

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXIX No. 32A - 10 a.m., Thursday, June 30, 2016

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 30, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Good morning, Madam Speaker. Would you please resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

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

The committee will now resume consideration of the motion concurring with all supply resolutions related to the Estimates of Expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

On June 29th, 2016, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Maloway) tabled the following list of ministers who may be called for sequential questioning in the debate on this motion today: the First Minister; Sustainable Development; Families; Education and Training; Infrastructure; Agriculture; Sport, Culture and Heritage; Growth, Enterprise and Trade; Health, Seniors and Active Living; Indigenous and Municipal Relations; Justice; Crown Services.

The floor is open for questions.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Before my colleague asks the first question of the Education Minister, I would like to

state a correction. There was an error in our—on my part during the Executive Council, Thursday, June 9th session. At that time I made a statement during Estimates in our discussion about the vote-rigging scandal during the Filmon years. I mentioned the role of the Cabinet secretary in that dark chapter in Manitoba's history. I misspoke, as it was the secretary to the Treasury Board, as well as the Premier's chief of staff who were implicated in that scandal, not a Cabinet secretary. So that's the correction I wish to make.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the Education Minister some questions.

I think that there was a question that was under advisement on deaf education. I believe that the minister is able to respond now, so I'd just like to ask again whether the minister could tell us the level of funding and the status of deaf education in Manitoba this year.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): And I thank the member for repeating the question. I ran out of time.

And I ran out of time towards the end of the day yesterday. The total amount of appropriations for the Manitoba School for the Deaf is \$3.561 million, and this is an area that has been growing slowly in terms of the number of students we serve, and not only through the School for the Deaf, but in the general school population as well, because services are provided not just directly in the School for the Deaf, but also in other ones and other schools around Manitoba.

We—it kind of takes two forms in terms of assistance for those that are hard of hearing and yet still do have some level of hearing, and the remainder in the area of those that are profoundly deaf, and with the use of American Sign Language, we do have occasionally need to replace some staff in that area and we're in a position now where we do have some hiring to do, but it's been prioritized. And so we're moving ahead to make sure that the level of service continues at a very high level. It has been actually very well received. We received a number of

very positive comments for the services provided in that regard, so I think it's an area that we continue to prioritize, and I think that should cover the question. Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: And specifically with the School for the Deaf, is that program continuing to be funded at the same rate?

Mr. Wishart: It's actually seen an increase in rates from previous years. Previous year's funding was 3.506; this year we're at 3.561. That's about two—a little over 2 per cent increase, so we're continuing to increase the funding in line with our other supports in the K-to-12 area in particular.

Mr. Kinew: And can the minister tell the committee is that increase primarily just step-ups in people costs or is that program spending increases?

* (10:10)

Mr. Wishart: And the member corrected; it's mostly step up in people costs; there's a slight increase in transportation costs as well.

Mr. Kinew: I believe that some of the regulations under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act is still in the process of being developed. Seeing as how some of these regulations will be impacting students, you know, deaf students, other students with accessibility issues, has the Minister of Education undertaken any conversations with his Cabinet colleagues about developing the regulations for the accessibility act?

Mr. Wishart: We're always having some discussions regarding accessibility. It is certainly a priority for this government across the grain of all departments, but in Education in particular. But a lot of the costs associated with accessibility are actually assigned to the individual schools and so don't actually show in this particular budgetary line item. But, certainly, it is a priority for this government to make sure that accessibility is improved as much as possible, whether it's for the deaf population or the hard-of-hearing population, which is an additional challenge, or those with other types of disability. So we certainly prioritize the need to put infrastructure in place to help deal with that. But, specific to this, most of it is actually imbedded in the costs of the actual school.

Mr. Kinew: So, regarding the regulations under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, has the minister begun any conversations about that with his Cabinet colleagues about the design of the regulations, and particularly how they'd impact students?

Mr. Wishart: I thought I was maybe clearer, but maybe I should have been a little more clear. We have had some discussions about how the regulations would be needed to be designed, and certainly we're prepared to move forward in this area. I can't, of course, share any of that discussion yet with the member opposite, but there is certainly things going on in regards to this.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to ask a question about students with special needs. Is there any changes to the funding for students identified as level 2 and level 3 this—in this year's budget?

Mr. Wishart: Any increase would be in line with the increases through the K-to-12 system, which is, as I mentioned earlier, in the area of 2 and a half per cent.

I know the member is familiar with the fact that we currently have a task force working on special needs funding and recommendations—preliminary recommendations, actually, went to the minister previous. And we are working with Pembina Trails School Division—oh, sorry, Louis Riel School Division on a pilot project to kind of test the recommendations to make sure that they actually work in a real level, and most of that is around a formula that is proposed for the level 2 to 3 special funding.

So in that school division there is clearly a change in terms of the funding formula, and we will be evaluating whether this formula works in conjunction with the special needs task force that's already in place.

I think the message we have been receiving, and I know the member's probably received it as well from many parents and teachers, is that the current methodology, which is very administratively heavy and a fairly negative approach—you have to overstate the problems for many students before you can qualify for funding—is something that we're—we would like to move forward from, so we're looking for opportunities to do that.

As I mentioned, Louis Riel School Division is trying to run a pilot around the recommendations of the task force, and we'll—we hope to learn—between the task force recommendations themselves and the pilot, we hope to learn how well that might work and whether that's something that could be put into the larger process in funding for schools.

Mr. Kinew: I believe we spoke about the pilot project in Estimates last week, so I'll just refer back to those notes for more information.

I guess on a somewhat related point, just given that there's another sort of report and task force involved, there was a report created by Kevin Lamoureux—not the politician Kevin Lamoureux, but the academic Kevin Lamoureux—regarding education for kids in care. And a number of recommendations in there to do with trauma-informed education practices for teachers, transportation for kids so that they could remain in the same school even after the care situation may have changed, things like that.

So I'd like to ask the minister, you know, what his plans are—well, ask through you, the Chair, what the minister's plans are in terms of following up for that report.

Mr. Wishart: The Lamoureux report is one we're taking it very seriously. There is additional dollars in the budget focused around transportation, particularly in the areas that have been identified needing—trying to keep the kids in school. I think the member's very aware of the problem and how few children in CFS actually graduate from high school. If I remember correctly, the number's in the range of 38 per cent, which is quite a bit below the average.

And so, certainly, we need to help try and do whatever we can, a education system to help these children that are involved with the child-welfare system here in Manitoba and of which it's very large number, as the member knows. So we are working at trying to find ways to provide the supports these children need besides the issue of transport.

Some of this actually will be touched on by the protecting children act in the future because, of course, teachers—the proposed one that we have brought forward—teachers will be included under that act, and there'll be some more information sharing that work to the advantage of teachers.

*(10:20)

I know that the Alberta example, the Sheldon Kennedy centres have recently expanded their mandate to be more engaged with the education system in Alberta, finding that they—even though they did inform, they didn't have active engagement; they didn't have the teachers and other members of the education groups as involved with the individual cases through the Sheldon Kennedy centre in that approach in Alberta until recently. And they're finding it to their advantage to have included, so the

teachers are in a better position to understand the trauma that the child is suffering from and to help the child deal with it.

That's very much a wraparound approach that we think will give children a better situation to recover, a better chance of recovering from trauma. And, certainly, the numbers indicated in the success in Alberta have been very encouraging, but we need to make this work for Manitoba.

As the member knows, we had an announcement at Snowflake Place just last week, I think, in regards to that, and we'll continue to work co-operatively with the other departments as part of that.

And, certainly, the children impacted by the child-welfare system are large in number and often have great needs. So we're certainly prepared to do what is necessary through the education system to help these children succeed better.

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister tell this committee how many additional dollars for transportation are in this year's budget? And, then, just please provide some insight as to how that money is distributed. Is it just a grant to the school divisions? Or is it an application-based thing? Or is it some other formula for distributing the money?

Mr. Wishart: I'm going a bit by memory here, but the—I believe the additional transportation was in the area of \$50,000 for a year. And, of course, it would be provided in a grant.

I can't provide exactly how that would be distributed. I know that we were looking to the school divisions to identify those in need. And, so, it would probably be on a grant-per-school-division basis. Much of that, of course, based on the populations and number of children in care, would actually be in urban areas. So a good portion of that would be engaged with the school divisions located in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Kinew: There's a program called the Triple A; I believe it's aboriginal academic achievement.

Can the minister tell us what the funding level will be this year? Is it same as last year? Is there an increase of 2 to 2 and a half per cent, as with other areas? Can he provide an update on the funding for the Triple A grant?

Mr. Wishart: The grant is provided to assist school divisions with current programming or implementation of new programs that target academic successes for Aboriginal students, and I

can certainly supply the member with numbers for the different school divisions. The total is \$9.2 million, and it did increase this year, in line with the general increase.

It is really focused around the number of First Nations families of school-age children in the system, so certainly there's some qualifiers around minimum numbers and things like that, but it is designed to provide support to school divisions with planning related to these types of programming.

I think that really covers the basics to it, but if there's additional information if the member wishes.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, one point of follow-up. I assume that the bulk of that 9.2 is the funding for the grant itself, but I just ask if there's any changes to the number of full-time equivalent staff positions that are working on that program. Or is it the same staffing level as in previous years?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for question.

The number of full-time equivalents is the same as in previous years.

Mr. Kinew: I believe it was two days ago in question period the minister made reference to a letter that he had received from the college of Manitoba midwives. I'd asked through you whether he could table that letter before the committee.

Mr. Wishart: Though I didn't quote directly from the letter, it is the same letter that was tabled by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) the other day. I can retable that later if you so wish, but I don't see a lot of constructive in regards to that. I think the member knows the content of the letter, where it stated that the college had approved a program that involved University of Manitoba and University College of the North, which is not what is currently out there in terms of options.

So I know the member and I actually disagreed at the time as to the content of what was approved and what wasn't. It was pretty specific and, if I recall the question, the—at the time that we certainly both were having a disagreement on wording and terminology. But I think we were both actually, when I reviewed it, actually both correct in our statement that the current program at that moment was there was no approved program at that moment, and I think that I still stand by that statement.

Mr. Kinew: I thank the minister for clarifying that the letter was the same content-wise as the one

that was tabled yesterday. So that's helpful for us certainly.

Can the minister tell us what the plans are for the Seniors' School Tax Rebate and for the Education Property Tax Credit next year?

* (10:30)

Mr. Wishart: For anyone to predict exactly what will happen for the future, of course, is difficult. I certainly can't make any realistic prediction. In fact, I would suggest to the member that if he wants to address that question to any minister, perhaps the Finance Minister would care to speculate. I would doubt that he would be prepared to do that either.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to ask a few questions about, I guess, certain aspects of the recent Auditor General's report, the follow-up, the ones that pertain to Education, anyways. There was a follow-up to the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care program in the AG report. I think that the Education and Training Department is implicated at least in some of those recommendations.

I'd just first like to ask whether there's any changes to what was outlined in that report as to what the Education Department will and will not be following up on in terms of the follow-through on those recommendations.

Mr. Wishart: I'll have to go a little bit by memory in regards to some of these. I mean, we're certainly working to try and put in place the recommendations that have come forward from this report. I know it was certainly focused about the increased need for early learning and child care and we'll—we are working to try and improve that. In fact, we're working with the Department of Families on some plans moving forward, and to make sure that we have in place—as we increase the number of child-care spaces in this province—that we have in place an adequate workforce.

I think the member's very aware from our election campaign that we have a set number of initiatives, including the one that was announced during the campaign, to focus around increasing in-home child-care spaces. I know that some of the members across have been a little critical. They think that this won't have a significant impact on the number of child-care spaces in the province. Not every province has a great record in regard to that. In fact, our record here in Manitoba is very poor, but there are a number of provinces that have, in terms of their capacity, in the 18 to 20 per cent of their

capacity. And then, of course, there is Quebec, which has a long history of strength in this area with over 40 per cent of their capacity in child care is actually licensed in homes. I suspect that that's an unachievable percentage by modern standards and I think it has a lot to do with a strong historical support for those types of child-care facilities. We believe that there's great potential in terms of taking a portion of the waiting list and putting them into licensed in-home.

When we—during the election campaign and in the run-up to the election campaign, of course, we had a number of discussions with different groups and families and individuals that made it very clear, and we certainly support their position in that child care is a very important part of today's modern society and we need to make sure that there's adequate capacity in the system in regards to that. But they provided a fairly clear message in terms of there are really two options that they like; one is, of course, in association with schools and we continue the policy of building child-care facilities in conjunction with new schools and we're certainly looking beyond that in the future.

But the other one was close to home—down the block was the other answer that we often got, and licensed in-homes fill that need. It's surprising; we were looking at some numbers not too long ago around child-care capacity in South Point and we're working with the school there to make sure that there's adequate child-care capacity there in that new area.

The only existing child-care facilities in that whole area were licensed in-home ones, and though they were not adequate for the demand, it was interesting to note that they actually made up a very significant portion of the capacity in that particular area.

So I'm not sure that we're wrong in our assumption and our thinking that, particularly with some groups like new immigrants and hopefully some of the First Nations communities, that there's a desire to build additional capacity and that that is one way we can do that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kinew: Thanks for the update overall.

The one recommendation that I was specifically interested in was recommendation 3(a), basically recommends that there be public—well, measuring in public reporting on wait times for child care. A year

ago today, the AG report says—this is the status as of a year ago today—the department noted that a system review found that it's current information system lacked the capacity to do this, so they indicated to the Auditor General that they would not be following up on this.

You know, being mindful of the capacity within the department, it does seem to me that benchmarks and measurement is an important part of being able to monitor progress.

Just curious as to whether the minister is at all interested in revisiting this, whether, perhaps, this is something that he'd follow up on and, you know, inquire into whether that's changed and whether reporting on wait times might now be possible.

Mr. Wishart: And I thank the member for the question. It is certainly an area that we've actually had some discussion around, not only in the department, but with other groups. It is—I mean, the waiting list is substantial and, of course, very often people get notified that they're now having a spot available to them about the time the child is ready to enter the K-to-12 system, and so that's really not a lot of value to them. In the meantime, they've had to make do with a variety of interim arrangements, whatever they might be.

So we're certainly interested in trying to get the waiting list to be a realistic waiting list. There are—there's two schools of thought around this, frankly: there are people out there that say that it's an over-reported waiting list, that there's actually more people on that list that are actually still looking; some have found interim arrangements that they like and they're really not actively looking, yet their name's still on the list.

* (10:40)

And then there are others that tell us that people take a look at the waiting list and say, what's the point, and going on such a long waiting list that is not a constructive and obviously not working well, and so they often go to the individual child-care facilities that they're interested in being part of and they get on a waiting list at those individual sites, paper waiting lists in many cases. And many tell us that those are the real waiting lists, and there is, of course, no real reporting mechanism for those. We're certainly looking for opportunities to try and have this waiting list be reflective, but, as the member mentioned, it would take a lot of resources to be checking these things on a regular basis and I'm not

sure that that's something that we will invest a lot of time and money in.

But, as we move down the road of trying to deal with the large demand that is out there and has been there for a number of years, we will certainly look for opportunities to try and get the waiting list to be a little more realistic in terms of the actual number that are out there. I'm kind of curious myself to see whether it's an under or an overstatement. Certainly, from talking to individual groups and organizations that represent child-care providers, their view is that it's an under list, almost for sure, that there are actually many more than that. That—if that's true, then, I mean, there's actually more of a demand than we all realize, I think, out there. But it's a significant demand.

It is really a function of the way modern society is. You know, even when you're dealing with two-parent households, both work in most cases, and there are significantly more single-parent households out there now than there were 20 years ago. So, certainly in those households there is clearly a significant demand for child-care facilities, and the family connections and the family supports, given that people move around a lot more, are not always as good as they were even a few years ago. So the need for good, reliable child care is a strong message to government. You can't get people, you know, to move on with their education or even to get into the workplace if you cannot provide them with reliable child-care facilities.

And people in the workplace often report that it's—significant issues with child care are a significant cause of absenteeism, so there's actually a further hidden cost that we probably are underrating. So we're certainly prepared to work very constructively, and I look for opportunities to work with the Department of Families in regards to helping them implement a good strategy on child care.

Mr. Kinew: There is a body—I forget the exact name, something like the minister's advisory committee on education. I'm just wondering if that group has met yet with the new minister and if he can tell us whether there's been any changes to the membership on that group.

Mr. Wishart: Thank the member for the question.

There is a minister's advisory committee across Canada—sorry—including the territories, of course. We've had a conference call—two conference calls already and a teleconference actually just the other

day. There is some things under way in terms of advisory and putting advisory structures in place and in a more permanent organization to represent and work on our behalf.

There is significant change in the membership. In fact, I believe—tried to count it up the other day, and I felt like the newcomer, but I was only marginally the newcomer. There has been, yes, a huge turnover. In fact, I believe there's only two provinces where there's ministers that have even two years worth of experience, so we're all going to—we have a face to face scheduled for I believe it's October, and that will be the first opportunity to get to know some of these people.

But we're all going to be very much in the same boat in terms of a lot of new people, and sometimes that's a good thing, provides the opportunities to work constructively together. Certainly from the conference call and the teleconference, I would say that we're very much on the same page in a number of regards. And we're prepared to work very co-operatively with the federal minister in regards to this, and we see opportunities—federal ministers, because there's some overlap in regards to some of the funding—in regards to that. And so we're looking for opportunities to work together in a constructive manner. I think education across Canada will benefit from it. I know there was a little discussion in one of them about school measurements and education measurement. That is going to be at least one of the areas of discussion in the fall.

So we're attempting to work in a positive manner. As I—as we've often indicated in this government, we're very keen on partnerships, and we think that there may be some opportunities in regards to working together in this area as well.

Mr. Kinew: I'd like to also thank the minister for providing some insight.

I think I—there's a lack of clarity in what I was referring to. That was the First Minister's working group. I was referring to a—like, a committee internal to here in Manitoba that is made up of academics from post-secondary stakeholders from the K-to-12 system, other interested parties, to provide advice on education. I believe it's the minister's advisory council on education, or something like that. I don't have the exact name in front of me right here.

So the previous answer was valuable; I do appreciate the insight. But I'd, you know, like to follow up on the internal advisory committee here in

Manitoba; whether that group has met yet, whether the membership is the same, whether there's any changes there.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question. I'm sorry I answered the wrong question earlier. It is difficult; there are a number of committees, as the member probably appreciates.

The minister advisory council here in Manitoba, we have not yet had a meeting. We're certainly intending to do that. I suspect, like the member, we're planning on doing a lot of consultations once session is behind us. And—but it—then this will be one of the early ones in the process.

As to the membership, there was a little discussion—not that we're planning a lot of changes—but just reviewing who was there and, you know, who are they representing, as some are there on behalf of organizations; some are there as individuals. And, of course, in the case of the organizations, things evolve; people change. So we'll certainly be looking at that. And it's certainly our intent to meet with them and seek their advice on several areas that we're interested in making changes to—really, all in regards to trying to improve the outcome for students in Manitoba. That's why they were put in place and, certainly, we'll be looking for opportunities to seek their advice on some thoughts that we have in regards to making changes. And we'll also be seeking their advice on any thoughts that they might have.

As I mentioned earlier, building on partnerships and working with—in consultation with groups is something that this government believes in very strongly, and we'll look for opportunities in regards to that. And this would be one. But, as of this time, we have not had an opportunity to have a meeting.

Mr. Kinew: That body developed a post-secondary strategy.

Can the minister tell us what his plans are for following up on that strategy, whether it be moving forward with the existing direction they'd developed or whether he'd now be trying to work with them to chart a new course?

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

We are reviewing the post-secondary strategy. We have not made a decision as to whether we're going to follow it as it sits or whether we'll be looking for some refinements on it. We certainly will

be consulting with this group before we move forward with either alternative.

Mr. Kinew: Previous to this advisory group, there was a separate body, somewhat independent, called COPSE, Council on Post-Secondary Education.

This is—was the body through which programmatic changes at post-secondary institutions were vetted through and, you know, other decisions like that were made through. That body's been dissolved; now there is the, I guess, more decision-making within the department itself.

* (10:50)

So I'm just wondering whether that decision to dissolve COPSE might be revisited now. Perhaps we could see a return of COPSE or whether the minister will be proceeding with the existing decision-making structure?

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I thank the member for the question.

I'm sure the—he's had some discussions with his colleague, who was the former minister of Education, as to the value of COPSE.

We certainly have had people come forward and say that COPSE should be put back in place. We've also had some people that are saying evaluate where we're at right now and see whether or not that's the right process forward. And I suspect that it'll be part of the value-for-money review will be one of the recommendations. In fact, I think it would be probably very advisable to maybe get that into the terms of reference when that moves forward because we're—there are a number of different models out there across Canada as to how to seek advice on this, and there are still a number of provinces that use a model that is very similar to COPSE and I would suspect that they found it worked for them.

The previous minister didn't seem to see a value in COPSE. We'll certainly be looking at that as one of the alternatives, but we're not necessarily going to go in the direction of turning everything backwards. Education continues to evolve. I know the member, I'm sure he remembers some of his early years in the education system and things don't look like that anymore, and I think we all recognize either in regular K to 12 or in post-secondary situations we've seen a dramatic evolution in terms of how things are done.

We have already had some consultations with the leaders from the post-secondary institutions in

regards to a number of things. They certainly didn't seem particularly worried about the loss of COPSE, and so we'll take that certainly under advice. But they did identify a few areas that we would like to work with them on and we'll certainly be doing that.

So I really can't give the member a definitive answer on the future of COPSE. I suspect he should have a nice conversation with the previous minister in the former government and see what his rationales were. There was certainly an element of pushback at the time; there was not everyone was on the same page in regards to that then, and it's always hard to get a good feel for which is the right way forward, but we'll be looking carefully at alternatives in this area.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I appreciate the minister's comments.

The—I'm not sure whether he'd be aware or not but there's actually quite a few academics and university types who live in the Fort Rouge constituency, so even though this is a fairly arcane point, it was a doorstep issue, if you will, in Fort Rouge. I did speak about it with a few people—again, different opinions—some people arguing for the COPSE approach, other people happy to continue without it.

So it is something that I guess those who are particularly engaged with post-secondary are attuned to. Curious to know more about the, at least in broad strokes, what the areas of interest that the minister spoke with the post-secondaries with, he spoke about some new directions or new areas of priority that the presidents or the executives had shared with him.

So just would like the minister, you know, asking through you, Mr. Chair, the minister to share please what some of those areas of priority would be.

Mr. Wishart: I hope the—and thank the member for the question.

I hope he's prepared to deal with my somewhat spotty memory, but we did have quite a range of discussions. It was a three-hour meeting and so we covered quite a bit of range. We talked about funding, of course, that would be a given with any post-secondary and future direction.

One of the things that they were particularly interested in and we did have some good discussion around, with the restructuring of the department the opportunity exists to get more engagement, especially for the colleges, in terms of trades and

training around trades. And so that was actually a very constructive discussion, and I thought they were certainly open-minded about opportunities that would be presented in that area. And so we're certainly—we're happy to follow-up on that. I know we made a commitment to do some of that.

We also talked about the commitments that our party has made to increasing scholarships and bursaries, and the change in structures associated with that. And not only the change in moving forward in terms of how we hope of increase the amount, but the fact that they would probably of—will move to broaden the range of eligible areas for support, which I think the member certainly, likely, is very supportive of.

That was another area that took a fair bit of discussion. Generally, everybody was pretty supportive of moving forward and saw opportunities in regards to what we could be doing in the future in regards to that. I think everybody—obviously, in the post-secondary community they're very supportive of a concept of improving level of education and quality of education here in Manitoba, but I think they also understood that we need to work at the early years to make sure—we get that discussion more and more often with different groups when we meet with them, to make sure that we got to get people graduating from high school with good academic qualifications.

The universities in particular want a pretty good standard coming in. Even technical colleges now are—quite a high standard that they're demanding, and they have to do—in some cases they have to do a little retraining to make sure that students are at a level that they need to be at to take full advantage of the course opportunities at technical colleges. So we're certainly prepared to work very constructively with them.

It was a surprisingly wide-ranging discussion, and I was surprised at the level of interest that the post-secondaries expressed in what are we going to do in the early years and how are we going to try and improve the quality of education there. I guess they're—they must be seeing it first-hand.

And, of course, we also had a very constructive discussion on Aboriginal and the proposals to improve the level and the graduation rates in Aboriginal areas. We all see this as an area that Manitoba needs to show a lot of progress in in the future, and so certainly we'll be working with them very constructively in regards to that.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Last night, I had the honour of attending the graduation at Tec Voc High School, and a very joyous event; a sea of green in the Duckworth Centre.

And, of course, there were scholarships given out by the aerospace industry for some of the top graduating students, and quite a number of students who talked about being proud to look for careers in aerospace.

I asked the minister a couple of weeks ago about the fate of the aerospace and welding wing. At the time, the minister gave the impression that that project was under review. The minister's office then later gave word to some of my constituents and to me that the money was there, but there was no word on when this would actually happen.

Could the minister let me know when will construction begin on the aerospace and welding wing at Tec Voc High School, and when does the minister anticipate that this very important and very valuable project will be finished?

* (11:00)

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

The detail-level of detail I have with me today really only lists 2016, so that's probably not the level of answer that the member would like. Certainly, we're planning on moving forward. I know when the original question came up, we were still in the review process, as we were with most projects. And we—I always want to be in the position of making sure that local officials are notified first, and that was, at that time, was some of what was going on in terms of we were getting out notifications.

Construction estimates are in, and so, certainly, we're looking at these numbers and they'll be some—probably some modifications in some of the requirements. We've had some discussion, of course, with the aerospace industry, and there'll be some of the capacity—the aerospace industry will be involved a bit, in some of the capacity within the shop, making sure that the right tools are there so that their students actually are learning what is necessary to move them directly into the aerospace industry. So—and there's also an element of sharing the shop space that is being explored and developed as well.

So we actually have quite a few partners in this one, which makes it a little bit complicated in terms of a project proposal. It is a pretty big project in terms of the size of the addition that's being looked at

there. So I can try and get a little more precise information for the member if he would like that. Certainly, we're getting very close to having all the details in place, but in terms of what I have today, I don't have an actual date for sod turnings or anything like that.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for his response, and if he could provide me, as soon as he's able, with an update on when this very important project, not just for the students at Tec Voc, but for the aerospace industry as well, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: We have no further questions for the Education Minister, so he can be excused.

Mr. Chairperson: Sure. Thank you.

Ms. Marcelino: We have a few questions for the Premier, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Go ahead.

Ms. Marcelino: Through you, Mr. Chair, we'd like to ask the Premier: Does he support the mayor of Winnipeg's goal of moving ahead with the feasibility study on rail rationalization and relocation?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I wanted to begin by saying it's nice to see my colleagues here and to share with them that I had the privilege of having some discussion with some of our allies over the last couple of days around the country, around the world. Very exciting to have that opportunity, and I know that there are many opportunities out there for us in terms of trade.

It was particularly heartening to have the opportunity to hear the address from the US President—[interjection] You boys are distracting me pretty bad. Cliff, you boys are distracting me pretty badly.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: —and the address was one which focused on a number of issues that are near and dear to the hearts, I think, of Manitobans, not least of which was the topic of trade. And it was very, very heartening to see the response of the people in the House of Commons and, I expect, the response of Canadians, especially in view of the recent events in England. The Brexit vote, it's sent some shock waves, I think, through the international community in general, and specifically, I think has raised some concerns around the loss of trade opportunities for us all as a consequence of the growing sense of

frustration that exists among many, not exclusively in that part of the world, but that is revealing itself in isolationism in some quarters and revealing itself in attitudes that are rooted in a desire to go back in time to a previous time when the—we had barriers between our countries that were formidable in terms of blockages to trade.

Was particularly fruitful, I think, to hear the comments of President Obama in respect of the issues around the TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He was very, very clear that he saw in that trade deal a great opportunity for the world to advance a trade agenda that would benefit not only the people of the United States of America but the people of Canada, the people of Southeast Asia and other areas directly affected by the trade agreement. More importantly, what he addressed was the issues of uplifting the lives of people in those jurisdictions that suffer greatly from poverty. And the linkages he made are very clear, certainly in my mind and in the minds of those in my party, that trade opportunities can lead to better jobs, can lead to better protections for workers, can lead to and have led to better protection against youth exploitation, against practices that are unsafe to workers.

And this uplifting through well-crafted trade arrangements is a tremendously helpful thing to our globe. We become people who have taken down walls, as some would advocate we build, and instead have built bridges to connect us, and so we can then build things together. We can use the products that one another make with such skill. We can enjoy a better quality of life.

And the President spoke very eloquently about the possibilities of that. It was a very—I was pleasantly surprised to see the members of the federal New Democratic caucus rise as one and applaud him on his observations, knowing the position taken during the last federal election was one against the trade partnership. And to see that change in attitude at the federal level was heartening. And so I was encouraged by that.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for the update to the trip he had undertaken. We appreciate the Premier driving directly to the Legislative Building after his trip to answer the questions—important questions we have this time.

I would like to restate again, or ask again the first question. Does the Premier support the mayor's—mayor of Winnipeg's goal of moving ahead with

the feasibility study on rail rationalization and relocation?

Mr. Pallister: I thank my colleague for the topic and raising the topic. It's an issue that is most interesting to me and my colleagues on this side of the House. We know that the concept of moving the preponderance of rails that run through our city, Winnipeg, to another location is a concept that has been discussed for some time. I recall discussions on it in the 1970s. I'm not sure if that was when the discussions began, frankly. I think they may have actually begun earlier. I—someone has told me that they was—there—they knew of discussion around the rail relocation concept during the time of Premier Schreyer. So it goes back perhaps as much as a half century, this discussion, and maybe longer. I stand to be corrected. The member opposite may know of earlier discussions.

* (11:10)

So, continuing with that discussion is, of course, something that we need to do and I'm encouraged by the thoughtfulness that has gone into some of the ideas that I've seen expressed in the media, very thoughtful people, experts, and I don't claim to be one, in the areas like urban design and, you know, city design, and so on, have commented on the benefits to be derived by the relocation.

Of course, there wasn't a lot of progress made over a long period of time in, oh, the previous 17 years or so on this topic. But, that being said, there's no reason that we can't progress in the future, and I do look forward, actually, and am quite excited about the opportunities to work more closely with the mayor and his team at city hall, because I think they are people who are like this government, very cognizant of the benefits of planning and of foresight. So, in that respect, I think an answer to the member's specific question, I would say yes, I am supportive of dialogue on an ongoing basis with the mayor on this topic and on a number of other topics as well.

I've enjoyed the opportunity to get to know Mayor Bowman a little bit better, and I know that he is working very diligently on a number of files that are of great importance, not just to the people of the city of Winnipeg, but also to the people of the province of Manitoba, on issues of transit, issues of cost containment and moving towards balanced budgets. Of course, as the member knows by the provisions of The Municipal Act the city governments and municipal governments of our

province are required to balance their budgets, and it's a—it is an onerous responsibility to do that. It's one that the previous administration, provincially, had great challenges in doing for some time, increasingly failing to get a handle on expenses and value for money.

And so it is a challenge. I know it's a challenge certainly in all households. It's a challenge in small businesses, and it's a challenge that must be faced up to if you want to sustain your household or sustain your business. But for too many years in government, in particular in Canada at the provincial government level, there's been, it seems, a lack of focus and concern about balancing budgets, and so what has happened is that we have seen a preponderance of growth in provincial debt. And this has created real concerns, and I will share some of those concerns with the member in more detail at my next opportunity,

But I just—I wanted to also say I just know that all members are very excited this time of year about the graduations. I just—I heard the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) reference with great sincerity his joy at the grad in Tec Voc. I know all members are attending grads right now and I would emphasize this is a joyous time and we should all share in that celebration of the accomplishments of our young people. I think it's tremendous.

There are a number of communities around the province, of course, that are struggling economically, largely in some areas because of loss of opportunity to neighbours like Saskatchewan and the United States with better, lower tax regimes, so their grads are not always as happy because their young people are often leaving the community and not to return.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for the answer. I gather that he's supportive of an ongoing dialogue with the mayor regarding the feasibility study on rail rationalization and relocation.

And, still on that, would the Premier support the feasibility study being undertaken by former Premier Jean Charest who had agreed to head the task force on these issues?

Mr. Pallister: Thank you for the member's question. I realize that Monsieur Charest is a friend of mine, actually, was retained on rapid-fire notice, just very, very close to the time before the last provincial election was called, and in an effort some have

said to create the impression that the previous administration had as a high priority the project she now alludes to.

It allows me—because this is too often a concern, I think, that taxpayers have expressed to our members, certainly, that governments too often concern themselves with visible projects, not solely close to elections but quite frequently close to elections. Not least of which would be examples like infrastructure, where the previous administration underspent that department significantly to the tune of about 28 per cent year over year—year after year. And this raiding of that department resulted in a lack of investment in significant and strategic infrastructure projects that could have enforced and upgraded our economy and our opportunities for our people.

And then, of course, in a rush to create the impression that this was a high priority, similarly to the announcement of Mr. Charest's retention to do this feasibility study, ostensibly on a high-priority item just prior to the election that had been neglected for the previous 17 years, the government rushed to then put up signs that claimed steady growth, good jobs. Nonetheless, such was not the case. The previous administration was, of course, unable over a long period of time to compete with other provinces on job creation and to demonstrate steady growth in most categories.

Some of the categories, though, they were successful in demonstrating steady growth in included, but were not limited to, poverty; debt; non-repaired, non-maintained roads, bridges and drainage; children in care of the state; families waiting for child care. These—in each of these statistical categories and many others, the previous administration was able to obtain steady growth. So one could not say that the signs were false advertising, although I would think most Manitobans would find it hard to believe a government would spend \$3 million promoting a record of steady growth in such categories as the ones I just mentioned.

The growth in debt is something that has very much concerned many people, and there was a report two days ago in *The Globe and Mail* from the Parliamentary Budget Officer—an article about the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Jean-Denis Fréchette, who warned the provinces are unprepared for the ballooning health-care costs they will face as Canada's baby boomers enter their final years. And

it's a report which comes as we're negotiating with the federal government on a new health accord. As my colleague knows, the health financing has been rising by 6 per cent per year for, you know, a decade plus, and will not, according to the federal government's current position, rise by more than 3 per cent in the—after the next fiscal year. So this is an important negotiation, and this report comes at an important time because I do believe it supports our case and the case other provinces are making that health-care needs are, in fact, growing significantly, and that the federal government has been drifting away from its real obligations to share in those costs.

Of course, at one time the federal government covered about half the cost of health-care delivery in our provinces. Now they're down to below—23 per cent are the last numbers I saw. And as health-care needs rise with an aging population and—high-needs population in our province beyond the elderly. We have many communities that are beset, for example, with diabetes and challenges. That's a very, very sad and hard illness for people to deal with individually and as families. It often—too often results in further deterioration in health care and greater suffering over time and greater expense for the system—the health-care system that we all want to support.

So these are important issues, and I'll carry on further and share with the member there's very interesting information in this report I know she'll want to learn about.

* (11:20)

Ms. Marcelino: We'll appreciate receiving that report. It will certainly be good information for all of us.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) had—or, we disagree with the Premier. We have a different figure and stats on record investments in infrastructure but—different from what he said, but we'll leave it at that for now.

Mr. Chair, we'd like to ask the Premier: With CentrePort having the space and the organizational capacity to handle rail rationalization and relocation—and we all have heard the Premier's committed to smart shopping—will the Premier discuss these opportunities with the task force?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I thank my colleague sincerely for the question. I believe that we have some great opportunities in front of us with respect to transportation capacity. As the member knows—all

members know, we are among the leaders in the country in providing transportation services. We are a transportation hub. And so, of course, CentrePort and its expansion of its services is something that gives us all optimism that we have a greater potential to offer those kinds of services to our customers here and around the world. And I'm—I've just become aware of a very exciting new project that I'm hoping I can tell the members more about in—perhaps as early as the fall session—that I think could well lead to some additional work opportunities here, some great jobs in Manitoba, great opportunities here for us to trade.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So the member has alluded to CentrePort as a rail centre. It is, of course, more than a rail centre. It has the capability to be much more. I have to just throw out one thing too. The member may be aware. I've just become aware that CentrePort is going to be engaging in some enthusiastic additional expansion in an area I hadn't—I had noticed over the years, the last few years—that they needed to do, and that's tree planting. That area of the province, I'm told in our—you know, hundreds of years ago, it wasn't an abundant tree-covered area. The natural topography was more prairie grass. But it will certainly add to the appeal and function of the place. I'm not sure if it will make it more profitable, necessarily, but it is nice to know that they're engaging in this enthusiastic tree planting.

I know—I had some great satisfaction in helping when I was the local chamber of commerce president in Portage la Prairie, working with a local agricultural representative, we teamed up on a project to do tree planting for the purpose of creating shelterbelts along—in the areas along the Trans-Canada Highway. That, as all members who drive that part of Manitoba know, that particular area is very prone to drifting snow and driving conditions are not always, let's just say, top-notch.

Unfortunately—fortunately, we were able to get a couple of hundred miles of shelterbelts planted not exclusively along the highways, but of course you can't stop a wind that comes from the northern end of Lake Manitoba and goes for 100 miles in one shelterbelt, so we built—we did plant other belts of appropriate—appropriately designed shelterbelts back off the highway on—in various locations, and more needs to be done.

Unfortunately, what's happened over the years is those shelterbelts have been allowed to deteriorate,

so when you drive the Trans-Canada Highway now between, say, here and Elie, you'll notice a number of beautiful trees surviving, but you'll also notice a number of trees have died. And that's a project that I think—I'm planting the seed myself right now with perhaps a couple of our ministers to undertake the project quickly and get those shelterbelts redeveloped because, for the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), who, I know, drives that road, it'll be critical that he get home safely. For the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) who drive these highways, you know, we all want them to get home safely, and then we want them to get back here, and the people of Manitoba deserve to have them back here working.

So we need those transportation corridors to be safer to travel and, of course, for our economy as a province, we don't want those highways shut down several times every winter because of blowing snow across them. This is interrupting our ability to provide services to others through our transportation networking capabilities.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So, you know, it's important to do these projects. And, you know, ribbon cuttings are fun, but it's the maintenance and repair part that maybe doesn't get as much credit as it deserves, and it's essential if you're going to maintain the projects you undertake. For the long-term good of people, you have to invest in that aspect of things. And this has been neglected for a time, and it's a good opportunity to restore those shelter belts to their previous functionality and potentially expand the network of trees around the province. And just, you know, where farming's getting bigger all the time and unfortunately a lot of that means the drainage of very good water sources and the chopping down of too many trees. Have to—we have to tackle this.

Ms. Marcelino: We all agree trees are important. It adds beauty to the scenery, provides shade and oxygen. So we'll look forward to more trees at CentrePort.

Back to the dialogue that the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—with the mayor that the Premier will undertake. Would the Premier take that initiative to meet with the mayor of Winnipeg to discuss the opportunities for part of the dialogue is the immediate rail relocation of specific facilities such as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe facility

in south Winnipeg moving to CentrePort and the feasibility of moving the CPR yards that divide north and south Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I'll repeat that I—and I've undertaken discussions already on many topics with the mayor. Of course, I, as the member knows, don't like to, without the express permission of the people I meet with, reveal the nature of specific discussions.

I will say generally though that I—and I did earlier—that I look forward to sharing an ongoing dialogue on progressive actions we can undertake both here and in co-operation with the City. And I like to be informed as much as possible, of course, on initiatives that the City wishes to undertake as well.

All of this, I think, is important to understand, has to be undertaken in a sustainable way. And I wanted again to share with the member this is a real concern. This lack of sustainability with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Jean-Denis Fréchette, in his report, he actually uses a phrase in his report and I'll just—I'll read a sentence from the report to the member, but it says the—or, of the article, from the article from *The Globe and Mail* of two days ago. It says: The federal spending watchdog assesses whether or not government finances are—and then, there's a bracket around, it says, fiscally sustainable—based on whether current spending levels can continue without adding more debt as a share of the economy. The report goes on to evaluate federal and provincial spending out to the year 2090. And this is done in an effort to provide a general guide to whether governments are prepared for longer-term demographic issues.

Now, the report concludes that the federal finances are sustainable and that federal debt is on track to be eliminated in 50 years time. Alternatively, it says that the—Ottawa could choose to maintain its current debt level, which is about 33.7 per cent debt to—of GDP, and could devote about 1 per cent of GDP year to a mix of new spending or tax reduction. Now, that's about \$19 billion in the federal context, a significant amount of Canadian dollars.

The provinces and municipalities are not so fortunate, the report goes on to say. It says: Simply stabilizing their current combined debt level would require a mix of spending cuts and tax hikes worth 1.5 per cent of GDP. That's about \$30 billion annually across the country. This, the article goes on to say, will—is sure to figure prominently in the

meetings among Canada's provincial and territorial ministers' schedule to meet in Whitehorse July 20 to 22 summit of the Council of the Federation.

* (11:30)

The report concludes that subnational government debt—that is, provincial debt—is unsustainable. Unsustainable, that's what they say in the report. And he goes on to say—and this is somewhat depressing; I'll prepare the member for this, that addressing this problem would require higher revenues, increased federal transfers, cuts to program spending or some combination of the three.

Again, those three things are tax hikes—and we know in Manitoba that we're taxed to the max here. We know that that was the choice, of course, of the previous administration, year after year. Despite promises not to, they proceeded to raise taxes in many categories. It says addressing this problem would require higher revenues, so here in Manitoba, we are committed to doing our very best to hold the line on tax increases.

We believe Manitobans have endured some of the highest tax hikes in many categories in the country and, overall, the highest tax, additional tax load, in the last six years of any people in any province in Canada. So to continue to burden Manitobans with additional taxes is a dangerous tactic—'taxtic,' I guess—and would not be sustainable over time.

What the danger of that is, there are many dangers, but—and I think we all understand that the failure to reward people for their work and effort is not generally fruitful as a political strategy, in particular when it creates great differentials between us and our neighbours.

Other provinces are becoming more competitive in their tax strategies than we are, and it's hurting people in border communities; for example, in places like Swan River and Flin Flon, Dauphin, Roblin, Russell, that are in close proximity to alternative marketplaces that their shoppers can use. This is just one example of where neighbouring communities benefit—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member—First Minister's time is up.

Ms. Marcelino: In the Estimates, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has informed that the Province could borrow at interest rates of around 3 per cent for bonds issued for a term of up to 30 years.

Does the Premier acknowledge, at this historically low rate of long-term borrowing for capital assets such as hospitals, schools, housing, daycare centres, personal-care homes, flood protection, infrastructure, this is a good time to pursue those projects and not cut the department of the Infrastructure budget at this time?

Mr. Pallister: No, I won't acknowledge that because I think that'd be foolhardy approach. That's like saying the stores go open for longer hours; let's go shop. Doesn't make any sense. It's what you buy with the money that matters, because you've got to pay back the principal regardless of what the interest rate is. It doesn't make any sense fundamentally in terms of financial management.

And that's what the Parliamentary Budget Officer is pointing out in his report. What he's saying is that this level of debt and accumulation of additional debt is not sustainable. He's also saying that, given the demographic reality of an aging population, this is not a practice that should be followed.

So, no, that would be foolhardy. It would be adding, especially in the context of Manitoba's mismanaged governmental practices over the last few years. It would be a high-risk strategy to suggest that because interest rates are low currently, relative to historic rates of, say, 20 years ago, that it would make sense to borrow more money.

It doesn't, in and of itself, make sense to borrow money unless one knows what they're getting with the money. So if the member would like to advance the discussion, we can talk about what we're getting for the money.

We know what we were getting with the midwifery program over the last number of years, basically a \$900,000-per-graduate program, return on investment, considerably less than one would hope and disadvantaging all other students hoping to have educational opportunities presented to them, giving no value, virtually no value, to taxpayers.

And this, you know, I'd be excited to see any protestations come to the Legislature. I'm sure they'll be directed at the previous administration for the gross mismanagement of that program.

Ms. Marcelino: Interesting, because a handful of Conservatives I've spoken to recently agree that borrowing at this time for infrastructure would be prudent.

But, you know, even Conservatives, they don't—not everyone agrees; same with other parties.

Again, would that be the reason, because the Premier (Mr. Pallister) believes this is not the best time—would that be the reason why work done this summer was put off for projects under review, resulting in a slow-down in tenders and creating uncertainty in the construction industry and, consequently, companies and jobs could go elsewhere?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member's caught in kind of a hopeless contradiction because interest rates have been lower than historical levels for a number of years now, and the NDP, five years ago, underspent their infrastructure budget by 28 per cent. So she's saying we should borrow more money and spend more money and create more jobs in infrastructure, but her own administration failed to do that, not only five years ago, but four years ago, three years ago, and two years ago—same thing.

So interest rates were at historical lows throughout that period. Only one department of government was underspent; that was the Infrastructure Department. So, if the member is now suggesting that there's been a change in the policy or the approach that the government wants to take, I would agree with her; there has been a rather radical change.

Now, the change occurred last year, but that we know why, was due to the proximity of an election and, of course, the need to demonstrate, through conspicuous construction, that there were investments taking place using taxpayer dollars and borrowed dollars.

But, if the member's suggesting that, just because in and of itself interest rates are low we should borrow more money, she'll have to explain why the previous administration did not do the same thing for four consecutive years to the tune of over \$2 billion that was taken out of the budget of Infrastructure and given to other departments to spend. It was not saved; it was not unexpended. It was expended, but it was expended in other areas.

And so, again, I would make the point to the member it's what you buy with the money that matters; that's the issue, not the timing of the borrowing. What you buy with the money is the issue, and that's why we're developing and will be implementing a return-on-investment approach to managing infrastructure so that we are evaluative—

evaluating effectively what is coming out of the investment for the people of Manitoba.

And this evaluation is critical to getting that good return that you want because, of course, as the Canada West Foundation has reported, and they've done some major work on strategic infrastructure; I encourage the member to google strategic infrastructure Canada West—she'll get it, and she'll learn that the real benefit, in simple terms, of investing strategically, is you get to make tax dollars from the investment, which can be recycled.

And those tax dollars, as a consequence of the increased profitability of enterprise—individuals succeeding as a result of the building of these structures, whether it would be, for example, a drainage project in an area that previously had unreliable cropping as a consequence of water laying on the land and delaying the planting season, just one example where a good drainage project would free up a farmer and the landowner in the area to put a crop in, produce a crop, produce a yield, produce something to sell, make some money, create a job, create better financial security for him- or herself and their families. That's an investment, a good investment. It makes sense. There's a return on that investment because somebody's using the land to produce something somebody else can use.

In this case, in this example, it might be wheat; it might be canola, it might be flax; it might be beans; it might be lentils; it might be a lot of things, but one thing for sure: if you can't get on the land because it's poorly drained, it ain't gonna happen. So an investment in drainage of good farmland makes good sense.

Now, when it's done sustainably and it protects permanent wetlands and it's done in a balanced manner to make sure that the overall environment is protected, it's a great practice and something that might satisfy the criteria for a prudent investment.

Now, what would be the benefit to the people of Manitoba of that, besides the family themselves that produced the crop benefiting, hopefully, with a good profit at the end of that year where they risked all that capital, put that grain in the ground, seed it and fertilize it and spray it and fuel a combine and get it off and take it in the truck and sell it? Who else benefits?

Well, people in Manitoba do, of course, because those people are going to be taxed. They're going to be paying tax on their profits, and that tax

money comes back to the coffers of the provincial government and the federal government, too, and then it can go back in to doing more projects like that.

* (11:40)

If you invest like that, if you, conceptually, can understand that putting projects up that help people produce more wealth and be better off financially, then you're going to make more investment in infrastructure possible and you're going to do it without having to just try to make the case that we're going to borrow more money because the interest rates are low, you're going to be able to do it with the money you take from the taxes of the people in that time frame, rather than having the children and grandchildren of those people have to pay for it 50 years out.

Ms. Marcelino: For your information, Mr. Chair, year after year under our watch, infrastructure investments increased which stimulated the economy, created good-paying jobs and this is confirmed by Conference Board of Canada.

On another topic, Mr. Chair, just recently the Free Press reported that Manitoba's population growth is hitting modern-day records. The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics points out that Manitoba is also seeing incredible growth in immigration to the province.

Through you, we ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister), does he agree with this assessment by his own agencies, and what steps is the Premier planning to do to address the substantial population growth in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I believe—our party believes, our government believes Manitoba's a beautiful place, a wonderful place for people to come to. We're a province of immigrants and we are a province that has welcomed people from around the world to come here to make a better life, a province that's represented hope to people for a long, long time. And so, as the political party that introduced, for example, the Provincial Nominee Program, we have behaved in that manner by introducing policies that encourage more people to come here, to make their lives here, to raise their families here.

Unfortunately, we also lead the country in exporting people. We have the highest out-migration in Canada and it's been worsening over the last several years. So it's good that we are able to attract people from elsewhere, but we're losing too many

people to other jurisdictions in the net out-migration, a number that the Employers Council expressed concern about in its report: Are we there yet?—where it reported that under the previous administration we were last or second last in 18 of 23 categories in analysis.

This, sadly, is the record of the previous administration, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) knows that record and is fully aware of it. And so, you know, the member speaks about investing more year over year in infrastructure but neglects to mention that also a tax increase has occurred year over year.

You know, in 2011, of course, the mantra of the New Democratic Party was that they were promising everyone in the province they wouldn't raise their taxes. They said they had a five-year plan no tax increase, and went ahead, of course, and raised them significantly—more significantly than any other province in Canada, an additional burden on every household growing each passing year.

Initially, of course, was the expansion of the PST to include fundamental items like insuring your home, purchasing benefits through your workplace to protect your family, these things were, of course—[*interjection*] I know the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) is embarrassed and ashamed and I know that he regrets having done it, but the fact is he did it, and he was part of doing—[*interjection*] The member for Fort Garry, of course, is proud of that record, unlike the man sitting next to him, the former premier, who has apologized for this action, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview never has. And so, clearly, he's proud of himself for having broken his word to the people that he met at the doors of his riding.

He shouldn't be proud because, of course, those people, Manitobans deserve—all Manitobans—like all Manitobans deserve to be treated fairly and be treated in a trustworthy manner and not lied to at their own doorstep.

So, of course, the actual increases that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview imposed on his own constituents in terms of things like raising the dividend rate on his seniors that he visited at the door when he said—he promised every senior in his riding that he wouldn't raise their taxes and, then, of course, immediately raised the dividend rate on those same people that he had promised, went around to seniors' homes in his riding and promised every senior. He tried to frighten them, of course, about the—made up

an agenda of the other people he was running against to try to make himself look better by comparison but failed miserably in the actions that ensued in demonstrating integrity or trustworthy behaviour.

So this is the actions of the member—and not only the member. I don't mean to solely single out the member, because it was every NDP candidate who behaved in this manner. And so that lack of integrity—integrity being defined as doing what you say you'll do—that lack of integrity is the record of that member and others.

And so, when the member says, year after year—year after year, they raise their taxes would be a true statement. They raised the taxes on all Manitobans. And they increased them in a number of other categories as well. I'll elaborate further given the opportunity.

But I wanted to go back to the point that the Parliamentary Budget Officer was making, which was that government spending on the baby boom generation will be felt first by their own government, but it will have much larger costs over time for provinces. And that will be because, of course, of health care being the responsibility of the provinces.

Now we hope the federal government steps up to the plate and is as generous in future, as it has been with the previous administration, within increases, year over year, of 6 per cent, but we're not sure that will happen. Certainly, I know other premiers are very concerned about this, and I know that members opposite will join in supporting us and ensuring that we do our best to have the federal government partner, as they have, in—historically, partner in supporting health—growing health-care expenditures as our seniors population increases.

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Chair, earlier, in concurrence, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was not—did not hear my—it's a sort of correction for a June 9th Estimates session we were in. I mentioned in—at that time, during Estimates, that during the vote-rigging scandal when the Premier was one of the ministers at that time, I mentioned the role of a Cabinet secretary in that dark chapter of Manitoba's history.

I misspoke, as it was the Secretary to the Treasury Board, as well as the Premier's chief of staff who were implicated in that scandal. And the Premier didn't hear my correction, so I'm stating it again. Thank you.

I have another question. Speaking of newcomers, we have many engineers and nurses coming through the Provincial Nominee Program, and these new immigrants could not practise their profession, because they needed bridge courses.

Will the Premier support the program to—for these newcomers obtain their credentials, recognized? Given our immigration growth, this is—these programs are critical. It's being offered—for the engineers, it's being offered by University of Manitoba. We ask the Premier: Will he make these investments to get these newcomers' credentials become a reality here, so they can practise their professions here?

Mr. Pallister: I missed a little bit of that, Mr. Chair, but I think the member was asking about credentials recognition issues around recognizing skills that people come to Canada with—previous training.

Was that correct?

Ms. Marcelino: Yes. Part of that is offering programs, say, at University of Manitoba, for engineers who graduated outside of Canada.

There's a program right now offered by U of M. Will the Premier support—provide support for that particular program as well as bridge courses for licensed practical nurses?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I won't get into specific programs issues. I'd encourage the member to ask the relevant minister about the detail that she is requesting.

* (11:50)

I would say I've been a long-time supporter of the licensed practical nursing profession in the province and will continue to be. I do think it's really important that professional skill sets that you can utilize to help people, and I think it's also important for people not to practise medicine without having the qualifications to do that, to make sure that they are able to give the proper advice, make the proper recommendations, to ensure that they are capable of making recommendations which ensure the betterment and safety of people. This is critical. It is really important. There are often times, I think, where people are put in real danger as a consequence of being given advice that is not well researched or necessarily based on science, but is rather based on other things.

And that is important to understand because I know, for example—one could speak about numerous

examples, I suppose. You know, if you wanted advice on an ache in your tooth, you very likely wouldn't come to the Legislature for something like that. You'd probably go to a professional practitioner, a dentist, likely, maybe an oral hygienist, somebody who has the training.

We have a doctor in the House, but he's not a practising dentist. The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) would, I think, especially, be cognizant of the dangers of giving advice outside of his field of expertise. Though he is a doctor, he is not a doctor with a specialty, as far as I'm aware, in oral surgery. He'll correct me if I'm wrong. I don't believe he has a background—though I know he has expertise outside of his areas of study in medicine. I understand he is an expert on certain bird species, and so he has those qualifications. He could give advice on certain species, I think, of eagles, if I recall. But he would not give advice on dental issues, though he is a doctor.

Now, this is critical to understand. If one is wanting advice from a professional, one has to be sure they're consulting a professional person who has the expertise in that field in which they want the advice.

Friend of mine, for example, is a specialist in family law, and he used to say he was asked for advice in numerous areas, numerous things, you know, categories, because people respected him because of his extensive training and experience. But he said every time someone asked him for advice outside of his area of professional expertise, alarm bells went off in his head, and he said to himself: Do not use the position of influence that you have, wrongly. Do not give advice outside of your area of expertise, because to do so is to challenge the trust in the relationship that must be maintained.

And so, if one wanted advice, for example, on medicine, one would go to a medical doctor. One should go to a medical doctor. If one does not have expertise in that field, one should not give advice in that field. One should not give counsel in that field. That would be entering into the world of myth. That would be departing from the world of professionalism. And that would be known, I think, by all professionals in the medical field, to be a dangerous practice and one that people should not engage in.

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Chair, I'd like to share with you and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that these bridge courses are very valuable for new immigrants. I

know of several practising professional engineers now who, because of this program being available to them through the U of M, are able to obtain their needed—obtain the needed credentials and are fully practising engineers now. As well, there are also doctors, foreign-trained medical graduates, because of the support provided by the Province through U of M, are able to practise their profession, as well as nurses.

So it's good for the economy. It's good for these new immigrants, because those skills are much needed, in-demand skills. We need engineers. We need doctors. We need nurses. So, will the Premier—he said he doesn't want to influence, but let's say convince his minister that these are essential supports for new immigrants and it should continue?

Mr. Pallister: I thank my colleague for raising the issue of professional training again because it is an important aspect of what we are focused on as a government and what we will continue to be focused on. We want to make sure that we not only offer great training to our professionals—for example, in the medical field, so they can give professional advice that is appropriate to the needs of the person as opposed to those who are not professionally trained who might want to give advice but are not so trained—but also to retain these people in our province to provide the services that they are studying to provide. And that is critical, whether new immigrants or, you know, children of immigrants, as I am and others in this House are, grandchildren, great-grandchildren now, as well, they should have the opportunities to train in our province, certainly.

But I would emphasize we are very concerned on this side of the House with the rate at which we are losing doctors. I'll just—I'll focus on that for a second. I don't know if it's because of the additional competition the member's been providing to them, but I think there's certainly been some concern that our doctors are leaving the province, pursuing their careers elsewhere. We have the worst doctor retention rates, under the previous administration, in Canada. And what was—what's been happening is that physicians have been leaving the province, pursuing their careers elsewhere, including, but not limited to, physicians who have come here as immigrants, qualified, and began their practices here, who are then moving on and leaving the province.

So I would reference this because, in respect of the member's comments, it isn't as simple solely as offering training to new immigrants to Canada. It is

also offering them the opportunities after they take their training to stay in Manitoba and to find their future here and to raise their families here and support them. It is important that we consider those effects as well.

And so, with any program, as the budget watchdog, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says, it's critical to get back to sustainability because fiscal sustainability is important to achieve because it allows programs to continue to be offered, not just offered for a year or two, but offered on an ongoing basis, and this is critical because our need for physicians is continuing to grow. Our losses of physicians make replacement of them important, but also recruitment of them important. This is why we'll be endeavouring to upgrade the level of our recruitment strategies and retention strategies.

I know the previous administration had suggested in the election campaign just completed that they wanted to jack up taxes on higher income earners. They thought that was a good strategy. That would certainly have created additional challenges on the retention of physicians. Many rural communities, in particular, Mr. Chair, have a great difficulty in attracting physicians to come to their communities.

And, much as I know and our members know, these communities offer tremendous quality of life, tremendous advantages for many people who come here from other countries, that are recruited to come here, they prefer not to go to a smaller community for their own reasons, and it's hard to retain them if they do go. In many cases, I know of numerous communities that have had a struggle with finding a physician. They get a physician, the physician leaves, and it becomes like a revolving door, and every time you bring in a new physician, that physician has to learn the files all over again because, of course, to be a real healer, one has to have training; it's not enough to just, you know, hand

out instant solutions out of one's office. You have to have a better skill set and training to be a real adviser, and you have to get to know the person because it's the person, the relationship, the person's lifestyle—these and many other aspects of getting to know the person that makes you able to be a better healer.

And so, when we lose these great people from our province—

Mr. Chairperson: In accordance with the clause 1(g), the sessional order passed in the House on June 21st, 2016, I am interrupting proceedings now to conclude the consideration of the concurrence motion in this committee.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion moved by the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions related to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017, which has been adopted at this—in this session, whether the section of Committee of Supply—which has been adopted at this session, whether by the section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): The motion is accordingly passed.

That concludes the business before the committee at this time.

Committee rises.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 30, 2016

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply

Concurrence Motion

F. Marcelino	1709
Kinew	1709
Wishart	1709
Swan	1717
Pallister	1717

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