

Fourth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. 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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 29—The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act**

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 29, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The amendments proposed modernize the act and ensures it responds to the changes in federal legislation.

In 2012, the federal government increased the age for old-age security benefits to start from 65 to 67. In light of this, the new act will eliminate the option to integrate superannuation allowance with old-age security.

These amendments also enable administrative housekeeping amendments including clarifying disability entitlement to ensure that additional pensions to persons who have received long-term disability benefits may apply to employees of a service provider, setting out clear timelines for pension applications and updating the provisions with outdated references and repealing provisions that no longer have effect.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by A. Cook, D. Tratch, N. Rayner and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In keeping with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to have been received by the House.

Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by B. Laba, D. Ogren, C. Mitchell and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Province-Wide Long-Term Care— Review Need and Increase Spaces

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the background to this petition:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

(2) All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoban-Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under the administration of Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as the Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

And this petition has been signed by V. Bauman, I. Muller, H. Muller and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Cottage Fees and Rents— Transparency and Accountability

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government has treated Manitoba cottagers with disrespect by increasing cottage fees and rents.

(2) Manitoba cottagers are willing to pay their fair share, but the provincial government has arbitrarily decided to raise cottage fees and rents by as much as 750 per cent without any clear indication that the money will be used for improved amenities or services for cottagers.

Under sections 18(3) and 20 of The Provincial Parks Act, the financial estimates and statements of each park district are to be prepared and maintained for review by any owner or occupier in a park district.

(4) The member from Flin Flon was quoted in Hansard on March 27th, 2014, suggesting that cottages be removed from provincial parks and be made part of a municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to honour the requirements found in The Provincial Parks Act and to consider working with Manitoba cottagers to ensure transparency and accountability when it comes to their service fees and rents.

This petition is signed by M. Jamiesson, C. Forbes, J. Johnstone and many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route— Information Request

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

(3) The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would've seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly

regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least 'intrusive'—intrusive option to the residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by J. Rak, E. Rak, L. Weiss and many more fine Manitobans.

Province-Wide Long-Term Care— Review Need and Increase Spaces

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under administration of Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

And this is signed by G. Wagner, S. Windsor, F. Howard and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of—to this petition is as follows:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

(2) All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoba will be required to increase—will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under administration of the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) An average occupancy rate for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as the Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuously aging

population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces in communities across the province.

This petition's signed by R. Branconnier, J. Miller and R. Miller and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is—follows:

There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

All trends point to an increasing aging—increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

Last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under administration of the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as the Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

This petition is signed by J. Henderson, B. Henderson, E. Frampton and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Pleased to table the supplementary Estimates for MIT.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Manitoba division of the MS Society, including Donna Boyd, Signy Hansen, Darell Hominuk, Lizelle Mendoza and Shirley Atkins, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum).

And also in the public gallery this afternoon we have with us from Juniper School 36 grade 8 students under the direction of Lorie Henderson and Lucy Mayor, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

And also seated in the public gallery this afternoon we have from Warren Collegiate, we have 50 grade 11 students under the direction of Ms. Lee Stewart, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTIONS

NDP Severance Packages Compensation Disclosure

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my questions today concern the continued cover-up by the Premier of the information related to this departure tax that he's foisted on Manitobans, bonuses that were paid ad hoc to departing members of the Premier's staff.

There is, in the freedom of information act, the clause which states that there is a duty for the government to assist, and it clearly states: "The head

of a public body shall make every reasonable effort"—we know the importance, Mr. Speaker, of the word shall in these places—"shall make every reasonable effort to assist an applicant and to respond without delay, openly, accurately and completely."

It should be noted that in 1999 in spring Estimates when then-opposition leader Gary Doer asked the premier of the day for information on the severance that was paid, that premier released the information to the dollar and included a formula for how the amount was determined.

So I have to ask the Premier: Why not do the right thing, obey the laws of the province and stop covering up the information on a \$670,000 bonus that he's billed wrongly to Manitoba taxpayers?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is that the severance payments paid in the '98-99 period for seven 'steef'—seven key staff members were roughly equivalent to what were paid out this time, \$650,000 in today's dollars versus \$670,000, roughly comparable compensation for people that were severed through mutual agreement.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's just another example of the double standard of the member opposite. He never disclosed that. He never discussed that. He never put that on the record. He—neither did he put on the record his own severance payments at the federal and provincial level. Those were disclosed by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

I know the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is very keen to pursue these issues. I only hope the member opposite would thank him for disclosing information he himself would not disclose.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier is on his tired talking points all right, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is when the information was requested by Mr. Doer, it was disclosed to the dollar, as was the formula. So, in fact, the double standard lies across the way with the Premier, and he needs to search out some new talking points.

Now, he is breaking the law of the province because he is hiding behind a false claim of privacy. Section 17(4) of the freedom of information act provides a number of examples where disclosure of severance agreements is not—I repeat, not—an invasion of privacy. Quote, if the information concerns the details of a financial contract to supply services, it should be released, it should be revealed, it should be disclosed; and if the information refers

to a discretionary benefit of a financial nature, exactly what a severance payment is, it must be disclosed.

Why is the Premier failing to abide by the laws of our province and covering up information which must be, by our laws, released so that Manitobans can have a look at it since they are the ones being asked to pay the bill? Why doesn't the Premier do the right thing, let them find out the details?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member pursues a double standard. He says, on the record, I'm not talking about individual staffers with you guys and I never will, and yet he wants other people to talk about individual staffers on this side of the House. One rule for him, another rule for other people.

The double standard never stops from the member opposite. He may call it a talking point. We call it continuous and chronic behaviour on the part of the Leader of the Opposition, and that's something that's not new but what we see frequently in the House.

We take the best advice we can get from human resource professionals and their legal advisers. That's the advice we follow. We fully comply with all the legislation requirements in Manitoba based on the advice we get, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And I remind the member again, he never disclosed his severance payments; that was the Taxpayers Federation that did that.

Mr. Pallister: I remind the Premier that it's not his money. It belongs to Manitobans, and the Premier is breaking his own laws.

The Premier has also stated on the record in this place that the information regarding severance will be in the public accounts documents this fall. However, that is not the case. First of all, when the information is released, it will only be partial in nature, and it will not disclose the actual detail which Gary Filmon disclosed when Gary Doer asked him for it. And if the contracts for severance were signed after April 1st of this year—in other words, if the government deliberately delayed signing those agreements until after April 1st of this year—then this partial information will only be made available in a year and a half from now, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier admit that, far from being transparent, far from abiding by the spirit, the principle and the letter of the freedom of information act, he is deliberately manipulating and covering up information and hiding secret payments until after the next provincial election?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we put the amount of money out there, \$670,000.

We never had any disclosure from the members opposite of the '98-99 payments of \$650,000. The member couldn't even recount the amount of money that was available; he was completely unaware of it. We never saw him disclose his severance payments, either at the federal level or the provincial level; the Canadian Taxpayers Federation did that on his behalf.

Mr. Speaker, we follow the advice we get from our HR people and our legal advisers that advise those people. We fully comply with the public sector accountability act. We will continue to do that.

And I say to the member opposite, he continues to pursue this line of questioning, but he doesn't want to discuss about his own hidden agenda to reduce jobs in Manitoba. He said he would never build hydro for export purposes. There goes 10,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. Why don't we discuss that in this legislature, why he wants to have less Manitobans working, less reliable electricity in Manitoba? Why doesn't he want to discuss those issues?

Provincial Deficit Balanced Budget Projection

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, what's clear is that no lawyer would've advised the First Minister of that kind of thing. He should take responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Committee of Supply, I asked the Finance Minister if and when he plans to balance the budget, and the Finance Minister responded that there are 120 entities that are included in the summary budget and some of them, he says, the government has no control over. The Finance Minister would not indicate if and when the government would balance the budget because he said he has no control over the operation of total government.

Will the Finance Minister set the record straight and indicate when he will balance the budget?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): What also was—I raised yesterday in the Estimates was

that the members opposite, when they went and knocked on doors in the last election, this member—*[interjection]* He knocked on doors in the last election. He went to all the homes in Morden-Winkler and he told everyone in Morden-Winkler that he—that it was their policy, their plan, to return to surplus in 2018. When they knocked on doors in Steinbach, Mr. Speaker, they said they're going to return to balance in 2018. When they knocked on doors in Tuxedo, they said they're going to return to balance in 2018.

That is our plan, Mr. Speaker. We'll return to balance in 2018.

Mr. Friesen: I want to be clear. Last year in the budget, in the budget papers, there was a projection, a definite date indicated in the future when the budget would be in balance. The budget previous to that one also projected a surplus at a future date, the budget before that one and so on.

However, Mr. Speaker, in this Finance Minister's 2015 budget, there is no date indicated by when the total budget is projected to be in balance.

He must have a projection. Will he share the total projection with this Chamber?

Mr. Dewar: As we discussed yesterday, we're still reporting on summary budget. That will not change. We don't believe that wild fluctuations in summary revenues should dictate how we are providing service to Manitobans, like health care.

While I'm on my feet, it gives me a chance to talk about Manitoba's economic performance's ranking for the last year: full-time employment, No. 1, Manitoba's No. 1; total employment, Manitoba is No. 1; private employment, Manitoba is No. 1.

We make no apologies for growing the economy. The only ones who are disappointed are the members opposite.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing's for certain, there's wild fluctuations between what they say they will do and what they actually do.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has to understand that we're talking about the total budget for the Province of Manitoba. The Finance Minister must understand that the total debt results from the total accumulated budget deficits, and the Finance Minister must understand that debt servicing payments are made on the total debt. The Finance

Minister says the government has no control over the government's total spending.

Will the Finance Minister indicate if he ever expects to balance the total budget?

* (14:00)

Mr. Dewar: As we discussed earlier, discussed in Estimates yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we're still reporting on summary. That has not changed. We don't think that weather, for example, should impact our ability to provide health care or education to Manitobans.

Members opposite, they have a different plan. Their plan is to kill our growth.

As I mentioned, in three or four categories we lead the nation in economic growth. Conference Board of Canada predicts that Manitoba will lead the nation in 2015-2016. We're creating record jobs in this economy in this province. Winnipeg is one of the fastest growing cities in western Canada. Again, we make no apologies for being No. 1.

Winnipeg Police Service Reasons for Increased Costs

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last week the Winnipeg Police Service released its strategic plan, and I want to thank the men and women of the Winnipeg Police Service for all that they do for all of us.

It was noticed within the—it was noted within the plan, Mr. Speaker, that the cost of policing has increased 64 per cent over the last decade, and much of that cost isn't attributable to Criminal Code violations or the things that people might associate police as normally doing. In fact, a large part of those costs are because police are out there on the street looking for missing young people who are under the care of CFS who have left the care of CFS because they were housed inappropriately.

Can the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) acknowledge that it's going to be difficult to get the cost of policing down when this government is so badly mismanaging CFS, which is costing our men and women on the police force time and money?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Of course, I thank the member across the floor for the question. In fact, Winnipeg Police Service does do an extraordinary job. Chief Clunis is doing an extraordinary job; so is his senior executive team.

During my time as the minister of Justice I got to know those folks very well, and I can tell you—and I can tell you—that we had a great relationship when we—because we agreed on three basic principles: (1) yes, we need to suppress crime; (2) we need to intervene when we can to help folks who need that help, but most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we need to prevent crime.

Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House, they don't believe in No. 2 or No. 3.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I wonder, in the Minister of Education's four months as the minister of Justice, if he was able to understand that police are often being called to situations where they take people under detainment when they're experiencing a mental health crisis, and then they bring them to the hospital and they have to wait because there isn't the appropriate care at the hospital. Often the police are waiting there for hours to try to find somebody to deal with the individual who is having a mental health experience. I know that is the situation in Steinbach; it's a situation in Brandon; it's a situation in Winnipeg. Police across the province deal with this, and police are waiting at our hospitals for hours.

How are the police in our province, whether it's WPS or otherwise, expected to get costs down of policing services when they're dealing with a health-care crisis in—a health-care system in crisis and it causes them to wait for hours to get assistance for somebody?

Mr. Allum: I just might add that I would rather have four months in Justice than a lifetime in opposition, as the member from Steinbach does.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I learned during my time in Justice was that there was—I had the chance to meet with the Big City Mayors' Caucus around the very issue raised by the member opposite. We agreed to work together to try to adjust those issues. We have a mental health crisis support unit, as the member well knows, we—but we—more importantly, we are working with our partners across Manitoba to address those issues to make sure people get the help they need when they need it.

Mr. Goertzen: It hasn't been a lifetime in opposition, it just feels like it. But that's going to change soon.

Mr. Speaker, police are not only consuming their time looking for kids who are under the care of CFS who have left inappropriate housing, they're not only consumed of their time going to hospitals and trying

to get assistance for those who are dealing with mental health issues, they're also wasting their time in court trying to testify when cases are getting remanded over and over and over again.

The Winnipeg Police Service is right; they're having a difficult time controlling costs, and they've increased 64 per cent over the last decade. But a large part of that is because of the mismanagement of this government, whether it comes to the court system, the health-care system or CFS.

Why won't this government acknowledge that it's going to be difficult to manage police costs when this government doesn't know how to manage a government?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, what we've done is work in partnership with both the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service as well as all of the municipal police services across the province in order to ensure that we have a balanced approach to when we're addressing justice issues. As I said earlier, there is a place for suppression, crime suppression, but there's also the need for intervention, and then there's also the most important thing, is to intervene to make sure that we keep people out of the justice system in the first place, and if they have been in the justice system one time, to make sure that they don't return.

Mr. Speaker, this government puts a premium on preventing and on prevention, and we will continue to work with our partners across Manitoba in order to ensure that we're preventing people from entering the justice system.

Zebra Mussel Infestation Use of Detection Dogs

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, detection dogs have been used to great effectiveness by many jurisdictions in the fight against zebra mussels.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many detection dogs are currently deployed by Manitoba in its fight against zebra mussels.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I thank the member for the question. It gives me the opportunity to elaborate somewhat on our policy regarding zebra mussels.

And I'd like to just begin my remarks by acknowledging the good works of the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), who in his

time in my office now, Conservation and Water Stewardship, was very active, very proactive, very aggressive struggle—with the struggle against zebra mussels.

And we undertook a very aggressive program last year. This year, again, we are stepping out to make sure that this affliction is contained to the best of our ability. And, yes, using detection dogs is a part of our strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Establishment of Protocols

Mr. Martin: I appreciate the minister's confirmation that there are zero detection dogs currently in use.

Mr. Speaker, zebra mussels were first discovered in the Red River basin over six years ago, and despite the ecological and environmental threat they pose for our waterways, the NDP have no established protocol to prevent their spread.

Parks Canada has announced boats who go to Riding Mountain will have to go through a free mandatory inspection.

Can the minister advise why his government has failed to initiate a similar protocol?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Once again, I'd like to just comment that we are now entering into phase 2, into year 2 of our struggle against zebra mussels. This is a very dangerous affliction that we're facing, and detection and the prevention of spreading to other bodies of water is our first and foremost objective here.

In addition to the dog teams—and members opposite might want to pay attention—we'll be possibly announcing something in the near future in this regard: decontamination units to go out there, an awareness campaign so that people are aware how easily zebra mussels can be spread. Anybody that has a boat knows that a little bit of water in the livewell, that's where the spread occurs, so—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Use of Potassium Chloride

Mr. Martin: No dogs, no protocol, so we're oh for two so far. Let's go for three.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's predecessor spent half a million dollars dumping 400 tons of potash in four harbours. Despite his standing on the SS Minnow and declaring mission accomplished,

those samples, mussels were found almost immediately thereafter.

At what point is the minister planning on resealing affected harbours and reapplying potash, or does he even have a plan?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, I would ask the member opposite to pay attention rather than just spouting off his lines there.

He should be aware that we are in year 2 of our struggle and we are in—entering into phase 2 of our struggle to combat the plague of zebra mussels. Detection dogs, decontamination units, awareness campaigns, a scientific advisory committee to advise us, all of these things combined, Mr. Speaker, will aid us in fighting this year and continuing to fight against this plague in the years to come.

Paramedic Association of Manitoba Consultations Regarding Self-Regulation

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, twice this week the Minister of Health has said that the Health Professions Advisory Council is working with the Paramedic Association of Manitoba regarding the further consultations that will be occurring related to self-regulation. Twice she was wrong.

Why did she say that they are working together when the paramedics can't even get a meeting with the advisory council until the fall?

* (14:10)

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

As I've said earlier, there is work going forward. HPAC has done amazing work, and our first responders do make a difference. And if we're going to move forward into self-regulation, we're going to do it right.

And as I've mentioned earlier, there is communication and the meetings have been set up. Work will keep going forward. And, again, the move to self-regulation needs to be done right, needs to be done prudently, and I look forward to the work that Mr. Duboff and the members of HPAC will be doing with PAM. Whether those meetings happen in the fall, again, that's their schedules, their timing. This is not about political interference and rushing the timeline forward; it's about meeting when they can meet to do the job right.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in its report to the Minister of Health, the advisory council recommended that further consultation with practitioners and stakeholders should be organized by the Paramedic Association of Manitoba. For some reason, the minister ignored that recommendation and instead, in a letter, she directed the council itself to develop and undertake the consultations.

Why did she do that?

Ms. Blady: I will again remind the member opposite that in the letter that was sent to me with the report, the council asked that we meet to discuss the recommendations. In that meeting discussing the recommendations, it was working with HPAC, and it was HPAC's determination that they would be the 'best'—best able to facilitate working with PAM. Their own recommendations state, on pages 3 and 37, as well as in the opening of the—that the idea of consensus-building processes for the purposes of working with the practitioners and shareholders.

They need to work together, they will work together, and they will come to the right conclusions about what is needed for self-regulation.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the advisory committee were the ones that indicated they thought Paramedic Association of Manitoba should be the ones in charge of that consultation and leading that consultation and organized by the Paramedic Association. She directed them otherwise. She turned the whole thing over to the advisory council.

So I would like to ask her to tell us why she is trying to stall the efforts of the paramedics towards self-regulation.

Can the Minister of Health tell Manitobans: What is her hidden agenda in stalling this process?

Ms. Blady: Again, like to thank the member for the question and to again clarify that this is supposed to be—excuse me—it's supposed to be a non-political, non-partisan process, and it is quite unfortunate that members opposite really want to keep continuing to treat this as a political football.

I met with HPAC, and the consensus was, the understanding was and the recommendation from Mr. Duboff himself was that HPAC facilitate this next process. This is the first time that it's happened. So HPAC gave the direction that they would be the ones best suited to work with the Paramedic Association, despite the conspiracy theories of members opposite.

Health-Care Services Doctor Retention

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, we'd hate to see politics get in the way of progress here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, not only are NDP staffers bailing out of the province, but so are Manitoba doctors. We have found that over 2,300 doctors have left the province under the NDP's watch. Clearly, this is not an issue the NDP want to talk about. Now, it's one thing to attract doctors to the province of Manitoba, but it's clearly another to keep them here.

Will the minister be open and transparent and indicate to the House why these doctors have left Manitoba?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question and remind him that while we have more and more doctors coming into the province, we also have things like doctors retiring, doctors passing on.

When we talk about new doctors, the math on the other side fails to recognize that we actually have 665 net new doctors. In other words, each of those doctors has been replaced plus an additional 665.

And, again, it's been those kinds of investments. We've increased class sizes, we've increased training, and this year I was happy to welcome 107 new doctors, including a whole bunch that are eager to get out to rural Manitoba.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the minister understands just how dire the situation is.

In the Prairie Mountain region alone we have over 40 doctor vacancies, and doctors continue to leave. Two out of the three doctors in Glenboro have just tendered their resignation. This will add to the list of vacancies. This emergency room already shares on-call with another facility 30 minutes away with the only doctor remaining.

Is it this minister's agenda to close this emergency room as well?

Ms. Blady: I can assure all Manitobans that our agenda on health care is to keep training and recruiting and retaining more doctors and to do so in rural Manitoba, hence our Physician Resettlement Fund, which is part of our recruitment and retention for both specialists and family practitioners. That's a fund that didn't exist in the 1990s. And so, again, this fund is designed to incent physicians to move to

areas of Manitoba where they're needed most, particularly in rural and northern areas, and the amount of funding a recipient will receive is dependent upon where the physician chooses to relocate.

So we are working to get doctors throughout the province.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: 2,300 doctors have left under their watch. We've got over 40 vacancies in the Prairie Mountain region. We've got at least 23 emergency rooms closed. Altona's ER was closed last week. It looks like Glenboro's next on the list. This is clearly a sign of a system in crisis.

So is it the minister's agenda to simply keep closing emergency rooms in Manitoba?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, I have no secret agenda. I have a very open agenda to keep—I come from a background where I used to train nurses. I was—wonderful to see how we had the increase in nursing staffing, as well as the increases in doctors.

And I can assure members that last year alone, in terms of the international medical grads, we had—we worked with the RHAs and we brought new international medical graduates to Swan River, Morris, Killarney, Gillam, Thompson, Ashern, Garden Hill, Pine Falls, Thompson, Russell, Gladstone and Vita.

And we're going to keep bringing more doctors and more nurses to rural Manitoba.

Energy East Pipeline Electricity Usage Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, from Manitoba Hydro's most recent annual report, the delivery of 32.9 billion kilowatt hours of electricity at a cost of just over \$1.78 billion means it cost Manitoba Hydro, on average, 5.4 cents per kilowatt hour to deliver electricity.

Can the Premier tell this Legislature how much the Energy East Pipeline will be charged for the electricity it uses? Will the rate be, at the very least, the actual cost to produce and deliver electricity to the pipeline?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I would like to thank the member from River Heights for the question about whether or not there's—what the rate will be for hydroelectricity if and when it's used by the Energy East Pipeline if and when it's approved by the National Energy Board.

We will be making a very vigorous intervention to ensure that water is protected in Manitoba and the communities are safe and that the environment is protected.

And if they decide—if the project is approved by the National Energy Board, we will ensure that there's no subsidy on the energy if they choose to use Manitoba Hydro. I understand currently they use gas. If they want to switch to Manitoba Hydro, they will obviously have less greenhouse gas emissions, and it will not be subsidized.

Mr. Gerrard: It's difficult to understand why Manitoba Hydro is asking for a rate increase of 3.95 per cent at the same time as the government is considering selling a large amount of power to the Energy East Pipeline at much lower rates than Manitoba's residential customers will be paying.

I ask the Premier to tell the Legislature today: Will the Energy East Pipeline be charged the same rates as Manitoba's residential customers, including, should it pass, the proposed 3.95 per cent increase?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, we're going to make a full intervention to ensure that water is protected in Manitoba, that communities are safe and that we also ensure that the environment's going to be protected.

If and when that project is approved, and they decide to select Manitoba Hydro for their booster stations for that transmission for that pipeline, we will ensure that there is no subsidy to that pipeline. I put that on the record with the member of the Legislature. And when that day comes, we will make sure that there is no subsidy for that hydroelectricity, if they choose to use it, Mr. Speaker. That will be our position.

* (14:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has repeatedly said that he does not support a Clean Environment Commission review of the Energy East Pipeline. Liberals believe that instead of today's NDP government arrogantly dictating what is in the best interests of Manitobans, all Manitobans should be allowed the best possible input into consideration of the Energy East Pipeline.

What message are Manitobans expected to hear when today's NDP government limits public input on the Energy East Pipeline by not holding Clean Environment Commission hearings and, at the same time, today's NDP considers providing power to

Energy East at lower rates than Manitoba's residential customers pay?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the member from River Heights clearly hasn't heard the answer I gave to the previous two questions. There will be no subsidized rate. There will be no rate that subsidizes any hypothetical use of hydro going forward.

I do remind the member opposite that the Liberal Party of Canada supports the Energy East Pipeline, and he's a Liberal so he's supporting the pipeline. Presumably he thinks it's a good idea, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that water's safe in Manitoba, we want to make sure communities are safe, we want to make sure the environment is protected.

And there's no subsidy for the pipeline for Manitoba Hydro. That will protect Manitoba ratepayers; that will protect Manitoba residential consumers and every other consumer in Manitoba. They will in no way be subsidizing a pipeline going through Manitoba.

Disabled and Special Needs Youth Visit to SSCY Centre

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): A building at 1155 Notre Dame in the Weston community of Tyndall Park has been refurbished, refreshed, and it will house the Specialized Services for Children and Youth.

Can the Minister of Health please tell us what exciting news we have for that facility?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I don't know about other parents, but I always like to think that our children's—with our children's potential, the sky's the limit. And it was wonderful to be with my colleague from Tyndall Park, with the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Ms. Wight) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today to visit a place where exactly that kind of potential will be fulfilled at SSCY, the Specialized Services for Children and Youth.

It's a wonderful partnership between Manitoba Health, Family Services and the WRHA, as well as a number of community service providers. The agencies will be located on-site that include the Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Manitoba society for—Society for Manitobans with Disabilities and Community Respite Service.

I hope I have time in my limited answer here to give the specialized services list that will be at SSCY: child development services; central intake

and delivery of therapy services, including audiology, occupational, physical and speech language therapies; a communication disorders clinic; rehabilitative services, including—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Health-Care Services Doctor Recruitment

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): The Health Minister and her NDP government—we better restart this, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if she's quite finished.

Mr. Speaker, this Health Minister and her NDP government continue to have a problem with doctor recruitment. NDP waste is hurting front-line services.

I would like to take this time to commend community volunteers and leaders on the northeast health committee for their dedication and commitment to taking it on into their own hands to recruit doctors to our wonderful region of Manitoba. This week they are hosting a doctor and their family to show off what we have to offer.

Why are hard-working Manitobans doing this minister's job?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): And I, too, would like to thank community members, because it is in fact RHAs and communities that work together on doctor recruitment.

I don't know if the member opposite seems to think that I post the ads and personally interview every doctor and then hand place them throughout the province. It's kind of a reflection of his ignorance of the system if that's how he thinks this operates.

We—it's about—we put the funding together and the RHAs work with communities to make sure that they get the right doctor in the right place for their communities.

Mr. Ewasko: Classy, Mr. Speaker, pretty classy in the House today, pretty classy.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans can't believe a word that this minister is saying. Under this NDP government, we have seen a major doctor recruitment crisis.

To fund these recruitment efforts, local municipalities are being asked to chip in from their sources of revenue to aid in this project which is being undertaken in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Manitobans are stepping up while this minister is stepping out or too busy. What is she busy doing?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, like to assure Manitobans I was busy, along with members of our department, negotiating a contract with Doctors Manitoba, for one thing. That's making sure that our doctors are well paid and we're working together on appropriateness of care and billing, ensuring that the best services are provided to our patients and our Manitoba citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we have more—we are training more professionals, hiring more doctors, and our Family Doctor Finder has already connected over 20,000 Manitobans with front-line care.

And so, again, we're working for Manitobans, and we appreciate the work that the RHAs and communities do in supporting doctors coming to their communities.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, obviously this minister's been up to something, because it took her over three months to respond to a doctor retention issue we had in the IERHA when it was even too late, Mr. Speaker, between the months of December and March.

Mr. Speaker, 2,300 doctors have left this wonderful province of ours. The Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority has 30 doctor vacancies. The Prairie Mountain regional health authority has 40-plus doctors missing in their area, 24-plus ERs closed. The Pine Falls-Pinawa and Beausejour ERs are closed more often than they're open.

This minister continues to fail Manitobans due to her inability to fulfill her responsibility of responding to individuals in a timely manner.

Leaving these people with serious concerns in the dark for over three months is unacceptable. Where is this Health Minister?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

The member opposite mentions vacancies; vacancies mean there's money on the table for the doctors to be there. That's what this department does, that's what this government does, is make sure that the money is there.

Members opposite, how they address their vacancy issue, they just cut the positions. We recruit, we train, we hire; they cut.

Prairie Mountain Health Access to Family Doctors

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I've lived in the town of Neepawa for 69 years. Sixty-seven of those years I had a family doctor. I have no family doctor now and I haven't had a family doctor in my community for two years.

Where are all these doctors?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Well, I can assure all Manitobans that, in fact, according to CIHI, Manitoba is among the best in the nation on national doctor retention. Manitoba has more doctors practising in rural Manitoba than anywhere else west of the Maritimes, including our neighbours in Saskatchewan and Ontario. We have—for every 100,000 people in Manitoba, we have 204 doctors. Saskatchewan only has 184.

And I look forward to welcoming the class that graduated this year. Many of them expressed a desire to practise in rural Manitoba. We welcome them there.

Mr. Briese: That class graduated this year, they immediately exported 40 doctors from it.

Prairie Mountain region—I wish she talked to the regional health authorities—is 40 doctors short. The doctors in Neepawa are not taking new patients. Doctors in Carberry are not taking new patients. The doctors in Minnedosa are not taking new patients. The closest I could probably get a family doctor is Brandon, which is an hour drive away.

I—as I said earlier, I've had a doctor in my own community for 67 years, and for the last two years I cannot access a doctor in my own community.

Once again I ask: Where are these missing doctors?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

I am hoping that he's tried our family doc finder because I know that that's connected 23,000 people with doctors, most people within the same day.

And of the 107 new graduates, yes, 77 will stay in Manitoba to complete their residency, but just because they're completing their residency elsewhere doesn't mean that they don't come back home to Manitoba. And I know that 34 are moving, again, towards studies in family medicine, 19 in family medicine in rural and northern Manitoba. And I know young Kyle Conrad will be completing his

Family Medicine Rural Stream Residency in Boundary Trails Health Centre.

* (14:30)

So rural doctors are coming to Manitoba and staying and staying in their home communities if they can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The time allowed for question period has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: And now time for private members' statements.

World MS Day

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Today, May 27th, is World MS Day. Though multiple sclerosis is not fully understood, this disease affects millions of people around the world and thousands here in Manitoba.

MS is thought to be an autoimmune disease which damages the central nervous system. We do not know what causes the disease, we do not have a way of predicting it and we have yet to find a cure. While this disease is not deadly under normal circumstances, it does seriously affect a significant portion of our population. When the disease is severe, it can cause extreme fatigue, vision problems, mood changes and cognitive impairment.

Almost every family in Manitoba knows someone affected by MS. But we are not giving up hope in battling this disease. There is promising research being done to combat MS right here in Manitoba and our government is proud to support this work.

Our government is contributing \$1.5 million to help fund the first Canadian clinical trial studying the use of mesenchymal stem cells to treat multiple sclerosis. Since 2011, we have invested another \$3.5 million towards the fight against MS; part of that has been a \$1-million contribution for the development and certification of a stem cell production facility in Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre.

The MS Society of Canada is one of our strongest partners in this fight. This organization has existed since 1948 and today counts a membership of about 28,000 people across Canada. It is the only national organization that provides services to those with MS and funds for research into the disease.

The MS Society, Manitoba branch, is an incredible advocate, partner and friend in this challenging journey for patients throughout our province.

We are joined today by Signy Hansen, chair of government relations standing committee of the Manitoba division of the MS Society of Canada; Darell Hominuk, director of client services and government relations; Giles Ringer, a member of the government relations committee; as well as Lizelle Mendoza and Shirley Atkins who are both MS ambassadors.

On behalf of all members in the Chamber, I would like to thank you, all of you, for your amazing work that you and your organize do—your organizations do on behalf of all Manitobans.

Thank you.

MS Awareness Month

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Alongside Canadians across our entire country, we in the PC caucus have been proud to recognize the month of May as Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

Multiple sclerosis, or MS, is a disease that affects the lives of thousands of Manitobans and their families daily. It is estimated that every day three Canadians are diagnosed with MS, which can occur at any age and can cause such systems as loss of memory, muscle strength, vision, speech and hearing. Currently there is no cure for MS.

But, Mr. Speaker, this does not mean that those living with MS and their families live without hope. There are individuals across Canada who work day in and day out to find a cure and advance treatment options through important research, advocacy and care.

Throughout May, the MS Society of Canada, including here in the Manitoba division, have been busy raising awareness, informing and educating the public and engaging new and existing supporters in their efforts towards finding a cure to end MS.

Today we are proud to don red carnations indicating our support of the MS Society's efforts and our support of all who live daily with the challenges of MS. The red carnation is Canada's oldest symbol of the hope of finding a cure to end multiple sclerosis. The carnation is well known for both its beauty and long-lasting nature, symbolic of the efforts of so many striving to find a cure for

MS and enhancing the quality of life for those living with it.

Mr. Speaker, as there is still no known cure for multiple sclerosis, we stand with Manitobans today to bring awareness of MS and all who are afflicted by it.

We also stand today to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the MS Society here in the Manitoba division, an organization that works tirelessly to ensure that everyone with MS in Manitoba has the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of life and to educate the public for the benefits of all who live with MS.

And finally, we stand today to offer our support and let all those with MS and their families know they do not face MS alone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Stella Hussey Retirement

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Joining us in the gallery today is Stella Hussey, principal of École Assiniboine in St. James. Stella's been working in schools for 42 years, but is now saying goodbye as principal to start her well-earned retirement.

Stella was born in New Brunswick and from a young age knew that she wanted to help others and work with young people. She began teaching in 1973, and at that time her husband Carl was a member of the Armed Forces, which meant they did a lot of moving. But she didn't let that stop her.

From Ontario to BC and even to Germany for five years, she always kept teaching wherever she was needed most. In 1988, they came to live and settle down in Manitoba, and Stella soon began working at Bannatyne school as the French co-ordinator. In 2000, she became the principal of École Assiniboine and has remained there since.

I have to state that this is a principal who is so well liked that I hear accolades about her from constituents while I'm on the doorstep.

Stella has said before that one of the biggest highlights of teaching is having students come back years later to let her know how much she influenced their lives. It's educators like this that have such an impact on so many young people. They inspire countless students to enjoy a life filled with learning and encourage children to believe in themselves,

providing them with experiences they will never forget.

Stella will be retiring only a few short weeks from now, but that will not stop her from helping others. Students and staff can expect to see her back at École Assiniboine in September to volunteer because she still loves being at the school with the students and staff.

She will certainly be missed by teachers and students alike, including my own children. And from personal experience, I can attest to the joy and sense of playfulness with which Stella engages children.

I'm happy to take this opportunity to thank you, Stella, for inspiring so many young people to learn.

Thank you.

French Public Speaking Competition

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, public speaking is an essential skill that is becoming more important to practise in everyday life. Learning to speak publicly in another language is even more beneficial and valuable.

Our province is filled with talented youth who participate in public speaking competitions, including the Concours d'art oratoire, a public speaking competition where students prepare and present speeches in French.

Cet événement annuel est organisé par Canadian Parents for French et qui s'est déjà déroulé pour plus que 30 ans.

Translation

This annual event is organized by Canadian Parents for French and has been held for over 30 years.

English

The competition has several tiers, ranging from the classroom, divisional and province-wide levels of competition. Every year, the provincial level of this competition takes place at l'Université de Saint-Boniface.

The Concours d'art oratoire provincial competition took place on May 2nd, and I had the pleasure of attending the event. Students from grades 3 to 12 in early immersion, late immersion, core French and core extended French programs participated in various levels of competition.

Tous les étudiants sont jugés sur la voix, la qualité de langue, leurs choix de sujet et leurs gestes.

Translation

All students are judged on voice, quality of language, choice of subject and gestures.

English

High school students are asked two to three questions in addition to their presentation. All participants in the competition receive certificates of participation at the divisional level, and cash prizes, trophies and ribbons are awarded at the provincial level.

I would like to congratulate the 65 medallists in the 25 levels of provincial competition, which I would like to include in Hansard. I would also like to acknowledge Angelica Castellaneta, Pol Ferreres-Garcia, Andréa Rondeau-Brown, Kayla Peters and Imane Marrakchi, the grade 11 and 12 provincial finalists who will represent Manitoba at the national competition level in Ottawa on May 30th, 2015.

A tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative, je vous prie de me joindre et reconnaître les étudiants manitobains qui ont participé dans le Concours provincial d'art oratoire.

Translation

I would ask all the members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing the students from Manitoba who participated in the provincial public speaking competition.

English

I ask that all members join me in acknowledging the Manitoba students who participated in the provincial Concours d'art oratoire French public speaking competition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lillian Lakser-Merz, Abby Cesmystruck, Gus Bonnefoy, Lucy Liu, Katherine Robinson, Tavis Derksen, Megan Burns, James Nowell, Maya Barnabé, Katia Djomo Wongep, Kiana Meister, Aminah Salem, Calum Remillard, Safiya Ratana, Natalia Neufeld, Andrew Estabillo, Sakshi Badesha, Adi Groumoutis, Sarah Cull, Teun Keijzer, Émelyne Surville-Barland, Meredith Rose, Jéric Lavoie, Sydney Dillabough, Bethany Kolisniak, Isaac Cassels, Emma Callbeck, Lillian Borger, Carlie Heinrichs, Arishya Aggarwal, Roene Nasr, Madeline Ritter, Suprova Hossain, Milèna Audino, Sophie

Conner, Ryan Hay, Shaelyn Burr, Kiera Nichol, Linnéa Cox, Jasmin Tang, Jordyn White, Sophie Partyka, Mariia Nevoit, Maggie Melnychuk, Michael Kehler, Svaytik Artemenko, Sélina Audino, Emma Borger, Andréa Rondeau-Brown, Laura Phrakonkham, Sabrina Kendall, Kayla Peters, Kitty Kerr, Angelica Castellaneta, Danielle Cherpako, Pol Ferreres-Garcia, Parsa Mansouri, Imane Marrakchi, Brianna Ritchot, Alexie Marion, Sukhcharhat Dhillon, Jason Cegayle, Anya Ingram, Ceilidh Simon.

Manitoba's Health-Care System

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I speak today of the problems Manitoba Liberals have exposed in our health-care system under today's NDP.

There have been numerous reviews, including many of emergency department operations, the latest from the inquest into Brain Sinclair's death. There have also been many other reviews like that of the emergency medical system in 2013.

After almost 16 years of NDP government, we have a fractured and fragmented health information system with enormous gaps. A provincial information system is essential to understand how our health-care system delivers care and to make improvements.

* (14:40)

But as we found, numerous ERs in Manitoba don't even have an Emergency Department Information System. We also found different information systems which cannot even communicate with one another being used within a single RHA.

The NDP has a Tower of Babel approach with poor and fractured communication.

Assessing the implementation of recommendations of the emergency medical system review, it is horrifying that after two years, so little has been done. It is also sad that Mr. Reg Toews, who spearheaded the report, has been removed and that progress has halted. This is very upsetting considering the emergency medical system was declared to be in crisis in 2007.

Today paramedics are working under horrendous conditions, sometimes for days on end without rest and, as a result, suffering tremendous psychological stress. The system is so fragmented because leadership has been swaying in the wind and most of the report's recommendations have been gathering cobwebs.

This government, from here on, in testament to its lack of ability to implement basic, badly needed and recommended improvements, should be known as the cobweb government.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that concludes members' statements.

We'll now move on to grievances—oh, pardon me, before I forget.

Is there leave of the House to include the names that the honourable member referenced in his members' statement, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko)? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order, okay.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Minister of Health put on the record a word that I think was not reflective of the honourable way in which all members would like to be treated in this House. She referred to a member of the House as being ignorant.

Mr. Speaker, I find, regardless if that particular word falls within the various words within Beauchesne's and within our own past rulings, as being unparliamentary.

I would cite O'Brien and Bosc, Mr. Speaker, on unparliamentary language, which indicates that any reflection and use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden.

I certainly would consider that to be offensive, Mr. Speaker, to any member of the House. All of us come here with our own views and our own ideas, and we express them, often passionately.

And the Minister of Health has the right to disagree, if she chooses, with any member of this House, but she doesn't have the right, I don't believe, to make an offensive comment about a member. And I would ask that she withdraw that comment.

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the—I'm not certain as, to be frank, whether or not in fact that particular word that is on the list of words that are prohibited by the House. There has been, certainly, in the last little

while, references to individuals in this Chamber that I think have caused some difficulty on all sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think that, if in fact that word was used, and if in fact it is on a—it is—has offended a particular member of this House, I think that—I don't think there will be a problem with the Minister of Health withdrawing that particular word.

And I'd—so I'm recommending, Mr. Speaker, that on the next occasion or opportunity, when that member's in the House, that that word will be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on the same point of order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment briefly. Because I believe that it is not just the word, but it is in part the context and it is part how the word was used and pronounced which becomes important in this particular circumstance. And I think, if you will review the—what was said, and the text as it was said in the tapes, that that will be important in considering your ruling in this circumstance. And my reflection of what I heard was that this was used in a way which should not be used in this Chamber.

And so I think that the member for Kildonan east should be, well, thanked for his intervention and his willingness to ask the minister to withdraw that, but I think it's also important that when this ruling, whatever it may be, is considered in the future, that there be some context and some assessment of the way in which the word is used, because we don't want to have ignorant being used in every context as being considered unparliamentary. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, the honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Yes, as to the point of order, I would just like to remove the word ignorance from my statement if that is to the pleasure of the House and to the Speaker and with my apologies to all members in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable Minister of Health for withdrawing the word that was used that was the matter of the point of order that was raised by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). I believe that will conclude the matter since the apology's been given and the word

has been withdrawn, and I thank the honourable minister for that.

I hope that will resolve the matter and thank honourable members for their advice on this as well.

And while I'm on my feet, I want to again caution all honourable members. I know that this place can sometimes be—have items in here that come before this Chamber that are hotly contested, and there are strong feelings on both sides of these matters.

But I caution all honourable members, when you're asking questions or answering questions or providing comments during speeches, that we pick and choose, as so many Speakers before me have said, please pick and choose your words very, very carefully, because any word in particular can be—cause disorder in the House, and Speakers are obligated to stand up and to take these matters seriously and to make sure that they bring the House back into order.

And so to prevent that disorder from happening, I'm asking all honourable members, please pick and choose your words very carefully to prevent disruption of the House activities.

So I hope that will resolve the matter with respect to the point of order, and we can conduct ourselves respectfully in the future.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now that we've dealt with that, I'd like to call grievances. Are there any grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to resolve the House into Committee of Supply in three sections. In the Chamber will be Education and Advanced Learning for today, in the room—in room 255 will be Finance, and in room 254 will be Family Services.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair in the Chamber, and the various committee Chairs to the committee rooms. Thank you.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

* (14:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Matt Wiebe): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I have some answers that I'd like to put on the record.

From the member opposite, he asked what kind of training do TigerTel employees have and are they trained in CFS policy. Prior to me putting that on the record, I'd like to put on some facts around the minutes used per month by TigerTel. In 2008-2009, it was used an average of 2,893 minutes per month. In 2014-2015, it was used 1,162 minutes per month. So that is a drastic reduction. And, in March, for example, TigerTel was used for 344 minutes, a decrease of 27 per cent since 2014.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Chairperson, in the Chair

It's a system that fluctuates, and so I think when you're looking at the statistics about how the minutes used, that it needs to reflect the averages. However, when hired, TigerTel agents are trained on the TigerTel phone system then shadow other agents as the other agent takes calls for two weeks. They are trained on how to handle a wide variety of situations. After two weeks, they start taking basic calls but continue to shadow other agents. For the first month, they have a senior-level agent sitting with them on every call to provide support. When a call comes in from ANCR, they have a specific script to follow and additional information sheets tailored to Manitoba CFS. Again, I would like to stress that the majority of calls are handled by the professionals at ANCR, and the TigerTel is used only when there are not staff available. And the staff aren't available because they're out in the community supporting families across the city.

The other question that the member asked were how many vacancies, and in the after-hours services there's approximately 1.4 FTE that is vacant.

There were some questions on Thrive! and the five-year autism strategy, and I can tell you that the representation on the committee is a combination of government and community membership. It is the Asperger Manitoba, Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment, Autism Society of Manitoba, Manitoba Family Services including front-line and program staff, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, parents raising children including adult children with ASD, as well as self-advocates who are consumers of autism services.

The ASD leadership group has three priorities: that's to improve access to diagnostic services; a community-managed website, which we've been working with them to implement; a pilot project for young adults to promote independent living and vocational and social-recreational skills. And that is—Transforming Futures is one of those initiatives as well. In this budget year, we had an initiative around a hub called Building Independence that we'll be funding as well to support it.

So we are working with the leadership group. The leadership group last met in 2014, so last year it met. But I think what is very significant is you need to be aware that there are working groups that are meeting on a regular basis and they are making significant progress in our projects or in our priorities that we have listed.

There was questions around the annual intake for the early learning program, how many students are allowed in ABA each year. So the annual intake for early learning program is there are 74.5 funded early-learning spaces. However, the number of children that enter the program varies each year, and that's because the children are entering and exiting the program at different times. And that's partly because, as well, that there is an intensity of service that is different depending on the needs of the child.

I can tell you over the last three years the number of children that have been served. In 2012-13 was 110; 2013-14 was 118; and 2014-15 was 116. The school-aged learning program, there is not a designated number of funded space, it is helping within co-ordination of education as well as Family Services, and also based on the needs of the youth and what the parents are interested in happening or want to see happen.

All right, and now there was a question about the wait-list for ABA. So, as we are aware and spoke about last—yesterday, last time we met, we know that there is a marked increase in the number of children

that are diagnosed with ASD and that, certainly, is putting pressure across the system. We are very aware of the impact of children being on the wait-list for the ABA program. That's why we are continuing to support ABA but also looking at supporting the continuum of services.

For the autism early learning ABA program, as of April 30th, there are 79. Autism school-age program, there is one; post-school-age consultative services, there are 23. I want it made very clear that as there're children on the wait-list we are providing a number of services to them.

The parent support model delivered by the St. Amant provides, whose children are wait-listed for early learning ABA program with training and assessment, goal setting and consultation. The service enables parents to begin using evidence-based strategies with their child. The child development services are also provided. The services offered through Children's disABILITY Services program provides a child development worker to work with parents to identify the child's strengths and goals. Train and consultation is provided either in the family's home or in a licensed child-care setting to assist the children to develop and learn new skills.

Autism Outreach is delivered by the Family Services staff and provides families with play-based, child-led flexible model of support for pre-school children. It provides parents with training and consultation on evidence-based autism intervention approaches. Since 2012, as I said yesterday, we've been able to hire five autism early intervention specialists; that has expanded the services to rural Manitoba. Children with ASD attending licensed child-care facilities are also eligible to receive support through the inclusion support program.

Child-care centres can get support to ensure children with additional needs are able to participate in the child-care program. The school-aged and children diagnosed with ASD are eligible to receive a number of services through the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and they can share information on those services for you.

Additional services and supports are provided to families through the Family Support Services program and it's a needs assessment is completed, and a family support plan is developed, and based on that family support plan, we could be providing families with respite and that's including nursing

respite if that's necessary; supplies, assistive technology devices.

The Early Childhood Development program maximizes the child's development in potential areas of self-help, motor skills, socialization, communication. There's also the Summer Skills Maintenance program to support children, and for adolescents we have the after-school care for adolescents. There's also assistance if necessary for transportation to and from medical appointments and also if—we will also provide home modifications if that's required.

So I think that answers the questions that were left outstanding, and I thank the member for his patience for allowing me the time to put them on the record.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I thank the minister for that, and I will certainly make sure that those questions are passed along to those that expressed an interest in that area.

I did want to ask one little follow-up on that in terms of inclusion support programs. Is that available at all licensed day-care centres?

*(15:00)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, it is. It's an application-based program, so depending on the child's need, it's—the application can be made by the director of the centre.

Mr. Wishart: The minister is certain that that's available to private licensed day-care centres?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I will confirm that. I think that the services that we provide are for the not-for-profit organizations, the child-care centres. That is our focus. Our system is built on not-for-profit child-care facilities and provides a great service for Manitoba families.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the minister checking on that, and I certainly look forward to any correction being added where appropriate in this.

And I—before we wrap things up, I did have a couple things I wanted to mention. It's very interesting that 2008 was the last time that there was extensive use of TigerTel, which was also, I think, the year that there was another issue with children in hotels. So I think that that may actually prove our point, that there is a linkage between the number of children in hotels and the usage of this system.

Going on from there, I did have a few questions about the five-year plan for the St. Amant Centre that

I wish to—and I know the minister touched on that in some of her statement. I understand from talking to some of the parents that this is a voluntary plan to move people from St. Amant back into the community.

Could the minister elaborate a little bit more about what the nature of this plan is?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, the St. Amant board of directors, as well as the executive management, have come up with a strategy to transition people who do not require 24-hour nursing care into the community residential settings. There has been ongoing communication with parents and with residents themselves around this strategy. Really, they are committed—St. Amant is committed to ensure that the level of care provided in the new facility does not change. They'll also free up space in the River Road facility for people who do require specialized services.

We recognize that the transition can be difficult for residents and families. There is a transition steering committee that's been established to manage the transition planning. St. Amant will continue to meet with staff through the transition, answer all of their questions and their concerns.

We often, and I—we know this from the MDC debate around the differing belief systems of where people should be served and how there are folks who believe community living is the only option, and I know that there are individuals, professionals and families that feel the security of a residential care facility and are fearful of what will happen to their loved one in the community.

I want to assure you that the transitional steering committee will continue to have the conversations with the parents, will do all that they can to alleviate the concerns as they transition their—the residents into the community. The philosophy is, is to provide community living, to improve and increase independence for particular residents that are able to do that.

So I will continue to have conversations with the leadership of St. Amant. Their goal is to move approximately 15 residents per year over the next five years, and as they have been doing that already for at least one year, and it could be that they've done it for two years, this is their—they're in their second year right now, and they're seeing some success. But, as I said, that they have a responsibility and they know they have that responsibility to make sure

they're sharing information and alleviating any of the concerns that family members or residents could have.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I thank the minister for that explanation.

The minister specifically mentioned only those that do not require 24-hour nursing care would be eligible to be moved into the community, and in terms of the decision-making process on who requires 24-hour care and who does not, could the minister enlighten me as to—is the decision maker—alternate decision maker in most cases, part of that discussion process?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, you're correct that the families are a part of it. The substitute decision maker is a part of the conversation about what is the care plan for the resident, as well as the professionals are making that decision together. They're doing it in a co-operative way.

What we are able to do because of—the facility at St. Amant has the cottages that are available, that there is a—if necessary, that there is a two-step phase-in—of going into the community. And the first phase would be leaving the residential-care facility and moving into one of the cottages with the supports that they need, and that could help, you know, alleviate if there's any stress around it, help with the transition if there's any further assessment that needs to happen, and when it is deemed by the decision makers that are working with the particular resident, when they're ready to move into the community that then will be the option for them. So, yes, folks are sitting around the table together co-operatively coming up with the information, the decisions.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister.

So this is a consensus decision? Everyone must agree?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm not able to confirm that it is a consensus model or not. I can confirm that the interested parties are at the table apart and having the conversation.

As we have spoken many times before, and we know with the MDC experience that there are a number of individuals that medically, socially and emotionally could be out in the community, but there are families that do not feel comfortable with that. I am very confident that the transitional steering committee will continue to work with those families

that are struggling with that decision and come up with a resolution that everyone can accept, and what is most important is that what is in the best interest of that resident. And those conversations sometimes are very, very difficult if the people are polarized. But I have full confidence that they will be able to alleviate those concerns and together make a decision that best serves that resident.

Mr. Wishart: Well—and I thank the minister.

And it is particularly interesting that this has a transitional facility attached to it that may help in terms of acclimatizing people back into the community that have been, in many cases, out of the community for very long periods of time, something we did not enjoy in the case of the MDC for those that are returning to the community.

One of the policy issues at the time—and I hope it's not still in place but was in place at the time of MDC—is if they had been out but returned to the community for six months they were no longer eligible to return to the facility should they have a period of time when they had a relapse and needed additional supports. That will not be the policy in this case?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We'll have to consult with St. Amant to make sure that we're giving you the most accurate information. We will do that. I'm not sure that you can compare the MDC experience to the St. Amant because they're making these transitions under different reasons. And I think because of the MDC and the human rights complaint that was placed and that—it was—you only—to get back into MDC it has to be a court order.

So we will contact St. Amant and get the information as soon as possible for you.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the minister's comments on that, and when the minister does acquire this additional information, if we either put it in—have it put into the record of Hansard or at least a letter stating—

An Honourable Member: I'll send you a letter.

Mr. Wishart: Yes, so that people are—have some assurance around this.

And that said, I believe I'd like to thank the staff and the minister for their patience in regards to this Estimates process, and we're prepared to let it go to vote.

* (15:10)

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable opposition critic and the minister.

So, hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$451,616,000 for Family Services, Community Service Delivery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$217,512,000 for Family Services, Community Engagement and Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$484,138,000 for Family Services, Child and Family Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,521,000 for Family Services, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$401,000 for Family Services, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

As you all know, the last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 9.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 9.1.

At this point, we'll kindly ask the minister's staff to leave the front table for the consideration of this last item, and we thank you very much for your time with us here.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wishart: I move that line 9.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion—oh, sorry.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Portage that line item 9.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I'm sure that my friend from Portage will want to put some words on the record as well, just simply to say that we know that there have been a number of very public and tragic situations around Child and Family Services, which no one takes pleasure in and which everyone, I think, feels saddened by. But, ultimately, not everyone around this table is responsible for the Ministry of Family Services. Only one person is, is the minister, and while that might be a difficult job to have, and I don't think anybody's ever said that it isn't a difficult job to have, it is the one that she does have, and responsibility and accountability come with that, and she knows that.

And, as a result of that, we don't bring forward these motions on every ministry or on every minister or every time, but they are brought forward as a way to ensure that people understand that there are significant concerns within the department, how it's being run at the top, how the outcomes and the results are tragic and difficult for Manitoba, and so we brought these forward for those reasons, along with others, which may want to be articulated by my friend from Portage.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Steinbach.

And, certainly, he's very right. This is a difficult time and a difficult job, but, ultimately, responsibility remains in one place, and I know that the public is quite concerned. I repeatedly hear from members of the public at events that certain aspects of this department's activities are not going particularly well and that changes need to be done and that the public seems to have quite an ambitious expectation of what can be done to deal with some of these issues, particularly in the area of child and family services where we have had some very public issues arise that have certainly left the general public in Manitoba very concerned about how this is being handled.

So, that said, I appreciate that this is a difficult job for the minister, but we do have to hold responsibility.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further comments, is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my humble opinion, the Nays kind of won that one.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Remarkable. A formal vote has been requested by two members. This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess to allow this matter to be reported and for members to proceed to the Chamber for the vote.

The committee recessed at 3:17 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:10 p.m.

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): Okay, we're going to resume and conclude. This section of the Committee will—of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

We have one last item of business to complete for this department.

Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,605,000 for Family Services, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of— is for the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Shall we—[*interjection*] No, we can keep going. The minister's here. We'll just bring the minister up. Who's the critic? [*interjection*] Okay. Good, there, we're set.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Yes, I have.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): The honourable minister.

Mr. Saran: I am pleased to represent—present to this committee for its consideration the 2015-16 expenditure Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development. I look forward to engaging in a constructive discussion regarding the direction our government has set out for the department in these Estimates.

Creating strong, healthy and sustainable communities across our province with our community partners remains a priority for the Manitoba government. We will invest in a number of key areas during the 2015-16 fiscal year to improve social and affordable housing, revitalize neighbourhoods and support community and co-operative development opportunities.

A year ago, we achieved a five-year commitment to create 1,500 new affordable housing units and 1,500 new social housing units. Building on this success, Manitoba Housing is currently undertaking a new commitment to support 500 new affordable housing units and 500 new social housing units.

Manitoba Housing continues to preserve the quality, functionality and long-term viability of the provincial social housing stock by undertaking major capital improvements. There are multiple benefits to this investment: tenants live in a home they can take

pride in; neighbourhoods are revitalized; and efficient upgrades improve our environmental footprint.

The department is facing the decline of federal funding as operating agreements expire under the social housing agreement. As federal funds decrease, the Province must step up to ensure that quality homes and responsive housing assistance programs remain viable to Manitobans.

Education and training are also an important part of Manitoba's economic growth. HCD partners with agencies such as the Frontier School Division on training related to housing construction trades. These opportunities help individuals acquire the skills needed to access the job market, a crucial set-step on the ladder out of poverty.

The government will also continue its work on advancing homelessness, as we heard in the recent budget speech. HCD is the provincial lead for homelessness. We are committed to supporting homelessness initiatives and partnering with organizations like the Winnipeg task force to end homelessness in order to provide more housing options for vulnerable people.

We will also continue to provide vital programming under Neighbourhoods Alive!, Cooperative Development Services, and the Community Places Program to support our communities in their efforts. We are pleased to be expanding the Neighbourhoods Alive! program to another Winnipeg neighbourhood where community-driven investment will support its revitalization.

I would like to express my appreciation of Housing and Community Development staff for their ongoing work, dedication to continuous improvement and commitment to the provision of high-quality service to Manitobans.

I look forward to this committee's review of the Department of Housing and Community Development's expenditure Estimates for 2015 and '16 and welcome the comments of committee members.

Now, I think my staff is there, but I think it's not still time for them to come over here.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): No, not yet.

Mr. Saran: Not yet, and the Chairperson told me, so I thank the—all the committee members to be here,

and I hope we will have a constructive discussion. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): We thank the minister for the comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the minister's opening comments.

I am deputy critic in this area, so I am pleased to be here today to open the discussions around this very important department.

We've certainly come to recognize the significant value of affordable and social housing in the province and how important it is, in particular, to those that are on limited and fixed incomes. I think, in many ways, our support of the increase to the housing allowance is a recognition that housing is absolutely critical issue, and we have long been on record of supporting initiatives like Housing First to deal with homelessness, and, in general, as an entryway to dealing with the poverty issues in the community. So certainly I'm interested in discussing that particular area with the minister.

In regards to community development corporations, I am particularly interested you've added a new one, and I would look forward to finding out actually what community that is, because other than the one at Thompson, which is—I have not had the pleasure of visiting, I think I actually had a visit with them all. So I certainly admire the good work that they are doing, and they are very grassroots and very involved in the community, and I think it's very important recognition of what local community groups can do.

So appreciate the opportunity to be the critic on this file at this time, and I look forward to asking some pertinent questions of the minister and his staff.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): We'd like to thank the member from Portage la Prairie, the deputy critic from the official opposition, for your remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 30.1.(a) contained in resolution 30.1.

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

The honourable minister.

* (16:20)

Mr. Saran: I'm glad to introduce my staff from—the department's senior staff, sitting at the table: Mr. Craig Marchinko, deputy minister; Mr. Steven Spry, chief executive officer, MHRC; Ms. Mala Sachdeva, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer for MHRC; Mr. Brian Brown, director of Financial Services.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Wishart: We wish to have a global discussion.

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): Is that the will of the committee, to have the global discussion? *[Agreed]*

Thank you. It is agreed that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has been concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wishart: I look forward to asking a number of different questions in—regarding housing issues with the minister.

Perhaps we'd start with some very basic stuff in terms of the number—current number of units that Manitoba Housing is responsible for.

Mr. Saran: Okay, I think we have total number of units: 35,500.

Mr. Wishart: Thank the minister for that and thank the Chairman.

Those the total number that you manage? Or does that—there's also some that are managed by other organizations? Could you break that down, please?

Mr. Saran: Yes, they are directly managed by the department, MHR. Yes, of the department is 14,200; and other sponsor-managed, 4,000; and non-profit co-operatives, 17,300, in total.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that.

Could the minister give me a number that represents the number that are co-operatives in—out of that total?

Mr. Saran: Mr. Chair, 2,102.

Mr. Wishart: Thank the minister for that information.

Has that number increased in recent years? Could you—a couple years' worth of information as to whether we're making progress in that area?

Mr. Saran: At this point, we don't want to give inaccurate information, so we'll provide it on later.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I would appreciate that. As the minister knows, that's also an area he's responsible for, co-operatives and co-operative development, and it has always amazed me that a province like Manitoba that has given rise to so many commercial co-operatives has actually done so little in terms of housing co-operatives. So I would like to know if we've made progress. So perhaps five years' worth of information, if that would be possible, would be very useful for us all.

Mr. Saran: I guess we will provide that to the member.

Mr. Wishart: Now, I'd like to also get access to some information regarding vacancy rates. And I suspect there may be a difference between the ones that are managed by third parties on your behalf and the ones that you manage yourselves.

I wonder if you would have any information, either annual or preferably seasonal, because we're all very aware that housing in particular tends to be subject to seasonal trends.

Mr. Saran: Okay. The number of vacant units available for rent, 221 units, and sponsor-managed are 70 units.

Mr. Wishart: Did you say the month of June? Was that specific to that month, or was that—did I hear that correctly?

Mr. Saran: Yes, according to staff, that will be April.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I would hope that we could get some, perhaps, monthlies for the last two years. As I mentioned, housing is a very seasonal market, so if there's a significant shift over the course of the summer, which often is the case, I'd certainly appreciate some numbers. Say, monthly for the last

two years should be current enough for us to see what the trends are.

Mr. Saran: Yes, we can provide for our direct-managed units.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I certainly appreciate that.

And we had access to some numbers here—and where did they go?—access to some numbers through a freedom of information request around the number of approved applications, by the month, going back to 2005. And back in 2005, the number was 464 in the month of November. And they rise fairly steadily through '06, '07, '08, '09 and '10 and '11, '12, and the last number we have actually is for the month of March of 2013. They go from 464 to 2,945.

Now, I know that that doesn't necessarily indicate people that are waiting, that that's approved, and that is family, I assume. We're concerned, I guess, that these numbers indicate a significant shortfall in the housing market. And I'm wondering what is being done to deal with this because I know you've had a fairly aggressive housing program for four years, I guess, maybe five, if I've got my dates correct. Are we building public housing and losing private housing? Is that what's going on?

* (16:30)

Mr. Saran: Yes, significant investments in social housing stock and improvements in the services to tenants have attracted new applicants to Manitoba Housing. Because of improvements in the housing facilities, more people are attracted to a better housing program.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I appreciate that comment from the minister. And, yes, certainly, it's important that we continue to upgrade the Manitoba Housing, but when we check the private housing market rentals, the numbers are relatively static for that period, a slight decline. And we do lose housing units to condoization and what would be called upscale, which is, you know, renovations that put them at a—back in the market at a much higher level, which clearly aren't available for those that are on limited and fixed incomes.

So we're kind of at a loss to explain why the number continues to grow so steadily. The marketplace is clearly not responding. I wonder if the minister has any thoughts as to why we seem to be creating a secondary marketplace that is not connected to the real marketplace.

Mr. Saran: Yes, we introduced a tax credit, but I think it takes time to materialize, those kinds of incentives. And also the member should realize, like, we are getting more immigrants signed up. In the beginning, they come over here; they are low-income people; they put their name everywhere where they can get it. But, later on, once they get their jobs and—so in that way I think there could be duplication in these numbers. So they could be registered at different places.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I appreciate those comments.

So, in many ways, then, this waiting list would represent transitional applicants, in your mind? They're not looking to become permanent residents in Manitoba Housing; they're just going to be there for a short period of time and then, hopefully, move on to other housing markets—not rental markets, then? So they must be—because the numbers haven't gone up there, they must be purchasing? Is that the minister's?

Mr. Saran: No, some will and some will move to maybe higher—not quality, but maybe bigger houses because—one thing we have to understand, like, in the beginning, everybody have to get whatever they can get, and we have to provide that because those people won't have a—otherwise place to stay.

And we have our PNP program, so we have—in that way, if those people move to the other provinces, we will lose both ways. So that's why, I think, in the beginning, people go to the houses where they can get. But, later on, as people come from different places, they are so much proud of having their own houses, so as soon as they get a chance, so they will buy new houses. But everybody's not that lucky. Some people, it takes time for them to get a job, then takes time for them to get adjusted and to come up to that level so that they can get their own house. So not everybody can afford to have their own house. Some people have to wait longer. Other people can get it.

But this is a program not only just for new immigrants, as I—just to give the idea, be—I come from—being myself an immigrant, I come from a place where we are used to have joint family and we have two, three rooms, and my—for my cousin, my other cousin, myself and then my uncle, and we lived in the—used to live in the one house. And to find a place where you can—so you—we have to share that.

So I understand how important having those houses, those rooms, are available. So I think we—in

that sense we have to think in those terms so that newcomers, we can give them enough space to stay. And later on they can advance their status by buying new houses. And so it's—people come and go, and that way and those.

But we also have a steady population who stay in the—those rental houses sometimes—in those senses. But we have to also—we're also working on the other part—side, because people can—we can provide them more training, they can uplift their earnings and then they can move.

So I think it's kind of a—like, a scenario which we have to continuously work on. We may not be—I'll work at it, and if we start cutting \$500 million in our budget, the—where the—we will be left. So we have to think in those terms and continuously provide those kinds of services. And for those services we must need funds, and funds should be available.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I appreciate the minister's point of view and explanation on that. But, as the critic for Family Services, we certainly see the number continue to grow for those that are on limited and fixed incomes, whether they're on EIA or working for minimum wage. And it is very difficult for them also to afford housing. And there's many, many people on disability, and there has been some increase in disability at the federal level but not a great deal has progressed here in the province. And many of those are in social housing.

And it would appear that we are creating a backlog here. And I suspect, as the minister may—his point may have been that it is a mix—a mixture of different groups. Some clearly are new immigrants to Manitoba, and we welcome them. And I understand that they need a period of time to adjust to a new reality, new economy, and find their place in that economy. And I think that there's lots of data to support how well they have been doing at that.

But I'm concerned that we are creating quite a sizable pool now, almost 3,000, and this is several months old, and a—well, a—in fact, a year and a little bit old, creating quite a substantial pool of people that are waiting for housing.

And I guess that begs the question, where are they staying in the meantime? Because if they're not in social housing and the numbers haven't increased dramatically in private housing, where are they?

* (16:40)

Mr. Saran: Yes, I—the member must know there are many people, they are also renting private, like, apartments and—but we are also providing them a kind of rent assist. So they stay over there, but they also at the same time provide for—apply for affordable housing. In their sense, so they are waiting there and they are staying in the apartments. They are waiting, so they can get a better—I—maybe they might think they might even get it cheaper as compared to they are staying now in the rental, private rental units. So I think that creates a kind of duplication because people also provide for their application for those houses and at the same time they are also staying in the apartments and they apply wherever they can apply. So I think that's—a duplication is there.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I appreciate that explanation, but that kind of takes me back to my original point, really, that we may have created a marketplace that is disconnected from the commercial marketplace because you—basically saying that people are staying somewhere, and I assume when you talk about apartments they're not just couch surfing. But they're—they have residences and they've made their application to social housing because that's more desirable housing and that's probably a good thing and, you know, there is more that's [*inaudible*] desirable than where they're staying. But those are acting like two different marketplaces, then, are they?

Mr. Saran: I think the member must remember, a few years ago I introduced a private member's resolution for granny suites, and before that it was not allowed to rent out your basement or granny suite—whatever you can say—secondary suite. So, because of that move, and then we were able to convince the city government so they allow—or to let them rent those granny suites as secondary suites. Because of that, now it is—creates kind of a situation where people are staying either with their relatives and renting those basements, but still they want a better place. Still they put their name on—name out on an application. We want that. But at least granny suites are really working well.

And, like, my constituency in The Maples, like, there are immigrants—come over there and other communities from different areas. So if you look—go to that area, you will see how many people are living in the secondary suites. So that actually accommodates people. It appears that we have extra number of people and—who are—don't have houses. They have houses. They are in secondary places, and

sometimes they stay with their relatives for a certain time.

There's, I think, another thing maybe we can learn from joint families, because in a joint family we learn tolerance and in a joint family we help each other. Seniors are helped with the younger ones and the kids are being taken care of by the seniors. That creates a kind of a small family, joint families. So these joint-family kind of structures—also being faded away time by time. But, as I mentioned, I come from the family—we are a joint family and we used to live in that. We have a good way to learn tolerance and take care of each other.

And I think that could also help in many other ways to eliminate those problems which we have in our society, because those problems are because when children are left alone and are—people who are close to them, they are not having—taking care of them. They are not there to hug them, and so I think that becomes an important factor of our society. I think, in a way, we have gone a little bit away from that. I hope somehow we can come back to the—that kind of living. But, as always, there's a swing-like pendulum, go one way and then come back to the other way. I think we have to adjust in the middle, and that helps our—those problems we are perceiving. Those problems are not there. Houses are available; granny suites are available; secondary suites are available; and those units in the private market are available. And we are helping them at the same time with Rent Assist. So I think in that way it's balancing out.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the minister and the comments. And he certainly has a point of view, and, yes, recognize that there are many other cultures that do things quite differently than we tend to do things here in North America. And that certainly doesn't make it wrong. And yet, as the minister knows, the zoning rules around granny suites and subletting single-family dwellings are managed by municipal jurisdictions and there are certainly many rules around that.

And recently, I believe—I think it was a call for proposal of interest in granny suites here in Winnipeg was put out—an expression of interest, perhaps, what it was. And, surprisingly, and at least from my point of view, there was very little interest. So, yes, I understand that people have to have a place to put their head and you can't move ahead in life without housing, absolutely can't do that. And I was, frankly, surprised that there was not a lot more

interest in that type of formal process to provide additional residence on the same lot.

I guess, you know, given the minister's comments, why does he think we're not getting a formal response to that type of a request?

Mr. Saran: Well, I really enjoy to talk about granny suites because I brought that PMR. Considering, like, there are some seniors who come from other countries, and they used to live in a joint family, and they—on the other hand, there's also a new culture over here, children that don't like to have interference. So to balance that kind of a situation, I think granny suites can be *[inaudible]* a really good idea and it helps a lot. But, you know, there is some kind of still resistance because when you come over there, and those people have kind of a tendency to still live in the same house and have their elders, because elders are being obeyed by the younger ones. But that is changing. So that resistance to stay in the same space and jointly cohabit together, that's one tendency. The other tendency, on the other hand, the children, they want their independence too. So considering that—also, people are buying it, slowly, slowly. But immediately to accept some idea, accept a different way of living, is hard.

So I think this program will get popular and once—personally, because I haven't—I think I started in my own way of this idea, and I have really invested and trust, and interest in this kind of housing, and we will be go and make sure that people are aware of it. People also are able to understand, this is a new culture—new culture—you have to make some adjustments. Sometimes we are not that much quick to accept these changes, and so it takes time. But this will be very popular. Like, this concept in Vancouver and those areas, it's really popular over there, and people are living two, three generations living in the same house.

So I think that will help us a lot to reduce the pressure of affordable housing and social housing stock.

* (16:50)

Mr. Wishart: Well, I thank the minister for that.

And you're certainly right; people hate change, and there's significant resistance. And so given the relatively low response to the granny suite proposal that was out there, do we think, then, that this is sort of happening anyway? I mean, you have personal experience in regards to that, that people are using the houses that are zoned single family and there are

multi generations of the same family, often, in place in those households? Do you think that's what's the reality out there?

Mr. Saran: Yes, I think of—it's a reality there, but it's—you cannot say absolutely this idea is right and people are accepting this idea or they're not accepting this and that idea. I think it's a combination of both. And also, slowly, slowly—sometimes if a city decides there are so much—so many difficulties to get the zoning, and that may be another way to have contact with the City, which we are trying to. Our effort, like last time before, the City was resistant—for example, Winnipeg, the City—but later on we were able to convince the right councillor to push for it and then they approved that 350 square feet to 650, something like that. So you can build that category. But perhaps we need other improvements, which I'm thinking. Improvement—if you only can make that smaller unit, some people don't like to stay in a small unit; they need it a little bit bigger. So perhaps we have to increase that size. We have to convince the City so they can increase the size, also, they can build that—those houses—or not houses—that can be suites on the side.

So I think there are many things that can be improved and those changes cannot come in one day, but we have to convince other levels of government and, also, we have to convince the federal government so they can provide more funds and appreciate that kind of living and every—unfortunately, the federal government stopped sponsoring your parents and, therefore, parents can only come on a super visa. There are so many difficulties that are being created by the federal government—and I think we are losing anyway, because we are losing really good people who can take care of the kids and the kids can become better citizens. If those kids are left alone and those—their parents or grandparents are there to help them out, and we are losing on that front.

I think, maybe, the member have close relation to the federal government and convinced them that don't be that strict on our parents, and so that parents can come over here and the joint family can be together. Now, people are torn about—between these two countries—their parents over there, the federal government won't let them come over here. On the other hand, their sons or daughters are over here; they are worried about, all the time, about them. And in that way, they have to go back over there; they lose productivity. And so I think if the federal government is a little bit more sympathetic to the cause of families, like, then, we can create a really

better society and better citizens. I am [*inaudible*] when I was a kid and my grandparents take more care of me because my father, they have to go to the farm and do farming. And so in that way I was being raised by—almost by my grandparents, and that connection had taught me many valuable lessons of life because they had gone through life, they have experience. And that experience helps to guide the children and that gives us a kind of better—will create a better society.

And so I hope the federal government can—it will look into it. I know the member might have closer connections to the federal government, being the almost the same kind of party, and so because of that philosophy, perhaps the member will help us to convince the federal government open the immigration for the parents, grandparents. Don't force them to come over here and leave them after a certain period of time. That disconnection creates hardships on the people. And, because of that hardship, what happens, people are not able to earn that much because they are worried they have to go back to their countries, take care of their parents if they're sick, they have to stay there, quit their jobs.

That's why I think the other part because we are creating this demand for affordable housing. If we get people out of poverty in that way, let them work the way they want to work, let them mentally free, because they're not worried about their children, and people will be better off. If people are better off, then the society will be better off, I hope, and the federal government wakes up.

Mr. Wishart: I certainly appreciate the minister's comments. I don't have a lot of direct influence on the federal government, of course, because, as the minister knows, that's a different party than the one I represent. Unlike what happens with the NDP, there's a difference between the provincial Progressive Conservative Party and a federal Conservative Party in case you weren't aware of that. And we do not get one membership like you guys do.

However, I certainly appreciate the minister's comments and have some sympathy for the multi-generational thing, as I am the third generation in the same house where I live. And so, certainly, generational use of dwellings is certainly important and becomes actually a focus for the family.

In the little bit of time we have left today, I want to touch briefly—and we'll come back to this, because I think this is a great discussion, and I'm sure I think the minister's actually enjoying it as well. I did want

to touch on something today that I know that my colleagues won't touch on, so I'll have to do it. And it is kind of a pet peeve, if you might excuse the very poor pun. And it relates to bedbugs. And—yes, Jim's already scratching.

Manitoba Housing has long had an issue in some of its facilities with bedbugs. And bedbugs not only are a burden to those that are there, but they can have significant impacts to those that dwell there in terms of their ability to move forward in society.

And the example that I often use was a single-parent household. The young lady involved had gone into training, she had secured for herself a future with education and she had her kids in child care. And she lived in social housing, which is one of the roles that it provides, and very rightfully. And social housing, unfortunately, came down with a pretty bad case of bedbugs, which, as we all know, does not restrict itself to one unit. It spreads through the whole place. And the minute the child-care facility, which was publicly funded, too, discovered that her—that there was a problem with bedbugs, she got her kids back that day. And she could not secure additional child care because word gets around pretty quick, and, besides, the waiting list for child care is over 12,000 at the moment. So she had to drop out of school. And it took her a year to get things together again. So, basically, she lost a year. But she was very persistent, and I certainly want to credit her with that. And she moved on with her life again.

But I think the minister would appreciate, then, how important these little critters are. And treatment for that is a difficult task, I'll concede that. I mean, they are becoming a bit of an epidemic worldwide. And even high-end hotels and restaurants and movie theatres have had issues with these little guys—and Jim will now never go to a movie again—but treatment for that is a very important issue. And you train your own people. And, in fact, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and—*[interjection]* No, it's not. Rural initiatives?

The Acting Chairperson (Jim Rondeau): I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the committee shall rise.

FINANCE

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

section of the Committee of Supply will now resume at consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, if I could—

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): We made a commitment to table some information for the member, and we're happy to provide him with that today: the net refunding schedule, the series, the maturity, the coupon percentage and the net refunding requirements.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): My question to the Finance Minister to commence this afternoon is: Could he indicate what the total revenue is accruing to the government as a result of photo radar revenues in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Dewar: We don't have the amount. That is a question best directed to the Minister of Justice, but I could say that the Ministry of Justice receives in revenue from fines and costs over \$34 million, but that would include—that would include photo radar, but it would also include a number of other fines. So we don't have that information for the member. It's probably best if he were to ask the same question to the Minister of Justice who could probably provide him with more detail.

Mr. Friesen: I accept that answer. We will pose those questions in the Justice Estimates.

I wonder if the minister could just comment from his department's perspective, what is the ratio that determines revenue sharing between the municipal authority in the province of Manitoba when it comes to that particular penalty?

Mr. Dewar: Again, I'd have to refer the member to the Justice Estimates. We don't have that ratio here.

Mr. Friesen: Just as a clarification then, so these fines pertaining to photo radar are collected under Justice and they're not captured anywhere within the departmental Estimates or even the estimates of revenue that the minister rendered yesterday. Could he clarify that?

* (15:00)

Mr. Dewar: They are included in the estimates of revenue, and the member would look to page 166 of the 2015 Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue. He

would, again, discover the total fine amount in terms of revenues of \$34,256,000 in fines. But, again, the detailed information would be found in the—within the Department of Justice.

Mr. Friesen: Okay, I thank the minister for that information, and because it is in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue then I'll assume that it's within scope to ask.

So—and I can look for this clarification, as well, in Justice but let's just say in general, having had some recent experience with having to remit amounts to the Province on the subject of photo radar, I was wondering about the—that revenue-sharing model or the basis on which that—the monies are divided—the revenues are divided between municipal authority and the Province of Manitoba. I understand I could ask the question at Justice, but, because the amounts do appear in the expenditures and revenues, can the minister indicate, is it always the same calculation or is that amount actually negotiated? Let's say it might be a different amount with the City of Brandon than it might be in the City of Winnipeg or that it might be in a different municipality.

Mr. Dewar: We don't have that level of detail in terms of full disclosure. I, too, had a photo radar ticket that I was—had to write to the Minister of Finance, but it wasn't me at the time. But the—there is—I don't even know, for example, whether Brandon has photo radar. I know that Selkirk does not. I don't know about Thompson or other municipal governments. Of course, the City of Winnipeg does. And—but I guess—as I said earlier, we don't have that level of detail on hand today.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the minister for that level of disclosure that he has made at the Committee of Supply and I know there are other Manitobans who would attest to first-hand knowledge of these penalties and, of course, we know they're there for a reason.

But in lieu of the fact that there is—there have been recent articles in the media about amounts increasing when it comes to 'phodar'—photo radar because of the new lower speed zones, and we know, you know, of course, that there's merit in these lower speed zones around schools and indeed a lot of Manitobans are getting accustomed now to slowing down around schools.

I spoke to another Manitoban just today about being unaware of a school zone and you quickly become aware with the signs that are posted there

and in my community as well, the cities of Morden and Winkler, we have these new zones, and the municipalities have worked really well, I believe, to identify—they call it areas of friction—so that they can make discretionary decisions about where those reduced speed zones would make the most sense. Now there is often photo radar; I think they call it temporary or it's portable, and they sometimes will enforce those speed limits there.

Local—or I should say recent media reports have indicated there are rising revenues to government as a result of this increased enforcement or perhaps it's also because of the new reduced speed zones. I say that as a preamble to ask the minister—I don't have it in front of me—could he indicate—does he have—does his department have the information to indicate how this year's estimates of revenue from photo radar enforcement compare to last year's? And would he be prepared to indicate for the last five years what those revenue amounts would be?

Mr. Dewar: I can let the member know the—again on page 166 you'd note that the estimates of revenue from fines and costs is the same as what the estimates of revenue in terms of the 2015-2016 revenue is. That, of course, would include any revenue that would be incurred from those who violate the photo radar laws. But, again, you'd have to speak with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) for more detail.

And in terms of—you had asked for the last five years. Are we able to—I'll just consult with my staff here. Mr. Chair, again my best advice to the member is to raise this with the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Friesen: And I will be certain to do that.

Coming back to the photo radar for a moment, because it does appear in the Finance estimates of revenue, I'm wondering if the minister can indicate on what basis are those amounts separated. Does the finance—does the Department of Finance receive all amounts? Are they the receiver general for photo radar fines and then they make disbursements to municipalities, or how is that done? If a ticket is received in an urban centre like Winnipeg, the—where is the cheque written? Does the Finance Department receive those amounts and disburse the amounts to the appropriate municipality?

Mr. Dewar: It is my pleasure to inform the member that the—these are administered by—in the individual departments who would again have that information for the member.

Mr. Friesen: Not to belabour the point, but I believe if I refer to my own experience when I did have the pleasure to have to remit an amount on the basis of an infraction pertaining to photo radar, if memory serves, I had to remit a cheque to the Minister of Finance. So that seems to be at odds with what the minister just said, but perhaps he can provide a clarification.

Mr. Dewar: The member is correct. The cheques are remitted to the Minister of Finance because there's only one consolidation fund, but the administrative processes by which those funds are used are the responsibility of the individual department, in this case, the Department of Justice.

* (15:10)

Mr. Friesen: Still, then, on the subject of penalties, I would like to ask the minister about a penalty amount, a matching program applying to taxpayers who fail to remit T-slips in a—in income twice in a four-year period. Now, there used to be a federal penalty. If someone had—if a taxpayer had failed to report T-slip income twice in a four-year period they were assessed a fine; I believe the penalty was 10 per cent federally.

Can the minister indicate whether there's a provincial penalty that is also payable on a provincial level of this same kind?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chair, the answer is no, we don't levy penalties.

Mr. Friesen: I'll just—I accept the minister's answer. I'm just going to ask in a different way so—just to be sure that we're talking about the same kind of penalty.

I'm aware that the CRA charges a T-slip penalty that way. I was informed that perhaps the Province was—had implemented a penalty some time back that was designed to match the federal so, in essence, instead of having one penalty for the failure to report T-slip income there would be a provincial matching one. I'm aware of a penalty of that sort that is assessed in other jurisdictions. I had thought that there was one in Manitoba as well, and I had thought that it was implemented somewhere between 2006 and 2008.

So is the—can the minister just confirm that there is no such penalty in Manitoba for taxpayers who fail to report T-slip income within a period of time that would mirror the federal penalty of the same type?

Mr. Dewar: We'll have to check, Mr. Chair, but we're not aware of anything. But we'll check and we'll get back to the member.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for making that commitment.

The only other point I would make on that amount, and I won't need another question answered here, but I've seen on the federal guidelines pertaining to this penalty amount that, basically, it expresses that if you fail to report an amount in your return for, let's say 2014, and you also failed to report an amount in your return for twenty like eleven, twelve or thirteen, then you would have to pay a federal and provincial repeated failure to report income penalty. And what I understood is that the federal penalty was about 10 per cent, and what I understood is that the provincial penalty was about 10 per cent.

So I appreciate him looking into that, and if he can get back to me and let me know I would be happy to just recheck against my sources and see if we can arrive at a better understanding of the situation. So I thank the minister for the willingness to look into that matter.

Still on the subject of taxation then, I wondered if the minister could just indicate—and I'm kind of asking, you know, with respect to fiscal and financial management within the taxation part of Manitoba Finance. I wonder if he could indicate—and just to remind me—how much revenue, then, in a given year does the government make on penalties assessed on matters where there is any kind of a—*[interjection]*—on matters where there has been some kind of a penalty against an entity or an individual, and then there is—oftentimes there's penalties and there's also other charges, and where is that gross amount reported coming from tax penalties in the budget papers?

Mr. Dewar: From, well, tobacco interdiction the fines that's—were levied, seventy-six thousand—sorry, Mr. Chair—\$76,958, and from other investigations, again, the total amount of fines were \$111,386.

Mr. Friesen: I'm looking for a clarification. The minister had mentioned that the second number, the \$111,000, was referring to other. What was the first amount referring to? Was that, like, tobacco interdiction or was it a different category?

Mr. Dewar: It was tobacco.

Mr. Friesen: And could the minister just quickly cite the source of that information? I believe it's found in the annual report. Could he indicate what page it's found on?

Mr. Dewar: I'm referring to Manitoba Finance, annual report 2013-2014, page 15.

Mr. Friesen: And so just so I can understand a little bit more how the department works, when I'm looking at the departmental Estimates, how many people within that area of Finance would actually be employed working directly with penalties and fines on—now, on taxation?

* (15:20)

Mr. Dewar: There is no one person in charge of the fines, but there are investigators. Maybe that's what the member would be interested in getting the number of.

Mr. Friesen: And the minister's correct. I'm looking at page 52 of the Estimates book.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. A formal vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply, and I'm therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

The committee recessed at 3:21 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:11 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to call the Committee of Supply back to order. The committee—this committee will resume its business where we left off prior to the recess. I believe the honourable minister was in the middle of providing a response to a question.

Mr. Dewar: I believe we did respond to the member's question, but I think he had a supplementary one which we're eagerly anticipating.

Mr. Friesen: Yes, I believe we were talking about penalties, and I'm just going to locate that particular page in the Estimates—yes. On page 52 of the Estimates under Taxation Division, I note that the information there is similar to the information that would be presented in the annual report, and I see there numbers that correspond with the information that the minister provided and put on the record when it comes to fines and recoveries under Investigations.

Could the minister differentiate between the revenues received in fines and recoveries?

Mr. Dewar: The recoveries is three times the fine which is under act. So the acts—the fines are \$100,000 and the recoveries are three times that.

Mr. Friesen: I'm just going to ask for a quick clarification of that just because this is not my area of expertise when it comes to investigations on taxes, charges and convictions and fines. And so, just to be clear then, this number of \$100,000 indicates the total amount of revenue received in the form of fines, and then the recoveries are separate.

Could the minister just quickly define fines and recoveries for me? Because I'm not sure that those amounts—or those terms are defined in the end of the Estimates book in glossary. I'm not seeing a definition there. I might have overlooked it. So I appreciate the minister's help with this one.

Mr. Dewar: The \$300,000 relates just to tobacco.

Mr. Friesen: The minister says that the \$300,000 pertains to tobacco, but if I refer to page 52 in the Estimates, it looks like an—investigations in tobacco interdiction are reported separately. So I see a number of recoveries of \$300,000 under Investigations. I see a separate number for tobacco interdiction recorded as \$500,000.

So could the minister provide a clarification about those two numbers in the books: recovery that are investigations and recovery under tobacco interdiction.

* (16:20)

Mr. Dewar: I do apologize to the member, but we'll have to take the question as notice and get the information back for the member.

Mr. Friesen: Oh, okay. Well, I welcome the minister's response on that in his willingness to get back to me in an answer, because, I mean, I don't think I'm asking a confusing question. I'm just referring to the actual chart that's printed on page 52 under Expected Results. And it seems to me that, you know, it's separate in the department—an area under Investigations and an area specific to tobacco interdiction. I'm noticing that there's charges, convictions, fines and recoveries reported from both of those areas and separate revenue amounts accruing from both of those areas.

So, if the minister will commit to get back to me, I'm looking for a few things: definition of fines and

recoveries, and then how the amounts—if he would just explain the amounts appearing under Investigations; any amounts appearing under tobacco interdiction.

My next question for the minister, though, is this, and it has to do with how do the revenues: How do the amounts accruing to government from convictions under Investigations compare to a year previous? How do they compare to five years previous? Is the trend up, is the trend down, and could he provide those numbers?

Mr. Dewar: Yes, again, Mr. Chair, we're—we'll be—we want to do our homework on this and make sure we provide the member with the accurate information, so we'll be—we'll provide him with that information as soon as we can.

Mr. Friesen: My next question, on page 53, is still under Taxation. And I believe this is correct—we're under Taxation—I see an aggregate number there for professional and technical FTEs under salaries and employee benefits. I would imagine that these would be the specialists involved in investigation if there's—the people who are responsible for tax investigations, those numbers would be reported here under Professional/Technical. I'm asking if the minister can confirm that and if he would please indicate how many FTEs involved in investigations, how many involved in tobacco interdiction. I'm not talking about managerial or administrative support, I'm talking about actual investigators.

Mr. Dewar: Well, I can inform the member that the investigators are included in the 105 FTEs, but we're unable at this point to break that down for him. Again, we would take that question as notice and provide him with the detail at another date.

Mr. Friesen: Will the minister also commit to provide a number that would indicate that number involved in investigations in tobacco interdiction not just for this year, but for the past previous five years? What I'm interested to find out is if enforcement is getting more resources or less, or if that number is stable.

Mr. Dewar: Well, I can inform the member that it's the same as last year, but in terms of the trend we would—we'll include that in the list of things that we shall return with for the member.

Mr. Friesen: Can the minister report if there has been a determination within the department to put a greater focus on pursuing convictions, and I mean the greater focus in the way of allocating

departmental resources to this area in terms of going after convictions and fines and laying charges. Has there been an increased focus in the department in the past, let's say, 12 months, the past 24 months?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Chair, the department informs me that they feel that we have sufficient resources to meet the task, so I'll guess the answer would be there aren't any additional resources at this point.

Mr. Friesen: Changing the course slightly, a question about tobacco taxes in the province of Manitoba. Now, I am aware that tobacco taxes have increased in this jurisdiction under this minister's budget, and I have a question pertaining to the amount of revenue. I see, looking at the Public Accounts, that the taxation generated from tobacco tax has increased in the past five fiscal years, but it's decreasing in the minister's estimate for revenue coming up. So I see that most recently the revenue generated from tobacco tax was 272, that would be million dollars, in the year ending '14, but now we're seeing a number of \$252 million projected.

Why would the number for projected revenues be decreasing when the actual tax assessed against tobacco products is increasing?

* (16:30)

Mr. Dewar: Well, there are two reasons. One is there are less Manitobans smoking, so there are less Manitobans buying cigarettes. There are—the second reason, of course, is the recent introduction to the marketplace of the e-cigarettes. And this is a—I don't know if we want to use the word problem, but it's a situation that all provinces are confronting and facing right now as they're seeing their tobacco revenues decrease because individuals are using e-cigarettes as an alternative to regular tobacco and the fact that there are just simply less individuals smoking.

And the member is correct; we did, in this budget, increase cigarettes, I believe, half a penny per cigarette. And the plan—not the plan, but we're—it's a commitment we made to provide additional resources to the Department of Healthy Living and Seniors, who will use those resources to help prevent—to help—well, to prevent young people from either taking up smoking, or the other objective, of course, is to get young people to quit smoking. But those are the two reasons why, and it's—as I said, it's a situation that's faced by all jurisdictions across Canada at the moment, and that is the introduction of e-cigarettes and just simply the fact that there are less Manitobans smoking.

Mr. Friesen: I would suggest that the minister's analysis is incomplete, and I'm going to refer him to a press release issued by the Western Convenience Stores Association, that was May the 5th of this year. It came out after the minister delivered his budget. I want to ask the minister, specific to contraband tobacco products, if he feels that we may be developing the conditions in this province that lead more—that tip more into a situation where contraband tobacco will continue to suck more and more revenue away from the Province. Now, I want the minister to understand, I'm not advocating to promote the conditions in which more and more people smoke in Manitoba. He and I both understand, you know, not only the individual costs of smoking but also the cost to our system. And, as the Finance Minister, I know when he looks at the rising costs of health care and, indeed, it's not just his problem; it's the problem of every jurisdiction in this—in the Western world where we'd see the costs pertaining to health care directly coming from the use of tobacco products. We're not trying to create the conditions which incent people to smoke.

When I look at page C34 of the budget, clearly, Manitoba has the highest—and already had the highest taxes of any jurisdiction in Canada before the increase. I'm noticing that in Manitoba that it's at 29.0 now with the latest increase and that supersedes any other jurisdiction. But I refer the minister to the statement by the president of the WCSA, that is the Western Convenience Stores Association, that says increased taxes on tobacco products will continue to fuel the illegal tobacco trade. And the next sentence says that Manitoba tobacco prices are the highest in Canada and the new tax increases will promote growth in the province's contraband market.

Now, I look at the fact that revenues to this government by tobacco is actually decreasing in this new fiscal year. The minister's own estimate shows it decreasing by over \$20 million. He says it's because of e-cigarettes and less people smoking. Is it possible that a great—one major factor owing to that decrease is the fact that more and more tobacco products are being bought illegally and no revenue accruing to government as a result?

* (16:35)

Mr. Dewar: I do appreciate the member's comments, and I don't dispute there could be some truth to that. But we think that an increase of only—of half a penny per cigarette, which would be 12 cents on a package, would drive thousands of Manitobans outside the

borders of the province to purchase cigarettes. But it's something, as the member says, we will continue to monitor.

Our understanding is that there are less Manitobans smoking, and the other cause is the—I said is the—is that that more and more Manitobans are using the e-cigarettes to get their nicotine fix.

Mr. Friesen: I would agree with the minister that probably the 0.5 per cent increase on tobacco would not be a cause that would drive thousands more Manitobans to avoid paying the taxes. I would express the concern that the conditions already existed previous to this latest increase in tax—tobacco tax per cents per cigarette. That would already have attributed to the conditions in which many Canadians—or many Manitobans were acquiring tobacco products illegally and in the underground market.

As a matter of fact, the same press release says that the WCSA commissioned a contraband tobacco study in 2013 that found that illegal tobacco usage rates range from 10 to 39 per cent in various locations, but it is highly affected by high taxation.

My question for the minister is: Has the Manitoba Finance Special Investigations Unit or Tobacco Interdiction unit done its own studies to determine an estimate of how much percentage of revenue is being lost because of illegal tobacco usage?

Mr. Dewar: I can inform the member that the department estimates that between 6 to 8 per cent of the consumption of tobacco in Manitoba is illegal. So there are—he's correct that there are individuals who will leave the, you know, the boundaries of the province or purchase them, I suppose, from those who sell them illegally.

But as—he has a legitimate issue there, and it's something we have to monitor. You get to the point where you could price yourself out of the marketplace. So it's important that we—it's still—of course, having a cigarette is completely legal and it's—there is a demand for that and so we understand that. As I said, we did increase it by half a per cent—half a cent, excuse me, per cigarette which will then allow us to have additional revenues which we're using to place within the Department of Healthy Living and Seniors and they'll use that to help young people quit smoking or prevent them from taking up the habit.

Mr. Friesen: I find that the numbers that the minister provided are somewhat suspect. He's indicating 6 to 8 per cent of Manitoba's tobacco products may have been procured illegally. Now, certainly, that would fly in the face of the evidence provided by WCSA that says that illegal tobacco usage could range from 10 to 39 per cent. I was somewhat interested to see how the WCSA actually did their study, because they actually commissioned a study to go around and collect discarded cigarette butts at public buildings and schools and high schools to determine if they were legal or illegal.

So they say any work is good work to get, but that would come with its particular challenges and, anyway, you could tell that there was a methodology to their findings. I don't want to cast aspersions on the department. I understand that, you know, they would've developed their own methodology to go about this work.

* (16:40)

Is it possible—does the minister think it's possible that perhaps that number might have been—is it possible that the minister thinks that his number might be too low? And I think, in particular, what I'd like to ask him is, can he see that correlation between raising tobacco rates, falling revenues to government as a result, and an increase in illegal usage? Does he see the correlation?

Mr. Dewar: Well, as the member will note, the market will decide, obviously, and his numbers are higher than—based upon the report that he referred to—higher than our own. But there's no doubt that Manitobans are getting their cigarettes illegally, whether you're counting up the, you know, the cigarette butts around schools or using the methodology that we have within the Department of Finance. There's no doubt that people are using other ways to get their tobacco. And so—but it's something we'll monitor. Something that I know that—I'm certainly going to keep an eye on as we move forward.

Mr. Friesen: And I assure the minister, I will also keep an eye on it, and I know the members of the department will as well. Because I do see it as a trend worth noting, you know, over the last five years, increasing revenues, and now sharply falling off in the next—in this newest year, at least the estimates sharply falling off in terms of revenue. When we have an increase in tax, it should always be our aim as legislators to look at those kind of

trends, and then ask ourselves, what are we missing in that equation.

The last thing I would say on this subject to the minister, just in way of reminder, is that the government of Ontario's commission of reform of Ontario's public service, actually talked about this issue. Because, of course, as he will know and members of the department will know, when that commission released its report, it talked about a number of things including the challenge of getting it to balance. It talked about how to increase government revenues, and, of course, it talked about how to trim the operation of government. What I thought was interesting, of course, in the Drummond report, was the focus it made when it came to tobacco interdiction and enforcement. And it actually made a recommendation under Finance, to say, to make a focus on increasing compliance within the jurisdiction, especially attacking the underground economy, intensifying audits and cracking down on tobacco—on contraband tobacco.

I'm going to come full circle now back to the questions I asked previous on page 52 of the Estimates, and ask the minister: Does he feel like a focus that could be increased on the enforcement unit within tobacco interdiction could actually have an effect on addressing lost revenues? Would he believe that that might have a good value-for-money calculation?

Mr. Dewar: It's something that the—that we are open to. I think that the member makes a strong case, but at this particular moment we feel that we have sufficient staff to—the right balance to deal with the need. But that doesn't mean we're not open to the suggestion to put additional resources in to try to catch these so-called smugglers.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the minister for that attention to that issue.

I want to turn my attention to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and transfers to the operating fund at this point in time, and I ask the minister to comment on what is clearly a progression over time to see the balance of the Fiscal Stabilization Account dwindling. As a matter of fact, if I look at even a 16-, 18-, 20-year analysis of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, or the rainy day account, as it's colloquially referred to, it would appear that the high-water mark of that account occurs in about 2008-2009.

And the reason I want to bring this up is because yesterday the minister and I had a fulsome

conversation about summary and core budgets, and we won't revisit that because I wouldn't want to visit on this Committee of Supply the full answers that the minister offered yesterday. But, suffice it to say, he talked about the challenge of trying to—of not being able to predict things like natural disasters and environmental fluctuations. Those become challenges for any government. You can ask a government in BC, Alberta, Quebec, you know, Manitoba; regardless of the jurisdiction, those events impact on public finances, and we understand that.

But what we see is at the—after the high-water mark of 2009, we see that every year after 2010, the net result is a loss or a withdrawal to that account. In 2011, a withdrawal of that account of \$125 million; in 2012, a withdrawal of \$155 million; 2013, a withdrawal of \$152 million; and 2014, a withdrawal of \$100 million; and now anticipated for this year, another—in 2015, \$55 million, and this year again, \$105 million anticipated to withdraw from that account.

So my question to the Finance Minister is—and to make my question focused, I don't need to have the minister respond and say that there are challenges to government when it comes to natural disasters. Clearly, this year is not the year of a natural disaster. The minister has put sufficient verbiage on the record during the last couple of days of Estimates to indicate that it looks rosy for Manitoba. He says that conditions are improving. I have not heard him in the context of these Estimates talk much about the global economic recession. And I would just assure him that his predecessor in the chair last year made sufficient reference to global economic downturn.

Now, it would seem that this is not a time of global economic downturn. Why did the minister remove \$105 million from the Fiscal Stabilization Account? Why, in fact, under the current Premier (Mr. Selinger), has there been a net withdrawal from that account every single year of his premiership, leading to an almost zero balance of that account?

*(16:50)

Mr. Dewar: Just in terms of the broad issue the member speaks about, the economic state of the world, is there's still a great deal of uncertainty in the economies of the world. I was just reading an article the other day.

But, it's—for example, the member will note that the United States is—for many years, went through a very deep recession, and they were running

trillion-dollar deficits for five years in a row, and they seem to have turned the path somewhat. I'll admit to the member that their unemployment rate has fallen down in the United States to 5 and a half per cent, which is almost one and a half percentage better than the national rate here in Canada. So there's a good sign there, and that's important for us, because we export a great deal of our products to the United States.

But, if you used to look at China, for example, and China for many, many years running double-digit rates of economic growth—12, 13 per cent, now they're forecast to have economic growth at around 6 to 7 per cent, still an envious rate, no doubt, but significantly less. When the member will note that, though the United States is still the largest economy in the world, China is a very fast, a very great close second.

And the other thing, of course, is Europe is in and out of recession, and one would say they're back into it again, where their growth for their Euro nation is below—just over 1 and a half per cent, and that's—the reason even it's at that level is because of growth you're seeing in Germany. So there is still—it's likely that they're back into recession as well. One of the bright spots—it seems like England is doing better.

And so there are—even India—they're looking at seeing some challenges ahead, but to suggest that we're out of the woods when it comes to growth around the world, it's simply not true.

You know, we look at our own situation—know that our own situation here's quite bright in Manitoba and relatively decent in the nation, but to suggest that, you know, we're out of the woods in terms of the worldwide economic situation, it's not quite—I wouldn't suggest that it's there yet, especially in terms of the level of growth that we saw before the great recession of 2009.

Now, the member asked about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I could enlighten the committee about the history of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund if the member would like, but it was, of course—the origins were back in the early '90s when the Filmon government at the time created it by, in fact, taking a surplus, creating a deficit and putting money into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which they drew out of as they felt was necessary as the government—as this government has done when they felt that it's necessary.

The—there was a requirement, and it was in the—in 2010 there was an amendment made to the—it was outlined in The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act, section 16.4, which included using an estimated six hundred thousand—\$600 million of the fund set aside to fund the amortization of increases in general purpose debt. So they say the money was set aside in the act to retire debt and the—there was a draw of \$55 million in 2014-2015, and this year there'll be a draw of \$85 million which will satisfy that requirement.

As well, there was a decision made by the government to remove—to take an additional draw of \$20 million to be used to pay down debt outside of the infrastructure program. So you have the infrastructure program around the—approximately a billion dollars, which we know will be put to good use. But a decision was made—and the member will realize there's other capital projects that the Province is undertaking, whether it's schools or hospitals or personal-care homes, for example—and the decision was made to take an additional draw from the fund to help us pay down the—those additional amortization interest costs related to capital outside of the infrastructure program.

Mr. Friesen: Yes, and I'm aware, of course, the changes that this government brought with respect to the taxpayer protection and balanced budget act, you know, essentially defining a period of what they called the, you know, the fiscal recovery. And, of course, I'm also aware of the fact that the government then went back into legislation to artificially extend the period which they had defined as the period of economic recovery globally. And the former Finance minister and I had a very good discussion about that, you know, and, of course, me making the point that on one hand the government was arguing that everything was rosy; on the other hand, they were at the same time quietly moving, really outside of the public awareness of their doing so, to artificially extend their mandate to continue to take amounts from the Fiscal Stabilization Account to offset overexpenditures.

My question for the minister, though, is this: It's now 2016. He has drawn out another \$105 million and reduced the balance basically at year end to \$115 million. He is almost out of options—1.25 years more of this same kind of thing, and he will have no options—and perish the thought that we would be in a position where a 1997-proportion flood would visit this province, or major forest fires in the North, or

other natural disasters that we can't anticipate because, of course, we never know.

The minister has used some very opportune economic times and opportunistically made withdrawals from this important account of Manitoba. What will he do in just over a year if he continues this trend after the Fiscal Stabilization Fund account balance has been reduced to zero? Will he then raise taxes, or does he have another plan?

Mr. Dewar: They just enlightened me, the committee, for the benefit of all members that they are—this is, I think, a good example of the, you know, the member—we're very proud of our economic record. We're proud of the fact that we'll lead the nation, but it's important to note that there are—when you look at the five years prior to the great recession, the percentage growth on average was 3 per cent. When you look at the five years post the great recession, the average growth here in Manitoba was 2 and a half per cent.

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

EDUCATION AND ADVANCED LEARNING

*(14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Education and Advanced Learning.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I do, yes.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister, go ahead.

Mr. Allum: Our government has a plan to deliver on the priorities of Manitoba families. We're investing to build our province and create jobs that will lay the foundation for an even stronger economic future. And we know that by investing in education and training we are helping more Manitobans, especially young Manitobans, get the skills they need to succeed. These skills will help young people start careers and take advantage of the opportunities we are creating with the investments we are making.

But, whether our kids want to become a carpenter, a teacher, an engineer or a nurse, it all starts with good schools and a high-quality education

system. That's why while other provinces have been reducing funding to education, we are funding K-to-12 education at the rate of economic growth for the 16th consecutive year. Our government now invests more than \$1.27 billion directly to our public schools, including the additional \$25 million we invested this year. Our funding to the public education system has increased more than \$500 million or 64.9 per cent since 1999, and this is a record that our government is proud of.

We all want the best for our children, and we are working with our schools to ensure greater accountability and providing targeted funding to improve outcomes in math and literacy so that parents see results. Together with parents, teachers and education leaders, we unveiled our action plan to improve academic achievement for all Manitoba students. We will accomplish this by working to enhance teacher education, supporting teachers and students in their early years, focus on fundamental skills training, giving parents and students more supports at home and ensuring greater accountability in our education system.

We are providing targeted funding to improve outcomes in math and literacy as well as targeted funding to support indigenous student achievement in math and literacy. We have also brought in legislation to create smaller classes in kindergarten to grade 3 and give teachers more one-on-one time with students. Working with school divisions, we've already hired more than 300 new teachers and invested more than \$29 million in new and renovated classrooms.

This plan is working. We've already seen a 50 per cent reduction in classes, with 24 students or less. We have also introduced a revised K to—math curriculum focused on basic skills development like being able to do math in your head and not rely on a calculator. We are also revising the English and French language arts curriculum to ensure kids are mastering basic skills in reading, grammar, spelling and punctuation. We're renovating science labs across the province to equip them with the latest technology. And, finally, we've introduced a new parent-friendly curriculum website and plain-language report card to give parents the information they need to help their students succeed in school.

*(15:00)

Madam Speaker, we're not just focusing on our investments to ensure that children get a solid foundation and learn the critical skills they need to

succeed. We're also building, renovating and expanding schools throughout the province. We know that strong schools are at the heart of our communities and the key to creating a bright future for our children. Right now, we're building new schools in Riverbend, Sage Creek, Waverley West, Woodlands and Thompson. And we recently opened new schools in La Broquerie, Steinbach, Winkler and Amber Trails. In fact, since we formed government, we've built 35 schools throughout the province.

And we don't stop at building new schools. We are also expanding schools to create more classroom space. Soon, École Taché, George 'fritten'—George Fitton, Meadows School, John de Graff, David Livingstone, Lansdowne, Lord Nelson and Waverly Park in Brandon will have new classrooms to respond to increasing enrolment and our investments to make classes smaller. In fact, we're building and renovating 40 new—48 new classrooms to directly support smaller classes. In addition, we are building and renovating gyms at 14 schools and we have already built and renovated 50 science labs across the province with more than 20 yet to come.

But we won't stop at creating classrooms and gyms. We also need to invest in our schools so they can provide new links to employment and skills training. This is why we're investing in new shops classes throughout the province so students have the chance to complete the first year of a trade while they're still in high school. With new shops and the newest equipment, our graduates will be able to get industry-standard training earlier and graduate with the skills they need to get a good job.

This is a record to be proud of. In fact, since we formed government, we have invested over \$1 billion to build, renovate and maintain our schools.

More students than ever are graduating from schools and moving on to the next stage in their lives. Our graduation rate has hit a new high of 87 per cent in Manitoba, and this is good news for Manitoba families. But we know that education doesn't end with high school graduation. More and more students are choosing to attend post-secondary education and training at our universities and colleges. In fact, enrolment at our universities has increased by 45 per cent since 1999 while our colleges have seen a 52 per cent increase in enrolment.

Many others are also choosing to enter the workforce directly and start their careers right away.

Still others are returning to school to upgrade their skills, to better position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities we are creating.

All of this requires a strong post-secondary system. We know that better training and education opportunities are key to keeping Manitoba on the right track. More people with access to a better education will translate into a better trained workforce that's ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

Our plan focuses on improving the quality of education in Manitoba, helping young people get jobs—good jobs—and keeping education affordable for students. This is why we're investing more than ever in our universities and colleges. Budget 2015 invests an additional \$19.8 million into the post-secondary system, the largest investment in the country.

Since 1999, funding support from our government has seen an additional \$335 million invested in our universities and colleges. Our government is now providing over \$680 million in supports to the post-secondary system in Manitoba. This funding helps institutions by providing operational funding but it also provides targeted investments designed to serve students and the economy better.

We have also taken steps to ensure more students have access to post-secondary education. We have frozen university tuition at the rate of inflation. We have the third lowest university and second lowest college tuition fees in the country.

And this year, we're making Manitoba the first province in western Canada to offer zero interest on student loans. And we're reducing barriers for rural and northern students by creating a vehicle exemption for student loan applications.

We've made substantial investments in supports for university and college students. By committing more than \$260 million in grants, scholarships and bursaries, and providing almost \$150 million to students through the tuition rebate, we are making studying and living in Manitoba more attractive.

Our post-secondary system works best when we are working together to serve students—ensure that there are no wrong doors. Last year we created the advanced education advisory committee to provide a table where education partners and stakeholders can meet to discuss the best ways to move our system forward. I'm pleased to report that the advisory committee has met several times and that the conversation around the table has been productive in

allowing all voices to be heard as we develop a new strategy for post-secondary education.

Our post-secondary system is thriving and we continue to make investments in our colleges and universities because we know how essential a strong education system is for a modern, growing economy.

Madam Speaker, our government makes the education and training of students a top priority. We all want our children to succeed and to lead happy, productive lives here in Manitoba. We know that by continuing to invest in our schools, in our children, in our teachers and in our universities and colleges, we are ensuring that the future remains bright for Manitoba. We know that reckless cuts to front-line services and infrastructure investments others call for will hurt families and destroy our economic momentum. Our plan is to grow our economy, create good jobs for families, protect front-line services and invest in education to provide opportunities for youth. Our plan is working.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to get into the Estimates process and put a few words on the record and ask some questions to the minister. And I know that he'll be forthcoming with many, many answers as the days move on and possibly into summer. Ms.—Madam Acting Speaker, I'd just like to say, I guess, I'll save my thanks to the staff once they do come in. So with that, I guess we'll get under way.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 16.1.(a), contained in resolution 16.1.

At this time we invite the minister's staff and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and after that we'll ask that the staff be introduced.

The honourable minister to welcome and introduce your staff, please.

Mr. Allum: I have with me today—that I'm honoured to have with me today the deputy minister, Gerald

Farthing; Claude Fortier, acting executive director of Administration and Finance; Scott Sinclair, assistant deputy minister in Advanced Learning; and Claire Breul, acting CFO.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Globally, Madam Acting Speaker, thanks.

Madam Chairperson: Is that agreed that we'll proceed globally? *[Agreed]*

Thank you. It's agreed, then, that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all the resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

* (15:10)

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to start off by saying welcome and thank you to all the staff in the minister's Department of Education and Advanced Learning for joining us today, and I know that you put in countless hours within the department trying to ensure the best education is brought forward to our students in this wonderful province of ours, even though I know that there's been some difficult times in the last few months and over the last few years as far as a little bit of the revolving door, but it's nice to welcome back the old-new-old minister or vice versa there back to the table.

So we could go in as far as taking a look at the flow chart as far as the department minister. So I'd like to ask is there any additions, deletions for this year on the chart as far as your staff and your executive?

Mr. Allum: I want to just say quite quickly I thank the member for his welcome back and I look forward to engaging with him day-to-day and week-to-week for the foreseeable future as we both hope to improve and expand our education system.

The work chart in the Estimates book on page 8, I think, is the same, but I do want to highlight some changes that have been made since last year if the member is interested in that kind of a change, and I'm just going to articulate it for him and then we can see what I might have missed and we'll try to get the information that he needs.

But I think he knows that the adult learning division was created to replace the Council on Post-Secondary Education—let me revise that, the Advanced Learning Division was created to replace COPSE, the Council on Post-Secondary Education, and International Education now reports to Mr. Sinclair, ADM of the adult learning—Advanced Learning Division, instead of the deputy minister.

In 2014-15, the following branches have reported to the deputy minister: schools finance, Manitoba Student Aid, Financial and Administrative Services and Public Schools Finance Board. These areas now report to the executive director of Administration and Finance currently being held by Mr. Fortier on an acting status basis. Mr. Fortier was the former executive financial officer. The EFO position is now being held by Ms. Breul on an acting status basis. The Innovative Technology Services branch reported to the EFO in 2014-15 and now reports to the executive director of Administration and Finance. The supporting student achievement unit is also new and is being headed up by Tia Cumming. The chairperson for the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund was Mal Anderson who is replaced by Ross Dunlop.

Mr. Ewasko: So the PVI, private vocational institute—institution's director Riel Dion, what's happened with that component of the organizational chart?

Mr. Allum: So PVIs, private vocational institutions, now report through the Advanced Learning Division, and the specific report is to the director of post-secondary programs. That's the specific reporting relationship, and then it's within the advanced education division.

Mr. Ewasko: So the private vocational institutions—for how many years prior to last year did it have its own director, and, also, question (b) to that question, I guess, is: Is Riel Dion gone somewhere else, or what's happened there?

Mr. Allum: So I would have to get the specific length of time that the member's asking for in terms of the reporting relationship prior to the change made this year. But I want to assure him that the status of the PVIs haven't changed even if their reporting relationship within the department has changed.

And what I want to suggest to him, and I know he's just asking for some clarification here, is that I think he knows that administrations evolve and adapt in order to always try to be more responsive to the

needs, so—of stakeholders, which in our case, of course, are primarily students, but their families and educators and administrators. And so when the decision was made several years ago to combine the department from K to 12 along with advanced ed. into one department so that they—we were effectively kindergarten to career, we—administrative changes were bound to happen within the department in order to reorganize the department in—so that it could respond more effectively to the changing circumstance of one department as well as to the changing features of our community, especially in the educational community.

*(15:20)

One of the things, as he well knows, that we have—are addressing throughout the educational system, and I say this concretely, from kindergarten through to career, but most importantly within the post-secondary system, is to address the issue of system co-ordination. I've said it many times and say it again and probably will say it many times in the days ahead: we need strong individual institutions within a strong post-secondary education system. So the administrative changes that he's asking about—and I know there'll be more that he'll want more information about—they're really all designed in order to ensure that the department is as equipped as it can be to respond to the educational needs of Manitobans.

Report

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates for the Department of Family Services, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) moved the following motion: that line 9.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.

Chairperson, this motion was defeated on a voice vote and, subsequently, two members requested that a counted vote be taken on this matter.

Madam Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

Recorded Vote

Madam Chairperson: In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates of the Department of

Family Services, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie moved the following motion: that line 9.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote, and, subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 16, Nays 30.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

*(16:10)

Madam Chairperson: The sections of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of the departmental Estimates.

The Committee of Supply, please come to order.

Considering the Estimates of the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, we'll invite the minister's staff to re-enter the Chamber.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Acting Speaker, we'll carry on in that line of—or Deputy Speaker. Thank you to one of my colleagues for straightening me out on that.

I guess we'll continue on on the line of questioning in regards to the private vocational institutions. They are now having to report, but there's no actual director in charge now. Is that correct, Minister?

And I would think that, as one of the many options that students have graduating from high school that you would continue to put private vocational institutions as something under maybe an umbrella or some sort of adviser or some sort of director. But it's sort of interesting—what was the rationale for getting rid of that—that department, or that director position?

Mr. Allum: If I didn't make it crystal clear, there certainly is a person—yes, certainly is an individual undertaking the duties of a director in relation to PVIs.

Mr. Ewasko: Looking at the organizational chart, you've gone now and added two assistant deputy ministers to the organizational chart.

Can you give me some sort of rationale for doing that, especially after the fact that last year you still had the Department of Education and Advanced Learning and you just went and expanded that organizational chart?

Mr. Allum: There is an additional one—singular—one additional ADM within the department, and that's, of course, in the advanced education division. The rationale for that, I think, is pretty clear. Under the former council of post-secondary education, or COPSE, there was a secretary who was sort of the overall head of that particular organization. When we proceeded with Bill 63 last year, then we, as you know, rolled COPSE into the department and created the advanced education division, and from there I felt, in consultation with the deputy minister, that it was appropriate, given the strength of our post-secondary education sector, that there would be an ADM in that position so that our institutions would know that we had a great respect for them and that we would have an opportunity to engage more directly with each of the institutions individually and then, of course, as a sector as well.

Yes, so—and, in addition to that, of course, it's worth saying, and I know we'll talk more about this, so I'll just briefly mention it, that, of course, with the new advanced ed. division, you know, we are streamlining functions, and, of course, trying to improve co-ordination across the system. And then, as I said earlier in our earlier discussion, within the department as well.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and I thank one of the clerks for clarifying the various titles in the committees and then also in the House, so that's great.

So question to the minister, then, we have Mr. Sinclair, who's the assistant deputy minister. So did Mr.—where was Mr. Sinclair before he was appointed assistant deputy minister?

Mr. Allum: He was with the Department of Jobs and the Economy.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. So, when you rolled COPSE into the department and you came up with the advanced education committee, can you go through sort of the names of the people that are on that new standing committee?

Mr. Allum: May have misunderstood the member's question, so, if—we'll certainly go backwards, if I haven't gotten this right. What I heard him say was about the staff complement, but maybe I got that wrong. The staff complement went from the council into the Advanced Learning Division. He—at that point, when it's rolled in, the secretary's position sometime thereafter became vacant, and, from that period, at that point, then, we undertook to establish the ADM position.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. No, I think—well, where I was trying to go, and sorry for the misunderstanding. But, once you rolled COPSE into the department, you've created the Advanced Learning Division. Now, instead of having COPSE, which would then answer or report to the department, you've created a committee, and I believe the title of that committee—I think you mentioned it earlier, but is—advanced education and something committee, and you'll clarify that if I can get the title of that committee again and who sits on that.

Mr. Allum: Yes, thanks, okay. So we're now clear and on the same page here. That committee is called the advisory committee on advanced education, and I'll take you through the folks who are on there.

Of course, as minister, I have the honour of sitting on that, and then we have Dr. Barnard from the—president of the U of M; Dr. Trimbee, president of the U of W; Dr. Fearon, president of Brandon U; Dr. Csepregi, president of Université de Saint-Boniface; Konrad Jonasson, president of UCN; Dr. Rew, the interim president at Red River; Mark Frison, president at—of Assiniboine Community College; Paul Holden, president, Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology; Dr. Cheryl Pauls, president of Canadian Mennonite University, CMU; Kimberly Embleton, she's the education director at Urban Circle Training Centre; Bob Silver, co-chair of the Premier's economic advisory committee; Kevin Rebeck, co-chair, Premier's economic advisory committee; Paul Olson, president, Manitoba Teachers' Society, although I'm aware that Mr. Olson left his position; his term ended, and so the new president will now join us; Carolyn Duhamel, executive director of MSBA, but, of course, Ms. Duhamel is also due to retire soon, but MSBA will still be represented on the committee; Dr. Meir Serfaty, he's the president of the Brandon University Faculty Association; Michael Barkman, who's the chair of the Canadian Federation of Students for Manitoba; Kathleen BlueSky of the Assembly Manitoba Chiefs, and she's a MBA student;

Doug Lauvstad, executive director of the Northern Manitoba Sector Council; Tara Manych, who's the principal at Mary Duncan School and director of Kelsey ALC; and then Paul Vogt serves as our secretary and acting chair.

* (16:20)

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Chair and Minister, for the reading of the list.

Those positions that are going to be vacant due to their stepping down or retiring or whatever else of the various positions—I mean, you mentioned the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. So are those positions within the advisory committee of advanced education, are those spots held specifically for those organizations or it just so happens that those people are within those organizations and they have a spot on that committee?

Mr. Allum: Well, the answer to the question is that, well, there's nothing specific outlining who ought to be members. The objective of creating the advisory committee was to bring together a broad cross-section of stakeholders across the education community here in Manitoba. And it was essential, in our view, that we have our key partners from the K-to-12 system sitting at the same table as our key partners in the post-secondary system so that we can continue to work on the seamlessness of the system and work on our collective co-ordination from kindergarten to grade 12.

So the answer in one sense is that the membership, of course, is at the minister's discretion; on the other hand, we wanted to be sure that folks from MTS, from MSBA, were represented on the advisory committee.

Mr. Ewasko: So how—you mentioned in your—I believe you mentioned in your opening statement that you have met a few times with this committee. When was it, again, created and how many times specifically have you met with this committee?

Mr. Allum: The—as the member knows, the bill was contemplated in—or the committee was contemplated in Bill 63, and so, once that legislation was passed and proclaimed, then the committee came into being. Of course, it took some time to organize the membership and get folks together. My understanding is that the committee has met four times—oh sorry, excuse me—three times since it was first established and—which was—sorry—in January. And then the—it was my great honour to attend the last meeting, which was May 15th, and had the

opportunity to reintroduce myself to those folks and get brought up to speed on the work that they'd been doing and have a chance to exchange ideas in addition to that.

I have to tell the member that, when I sat down and saw the configuration of the folks at the table, that I was—felt that what we had envisioned in Bill 63 had come to fruition. We'd put all stakeholders in the—from the education community together and there was a high degree of collaborative spirit and, I would say, a enthusiasm among all participants who were pleased to be in a circumstance where we could exchange ideas and work together, as I said earlier, to create strong institutions, but more than that, to create a strong post-secondary system for Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: The—when COPSE was brought into the department—or before COPSE was brought into the department, each and every year COPSE would produce a report which was transparent and relatively open to the public. How do you see this new committee actually reporting or even being held accountable to any degree to the general public now that it's been brought right into the purview of the minister's office?

Mr. Allum: Yes, it's a good point that the member makes, but I want to make sure that he properly understands the nature of the advisory committee in relation to how the Council on Post-Secondary Education worked.

The advisory committee does not do, really, any of the work that the former community members of the council did. The—in COPSE, as he knows, I was the chair of the council, and an extraordinary amount of the effort of the community members were put toward program approval with very little time left for contemplating the strategic direction of the post-secondary sector. So, in this case, the advisory committee, as we've contemplated it and then executed it, in fact, is there to provide advice and guidance to the minister in the construction and evolution of the post-secondary sector.

But, in relation to reporting, of course, the functions of the staff component of the council of post-secondary education will now be reported through the department's annual report each year, so equally transparent and accountable as it was in its former incarnation.

* (16:30)

Mr. Ewasko: The—there's also a group or a committee, and it does sound, as far as the names

that you've put on the record, you have quite the team that you've put alongside you to be advisers, and I commend all of them for taking on that role because they are superb educational leaders within the province, for sure.

Now you also have another committee called COPUM, and so if you can talk about what COPUM stands for and also the names that are on that committee.

Mr. Allum: Well, I want to agree, first of all, of course, what the member's observation. We feel exceedingly privileged to have those individuals participating in the activities of the advisory committee. You're quite—he is quite right to say that they are outstanding representatives of our educational system who are forward thinking and progressive in all matters relating to education, and so I can easily concede that I'm humbled and privileged that they have chosen to participate in the activities of the advisory committee.

But I want to make sure the member understands that 'cocum' is not related to the department in any way; it is, in fact, the Council of Presidents of Universities in Manitoba. It's a voluntary association of those individuals and so their activities are unrelated to my responsibilities or to the department's responsibilities.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, that group of individuals do not have to report back to the minister in what—in any way, shape or form?

Mr. Allum: Well, it—no, 'cocum'—members of COPUM as COPUM do not report to the minister in any way, shape or form. Of course, we talk, we chat, we converse with one another, we share ideas and exchange ideas, but, no, they don't—there's no reporting relationship there.

Mr. Ewasko: Going back to the organizational chart, and after taking a little bit closer look at it here, there are quite a few names that are—have either changed some sort of position or have been moved into the organizational chart for this coming—this upcoming year 2015-16. Can you go over the names of the people who have either left or retired or have been transferred out and where have they gone, and then just explain the new people that have moved into the organizational chart as well, please? And you've already mentioned Mr. Sinclair, so you don't have to go over that one again.

Mr. Allum: I'm going to try to do the member's question justice, and then we—from there we can try to sort out what I haven't answered fully.

So, if I start at the top of the org chart on page 8, and I think that, then, if he looks to his right, he'll see the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Board, and the chair there of TRAF is now Ross Dunlop, who replaced Mal Anderson.

And then, if you go down, you'll see under the deputy and then to the right, is Tia Cumming, who is now the co-ordinator in the Supporting Student Achievement Unit; euphemistically, we refer to that as our quality unit, and Tia's doing a superb job there.

And then, if I move to the left, far left of the org chart, under Administration and Finance, there you can see that Claude—Mr. Fournier is the executive—acting executive director. He was previously the acting—well, he was the executive financial—previously, the executive financial officer, which Ms. Breul is now occupying that position. And then, if you look under the Public Schools Finance Board, you'll see Gerry LeSage, acting as the acting director. The current director is on leave currently.

Then moving to the right of the organizational chart, you have the Educational Support Services director, Marcel Bérubé, and then, as you are aware, in the Advanced Learning Division, that's Mr. Bérubé, of course, is a change from last year, which is what I'm trying to articulate here. And then, in the Advanced Learning Division, we've discussed Mr. Sinclair, who we are pleased to have as our newest ADM. And then you'll see to the right, Dave Neil, who is the executive director of Campus Manitoba, and Mr. Neil has been seconded for that position.

* (16:40)

Mr. Ewasko: Was there any other changes as you went further down the organizational chart?

Mr. Allum: So, on the org chart, as I've articulated it, there would be no additional changes. Of course, the department has undergone personnel changes that one would ordinarily experience in terms of people retiring or people moving on to other jobs or laterals and all that kind of thing, but the org chart that we have there is—I think I've articulated all the changes in relation from this year to last year.

Mr. Ewasko: It just seems to me, Minister, that the amount of people has increased by, I'd say about 10 to 15 per cent, so to me it just looks like there's been an increase, so if you—I don't know if you want to—if you've got that answer handy or if you want to get back to me with that.

Mr. Allum: Yes. I think what the member sees, Madam Chair, in looking at the org chart, because I think he does see an expansion of the names and the number of positions on there, is what he's seeing is simply our transparency in articulating the membership of the Advanced Learning Division that you previously would not have seen when the council of post-secondary education was part of the equation.

Other than that, there have been other, of course, as I said, other changes—people retiring, moving on, finding other good work, but I think that's what the member's seeing, Madam Chair, when he looks at the organizational chart.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, so a lot of those—the people under the Advanced Learning Division were already employed or working within the COPSE stream. And then when you mention that, you know, some of them have been either employed or were employed, have retired or have moved on, how many of those members had moved on out west? Do you know how many of those had left to go towards Alberta?

Mr. Allum: Yes, the folks that are now identified in the Advanced Learning Division on the org chart did previously work with the Council on Post-Secondary Education. But, when people retire or leave or whatever, I don't actually pay attention as to where they're going unless I have a personal relationship with them in some way.

Mr. Ewasko: I've got a document which is the School Programs Division Whom Do I Call? sheet, which is online—found online for parents if they have the time to, sort of, sift through the website. It was last updated on March 12th, 2015. I just want to know: Is that listing up to date, or has there been any changes or movements within the School Programs Division?

Mr. Allum: Well, we believe there was—that contact information that the member identified is up to date, and we would expect that the names and the numbers and email addresses that are there are up to date. But he's encouraged us to make sure that they are, and I appreciate that, and we'll certainly reflect on that—make sure that it's as up to date as possible. But

remind him that this is, of course, something that I think he would be pleased about and I'm—certainly am that we're transparent in the department in making sure that when there are questions about any of the programming that goes on within the School Programs Division, that folks have somebody they can pick up the phone and speak to, get answers to the questions, engage in a dialogue if need be, and certainly provide the kind of information that we know that families need and—in order to ensure that students are going down the right possible pathway or getting the right—best possible education that they can.

* (16:50)

Mr. Ewasko: Turning to page 9 of the Estimates booklet, we have allocation of funds to Finance of two point almost six million dollars. I just want to hear from the minister why that's been transferred over to the department of—or to the Finance Department.

Mr. Allum: So the money that the member was looking at on page 9 of the Estimates book, that's—I believe that's the 2.592 number that he was referencing, is funds that are not provided to schools. These are dollars that are payment for accommodation costs that were formerly paid to MIT. So I'll just reiterate that again, if he wants. This is not money for schools. It was payment for accommodation costs normally paid to—formerly paid to MIT.

Mr. Ewasko: So, if it was formerly paid to MIT, why is it now being paid to Finance, and why, in the first place, was it going to MIT?

Mr. Allum: Sorry, I'd just ask the member to quickly repeat it, if he wouldn't mind, the question.

Mr. Ewasko: So the question was—so now it's being transferred from your department, Education and Advanced Learning to Finance, and you're saying that it used to be paid over to MIT. So I guess the first part of the question is, why in the world was it going to MIT in the first place, and now, it makes even less sense now that it's going to Finance. So what's the reasons for it in the first place?

Mr. Allum: Well, I think to answer the member's question, it's not a particular mystery or anything like that. I think he knows that MIT was formerly responsible for accommodations across the provincial government, responsible for, you know, lease costs and maintenance costs and those kind of things. And so, in the past, the department would have paid

those expenses to MIT. In the interim, those—that service, that accommodation service was transferred to Treasury Board under the Department of Finance. So it's simply a matter of a changing of administrative responsibilities within the provincial government. And I think he knows that we make those adjustments in administration from time to time in order to try to ensure that we make as many efficiencies as we can.

And so sometimes things change within the administrative structure of government, at certain times, in order to respond to current circumstances and whatnot. And so, in that respect, it's not intended as anything other than a change of administrative function within government.

Mr. Ewasko: Now I'm looking at last year's Estimates booklet, and there is no line that says there was that amount of money. Two point almost six million dollars transferred over to MIT. So this is just interesting. So that's why I'm asking these questions. So I don't see where it was last year or how much was transferred over to MIT last year.

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

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