programs.

So I don't understand the rationale. Perhaps the minister could share with us the rationale to cut this staffing complement by at least 14 per cent.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the rationale is quite simple. We are focused as a government on providing for safer communities and more timely access to justice, and our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy focuses on just that. We have already implemented part of the strategy and we are seeing some preliminary results that are quite positive, particularly in the area of youth.

* (15:30)

The member opposite will know that we have—we will—we continue to fund Lighthouses and other organizations. In particular, we have focused on crime prevention through community mobilization units, which the member opposite will be familiar with Thunderwing in Winnipeg, as well as START in Selkirk. In Steinbach we have one. We've got them sort of popping up everywhere. In fact, just last week I was involved with a—an announcement out in Portage la Prairie where they're starting up their own community mobilization out there. And we will continue to support those community mobilizations in the way of supports in the area of Families, in Justice and in Health.

And so we will continue to work in that direction, and I'm hoping, I mean it's just a start, but certainly we are quite pleased with the youth crime rates, and really this has to be what this is all about is trying to provide for safer communities for Manitobans, trying to get youth on the right track, and what we're finding is these community mobilization units are actually providing very, very good results and it's starting to be reflective in some of the crime rates, in particular for youth, that I mentioned earlier.

Ms. Fontaine: So could the minister make the connection between what she sees as part of the strategy that she just advised has been implemented and make the connection between those implementations, and, again, I—specifically what those—part of the strategy that have been implemented and then, again, making the connection to some of the decreases in numbers that she noted earlier?

So what is the connection and how does she see that happening with, again, her modernization strategy?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, what we're obviously focused on here is getting results for Manitobans. We want to see those results by way of providing safer communities for Manitobans and decreasing our crime rates. We are already seeing in this area some good preliminary results in the area of youth and so we believe that it's because of some of the initiatives that we have taken, and part of that initiative is part of the Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy in the area of crime prevention is to focus our resources on the community mobilization units and continue to go in that direction.

There are a number of organizations that we do support out there through Families, through Justice, through health care and other areas of government. We look at this as a whole-of-government approach to yield better results for Manitobans and that's what we will do.

So the connection here is to never get off our main objective, which is to provide for safer communities and decrease crime in those communities and we will continue to focus on that.

Ms. Fontaine: And I get what the minister is saying because she has said it several times, but what I'm asking is actually just those specifics, like, what are the specifics that she said has been implemented by the modernization strategy? Like, what are some of the specific things that the strategy has implemented?

Mrs. Stefanson: We have started to implement and fund organizations. I have mentioned this—I mentioned this in the previous two answers. We have continued to focus on supporting community mobilization units because we found that investments in these areas are yielding positive results for Manitobans and providing for safer communities.

So I'm not sure what the member doesn't understand about that, but we will continue to focus on what is in the best interests of Manitobans and providing for safer communities. Better access to justice is that—is just that, and we are doing that through our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy, through crime prevention, through restorative justice initiatives, through responsible reintegration of offenders back into society and looking also at the most, and dealing with the most serious of crimes first.

And so, you know, the member opposite will, hopefully, have had a chance by now to read our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy and will see that we're moving in the right direction.

We also are being accountable with our modernization strategy. We will post results on an annual basis to see how we were doing, and if there are some areas that are falling behind we will look at different ways and different approaches to do things so that we yield better results for Manitobans.

So we will continue to work in this direction within our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy to provide for safer communities and more timely access to justice for all.

Ms. Fontaine: But, actually, the only thing that the minister has repeated is the community mobilization units, and I don't know if the minister is trying to indicate that that one piece is the reason for all of the decreases that she noted earlier. That was—that's the only piece that she's put on the record here.

So I'm just wondering, besides that, because I did hear her and I thank her for that, I'm just wondering what else of the strategy, what other parts of the strategy that she noted earlier have been implemented, other than the community mobilization units, which I get, and I did hear the minister. And, again, I appreciate that. But what other parts of the strategy have been implemented?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, just in the area of crime prevention, I can indicate to the member that there's a number of organizations that we do fund: Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Winnipeg; Marymount, which is for youth at risk; the Dauphin Friendship Centre; Lighthouses; the Lord Selkirk School Division; Selkirk team at-risk teens, also known as START; Macdonald Youth Services' Youth Resource Centre; New Directions' Training Resources for Youth; New Directions' help eliminate auto theft program; Winnipeg School Division; and the list goes on and on, Madam Speaker; Ka Ni Kanichihk is in there as well; Spence Neighbourhood Association and other school divisions as well. And so I think it's important that we recognize that we are continuing to invest in programs that are providing real results for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I mean, I appreciate that the minister, you know, again, makes note of all of these really, really good organizations that are doing really good work but actually have been doing that work for very, very long. In fact, New Directions, as

everybody in the Chamber knows, has been doing it for, you know, well over 25, 30 years. So I don't know if the minister is trying to stake claim over the work that these organizations have done certainly in the—and I would suggest to you in the—you know, during the last 16 years or 17 years under our government. So I'm not really seeing any—which we partnered and supported these organizations, understanding the need that, you know, when we're looking at lifting up folks in respect of getting in conflict with the law, certainly that community organizations that do a variety of different work are integral to that.

So, I mean, that's nothing new. That happened under our watch. So I would suggest to the minister and I would submit that that's actually not under the last two years, and it's certainly not under the—this modernization strategy that she keeps trying to tout.

So, other than that, other than the agencies that she's listed off, which, again, I think we can all agree have been in existence for way longer than the last two years, and other than the community mobilization units, I just want to get, again, a clearer sense of what parts of the strategy have been implemented because that's what the minister just said when I—in my first question when we started, you know, 10 minutes ago.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I thank the member for her question.

And, certainly, there is a number of initiatives outside of just the community mobilization, but the minister—or, sorry, the member had started off asking about youth crime, and so I've provided her with—you know, I think we're going in the right direction there with some of our supports in community mobilization. And it should be about reducing crime.

But part of the modernization strategy is there's other areas in terms of preliminary inquiries, for example. We fought hard with the federal government to try and get them on board with reforms when it comes to preliminary inquiries, and we think that this will be a positive step. The federal government has introduced legislation in this area now. They have listened to us. We got—we managed to get Ontario and Quebec on board and other provinces to support this. We think that this will be good, particularly for victims of crime who often have to go through and be—or cross-examined, and witnesses and so on, twice, because they've got to do it once in a preliminary inquiry as well as again, more often than not, in a regular trial. And so this is

a positive move that the federal government has listened to us on, and we look forward to those changes happening.

*(15:40)

So there's a number of things. We have gone towards more direct indictments to ensure that we deal with the more serious of crimes first. What we don't want is people on our streets who have—commit very, very serious crimes, especially when it comes to sexual offences, to domestic violence, to those types of crimes. We want to make sure that those issues are dealt with so there's not a resulted—resulting stay of charges as a result of not being able to move through the system as a result of the Crown v. Jordan ruling back in July of 2016.

And so these are some of the other things, if this is what the member is looking for, these are also included in our Criminal Justice System Modernization Strategy that are providing real results for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: So to make clear what the minister just said, the minister brought up, you know, preliminary inquiries and direct indictments, and so is the minister putting on the record that in her—the answer to her first question where she read out the statistics in respect of a variety of different crimes and, in particular, those associated with youth—is the minister putting on the record that the preliminary inquiries and direct indictment pursuits that have occurred, that's what's contributing to the decrease in numbers here and that is fundamentally a part of the strategy that the department has implemented? Because that doesn't make any sense, quite honestly. I don't understand how court processes which are absolutely so important, and I would agree with the minister that are so important that we undertake a robust and comprehensive review of our court systems, including, you know, jury selection. But I don't understand why the minister would put that on the record in respect to answering my question about what parts of the strategy has she implemented.

And I will point out as well, just so the minister is clear, that, you know, these pursuits for the preliminary and direct indictments, those came well before she released, again, what I would suggest is a very scant strategy. So I don't understand how she's making the connection between this and the decreases in the numbers that she brought forward in my first—or it—that she brought forward in her answer in my first question.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the answer is that we are implementing this and we have been implementing this for some time now, and when it comes to direct indictments, and that is a policy shift that we made because we wanted to ensure that we dealt with the most serious of cases first to—and I mentioned already to the member that we're—that we want to ensure that we don't have people going free as a result of stay of charges. Those who have committed serious crimes, they need to go through the trial process. They need to go through the proper process. We need to make sure that we get through that process in a timely fashion that has been set out in the *Crown v. Jordan*.

So I'm not sure what the member doesn't understand about that. That is something we are implementing. She asked me for other areas that we have implemented already and that is one of the areas.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, what I specifically asked, though, was in respect of youth. And when we started this line of questioning I talked about, you know the 14 per cent decrease in staffing complements in respect of Lighthouses and Turnabout in that branch. So what I was specifically talking about was youth, in the beginning of my question. And what I was trying to ask the minister was which part of this strategy, this scant strategy, that, as it pertains to youth, in her mind, contributed to those decrease in numbers which she put on the record there. And all I got was community mobilization units, listing off a bunch of organizations that, again, I think we can all agree, have been in existence for well over, you know, the last two years, and now a process that started before the strategy was even introduced to the public or put out, which is preliminary inquiries and direct indictments. I don't see the connection. I—and the minister should be able to provide an answer.

If that's her answer, then she should be able to provide the connection between these pieces and what she thinks is good, successful work at putting these numbers of—down that she reiterated early, these percentages, because there's no connection here; there's absolutely no connection.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I know the member opposite is more concerned about staffing issues. We are more concerned about results and we are more concerned about providing safer communities for Manitobans.

So this is what I have tried to explain to her in terms of what we have done to reduce crime rates,

particularly for youth, and I have indicated already the areas where there has been a decline in total crime for youth, down 5 per cent, and a number of other areas. I've already done that. I know the member opposite is more concerned about staffing; we are concerned about results for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, and I would ask the minister not to—and I know she does this all the time when she puts on the record that I—I this—she speaks on my behalf. I never once in any of my line of questioning talked about that I'm more concerned about staffing. Not once did I say that.

What I said—and again, I'll go back to my first question—what I said was is that if there was a 14 per cent decrease in the staffing complement for those folks that work in Lighthouses—or, for that—you know, do the administration and all of those pieces, which are huge jobs in respect of Lighthouses and Turnabout, it doesn't jive with the modernization strategy of prevention and intervention. And so I would ask the minister not to put words into my mouth. I never said that, and Hansard will confirm that.

So all I'm trying to get to is what part of this really scant modernization strategy is—does she believe, that was just released in the last couple of months, contributed to the decrease in numbers and percentages that she reiterated—or she spouted off earlier in her first answer to me. And it is a relatively easy question if she's—if she really does believe that there's been so much progress, then outline those pieces of the strategy that have fundamentally contributed to that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I've already mentioned a number of things. I've mentioned our focus on dealing with the most serious of crimes first in the system, which has helped move cases through the system to get people through the system in a more efficient and effective way, but I will also mention that—and I want to thank all of our prosecutors out there for the incredible work that they do, and one thing that we have established and we will continue to enhance is the establishment of an intake unit called the intensive case assessment process within existing resources. And the following—and I'll talk a little bit about the objective and the purpose of this is to enhance the functioning of the criminal justice system by ensuring appropriate matters are dealt with in the system and that those matters are prosecuted in a fair, timely and effective manner. The list goes on and on, but I do want to emphasize the fact that this

is another area that has really helped move people through the system in a more efficient and effective way.

We have been very successful at reducing our incarceration rates for—in particular for youth but also for adults. In fact, the youth-in-custody counts are down 16 per cent since 2016, and we've reduced our overall total adult custody population by 10 per cent. Those are not the direction that the previous government took. They chose instead to increase significantly their incarceration rates. In fact, under their watch I think they doubled. That is not the approach that we take.

We find that if we get people—and again, this is through our Responsible Reintegration Initiative—if we can get people back into society, get them the programs and the tools that they need, and again we look at—excuse me—a cross-government approach to this, so there's other areas. Education has been very helpful in this, Families, health care; we all work together to ensure that people can be responsibly reintegrated back to—into society rather than keeping people in jail. And so that is the approach we have taken. We have found that as a result of that, in particular in the youth rates, there's been a decline in the number of youth that have been incarcerated under our watch and there's also been a correlating reduction in crime rates. That has been seen in other jurisdictions, and so that is the direct correlation there. I hope that the member opposite can understand that now.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, let's shift gears here, because, again, I don't think that—we're kind of going in circles here because you're—you still have not put on the record any specifics that this modernization strategy has specifically done to decrease the numbers that you stated in the beginning in your first answer.

* (15:50)

Certainly I think that—I know that we've brought it up several times in the House that the minister faced significant criticism for cancelling training classes for new sheriff officers due to the growing amount of overtime. At the time it was reported that there was a very low vacancy rate in the branch of just 3 per cent. Now we know that the minister has cut three professional positions with the sheriff services.

So, I mean, it is curious. So I ask the minister, you know, why is she cutting those positions when

there's clearly a need for those positions to be able to support those very vital services?

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question. It allows me the opportunity at this point in time to indicate that we have—we're very proud of this year's budget where we have introduced a strategic innovation unit that will focus primarily right now on a comprehensive review of law enforcement in Manitoba. Sheriffs are a very significant part of that. And I want to take this opportunity to thank all the sheriffs out there for the incredible work that they do transporting our prisoners back and forth to court and back to our correctional facilities. They do incredible work and I think work—sometimes long hours, and they should be commended for the work that they do.

We are trying to find ways in all of this—in the strategic innovation unit, the focus will be an overall—a comprehensive review of law enforcement that has never been done in the history of Manitoba. It was never done; it was never a priority under the previous NDP government. And we're finding now that we think that there's probably better ways to deliver the services and more efficient and effective ways to deliver the services that Manitobans need, want and deserve within our justice system. And so we look forward to that review taking place and the results of that review.

What I will say is that, certainly, when it comes to sheriffs and the work that they do, we have introduced more cameras in courtrooms, more cameras in jail. And so there's less need to transport prisoners back and forth between court and our correctional facilities. And we will continue to modernize that through the use of technology to ensure that we can find more efficient and effective ways to deliver these services for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, when the minister says, you know, finding, you know, different ways and more effective ways of delivering these sheriff services, what specifically is she talking about? Other than sheriffs, like, sheriffs who do sheriff services, what is the minister referring to? Like, how better are you going to do that if you're not using sheriffs?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, that's exactly why we set up a strategic innovation unit, to explore options as to the delivery of various law enforcement in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Fontaine: So the minister is saying that you are looking at exploring different ways of executing sheriff duties in Manitoba, just to be clear?

Mrs. Stefanson: No, we're looking at an overall—again, the member opposite says to me not to put words in her mouth; please don't put words in my mouth. No, what we are doing is doing a comprehensive review of all of law enforcement. So that would include sheriffs as members of our law enforcement community and will include correctional officers, will include policing. It will include a number of areas within our law enforcement community.

Ms. Fontaine: So is this review, this comprehensive law enforcement review, being done internally within the department or through an advisory group or through a consultant or—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister for Justice.

Mrs. Stefanson: It's within the department.

Ms. Fontaine: I didn't hear her.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, can you repeat, the honourable member—or the Minister for Justice, if you could repeat that?

Mrs. Stefanson: It's within the department.

Ms. Fontaine: And when will that review be completed?

Mrs. Stefanson: I don't have a date at this time.

Ms. Fontaine: When did the department start beginning this undertaking of this review?

Mrs. Stefanson: The unit was set up in April.

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry, when the minister says the unit, there's a unit dedicated to doing a comprehensive law enforcement review?

Mrs. Stefanson: It's called the Strategic Innovation Unit, and part of—like, one of the functions to start off with will be a review of the law enforcement. There will be other things that the Strategic Innovation Unit will do as well.

Ms. Fontaine: And when does the minister expect to get a final report?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think there's a significant amount of work that needs to take place here and I wouldn't want to put a particular time frame on that, but certainly it is a priority for our government.

Ms. Fontaine: And will that report be disseminated to the—to this House or to the public?

Mrs. Stefanson: It will be a list of recommendations that we will likely be implementing, so it will be done by way of implementation.

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry, sorry, I apologize to the minister. So a list of recommendations, but will that be disseminated? Sorry.

Mrs. Stefanson: There'll be a list of recommendations. There's not going to be a report per se, but we will continue—it's sort of an ongoing process, and we will continue—the way it will be disseminated is by way of action, not by way of a report.

Ms. Fontaine: And, I mean, one would assume, and I'm just trying to get clarification that, in respect of the comprehensive review, that each of the law enforcement stakeholders will be engaged in and partners in the review and coming up with the recommendations?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, law enforcement, including policing and various policing organizations will be a part of this.

Ms. Fontaine: So, miigwech for that. I thank the minister for that answer.

So I am just curious, again, is, then, the three professional positions that were cut in the sheriff's office—or within Sheriffs Services, I apologize—is that in response to this review? Or was that prior to the review?

Mrs. Stefanson: I mean, we have looked at staffing across government departments. We've looked at staffing across the Department of Justice as well. Again, it's not about staffing, it's about the delivery of service, and we need to ensure that proper tools are in place for the—for all of our law enforcement to be able to deliver the services that they're providing.

I think what is happening, though, is that there's never ever been a review of what, you know, law enforcement does in Manitoba in general across the board and what each area—there's many, many different areas of law enforcement across the province, and there's never ever been a review to sort of see where there's overlap and duplication and those kinds of things.

So those are the things that we're going to focus on within the review of the law enforcement in Manitoba.

Ms. Fontaine: So we also know that the consumer protections officer is also losing a professional position.

Can the minister comment on that professional position that's been cut and why?

Mr. Chairperson: Before I get the minister to answer the question, I just—there's a lot of noise here. It's hard to hear both the minister and the critic, so I'd just ask everybody to be a little bit quieter and have their visits at the 'lowge'—loge there, so.

Mrs. Stefanson: As part of our overall cross-government approach to the civil service, we found that there was a number—and the previous government had increased the number of senior management roles across government.

*(16:00)

And we believe that we should be focusing on, not so much in the area of management, but we should be focusing on front-line services. So those are the decisions that have been made by our government to ensure that we focus on providing front-line services for Manitobans, and that's what we'll continue to do. We start to see results like we see in the youth crime and we start to see better results because we're focusing the resources where they should be focused, not on senior management, not—but more on front-line services and those staff, and so we will continue to do so.

It should be noted that we, of course, have increased our budget by some \$12 million. Much of that is focused in the area of policing and where our focus will continue to be, in delivering better services to provide safer communities and more timely access to justice for all Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: So we also know that both the Residential Tenancies Branch and the commission have lost several positions in total. You know, we've heard concern from—about the need for more resources in these areas and not less.

Why has the minister cut these?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, it's the same answer as I just gave with respect to the other area. We're looking at refocusing and repurposing resources into the front line and we will continue to do so, so we can provide for better access to justice, safer communities for Manitobans in all areas, not just in Justice, but across the board, and so that's our approach.

I know members opposite took a very different approach when they were in government. They chose, instead, to increase upper management in pretty much every area and every department across government. We take a different approach. We believe that those resources will be better utilized in front-line services, those on the front lines that deliver the services to make safer communities in the area of justice for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, can the minister kind of map out, then, how these cuts have, you know—contribute then to front-line services? How is those dollars that she cut directly impacting on front-line service, then?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member's myth of cuts is just exactly that—it's a myth. We have, I just stated, that we had increased the budget by some \$12 million. We are spending more in the area of Justice than was ever in the history under the NDP in the province of Manitoba. So her myth of cuts is just exactly that, and so I don't know why she is continuing along those lines, but I guess that's her prerogative.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, but the thing is, is that I don't know if it's a myth when I got it from the minister's Estimates book. It's in there; it's not like I came out here and made up numbers. These are all numbers that are in the minister's own Estimates book. And so my question, based on what was provided to me by the minister in her department book is: What is then the connection between these cuts and front-line services?

So—and the minister previously said that, you know, they're taking a different approach and all of that stuff, that this fundamentally impacts on front-line services, these cuts, and they are cuts, so I'm just wanting to know if she can map out how she thinks that these fundamentally contribute and bolster front-line services.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I—the member opposite needs to look at—if she wants to look at the numbers in the Estimates book she will see that we are some \$12 million—and I can get the exact numbers for her, but she can see that there are not cuts within the Department of Justice, that, in fact, it is increased by some \$12 million. Those are the facts.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, there are cuts to positions, and so those constitute, in its truest, most purest form, a cut, and so I know that the minister doesn't like that word, but that—but it is a cut. When you're cutting—I don't know how many positions we are even talking

about here just in the last 10 minutes, but—and the minister keeps trying to justify those cuts of positions by saying that there's a direct impact and correlation on front-line services. And so all I'm asking is how does she see that, like, how does she see that those cuts fundamentally bolster or contribute to front-line services?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member opposite continues along the myth of cuts. There are not cuts in the Department of Justice. In fact, we are up overall by nearly \$12 million, an increase to Custody Corrections by some \$2.5 million, an increase of \$6.8 million to provincial policing; community-based crime-prevention programs, up \$250,000; Salvation Army, up \$130,000; Eyaa-Keen community outreach program, up \$35,000; Legal Aid Manitoba coverage for asylum seekers, up \$294,000; creation of the Strategic Innovation Unit, \$363,000. So, the fact is, that we—there are not cuts in the—in Justice.

It's increased by nearly \$12 million. Now, the member opposite is suggesting that we should continue along the line of the previous NDP government in increasing the senior management and at the expense of front-line services. We don't agree. We don't agree with that approach. We agree with repurposing some of those resources towards front-line services. That's exactly what I've just outlined for the member opposite. So her myth of cuts is just that. It's a myth.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, well, I mean, we can go back and forth and say it's not a myth, it's—and you can say it's a myth. It's not. And I think I—it should be clarified as well and should be put on the record as well that the minister keeps talking about, you know, management positions, management positions. However, actually, those cuts included professional technical positions, not management. And certainly, the minister's department has been reduced and they are—the minister is cutting non-management jobs. So, you know, when the minister talks about, you know, that we, you know, liked upper management and, you know, all this bureaucracy, again, I would say that that's a myth and I'll put that on the record. But, you know, it's simply not accurate that all of the cuts that we're talking about right now are management, upper-management positions. They're not.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the fact of the matter is that we are realigning resources to provide better outcomes for Manitobans, to provide better and safer communities. So member opposite is getting cut up—

caught up on these areas, but I will say that what Manitobans are most concerned about is about providing safer communities and more timely access to justice. We will continue to focus on what Manitobans want.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, I want to kind of go back to, you know, if the minister says that they've found efficiency that I think that, you know, I would suspect that she would also agree that these resources should be redeployed to increase capacity in front-line services, right. We know that it's already really difficult for folks to kind of navigate those systems. So, you know, if the minister can, again, advise if those efficiencies have been found, how do they contribute to building up the capacity for front-line services, for, really, for folks that really do need those additional supports.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, we are realigning resources to provide better results for Manitobans. I've stated that already.

For example, one area is the Momentum Centre, which does excellent work at helping reintegrate offenders back into society. I was honoured to have been at an announcement with the Minister of Education in this very area. So that helps some of the most marginal citizens in our—marginalized citizens in our province. I'm just so proud of the many individuals who have had some really tough times in their lives that have turned their lives around as a result of programs like the Momentum Centre, and that is one example.

There are many examples of that where we are realigning resources to make better investments that are making real results and better results for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to the minister for attempting to answer some of those questions. I appreciate that. I will move on to asking the Minister for Status of Women some questions.

* (16:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Let's have just a little bit of a break just to get the minister ready for questions.

I'm just going to ask the minister if she's ready now. Okay.

The honourable member for St. Johns, on a question.

Ms. Fontaine: So, on November 20th, 2017, the government issued a press release announcing that

the family violence prevention program will be transitioned to the Status of Women Secretariat. Can the minister advise whether the transition has occurred or fully occurred or partially occurred?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): So I can also confirm for the member that this was the exact same question asked of me in Estimates, and she can read all those answers in Hansard or we can go over that same territory once again. But I can confirm for the member that the transition from—the family violence prevention program transitioned from the Department of Families to the department—or to the Status of Women Secretariat has occurred. I believe the physical relocation was finalized by January the 3rd, and that the staff are now fully integrated into the Status of Women Secretariat. And, again, I would encourage the member to read Hansard for the list of all those answers.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we ask another question, again I want to remind everybody if they can be a little bit quieter. People are having difficult hearing the critic and the minister. So the—especially that group over there.

The honourable member for St. Johns—well, that group over there.

Ms. Fontaine: So, you know what? I will do as the member—or the minister suggested. I guess somebody else had asked those questions, so I'm going to actually move on to that until I know which questions have actually—so I appreciate her pointing at—that those questions have been asked. I say miigwech for that.

So the minister certainly has been used as the spokesperson for issues in respect of the Mifegymiso, and so I think that it's—we should maybe kind of explore some of those questions. And I'd like to know where the minister is in respect of looking at the distribution and making the accessibility of Mifegymiso more readily available across Manitoba.

Ms. Squires: I appreciate the member's question. And it is certainly a challenge that not just Manitoba is dealing with in regards to how we can provide assessability in our rural and remote parts of this province. But it is also a challenge that is being addressed in many other jurisdictions. So I have instructed the department to take a look at what some of the options are that other jurisdictions are exploring, in terms of assessability and putting

together some suggestions for my—for our government's review. We are—we do know that there's very, very limited uptake in northern Manitoba with doctors who are willing to prescribe. So that is certainly also a barrier, and we're looking at ways in which we can address that.

Ms. Fontaine: So I know that the minister had spoken about, you know a review that was going to take place. We know that that didn't necessarily happen because—for a variety of reasons. But now I understand that the minister is staying that there is—she's directed, again, another review for suggestions. Does she have a date on perhaps when that review might take place and when that might be disseminated?

Ms. Squires: Well, I would like to correct the member in that I did conduct a review. In fact, I'm always reviewing the information when it comes to Mifegymiso and the numbers of—the distribution numbers, and I provided those for the member in question period a few weeks ago, and I can provide her with an updated list of the number of clients who have accessed Mifegymiso free of charge through the variety of methods that our government has made available to these women, and—but I'm reviewing it on an ongoing basis.

This is something that is very, you know, it's very active. As the member knows, we're in our first year of offering the service to women in the province, and so it requires a lot of attention and hands on, and so I have had regular updates but have also looked at a review—or have done the review, provided some of the results of that review. And there's a lot of ongoing discussions as it pertains to the introduction of Mifegymiso in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Fontaine: Back on April 23rd, I asked the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in Executive Council Estimates about—just trying to discern where the government was in respect of funding Mifegymiso to Manitoba women. And the Premier's response, and I quote, was "I'd encourage the member, if she wants further detail, she can proceed across the hall and talk to the Health Minister directly on this issue, and I'll let him do his job," end quote.

So then, on April 25th, I went over to the Health Estimates to ask the Minister of Health the same question, and he said, and I quote, that file, when it comes to reproductive health, is being led by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. I'm

sure she would be happy to provide with an update in her Estimates process.

So you can see my confusion when the Premier (Mr. Pallister), who is, you know, the big boss of everybody, tells me to go to the Minister of Health and then the Minister of Health tells me to go to the Status of Women. I guess people are wondering, you know, who's really in charge of women's reproductive health? Certainly, most would suggest that it falls under the preview or the responsibility of the Minister of Health. And, as I've put on the record many, many times, the Minister for Health refuses to answer a question, refuses to even say the word abortion.

And so we're—I'm wondering, again, and I know that I've asked this question—I don't know how many times in question period now—but was there a specific administrative letter or process in which government response and policy development and approval of the abortion pill transferred formally from the Minister of Health to the Minister of Status of Women, and did anybody let the Premier know that?

Ms. Squires: Well, the Premier had mentioned—had referred the member to the Minister of Health's Estimates, because the Minister of Health was currently in Estimates at that point; I was not. I'm sure if I was in Estimates, he might have referred the member over to the Chamber in which I was deliberating. But because he was available and already in the process of Estimates, he probably anticipated that the members opposite would want to speak with the Minister of Health on a variety of issues. And so he was just informing her that that was an option available to her.

In regards to the question about who signed and who's working on this file and that sort of thing that this member has continuously raised in this House, I would respectfully assure her that out of all the women that I have spoken to who have received an abortion in the province of Manitoba, whether it is through Mifegymiso or through a surgical procedure, not once—and of all the women that I have spoken to and out of all the health-care practitioners that I've spoken to who are working with these patients, no one has ever been fixated, like this member is, on who signed and who's in charge. And what I think is really important is that women and girls, when they go to a hospital, when they go to a clinic, when they go to their doctor, that they get the care that they need.

And I would suggest to the member that our Health Minister has done an admirable job in bringing down wait times and providing patient care in a—many regards. And I certainly hope she'd asked him some of those questions when she had the opportunity when he was in his Estimates process.

But, again, I can assure the member that most—all the women and all the patients that I have spoken to have not been as concerned—or, in fact, it's not even on their mind; it doesn't come to their mind to think who is responsible for Mifegymiso in the province of Manitoba. They want to make sure that the product is available, and that's what our government has done.

* (16:20)

Ms. Fontaine: Well, actually, the minister's government hasn't made Mifegymiso available, and that is the problem in respect of whose responsibility this is. We seem to have three ministers, or a Premier and two ministers, that are not really standing up for women and girls in Manitoba.

Mifegymiso is only currently available at three sites, the same three sites that offer surgical abortions. It's not an uptake in ensuring that the abortion pill is accessible.

I don't know who the minister's been talking to but certainly it's not the same people that I've been talking to, in respect of that there is a concern that when the Minister of Health can't stand in this House and say the word abortion, but seems to have time for pro-life rallies on the weekend, to attend pro-life rallies, but he cannot sit in this House and answer questions on the abortion pill or Mifegymiso that women and girls have absolute—it is a fundamental human right that they should have access to, it is concerning.

And I'm sorry that the Minister for Status of Women doesn't feel that it's concerning. It is. It is certainly concerning when we know that under, you know, the Health Minister's responsible for the health services act, the Health Minister is responsible for The Health Services Insurance Act, the Health Minister is responsible for The Midwifery Act—that's just a few of them—it is absolutely concerning that we have the Status of Women who doesn't have a formal process that has indicated that she is now the lead for this file.

And I'm wondering if she can tell this House exactly how she plans to lead this file for the government, and what her plan is to make

Mifegymiso accessible to all Manitoba women and girls.

Ms. Squires: So I would like to disabuse this member of her opinion that we are not making this available to women throughout the province. We have. It is available, as she had mentioned, free of charge, at the three centres in Manitoba that currently provide a surgical abortion.

It is also available to women in the province in other regions, in northern Manitoba, in other parts, in western Manitoba, it is available—we put the drug on the formulary and women have the opportunity—and, in fact, we've had 26 claims for Mifegymiso that have occurred through the Manitoba Drug Program Information Network.

That would suggest, and I don't—based on privacy, I'm not going to divulge the location of these 26 patients, but that would provide some assurance to this member that women are accessing Mifegymiso outside of the three centres that she has listed as where it is available at no charge.

I would also like to remind the member that we have made Mifegymiso available free of charge to women of no income, women of low income and indigenous women also receive Mifegymiso free of charge.

Ms. Fontaine: And, again, I know that the minister keeps reiterating that Mifegymiso is available at three sites, the same three sites that offer surgical abortions. And I will keep reiterating that the minister has missed the whole point on why Mifegymiso is a game-changer to women's reproductive health.

It is simply, in its most purest form, allowing women the privacy to make a choice and execute a choice that is their human right within the privacy of their home, and not having to leave their communities.

Just last week, I think on Thursday, I participated in a panel on abortion in Manitoba, and I had the—just the honour to be on the panel with a doctor that currently provides abortions, surgical abortions, and certainly she said that not enough is being done—and, again, I just want to reiterate that this was just last Thursday or last Friday; last Thursday, I believe—and she indicated that not enough is being done in the province—and this is an expert on abortion. This is a doctor who's gone to school for years and who has offered this service to Manitoba women and girls on abortion. She is the

expert, and so she's indicated that not enough is being done by this current government to make Mifegymiso available to Manitoba women and girls. And the Minister for Status of Women can, you know, stout—you know, spout out all these, you know, numbers. The fact remains is that if Mifegymiso—if there was an actual strategy and a plan at making Mifegymiso accessible across the province and making Manitoba women and girls aware as part of public awareness in respect of reproductive health, there certainly would be more of an uptake on Mifegymiso.

The—this doctor that I had the privilege of sitting on the panel with, she spoke about how, again—and the same thing that I've said in this House is that women—if you're in a fly-in community, you are forced to first off get—you first off have to get permission to get on a plane—that has to be covered and approved—and then come to the city to get an abortion. And, as I've said so many times, everybody in the community knows why that woman or that girl is getting on the plane and why she's travelling to Winnipeg, and everybody knows when she gets back what she's just done. We know that there is a stigma for women and girls who choose abortion. There shouldn't be. It is absolutely a woman's right and a girl's right to choose abortion, and there should be no negative connotations. Unfortunately, there still is. And here we have these girls that are being forced, in a very public way, to go seek abortion. And here's the Minister for Status of Women thinking that that's okay, that what she's been doing so far is just hunky-dory. It's not. It's in no way, shape or form adhering to the principles of a woman's right to her reproductive health. And the minister is spouting off all these numbers as if she's doing something good here for Manitoba women and girls. And she's not.

Ms. Squires: I didn't hear a question in that lengthy preamble, so I'd ask the member to specifically ask a question.

Ms. Fontaine: Absolutely. I'm glad to go on again about this.

You know, I shared a couple of times in this House and on other panels that when we don't make reproductive services available to women and girls, there are real consequences. The fact remains is that if women—Manitoba women and girls had full control and accessibility to their reproductive health choices, they'd be able to make choices that best fit their lives. And I would suggest here in this House that many women and girls would choose abortion,

but because of the stigma and because of a variety of different issues that go on over women's reproductive health and certainly because of accessibility, many women and girls do not have the opportunity to make the choice that they want to make.

And a really tragic example of that is a young girl in a northern community who was repeatedly raped by her grandfather from very, very young and ended up getting pregnant, I think, at the age of 13, could not have an abortion for a variety of different reasons as I indicated: one, that community pressure, that negative stigma and the fact that she was in a fly-in community. And, because we didn't have those systems in place, she wasn't able to make a choice—a full choice—or have full control of her reproductive health.

So my question to the minister is: How can she sit back as the Minister for Status of Women and actively dissuade—or, no, that's not the right word; I retract that, sorry—actively not engage in a process to ensure that Mifegymiso is made available and that Manitoba women and girls know about Mifegymiso and that if they have to go to their nursing station or they have to go to their pharmacy, that they can go and get the abortion pill, they can go home, they can take the first abortion pill one day and five days later or three days later take the second abortion pill and have full control over their body and their reproductive health? How can she sit back and allow that to happen?

Ms. Squires: Well, I would like to also remind the member that one of the requirements to accessing—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order.

* (16:30)

I just want to remind everyone again. This is the third time I had to give everybody notice that this is getting a little loud here. And I would really appreciate it if some—if you guys would just quiet down a bit and so we can hear the minister speak and the critic.

Ms. Squires: Thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Chair.

So I would just like to remind the member that one of the requirements, as outlined in Health Canada procedures and the drug manufacturer's procedures, is access to an ultrasound. So, while she sits in here and spouts misinformation about the ease

in which patients could receive this product if we had an awareness campaign, I would like to remind her that awareness is only—awareness is—it does not remove the requirement for an ultrasound, and to suggest that patients receive this treatment without an ultrasound is quite irresponsible on the member's part.

Ms. Fontaine: You know, I know that the Minister for Status of Women is going to defend her position until the cows come home, defend her position that she is standing in the way and—of Manitoba women and girls having full control over their reproductive health. Quite honestly, it's shameful, and one would think that a minister for Status of Women would put aside their ideological beliefs and actually stand for women in—Manitoba women and girls to ensure that no matter what women and girls think or believe but that they have the full range of choice over their body. And this minister gets up, day after day, in this House and in her office and actually works against that.

If she wanted—which is why, again, I know she brought up that nobody cares about the fact that it's actually the responsibility of the Minister of Health, I would suggest to you that it—people do care, because it does then beg the question, while the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sends me to the health—Minister of Health and the minister sends me to the Status of Women, she doesn't have the responsibility. She doesn't have the authority to make Mifegymiso fully available and accessible to Manitoba women and girls. She doesn't.

And so therein lies the dilemma that Manitoba women and girls are faced with, is that we have a minister that will not even say the word abortion but finds time to go on the weekend to a pro-life rally and speak at a pro-life rally. The Minister of Health has the time to go back to his constituency and speak at a pro-life rally, but he doesn't have time to stand up in this House and execute his duty as responsible for all women and girls' reproductive health, which includes the right to abortion. And here's the Minister for Status of Women really not doing anything but offering the abortion pill free of charge at current sites that offer surgical abortions. That's not making Mifegymiso available, and it's not certainly giving anybody accessibility to the abortion pill.

So, you know, my question is, is who really does have the authority to make the final decision on making Mifegymiso robustly and comprehensively accessible to Manitoba women and girls?

Ms. Squires: Well, I believe I already did answer that, but perhaps the member wasn't hearing properly and so I'll cover over some terrain that we've already covered. But our government works as a team, and I'm pleased to work with all members of this government on a regular basis and making life better for Manitobans, better for Manitoba women, better for Manitoba girls, better for all Manitobans. We're making improvements to their lives, to their health-care systems, to all the issues that women care about in a way unseen under members opposite and their time in government. So I will continue to work with our Minister of Health, and I will continue to work with all members of this government, and, in fact, I'll continue to work with all Manitobans to ensure that we are the most improved province and that we are making life better for Manitobans.

Mr. Chairperson: Any other questions?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Question for the minister on the Sustainable Development side of her department: the Clean Environment Commission released its Lake Winnipeg regulation report back in 2015. Wondering if the minister could tell the House what the status is of that report with her government, and will they be implementing all of its recommendations as we had pledged to do while in office?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, I want to say that I really appreciate the efforts of the Clean Environment Commission and their work on this and as well as the people within the organization, Lake Winnipeg Foundation. I do intend to meet with them once again. I've got quite a long relationship with them. Met with them on a couple of fronts. Looking forward to having a real sincere and honest and lengthy dialogue in a few weeks' time.

Mr. Altemeyer: Just—I was just putting in the earpiece. I'm not sure if the minister heard me correctly. I wasn't asking about Lake Winnipeg Foundation; it was the Lake Winnipeg regulation report, so the regulation of water levels in Lake Winnipeg and numerous steps that can and should be taken to help address that situation. So the Clean Environment Commission report, has the minister received a briefing on that? Is she up to speed on what this issue is about?

Ms. Squires: Absolutely, we're working with the Clean Environment Commission and looking at a variety of issues, this being one of them.

Mr. Altemeyer: Can the minister provide us with a timeline of when her government will be announcing which number or perhaps all of the recommendations in that report they will be implementing?

Ms. Squires: Well, the recommendations were very thorough, and a lot of complexities were tackled in that report, a lot of the challenges that we're seeing on Lake Winnipeg. And so it certainly does require a thorough review and a thorough assessment and a lot of—you know, our government recognizes that Lake Winnipeg does have some very unique challenges, and our government is ready to address those challenges head-on.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thorough or not, and the report was certainly thorough, the government has been in office for two years now, and there hasn't been any public action that I'm aware of, either under this minister's watch or her predecessor's. So does she have a timeline of when that—when her government's response to the recommendations in the Clean Environment Commission report will be coming forward publicly? Could she give us a—would it be within the next year, even?

Ms. Squires: I can assure the member that it will be a lot sooner than the former NDP government, the timeline in—that they worked in in responding to the Clean Environment Commission. I believe it was the 2003 report on the combined sewer overflows that remained unaddressed and ignored by the previous government. So I can assure the member that it will be shorter than that timeline.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, if we're talking combined sewers, the minister may want to take a look outside. It is pouring down crazy rain right now, and I'm sure Winnipeg's combined sewers are putting quite a bit of excess nutrients into the waterways and the mayor for Gimli's not very happy about the extensive timeline that this government has given the City of Winnipeg on that issue.

Shifting gears slightly, polar bear park in the North has been under consideration for some time. Does the minister have any updates for the House on that file?

Ms. Squires: Yes, I can inform the member that I have had some really good discussions with the chiefs and council up at Fox Lake Cree nation and York Factory Cree nation and a really good, extensive dialogue with Split Lake.

* (16:40)

What I can assure the member, though, is that what our government is not going to do is to declare an intention to remove—to declare an ancestral land to a First Nation's park without proper consultation like the members opposite did, in 2015, in the lead up to the last election.

And I can also tell that member that the way in which they conducted themselves in engaging, or rather not engaging, with the First Nations has really set things back significantly and that I had to work with these community leaders and assure them that we would not do what the former government had done, in that's just make declarations without proper consultation, taking community members off, taking them—catching them by surprise and putting relations a step back.

So we've had to undo some of the damage that was caused by the former administration in their rush to have some pre-election announcement about a polar bear provincial park, and we've had to start from scratch and do so in a meaningful and respectful manner.

Mr. Altemeyer: I would just point out that the Protected Areas file for her government is a glaring weakness. The global scientific community, the United Nations, even former Prime Minister Stephen Harper were all in agreement that a much larger percentage of land mass must receive protected status and to be honoured as such, if we are going to retain the fundamental ecological integrity of the earth's biosphere.

To date, the only initiative I am aware of that her government has done on protected areas has been to actually declassify a couple of park reserves and turn them over to a mining exploration operation around Pemmican Island.

So I was merely inquiring about the status of polar bear park. I very much hope that this and other initiatives to expand the amount of protected areas in Manitoba is on this minister's radar.

And so I will ask her more broadly: Will there be any new protected areas announced this year in Manitoba? Because since they came to office, I don't think there's been any.

Ms. Squires: Well, I am going to have to correct this member's false assertions, as well, and remind him that on June 16th, 2017, my former—

the former minister, my colleague from River East, had—she was the minister of Sustainable Development at the time—and Goose Island and Grand Island provincial parks were designated, permanently protecting 1,180 hectares of island habitat on Lake Winnipegosis, including important nesting habitat for the diversity of migratory birds. That was something that had occurred under her watch, under our government's watch.

We are also moving forward with a strategy. We are working with our federal and other provincial colleagues on the 2020 biodiversity goals and targets for Canada, and we certainly do support Canada's goals of, by 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial areas and inland water and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas would be protected.

We certainly believe and support the values for these protected spaces and, in fact, the member—perhaps his memory needs to be refreshed, but, in our climate and green plan, we have a substantial section on protected areas. So it is an area where we are moving forward on. We're doing it in a very respectful manner and proper engagement with our First Nations.

And, on the issue about the mining in provincial parks, I would like to remind members opposite that I know it wasn't—he wasn't the minister, but he was certainly—it was his government that had led to the destruction.

I believe his friend Eric Reder had called it 99 per cent destruction of Grass River Provincial Park when they had issued exploratory and mining permits, not just exploratory permits but mining permits, I believe, in that provincial park, that led to the 99 per cent destruction of that provincial park. So I would like to remind the member that that is his record.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): So I just would like to advise the House that we will continue on with the current list for concurrence.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. I want to thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for the current list. Thank you.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, irony has an interesting way of rearing its head. The one announcement that the minister was able to point to back in June of 2017 was exactly the one that I was referring to.

There were several islands that had been identified in advance, not just by our previous government but by the local First Nation, that park status would be entirely appropriate and those areas had had park reserve status while those conversations and consultations took place.

And it was the First Nation—I spoke with the chief. He reached out to me, and he was the one who was very shocked and surprised that the Pallister government had actually reneged on the direction that his community was in favour of, which was full protection status for all of the areas in question.

Only a couple of them received that designation, and the rest was handed over to a mining operation. So the minister's reference to the so-called green plan is also noteworthy because that plan has not produced a single new protected area either.

Someone who has picked up a bubble gum wrapper in a park has done more for protected areas than this government has managed to do so far in two years in office.

So the minister can continue to say that her government is in favour of the 2020 Biodiversity Goals. I'm glad she's even aware of that. That's a step forward, but to achieve 17 per cent of Manitoba's inland land mass protection by 2020 means that's a challenge that her government will be responsible for.

The next provincial election isn't until October of 2020. We dramatically increased the amount of protected areas in Manitoba, and there is work still to be done. So we will hold the minister to her pledge to honour the 2020 biodiversity challenge.

And we look forward to finding out how an additional 5 per cent of Manitoba's land mass is going to receive protected status within the next two years in a respectful manner, honouring proper duty to consult, section 35 consultations with indigenous communities and peoples.

Speaking of that so-called green plan, can the minister tell us what Manitoba's climate emissions will be in 2018, when this year is done?

Ms. Squires: Well, first of all, I have to address a few comments that the member had put on the record, some erroneous comments regarding The Pathway target.

Now, he should know—and, perhaps, I know research is hard for this member; reading and understanding is hard for this member. But, if

he had read the actual 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada, he would know that the 17 per cent of terrestrial areas and inland waters and then 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas are all—are—is a nationwide target.

And Manitoba is supporting the nation in moving forward with a strategy to enhance the acres of protected areas, hectares in the province of Manitoba, but that doesn't—The Pathway document, and I can provide him a copy. I can provide him the information, I could read it to him as well, but I cannot understand it for him.

* (16:50)

But he'll have to do that heavy lifting himself, but what he needs to know that it does not mean that Manitoba itself is committed to the 17 per cent. It's—we are committed to working with a national goal of 17 per cent. And he can certainly hold me to account on our commitment to work with Canada on its target for biodiversity.

And, in regards to carbon emissions, our plan is to—we have done some modelling, and, of course, we are going to see a significant reduction in carbon emissions over the next five years. In fact, we're going to have 1.07 megatons of carbon emission reductions, according to the modelling that we have used at both the—and we've used two different models. We wanted to ensure that our modelling was providing accurate information. And so we used a model—modelling techniques that provinces across the country—some provinces across the country have used. And then we also used the Environment Canada modelling for our analysis.

And so we're very confident that our modelling is accurate. It's going to show meaningful emission reductions over the next five years. And I would like to point out to members opposite that the only time that they were able to reduce carbon emissions in the province of Manitoba was during a deep recession.

We believe that we can achieve results. We will have results for our economy and we will have results for our environment.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister, it's one that I've asked before, so I'm hoping that I will get an answer.

The—as the minister knows, the biggest point source of phosphorus is the city of Winnipeg, and action to decrease phosphorus coming from the sewage in the city of Winnipeg is dependent on

doing two things. The first is completing the North End treatment plant to the point where it removes phosphorus, and the second is addressing the combined sewer system. And my question is this: What is the—does the minister see as her timeline for achieving the removal of phosphorus and the North End treatment plant and the timeline for addressing the combined sewer issue? Does the minister have a timeline at all, or can the minister specify what the timeline is?

Ms. Squires: So, on the combined sewer overflows, the member will probably note that in 2003, I believe, the CEC had requested the government of the day to do something about the combined sewer overflows. This is a challenge that jurisdictions all across the nation are faced with. Unfortunately, the former administration chose not to address the problem, and they ducked their heads in the sand and ignored it for several years.

And so our government has worked more closely. We're working with the City of Winnipeg and moving forward on a plan to upgrade all the combined sewer overflows. Every year, that work is commencing, and we are certainly moving forward with more aggressive targets than the former administration. Well, the former administration didn't have any targets; they didn't have a plan to upgrade the combined sewer overflows. And our plan is—and the exact timeline that we have given the City of Winnipeg on the combined sewer overflows—it escapes me right now, but I can get that for the member and I can provide him the letter that we had written to the City of Winnipeg on this issue, in November of 2017, giving them a very definitive timeline in which they needed to move forward with their combined sewer overflows.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister didn't talk about the North End treatment plant and the phosphorus removal from the North End 'plant'—treatment plant. Does the minister have a timeline for that?

Ms. Squires: One of the greatest joys that I have coming to work every day with this government is I get to work with all my colleagues, and we have developed a real rapport and a relationship. And it's just a joy for me to work with my colleagues, and I know the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton), the Municipal Relations Minister, he is in talks on a regular basis with the City of Winnipeg, and we are working together to bring these conversations to the forefront. They have been stalled out for many, many years and there has been no activity on the North

End water pollution centre, and our government is moving forward.

So I don't have a timeline. This is—there's a lot of work to be done, but I can assure the member that this is something that we are moving on.

Mr. Altemeyer: Speaking of the Minister for Municipal Relations, he's supposed to be here.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll give him a little break—we'll give him a—the minister a chance to get himself settled.

An Honourable Member: There we go. There we go. All right.

Mr. Altemeyer: That'd be a good example of just-in-time delivery, I think, Mr. Chair.

I'm wondering if the minister, since his colleague so kindly referenced him, if I can ask him a question now. He can thank her for that later, I'm sure.

Could the Minister for Municipal Relations please update the House as to the status of the money that used to be looked after by the Manitoba community services council board? Board, of course, the government got rid of. They were pretty opaque about where the funding was going to go and how that was going to be dealt with. Any updates would be much appreciated.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Again, I thank the member for the question, and also would like to extend a thank you to my colleague. It's great working with a team and working together. It's a pleasure, and I know the member from Wolseley's probably learned a lot over the last two years watching teamwork in action. So it certainly has been a pleasure to share that with the member from Wolseley.

And regarding his question on Manitoba—MCSC, you know, the bottom line is that we had some great dialogue with the organization and we had some discussions early in the year and we've, of course, continued to ensure that we maximize investment to the front-line community organizations and certainly—and we found in the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, as well, that—we found that there's a lot of duplication in administration. So this was an area that was noted that potentially we could send back to front-line community organizations upwards of 11 per cent more to programming for community organizations, and in consultation and

dialogue with organizations across Manitoba, they certainly appreciate the fact that we're committed to them. We're committed to their organizations, we're committed to their volunteers, the hard work that they do on the front lines throughout not only Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba.

And I can, you know, share with the member that I have met with a number of organizations, as a matter of fact, as recently as meeting—two weeks ago I met with the Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation and their entire team and their board and it was a second meeting we've had since I took on this responsibility as Minister of Municipal Relations. And it's been—we've had some great dialogue. We're moving forward collectively on ensuring that we maximize the investments of taxpayers' money to the front lines of the community organizations, and I can also share that they are very, very, very pleased with the relationship—the new relationship—that we're developing with organizations across Manitoba and how we treat them as essentially our customers.

And you know, maybe the member—I don't know if the member had the opportunity to ever run a

business but—and maybe when he's—when he retires in 2020 he may want to look at entrepreneur—*[interjection]* Or perhaps sooner, as the member from St. Vital reminded me. Maybe he will leave sooner. But, again, that's naturally his choice. But maybe he would consider, you know, potentially looking at becoming an entrepreneur and really understanding how customers are treated in order to ensure that you can grow your business, and that relates right to community organizations.

Mr. Chair, you know, we've adopted a new way of dealing with the front-line community organizations in saying, look, you are our customer, we respect you, we know the hard work—

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

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