

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
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ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to advise the House that *Hansard* from yesterday morning is available and has been distributed to members. However, the *Hansard* from yesterday afternoon is not yet available.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Power Line Development

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct a third high voltage transmission line down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis instead of the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

The line losses created by the NDP detour will result in a lost opportunity to displace dirty coal-generated electricity, which will create added and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to an additional 57,000 vehicles on our roads annually.

The former chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has stated that an east-side bipole and a UNESCO World Heritage Site can co-exist contrary to NDP claims.

The NDP detour will cut through more forest than the eastern route and will cut through threatened aspen parkland areas, unlike the eastern route.

Former member of the Legislative Assembly Elijah Harper has stated that the east-side communities are devastated by the government's decision to abandon the east-side route, stating that this decision will resign them to poverty in perpetuity.

The NDP detour will lead to an additional debt of at least \$400 million related to the capital cost of line construction alone, to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

The NDP detour will result in increased line losses due to friction leading to lost energy sales of

between \$250 million and \$1 billion over the life of the project.

The added debt and lost sales created by the NDP detour will make every Manitoba family at least \$4,000 poorer.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to abandon the NDP detour on the basis that it will result in massive environmental, social and economic damage to Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the route originally recommended by Manitoba Hydro, subject to necessary regulatory approvals.

This petition is signed by Caleb Jones, Doug Dobrovolski, Mark Anseew, and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Child-Care Centres

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on an already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they

are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate, fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

This petition is signed by A. Pawlyshyn, Emma Milaska-Tinman and Amanda Jones and many, many others.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Norma Sanders, J.D. Sawatzky, John Olafson, Elda Schroeder and many, many others.

Lake Dauphin Fishery

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Fishing is an important industry on Lake Dauphin.

To help ensure the sustainability of the Lake Dauphin fishery, it is essential that spawning fish in the lake and its tributaries are not disturbed during the critical reproductive cycle.

A seasonal moratorium on the harvesting of fish in Lake Dauphin and its tributaries may help create an environment that will produce a natural cycle of fish for Lake Dauphin, therefore ensuring a balanced stock of fish for all groups who harvest fish on the lake.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to consider placing a moratorium on the harvesting of any species of fish on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries for the period April 1 to May 15 annually.

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider doing regular studies of fish stocks on Lake Dauphin to help gauge the health of the fishery and to consider determining any steps needed to protect or to enhance those stocks.

This petition is signed by J. Pshebnicki, E. Perzylo, Ernie Harrison and many, many others.

* (13:40)

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent each year for the past seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This petition is signed by Gayle O'Greysik, Lil Hamilton, Laurie Roots and many, many others.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent every year for the last seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This is signed by Mychelle Houde, Anne Schmidt, Larry Tafer and many, many other Manitobans.

The Elections Act Amendments

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In the constituencies of The Maples and Wellington, serious allegations were made about inappropriate behaviour by high-ranking NDP members, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) failed to show leadership in enforcing a political code of ethical conduct.

Elections Manitoba has made it clear that it does not have the jurisdiction or any authority to enforce in any way a shared code of ethical conduct.

The '99 Monnin inquiry clearly wanted an effective code of ethics, not the current non-enforceable code of ethics that the Premier and others continue to ignore.

The '99 Monnin report states: "If the political parties fail to implement a Code of Ethics by December 31, 2001, that a standard Code be made compulsory by legislation."

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Manitoba Legislature to consider acting on the 1999 Alfred Monnin report and include the principles of a shared code of ethical conduct into The Elections Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Gerry Green, Pat Ferguson, Craig Hildahl and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to table the following reports: Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2008-2009 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations; Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs; Manitoba Civil Service Commission.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bill 37

Government Intent

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last year Manitoba taxpayers and ratepayers to our Crown corporations were forced by this government to put up at least \$3 million of their money into pre-election advertising campaigns through six different government-sponsored campaigns to deliver the government's message. They continued this advertising campaign right up to and including the first day of the election campaign last year, and they only stopped in response to a complaint on the first day of the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, now the Premier has introduced a bill, through Bill 37, to allow opposition political parties to spend \$75,000, 2 percent of the amount that government is allowed to spend outside of election periods. Now, I know the Premier is afraid of debate. I know he's afraid that people may put out information that he doesn't like, but how can he justify political parties being allowed to spend 2 percent of what taxpayers are spending through the forced ad campaigns run by him and his government?

Will he put political parties, opposition parties with the voluntary contributions coming from Manitobans on the same level playing field as the state when it comes to communications in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, obviously government and Crown corporations are subject to prohibitions on any partisan ads. In fact, I can recall that an auditor general commented that a Crown corporation—no, actually a government department could not print a picture of the Premier presenting an award to a specific company taking out full-page ads. It was very specific guidelines about what is partisan and what is not partisan. To my knowledge, it hasn't been our government that has been cited by an auditor general in the past. It was members opposite.

Secondly, the issue of advertising during election campaigns, there was a proposal made by the Leader of the Opposition in committee which we accepted in terms of Crown corporations and other limitations.

Thirdly, this bill actually goes further than what we had in 1999 and what we had, actually, in 2007. The proposal in this bill is to deal with a 60-day period prior to E day to give even a further buffer to what happened in the past.

But, clearly, it's illegal and inappropriate for partisan ads to be paid for by taxpayers. The member opposite knows that and, Mr. Speaker, we've actually added days to protect members of all political parties in this proposed legislation. In fact, instead of being the existing law which is during the election period, it actually extends that by another month to try to provide greater protection for the concerns that were raised by members opposite.

We had no such protection when we were in office—or in opposition, rather, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: There was never a prohibition on how much his political party could spend when we were in office. The fact is that they were free to spend as much as they wanted. There was no government vetting of their MLA communications with Manitobans. There was no restriction on political advertising.

The Premier has raised the point about government advertising and we've acknowledged that steps need to be taken to bring it back, but for him to say 60 days is also misleading. It's 60 days from election day. It only cuts off some 22 to 28 days, depending on when the election is called prior to the writ period, Mr. Speaker.

But the point is this: If the state is allowed to spend in excess of \$3 million, why wouldn't opposition political parties who rely on voluntary contributions, except to the extent that he wants taxpayers to shovel even more money their way, but rely primarily on voluntary donations from Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the Premier, given the significance of the clampdown contained in Bill 39, given that it was not taken through the normal process, through the Chief Electoral Officer which involves all-party input, given that it was not taken to the Legislative Assembly Management committee to get all-party input, given that it wasn't even reviewed by his caucus before it was introduced, will he withdraw the bill?

Will he withdraw the bill? Will he go to public hearings, allow Manitobans a full opportunity to participate, and will he return this fall with a revamped piece of legislation that is fair, open and responsible for Manitoban taxpayers?

*(13:50)

Mr. Doer: Well, this legislation is fair, open and responsible to taxpayers. In terms of taxpayers, we're dealing with unfettered partisan advertising. We see, in Ottawa, it's \$7.5 million partisan—[interjection] Some federal incumbents now have 14 pieces of mail and partisan ads being mailed in—blank-cheque mailings into ridings with partisan nature.

If you want to mail into a riding, under this law you can do so as a political party. You're just going to have the political party pay for it, not the taxpayers. That's one of the issues we're dealing with in terms of the taxpayers in this Legislature.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there are recommendations that, obviously, we've brought in in this legislation that go beyond what the Chief Electoral Officer has proposed. We've done that in the past. The members opposite campaigned against public financing, then took it. They campaigned against the banning of union and corporate donations.

I wonder what his position—would he bring in a ban if he was ever elected government? Would he keep the ban on union and corporate donations, or would he get rid of it? Most Manitobans, in fact even the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, first of all, opposed the ban of union and corporate donations. Then they polled their members. After the opposition complained about it, they polled their members, and the small businesses of Manitoba approved the ban on corporate and union donations in Manitoba. Of course, they did so because they can't compete with large corporations in terms of the financial authority they have. That's why this law is fair to all Manitobans and that's why it is also fair to taxpayers.

You can mail into ridings as the Progressive Conservative Party and you can say anything you want in a partisan way, but you're not going to have the taxpayers pay it with the proposed amendments in this legislation.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Premier to read his own bill. He's giving his party \$250,000 of taxpayer money to do partisan mailings into constituencies, \$250,000 every year contained in Bill 39.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the responses, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Under Bill 37, his law requires taxpayers to put money into political parties, \$250,000 for his party, a million dollars over four years that they can then use for partisan messaging, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know if he hasn't read the whole bill. I know that sometimes he takes a part of something and focusses on that and forgets about the rest of it, but the fact is when you look at this entire package of amendments, opposition parties' allowance are 2 percent of what government spent last year at taxpayers' expense.

And let me just say where we stand. We are opposed to union and corporate donations to political parties, never supported. We are opposed to a clampdown on third-party advertising. We believe in freedom of speech. We're opposed to a clampdown on political party advertising. We'll repeal it if and when we get to office. It's up to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, why is he so afraid of debate that he needs to clamp down on opposition parties, clamp down on caucuses and use taxpayer money to prop up his own party going into the next election campaign?

Mr. Doer: Well, I'm pleased that we've had a flip-flop in position on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: I'm opposed we've had a flip-flop on the banning of union and corporate donations. This is a good development from the sky-is-falling position of the past.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I proposed third-party restrictions. We did not proclaim it because it was taken to court. If the member opposite wants to have a discussion, we have taken away the requirement in this act. The media itself decides what is a partisan ad or not, as opposed to an issue-based ad, so I'm open to any discussion on that issue if there's another conversion on the road to Damascus.

I know the members opposite opposed the partial funding of political parties and had 11 years to change that. In the last election campaign, they claimed more money from the taxpayers in their

central grant because they actually spent more money on advertising than the government, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talks about how outrageous it is. I think the cheque was \$14,000 for partial public financing of his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the money spent on Crown corporation ads and public ads were even longer before the 1999 election. They went right through the Pan Am Games because it was longer and more money because they didn't call an election at the four-year period. They were hanging on by their fingernails spending money. He was the chief of staff. They spent money every day, and you know what? At the end of the day it doesn't make a difference because actually the public is smarter than all of us.

It's the message and the messenger that will win or lose election campaigns. Partisan ads are illegal. They have been cited in past. We will not have it. We've not had it anytime we've been in office. We've even extended the buffer even longer, and, you know, we should get on with debating the issues that affect Manitobans because that's what the people care about, Mr. Speaker.

Public Accounts Documents Accessibility

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Well, Mr. Speaker, the strange logic of this First Minister, when he is prepared to take \$250,000 a year from taxpayers for partisan purposes and then disallow ordinary members of this Legislature to communicate with their constituents, is indeed difficult to comprehend and understand.

But, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. This morning I received, or all members of the Legislature received, a letter from the Minister of Finance indicating that we will no longer be able to have the hard copies of Public Accounts available to us.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether he will reconsider this and make available to the members of this Legislature a hard copy of Public Accounts so then, indeed, we can hold the government accountable, as we should.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, any member who wishes to have a hard copy of the Public Accounts will have it.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I rise, therefore, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Russell, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this matter of privilege is one that is fairly serious, because when I received the letter from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) this morning I read it very carefully.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that matters of privilege and points of order are very, very serious matters, and I need to be able to hear every word because I will have to make some kind of a ruling here.

The honourable Member for Russell on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, there are two conditions that have to be met in order for me to satisfy this matter of privilege.

The first is to raise this matter at the earliest convenience, and the second is to establish a *prima facie* case.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister the question in order to give him the opportunity, indeed, to come clean in terms of what he meant in his letter, and I am prepared to read this letter for the sake of the media and people in this Legislature.

Secondly, I want to just clarify that it is Volume 4 that I was asking about, and Volume 4 is this volume, Mr. Speaker, and this is another example of Volume 4. Volume 4 contains all of the detail with regard to government business, with regard to government contracts, with regard to financial statements of Crown organizations and, indeed, it is a reporting system to Manitobans with regard to where government spends its money.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister did say in his letter that this information is available on the Internet and, secondly, that this information is available on a CD and a CD copy could be made available.

But, Mr. Speaker, as a member of this Legislature, it is important that every individual member of this Legislature have a copy of this document so that, indeed, when we go to Public Accounts with it, as an example, we can take the volume with us, refer to certain pages, to certain

lines and, indeed, have an informed discussion and debate and hold the Department of Finance, indeed, accountable to Manitobans.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, additionally, I want to be able to take this to my office, a constituency office that I have in my constituency, lay it on the table and, indeed, allow Manitobans to be able to go through it and take a look at where government spends its money. Having this on the Internet or having it on a CD does not allow each and every Manitoban who wishes to enter my constituency office and look at the volume that ability to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, as a member of this Legislature, I feel that my rights and my ability to do my job has been restricted by the Minister Finance in not coming forward and making Volume 4 available to us in hard copy. Now, he told us that he would make the Public Accounts volumes available to us in hard copy, but it is Volume 4 that he refers to in this letter and he does not indicate in this letter that the Volume 4 will be made available in hard copy.

I will read the letter: We wish to inform you that Volume 4 of Public Accounts for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2007, is now available on the Internet. The letter goes on to indicate what this volume is about, and then it also indicates that: In order to reduce paper consumption, we no longer produce a hard copy of Volume 4. A CD version for the 2006-07 Volume 4 is available upon request.

Now, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and his cohorts may think this is a frivolous issue, but we are just dealing right now in the House with matters where government has taken unilateral action in terms of restricting members' abilities to communicate with their constituents, to be able to communicate with Manitobans and to hold this government accountable for its actions. The Minister of Finance has a responsibility—and, yes, perhaps, there's quite a bit of paper in here; it's true. But, Mr. Speaker, in order for us as members to hold this government accountable on how it does its business and with whom it does its business, it's important for us to be able to take this volume into Public Accounts and to be able to point to areas where we have some questions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, technology today is available. I understand that. We can use technology to be able to reduce some paperwork. But it's for the very reason that we have *Hansard* in hard copy in

this House. It's to ensure that members can read *Hansard* and then use it to be able to hold government accountable. That is why *Hansard* is still produced in hard copy. That is why I maintain that Volume 4 must be made available to members of this Legislature in hard copy. Not Volume 1, Volume 2, not Volume 3, but, indeed, Volume 4 is the important one.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you want to just take a look at what Volume 4 is, this is an example of Volume 4.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) appears to have some embarrassment on his face. I don't know whether he read the letter or not. The matter of privilege refers to the letter that every member of this Legislature received in this House. Now, if the Minister of Finance is prepared to retract the letter or to add to it or to amend it, then he should stand up in this House say I will amend that and I will ensure that every member of this Legislature receives a hard copy, then the matter will have been put to bed.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that this matter be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and be reported back to this House.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to this question of privilege motion that's been raised. Certainly, it's timely. The member raised it immediately upon after asking his question whereupon in his question he asked if I would make the Public Accounts available, all four volumes in paper. I said, yes. I said I would give that to him. I thought that would end it, but then he seemed to have a prepared speech ready that he wanted to roll out. He didn't hear my answer and then went into a question of privilege, saying that my letter had refused him a hard copy.

When the original documents were put forward in the Public Accounts, there was no such thing as the Internet that you could post these documents on. There was no such thing as a CD-ROM that could be made available to people. There was only one source of information, a hard copy.

We have said in the letter, which I hope you will have a copy of, that it will be posted on the Internet. You can have access to it 24-7, and anybody, any

citizen in Manitoba can have access to it 24-7. I've also said in the letter that a CD-ROM, a physical compact disc with all the information on it, would be made available to any member upon request. Then for greater certainty, when he asked me the question in question period, if I would make a printed copy available to him, I said yes, we would make a printed copy available to any member of the Legislature.

So, I would like to suggest that we have tripled the number of means by which members can have access to the Public Accounts information, and the public. Not only can they have it through hard copy, not only can they have it through a compact disc, but they can have it on the Internet.

I therefore suggest that there have been no privileges of any member of this Legislature having been breached, but, in fact, they have been enhanced by the questions and the answers provided in the Legislature today and built upon in the letter which I provided to all members of the Legislature.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the privilege, I do believe that there's a very sensitive issue that needs to be addressed. Fortunately, we're in a situation where we had question period today where the member could raise the question, and the minister did appropriately answer by saying that we could have a hard copy.

Mr. Speaker, the letter is what's important here. It's in the letter that there was no mention that members would be provided a hard copy and having a hard copy is very important. I know for one, personally, quite often I'll refer to a hard copy, whether I'm going on a car trip or going somewhere where I don't have access to the computer, so having a hard copy is important.

Now the reason why I decided to stand up on the privilege is that I think it's important that all ministers, not just the Minister of Finance, recognize even in today's technology that if you are circulating a note, because I've seen it in the past, Mr. Speaker, that it's very important to make it clear that all MLAs do have access to a hard copy if, in fact, they contact a set number. I think that's an important point that I wouldn't want to see lost, and I think that's ultimately what the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) would have liked to have seen is on the letter reassurances that hard copies, no matter what the report, if it's supposed to be a tabled document, is available to all members of the Legislature.

We don't want to lose that particular privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Before recognizing other members to speak, I remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether an alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity, whether a prima facie case has been established.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) today that's been talking out of both sides of his mouth.

In one piece of correspondence that all members received on their desks today, this morning, it says and I quote: We no longer produce the hard copy version of Volume 4. Then when he stood up and answered the question in the House today he says, if you want it, you can ask for a copy.

Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't have to be asking for hard copies. In order to do our jobs as members of the Legislature, the hard copy should be tabled in this Legislature and every member should receive a hard copy.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, when you take this under advisement whether you might ask the Minister of Finance to write to us again to withdraw the letter that he sent this morning that said that hard copies were no longer available and ensure that all volumes of Public Accounts are tabled in this House and that every member of this Legislature be afforded the opportunity to have that hard copy.

* (14:10)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, there have been many occasions in this House when we've received correspondence that says we are trying to reduce paper consumption, and do you, as members, wish to have or not have something. I find it absolutely incredible. I find it astounding, in fact, that during the course of the member's question, the minister answered and said, yes, it will be available. The correspondents, themselves, said, we wish to inform you that in order to reduce paper consumption, we're going to give you a CD version and we're going to give an Internet version available to all Manitobans. Then the member asked that they should have a special privilege, as an MLA, to have a hard copy. The minister said, if that's what you want, that's fine.

But I think we should all strive in this House, where we can, to set an example and reduce paper and reduce consumption of paper. We've done it with bills. We've done it with *Hansard*. We've done it across the board. Now, if members opposite see some mal-intent in that, particularly in light of the member's answers, Mr. Speaker, then I'm almost astounded at the lack of research and the lack of capabilities in terms of raising matters.

This is not a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The matter was dealt with. It was a matter that's of a routine fashion. In fact, I suggest, this is the fourth or the fifth privilege we've seen in two days. I think that, in itself, and the fact that the minister answered the question, provided the member with a response—there is an issue of dealing with green, dealing with energy matters, that we ought to set an example of.

I think, on the face of it, Mr. Speaker, this speaks for itself, and the matter is settled. In fact, it's not a privilege. In fact, it's almost an abuse of the rules, in my view.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is turning into a debate here. I'll recognize the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The stated reason given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for not printing Volume 4 of Public Accounts is to save paper. Just as an example, here's some of the paper they provide us, some of it consisting of some very bad law.

So I wonder if they could just clarify why it is they would apply the policy to that one volume that happens to contain all of the contracts awarded by government last year to all of those entities. Why are they concerned about saving paper there, but they couldn't be bothered saving paper when it came to the garbage that's in Bill 37, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'm going to hear the honourable First Minister, and that will be the last person I will hear.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I think it's an excellent idea to look at, also, putting on the Internet and computers the *Hansard*, as long as it's available to us and accessible.

I think the key issue here is not only the rights of members but the rights of the public. This process has enhanced the public right to know, to examine, to question, through their MLAs, through the media, through other means. This has actually increased and

flattened out this Legislature to 1.2 million Manitobans if they have access to this technology.

Now, I know not all Manitobans have access. Many First Nations communities, we're still working on that strategy for access to them. But I actually suggest that this increases the public right to democratic accountability, not decreases it. There are other ideas on reducing paper. Let's work on it.

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

We will now continue on with question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS (Continued)

Bill 37 Consultations

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, Bill 37 is an affront to every member of this Legislature and, indeed, it severs the rights of members of this Assembly.

While the government continues to use its powers to be able to communicate with people right up until election day, members who are critics, members who are members of this Assembly, can no longer communicate with their constituents 60 days prior to an election.

But I want to ask the minister whether or not he had consultation with the Legislative Management Commission prior to bringing in this bill, and can he inform the House what their response was when he consulted with them on this legislation?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The members retain their three rights of franks every year as opposed to when I was a backbencher in the opposition and the government cut our franks from three to two. We didn't stand up and whine, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, the budget for mailing is increasing. In fact, we are trying to prevent partisan mailings into places being paid for by the government. We're trying to prevent that. If the member is against that, he ought to stand up. Those ought to be paid for by the Conservative Party, not by government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum, please. Order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister could not have been more clear. It is an attempt to prevent critics of government ministers from communicating with Manitobans about the critic responsibility, as they have every right to, because he is sensitive to information flowing to other constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, the government has now stripped the right of LAMC to consider extensions in mailings unless you, as Mr. Speaker, are going to allow that.

I want to ask the government, or the minister, why he has taken that right of extensions, of any extension to any member, being decided upon by LAMC and has now turned it over to the sole judgment of the Speaker of this House as is identified in Bill 37?

Mr. Chomiak: In fact, that's one of the reasons we debate bills, so members can get a proper understanding of the bill and can make their concerns known, Mr. Speaker.

The reason is that every year the mailing budget of the government of Manitoba, as a result of members' mailing, goes over budget. In Ottawa it's \$7 million over budget.

Every year, the LAMC meets, sets a budget. Every year, the budget's over. All we said is that everyone is responsible. Every MLA ought to do their part to save precious taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker, and the public does not expect us to use precious taxpayer dollars to mail out partisan documents. If that's going to happen, it ought to be done under the political process.

It's the same for every member of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, no different no matter which the political party is. You're subject to the same non-partisan—

Bill 38 Government Intent

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I find that absolutely outstanding, outlandish. It's totally outlandish. Here is a minister who is now blaming Ottawa for our overexpenditures in sending pieces of information to our constituents in Manitoba. Now he's going to blame Ottawa for that.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance will not admit to it, but the so-called non-balanced budget legislation opens the floodgates to deficit financing. Let's see what a four-year rolling average does when you bring the Crown corporations into the equation.

Year 1, you can have a deficit. Year 2, you can have a deficit. Year 3, you can have a deficit. Year No. 4, oh, guess what? You can also have a deficit. You know why? Because the weather didn't co-operate.

This minister will not have a balanced budget if there is unusual weather or climate conditions. Floods, drought, too many clouds, too much rain, forest fires. Is that going to be his excuse for his fiscal mismanagement and deficit?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): December '07, at the Public Accounts Committee, the Member for Brandon West asked the Auditor General, your recommendation or your approval would be to a summary financial statement, one simple financial statement incorporating all the Crown corporations into the accounting of that particular financial statement. Is that what I hear from you? The Auditor General replied, that's correct.

That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. One set of books, one bottom line.

* (14:20)

And, Mr. Speaker, the member in his explanation of how we could avoid balancing the budget is exactly wrong. There would be more discipline. If you ran a deficit for one year, you would have to make it up in future years. It gets harder to balance the budget, not easier. The member should know that, if he would take a second, if he would just take a nanosecond. If he would take a nanosecond—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, in fact, did talk about GAAP and did talk about a summary budget. The Auditor General has also indicated that an annual operating budget is not out of line for this government to put forward to this House on a balanced basis every year. It's pretty simple. Revenue in, expenditures out. It's really simple. You can do that on an annual basis and not use the piggy bank of Manitoba Hydro to balance the budget on a four-year rolling average. You can have both. Make no mistake about that. You can still comply with GAAP and still have a balanced budget.

The minister will not accept that. What he's looking for is an excuse to overexpend in three years and, by the way, use the excuse of the weather to overexpend in the fourth year, too, Mr. Speaker. That's what he's looking for.

Mr. Selinger: I didn't actually detect a question there, but I did hear a rant.

Look, Mr. Speaker, this is what the Finance critic said on April 14, 2005: "I can tell you that we believe that GAAP should be fully implemented." We're on the public record for that. We've got what we have right now which is the '03-04 financial audit report which includes both summary financial statements and operating financial statements.

The Auditor General has asked the Minister of Finance to focus on the summary financial statements because that is what he has available to assess the fiscal performance of the government and not the operating financial statements. Simple as that. That's what the opposition critic said in '05. Perhaps the member could check the record and get on the same page as his predecessor.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, this minister has blamed the feds. Oh, Gollum, it's nice to see you back in the House, Gollum. Let's see, the minister has blamed the feds. He's blamed the City. He's blamed the opposition. He blamed Filmon, and now he's going to blame Mother Nature, okay? By the way, in 2005, I wasn't the Finance critic then. Perhaps at that time he should have looked at what this minister really—his real intent was was to fool Manitobans and snow Manitobans. And if it snows, by the way, that gives him an excuse to overexpend his budget as well.

Bill 38 is too important for the future of Manitoba, yet the Minister has not allowed any input from his caucus, the financial community or the public. Will the Minister do the right thing, take a step back and allow the public to its rights to have input into this bill?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we, in the pre-election budget, put it together on a summary financial basis. We explained it to the media and all the people that came to the lockup. We explained to them why we were doing this. We showed them how it included more information. As early as 2005, we made a public declaration that we were moving to the summary financial statements.

After very serious criticism by the Auditor in a press release of January 8, '04, where they said, since '98 we've been asking you to move to full summary budgets—the Auditor, in that press release, criticized the balanced budget legislation for leaving the pension liability off the books, for taking money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and counting it as revenue twice, for selling off Crown assets.

All of those things are illegal under this new bill. It's more accountable. It's more transparent, and it's better for Manitobans.

Waste-Water Treatment Facilities Government Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget it says, and I quote: "Manitoba is also providing one-third of the funding for upgrading Winnipeg's waste water plants, an investment of \$235 million." When asked in Estimates about where we'd find this commitment in the budget, the Minister of Finance said, and I quote: It is part of the infrastructure commitment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when I went to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) and asked him where in his government department I could find this, he said, well, why don't you pose those questions to the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton)? So, Mr. Speaker, I went to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and I asked him where it would come from and he pointed his finger back to the Minister of Infrastructure.

So my question for this government: Where in this budget would we be able to find the \$235 million that is apparently earmarked to go towards the upgrade of the waste-water treatment facilities in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, after being pointed all through the Estimates process, it ended up in my department where I gave the member a comprehensive background of what has happened in waste water. The member still doesn't get it. The member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can't hear a thing. Order. I can't hear a thing. Come on. Order. Let's have some decorum, please. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Ashton: She still doesn't get it. The member insists on putting on the record that the cost will be \$1.8 million when, in fact, waste-water plant upgrades, Mr. Speaker, according to the City's own documents are \$668 million. We committed to our one-third share. We also have committed to infrastructure funding. We put in our share of \$28 million. We flowed \$16 million of that, and in fact, under the infrastructure section, under the

strategic infrastructure program, there'll be money flowed this year.

What happens, Mr. Speaker, the City of Winnipeg does the work and we provide our one-third share. We're still looking to the federal government to come through with its one-third share. Ours will be there through the end of the project in 2014.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this is like a three-ring circus. We've got the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), who can't answer the question who made the announcement in the first place. We asked the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux), who pointed the finger at the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who then pointed the finger back at the Minister of Infrastructure, who, apparently, doesn't have it in his budget.

So where is it? Is it in some separate document, some secret budget that's out there, that second set of books or something that we don't have? Where would we find the \$235 million that has been earmarked towards the waste-water treatment facility in the city of Winnipeg? Where is it? Who over there is going to stand and answer the question?

Mr. Ashton: I realize the members opposite don't have much sense of major capital projects, but the operating to the waste-water system should've happened in 1993-94. It's already under way. We've already flowed \$16 million. We've already committed \$28 million-plus under the infrastructure program, but the work continues until the year 2014. Maybe the member should just phone the City, because she will find, for example, the total capital works this year for the City in terms of their water utility is \$26 million. This will peak in the year 2012 at \$197 million.

Our cash flow has been there and it will continue to increase over the next number of years. The project runs until 2014. We already have the West End treatment centre improved. We're putting our money in. We're flowing the money when the City needs it. The members opposite did absolutely nothing.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, our question was, where would we find it in this budget? The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) announced the \$235 million. If it's not in this budget, are they then waiting for yet another federal government handout to pay for the announcement that they made, that

they said was in this budget? This is absolutely outrageous.

So, if it's now the federal government that's supposed to come up with the funding for this Minister of Finance announcement, is that where it is or are they planning on paying for it once their Bill 38 or whatever passes, that they can then run a government deficit? Is that how they're then going to pay for it? Where is the money coming from?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The last federal-provincial agreement—and the former chief of staff of the mayor would know this—dealt with the Kenaston underpass, sewage treatment, and it dealt with rapid transit which was amended to be recreation. Our share of the money has flowed under that agreement with Ottawa and the City, and 50 percent of the funds for the West End treatment centre have been funded by the provincial government.

We obviously have already announced it and already dealt with the capital expenditures, and so the question raised by the member opposite is best put to the former chief of staff for the mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

* (14:30)

Waste-Water Treatment Facilities Government Funding

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, this is incredible. We have the Premier standing up trying to blame the member of the opposition for a budgetary announcement of \$235 million that was in this year's budget, not the 1999 budget, but the 2008 budget.

Where is the \$235 million that was announced with great fanfare in the budget 2008?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Now I know why the members opposite didn't deal with this, because they simply don't get it, Mr. Speaker.

The City of Winnipeg is upgrading the waste-water treatment plant. Mr. Speaker, there are three separate waste-water treatment plants. It went to the CEC. It is licensed. The project will run through to year 2014. Our cost-share is for the entire project up until 2014. It's one-third. Yesterday, in Estimates, I gave the members opposite the specific line item, Mr. Speaker, under the infrastructure agreement, where the cash flow will come this year. I also pointed out we have been there with \$16 million. There will be additional money this year that will

flow when the City of Winnipeg completes the work, and let me explain once again for the members opposite: it is a one-third share of a project that runs to 2014. This is the year 2008. We'll be there 2009, 2010, all the way through to 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I answered the question yesterday. The members just don't get it. We're fixing waste water. They're not.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, this is absolutely unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. When we asked the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs yesterday where the money was in his budget, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) said it's in the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

When we asked for a line in the budget, he referred us to a line in the Department of Infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, where is the money in the budget 2008 for the commitment to the City of Winnipeg for sewer waste-water treatment?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I was in Estimates yesterday. I also read *Hansard*. The Minister of Infrastructure pointed out that as Minister for IGA, I'm the lead minister in dealing with the City of Winnipeg on their infrastructure issues, including waste water.

I pointed out the specific item it is. It's under the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund. That was what the Premier referenced earlier, and I would hope members opposite would get up on the record and correct the fact that what we're talking about, this runs till 2014, and we will be there every year to fund it.

The bottom line though is, Mr. Speaker, the real issue here is, why did members opposite do nothing in government? Why do they still not want to have the removal of nitrogen? They want to go against the Clean Environment Commission. Why don't they get the fact that we're there for one-third? The City's there for its one-third. We're looking to the federal government to do the same thing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'll try one more time. I will try one more time. There was an announcement with great fanfare that there was \$235 million for the City of Winnipeg to improve their sewer water infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, a very simple question to the government: Show me the money in budget 2008.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, and I can appreciate members opposite didn't have much experience in government with any kind of capital developments. People in Brandon know that. People throughout the province know about hospital projects, but just for the information of the member, again, we have flowed money.

Prior to the infrastructure agreement, there was \$4 million from Intergovernmental Affairs. With the infrastructure agreement, we have flowed, Mr. Speaker, the last two years, \$16.7 million. There will be additional flow, our share of over \$3 million this year, under the CSIF fund.

I pointed out the exact line item which that appears under, yesterday. But the members, you know, the bottom line is, they don't care. They still don't believe that we should improve waste water and save Lake Winnipeg, where this government does. We're there, Mr. Speaker, not only with the regulations but with one-third provincial funding, as well, through to 2014.

Bill 31

Government Intent

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, Bill 31, which creates a privacy adjudicator, is yet another bill that dupes Manitobans into thinking they are getting something that they are not. The changes to FIPPA will not increase the flow of information. In fact, this bill locks down the release of information.

In 1999, the Premier (Mr. Doer) promised he would establish a privacy commissioner as is the case in other jurisdictions. Those were his words. He said this would have dealt more effectively with the public interest in the disclosure of information. Now, eight years later, this government is expanding FIPPA to allow governments to withhold information from the public.

I ask the minister responsible: What is this NDP government doing that they so desperately need to hide from Manitobans?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful for the opportunity to respond to this very important progress that our government's making. We all know that the legislation itself has to be updated, and it's time. We've gone through a review process, and actually we've been deemed to be one of the better jurisdictions in Canada as far as the dissemination of information.

Our staff will be providing a briefing for the critic, as we previously committed to, but the adjudicator that we're proposing will deal with a very small number of cases where a public body does not follow the recommendation of the Ombudsman. So that would be the role of the adjudicator that we're proposing.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, a privacy commissioner, as in nine other provinces, has a duty to the public, yet this NDP government has chosen not to include the public interest, only the interests of government. In 1999, the Premier said the main tool in enforcing a freedom of information legislation is a prospect of embarrassing the government.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister responsible why his government refuses to install a real privacy commissioner like nine other provinces and territories already have. What secrets do they desperately need to keep hidden? What is it that is embarrassing them?

Mr. Robinson: Well, allow me to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, the adjudicator will be an officer of the Legislative Assembly appointed in the same manner as the Ombudsman, and he or she will be equal to and independent of the Ombudsman.

Allow me to say that the Newspapers Association deemed Manitoba to be one of the most open governments in Canada, and at the same time we are going to be opening Cabinet records from what was previously 30 years to 20 years, so I think that's some significant progress we're making.

Asperger Syndrome Government Programs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a big thank you to the members of Asperger Manitoba for their presentation to MLAs this morning to explain how people with Asperger syndrome are physically healthy but their brains work differently so they're often singled out.

Government programs indeed single out Asperger syndrome by having them dropped through the cracks too often because under the conditions of this government's programs, in many circumstances you need to have an IQ of less than 70 in order to qualify for support.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) why he's not moving away from the government's focus on IQism

and instead using a more realistic measure of disability, a measure of adaptive function as indeed is used in the disability tax credit?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I, too, enjoyed the hospitality of the Asperger society of Manitoba.

Asperger syndrome is a unique condition that's part of the autism spectrum disorder. Each child diagnosed with that diagnosis as an adult has varied specific individual characteristics.

Our government has been working cross-departmentally as well as with families. Family Services and Housing, Education, Manitoba Health and Healthy Living have come together to provide services. The diagnostic services through the Child Development Clinic as well as Children's Special Services provide treatment, therapy and respite, as well as school-based services through Education, Citizenship and Youth through the funding formula for level 1 and level 2 and 3 students. As well, Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre is working on developing a program that will continue to provide services to people that are afflicted with Asperger Syndrome.

*(14:40)

Suicide Rates Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, many adults with Asperger syndrome are continuing to drop through the cracks due to the way this government has organized things.

Indeed, a recent Canadian Medical Association Journal article exposed shocking statistics that Manitoba's—and I table this—suicide rate is higher than in any other province in Canada, and more than one and a half times the national average.

Time and time again in this Legislature, I've raised concern about Manitoba's high suicide rate and about people dropping through the cracks, and, yet, the government has bungled and bungled and bungled.

One reason for Manitoba's high suicide rate is that government programs miss the mark. They miss too many people at risk, whether it's people with Asperger syndrome, with brain injury or others.

When will the government address these important needs?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, suicide is an issue that concerns all members of this House and all communities as we come together.

Our services around mental health supports—we've provided over \$40 million since 2005 to provide supports. Yesterday we announced \$1.8 million for mental health workers across the province of Manitoba. Twenty new mental health workers will provide that support. We take it very, very seriously. We're going to work with our community partners through health, social services as well as parents and ensure that we're dealing with these issues.

It's about providing prevention services as well, and making sure that children are, through early childhood development, developing with strong self-esteem and the supports that they need.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Premier (Mr. Doer), how can you tolerate the appalling situation in this province where our suicide rates are about three times that in Québec and four times that in Nova Scotia? It's disgraceful. When you could have acted, you failed time and time again, even to action to prevent suicides in people with eating disorders, as an example. Straight forward is following the Saskatchewan model of setting up an eating disorder centre like that in Bridge Point, in Mildred, Saskatchewan.

Elaine Stevenson and others have been calling on the government to act for years, but this government has done nothing. Far too many of our young people have died.

When will the government act, Mr. Premier?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, suicide is an issue that concerns all members of this House as well as every citizen of Manitoba. We are very concerned. We will continue to work with all of our partners and ensure that we provide people with the supports that they need through our mental health workers across the province as well as through prevention programs.

As well, specific around the eating disorders, there are services that are available for eating disorders. We have the Adult Eating Disorders Program and the Child and Adolescent Eating Disorders program at the Health Sciences Centre. As well, there are self-help programs that are throughout the province.

We will continue to work with all partners as we address all mental health issues in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, May 4 through 10 is North American Occupational Health and Safety Week. In this era of globalization in which goods, people and information rapidly move across borders and into foreign jurisdictions, we can easily take for granted the increasing standardization. Yet, while the speed of commerce and communications has made the world seem smaller, it has not necessarily made it any safer for workers.

This week is an opportunity to renew our commitment and awareness of occupational safety issues and to ensure that all workers from Canada to Mexico are equally protected from the hazards of the workplace.

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week was born out of the strong tradition of safety awareness and promotion which have been provided by the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering since the mid-1980s. In 1996, CSSE partnered with safety organizations, governments and other groups to expand the scope of this important awareness campaign continent-wide.

Despite the international scale of this safety campaign, it is imperative that we recognize that safety implementation is decidedly local in nature. Successful safety strategies often require the work of employees, management, volunteers and the surrounding community to build a foundation of mutual respect, trust and appreciation of human life.

While there is much work yet to do, because of the awareness raised by the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, workers in North America are closer to enjoying the same safety standards, no matter their location.

Mr. Speaker, every worker deserves a safe workplace. I would like to commend the members of the business community who have taken on this challenge with respect and concern for their workers. We also honour those workers who have been injured or whose lives were lost in the workplace.

Parish of St. Norbert 150th Anniversary

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, this year is a milestone in my constituency of St. Norbert. The parish of St. Norbert was established on November 30, 1857, and it is celebrating its 150th anniversary. It is the third oldest parish in western Canada. In the 1860s, St. Norbert was the largest community in the North-West Territories, as Manitoba was once known. Today, 150 years later, it is still a vibrant and essential part of our city and our province.

Located at the junction of the Red and LaSalle rivers, the French-speaking Roman Catholic parish of St. Norbert has enjoyed a long and eventful history as one of Manitoba's earliest and most significant French Canadian and Métis communities. The community of St. Norbert was witness to the formation of a provisional government of Manitoba on October 20, 1869, the drafting of the Bill of Rights in the Red River in the first rectory in the St. Norbert parish in December of that year, and the creation of a representational provisional government of 24 delegates with Louis Riel as president in February of 1870.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the very creation of our province is intimately connected to the history of the community I represent. Today, St. Norbert is still a cornerstone of our province. Its French culture, historical roots and vibrant arts community make it a truly unique part of our city.

A series of activities to mark this milestone anniversary in my constituency have already taken place over the course of the last year. The formal celebrations were kicked off in July 1 of last year with a community picnic and the celebrations will wrap up with the grand finale banquet to be held this spring on June 7.

I ask all honourable members of this House to join me in congratulating the volunteers who have been working very hard on ensuring the success of this year's event and the parish of St. Norbert on its 150th anniversary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pilot Mound Hockeyville Finalist

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate the community of Pilot Mound in finishing in the top five in Hockeyville 2008. Kraft Canada together with the CBC, the National Hockey League and the NHL Players Association hold an annual challenge in the

search of the community that best demonstrates pride and passion for the game of hockey.

This was Pilot Mound's third attempt to claim Hockeyville's top prize. In 2006, they were one of 25 finalists. Pilot Mound has a very unique history. In 1947, after fire left the town without a rink, volunteers travelled to Souris to dismantle an old air force hangar. By 1949, they had transformed it into the Pilot Mound Arena which is still in use today. However, in desperate need for a new hockey rink after 60 years of use, the community's volunteers once again travelled across the province to bring a new rink to Pilot Mound. In 2000, a recreation facility from Sundance, Manitoba, was purchased. Volunteers travelled 1,200 kilometres north and dismantled the complex in 40 days. They then transported the materials and 50 truckloads back to Pilot Mound, and they have since been constructing the Pilot Mound Millennium Recreation Complex, set to open in the fall of 2008.

Since 2000, community members have dedicated over 150,000 volunteer hours on this project alone. Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely remarkable. Over the weekend of April 26, they held a community auction where they made \$80,000 for the new arena. Included in the night's events was a pie sale. Pies were made by local residents and were auctioned off for between \$200 and \$850, one of which I purchased.

As a finalist, Pilot Mound was awarded \$20,000 to be used for upgrades in their home arena and had the privilege of hosting CBC's Hockey Night in Canada from the Pilot Mound Arena on April 1.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, it is remarkable that the people of the area have committed so much time, energy and talent to making something so special happen for this community. The volunteers have worked tirelessly. If it were not for them, the great citizens of Pilot Mound and area would not have had an arena in which to learn and play this great Canadian game. They have undoubtedly made the community of Pilot Mound and the province of Manitoba a much better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members here today to join me in congratulating the community of Pilot Mound for a job well done. We are very proud of their accomplishments and look forward to the grand opening of the complex this fall.

Boy Scouts and Girl Guides

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, the Scout and Guide movements provide excellent environments for the development of citizenship and leadership in our youth. I was very pleased to join the 1st Kirkfield Park Venturers Troop when they raised the Canadian Cancer Society flag during the recent Daffodil Days event here at the Legislature.

The Scout's mission is to seek to contribute to the education of young people through a value system based on the Scout promise and law to build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and to play a constructive role in society. It was a pleasure to collaborate with these fantastic young people who are working to make a real difference in their communities.

Manitoba Girl Guides and other fantastic youth groups celebrated 2008 International Earth Day with a tree planting and environmental education session on May 3 at Optimist Park.

Working in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Conservation, Environmental Youth Corps, Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Assiniboine Watershed Network, the Girl Guides assisted with the reforestation of the bank of Sturgeon Creek, planting over a thousand trees in one day, adding to the over 2,500 they have already planted.

These two organizations play an important role in building citizenship skills. Their philosophies have instilled qualities like strong work ethic and a sense of social responsibility in hundreds of Manitobans.

The young men and women who come out of these programs are skilled leaders and have training and values that hold them in good stead in their daily endeavours. I was thrilled to get to know these young up-and-comers.

Learning at an early age about cancer prevention and protecting the environment are two important issues that are facing all Manitobans. Having young advocates for such important issues truly makes a difference in how we all think about cancer and protecting our natural areas.

On behalf of all honourable members and as a former member of the Guide movement, I would like to congratulate the 1st Kirkfield group and the Manitoba Girl Guides for their ongoing commitment to building a better society full of conscientious

citizens. I take great solace knowing that we are leaving our future in such caring hands.

Early Childhood Education

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): For a long time, Liberals have been calling for improved provincial support for early childhood education. As one example, I remember February 5, 2007, when about 80 concerned parents, day-care providers and children braved the very cold weather and came to the Manitoba Legislature to plead the need for much better support for early childhood education in Manitoba.

I want to recognize those who came that day, and particularly Don Woodstock, who's in the gallery, and Diane Hale from the Rainbow Day Nursery, and many others.

At long last, after much effort by those who were there February 5, 2007, and many others who've contributed in one way or another to the cause, there has been some movement. In my own constituency of River Heights there have also been many who've worked hard in the effort, including Karen Ohlson and others at KIDS Inc. day care at Montrose School.

Thanks are due to all those who've contributed to the effort to improve support for early childhood education in Manitoba. Yet, as we know, there is still a huge need now for increased support with long waiting lists, some up to four years in length. For children in their early years, four years is far too long to wait. I hope we will not have to wait the full five years of the government's plan to dramatically reduce the waiting times. It's needed now.

All too often in the past, there've been reversals in support for early childhood education. Most recently, with the change in federal government in 2006, there was an abrupt move away from a national program for early childhood education. As Liberals, we commit to moving forward on early childhood education, and I hope the other parties will similarly make their commitment as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Would you please canvass the House to see if there's unanimous consent to waive rules 154(1), 157(1) and (3), regarding the requirements for the

deposit, the publishing of a notice of application for a private bill, and the proof of publication for the Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club? I should note for the House that publication had already previously taken place in May 2006.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to waive rules 154(1), 157(1) and (3), regarding the requirements for the deposit, the publishing of a notice of application for a private bill, and the proof of publication for the Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club? It's been noted for the House that publication had already previously taken place in May of 2006. Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the House, and I wonder if we might now resolve ourself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply. Would the respective Chairs please go to: the Chamber will be Competitiveness, Training and Trade; Room 255 will be Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport; and Room 254 will be Family Services and Housing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING

* (15:00)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): 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 and Housing.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I want to go on to the issue of social worker caseloads. There have been over a period of time three separate judicial inquests that recommended the development of caseload standards. The minister in 2003 promised that those would be established. Can you indicate where the plans to develop caseload standards are at right now?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): The external reviews, which form the basis for our Changes for Children action plan, provided a number of recommendations directed at workload relief. As I recall—we're just looking for the quote—but in the external review, there was a conclusion drawn that any jurisdiction

should be very cautious of using a standard caseload formula because of the great variations in work. Distances make a difference. The complexity of human nature can make a big difference with individual worker's caseloads demands. I think that reflects what has been the conclusions by a number of organizations that have some good knowledge in this area.

First of all, the Child Welfare League of America has concluded that there is no universally accepted formula for computing caseloads. The Child Welfare League of Canada has actually made a point of not recommending a formula for caseload standards, as a result. That's because caseloads don't, as I said earlier, really, necessarily reflect workload. But most jurisdictions in Canada do not employ caseload standards due to the complications inherent in developing them.

Now what the history of caseloads in Manitoba has been, does reflect, though, an eagerness by observers to keep going back and computing numbers based on some kind of a formula. For example, in 1996's inquest report into the tragic death of Sophia Schmidt, Judge Conner, there, found that child protection workers involved with that case had caseloads of about 45. They said, there, that the heavy workload that he found had been the status quo since 1988. Those were his words. We then had the inquest report into the '96 death of Nadine Beaulieu, and the child protection worker in that case, at West Region, had between 45 and 50 cases and, as well, had some other files that were being carried with less seriousness. The judge in that inquest found that that social worker would have had a caseload of 45 to 50 children in care and about 30 family files. So that was some earlier attempt at caseload measures in Manitoba.

I think we've seen a real variety, a divergence of caseload measures and ratios right across the continent. So when the external reviews said we had to address workload relief without regard to a caseload measure, they said that the need was 150 more workers, which should provide front-end relief. Not necessarily, though, social workers. In fact, I think there was a theme in there that support workers were also very important and necessary to reduce the workload of social workers, for example.

* (15:10)

Now since Changes for Children commenced, then, and with a goal of 150 more staff resources, we are now at 91.5 more approved positions. I

understand that most of those, if not nearly all of them, have been filled. Those are at the different agencies across the province.

The challenge, of course, with regard to adding more resources is that we are also seeing more children in care. So, by the time that devolution had begun and using the rough measures and with all the caveats that have been urged, I understand that the average caseload was around 28 or 29 in Manitoba. So, with the workload relief and in light of the added numbers of children, the caseload is down somewhat. Average caseloads, I understand, range from about 27 in the north to 28 with a general authority, 29 with a southern authority. The overall caseload is somewhere around 28 or 29, if you use those kinds of measures.

The unfortunate thing here is that the Province has been adding resources for caseload relief while there has not been a reconsideration by the federal government of its funding on reserve. Any enhancement to caseloads is skewed and can be lost because of a lack of federal recognition of the need for more funding for on-reserve services. The challenge remains a serious one. It was a subject of an Auditor General's report from Ottawa yesterday, on the need to address on-reserve, child-welfare funding. We'll have to continue with our efforts to bring the federal government to a new funding formula and a new partnership with First Nations—and the Province, for that matter, if all the provincial standards are to apply. The recent inquest report into the death of Tracia Owen commented that that is very difficult if not impossible to live up to when there isn't the comparable funding on the federal side.

Madam Chair, we're recognizing that caseload doesn't necessarily reflect workload. I also understand that the authorities are working on a workload-relief initiative to take this matter further now and in light of further resources that have been earmarked for distribution to agencies. One part of the strategy is to strengthen the information management system, the CFIS system, which can make work easier and is workload relief when it works for those on the front lines. Other methods of volume relief are being examined and so they are assessing workload and tracking it over time. They're using quality assurance with the agencies to implement workload assessment and tracking. The administrative time and increasing time with clients, obviously, is a focus, but the funding model as well is being looked at.

As well, it's important that the recruitment and retention efforts be continually strengthened because, when there's a big turnover of staff, it obviously can cause workload implications for the agency and for other workers. So management practices are important and that is under way. The standing committee has identified some steps, then, to look at the previous workload measures that have been used and the approaches in other jurisdictions. There are some improvements to this in light of the blueprint that was set out by the external reviews.

Mr. Briese: I do understand some of the complexities to different cases, but the fact does remain that the minister, in 2003, promised that caseload standards would be implemented. In a more recent Manitoba Government Employees Union survey of social workers by Probe Research, 46 percent of the social workers identified caseloads as their No. 1 concern. Also, the Children's Advocate, in most recent annual report, has identified caseloads as an area of serious concern. I know there's been a commitment made on another 150 social workers, but also the numbers in CFS continue to grow. I question whether we're doing any more than just keeping up to the extra loads that are going in.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, when you compare what were the judicially determined caseloads in the late 1990s with caseloads of 45 to 50, and another 30 family files for one social worker, versus the numbers that we have now, that's a very substantial improvement and very measurable improvement. But I do know, too, that the social workers and the child welfare workers in the 1990s also complained bitterly. I think 80 or 90 percent of them in a survey said that they couldn't do, they couldn't fulfil the responsibilities under the act because of their caseloads. We have to continue our efforts there, and, as I say, the blueprint was set out by the external reviews and we are going to move to 150 more workers, strengthening the information management systems, strengthening management practices and, at the same time—I mean, you can deal with caseload in different ways.

You can just keep adding more and more social workers and other front-line workers and just keep piling that on. You can also reduce workloads by looking at why children are in care in the first place. What is driving this horrendous number, 7,000, 8,000 children in care in the province of Manitoba. What can be done better to strengthen families and reduce child abuse has to be part of the question. It's

not enough just to say, well, we're going to keep adding and adding and adding resources to deal with what is undermining the well-being of children and families. Any discussion on this shouldn't only talk about staffing. We are adding 150, it's a sizeable investment; but, when you look at what's happening in Manitoba families, you can't help but come to the conclusion that there are serious troubles in far too many families.

In terms of the role of government, first of all, let's remember, the children don't grow up in a program. They don't grow up in government. They grow up in a family; they grow up in a community. What can government do as one agent to ameliorate conditions? You can provide parenting skills, and we've got a world-class program that's rolling out now, the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program. You can provide help in terms of getting people off of welfare. You can provide help in terms of addiction services and mental health services and all those issues. There are, of course, as well, the responsibilities that rest with being parents in a family and rearing children. Government can't be there all the time. But there are efforts that are being undertaken, both through the child welfare system and through all kinds of other initiatives and with community organizations to help families become healthier.

The focus of the differential response model that we talked about yesterday in some length is wholly intended to reduce the number of children that have to be taken into care because we are able to help families nip their problems sooner before children become actually abused. We can deal with neglect cases and with an objective of strengthening parenting skills, dealing with the challenges, whether I say it's employment, literacy, addictions, mental health, all of those issues, in a much more focussed way.

* (15:20)

The plan there is to see the number of children in care decrease. That has been the experience in other jurisdictions that have introduced this differential response model, or this family enhancement stream that will be introduced in a formalized way in Manitoba. I just wanted to put that on the record that there are different sides to this here. I don't think that the long-term strategy should ever just say, well, yes, we're just going to keep adding more and more social workers because of the number of children in care. You have to work together with families and

communities to turn off the tap of those who are maltreated.

Mr. Briese: Madam Chair, I would agree with that; there have to be the other approaches. The fact remains that the caseloads are there today, and what are we doing to deal with the high number of caseloads?

One other question that I would have pertaining to that. You've mentioned 91.5 positions are filled out of the 150. Would you have a breakdown on how many of those are actually front-line workers and how many are more of a supervisory capacity—or administrative, I guess, would be the word?

Mr. Mackintosh: The external report said, and I'm just paraphrasing what they said here, but they said, get your social workers out of the file room and into the living room, you know. Give them some added support; fix your information technology up; get other people doing the photocopying and helping with the file preparation. But, as well, you can strengthen supports for front line by strengthening supervisory capacity as well. So the reports were very clear. They didn't say just hire all social workers. They said, give front-line relief, so it was up to the agencies and the authorities, then, to determine how best to flow the first round. That was about \$5-million worth of new resources and that was done over time.

In terms of the 91.5, the department advises me that 60 are classified as traditional front-line workers. There are about nine supervisors; service assistants are 2.5, and admin is 19.3. So, to a fair extent, we complied; we didn't put them all into just the front-line workers, but in terms of some of the other supports as well for those on the front line. I think what's important now is that, with the workload relief initiative and analyzing how to better gauge volumes, we'll continue to tweak that with the agencies on a go-forward basis. You know, we've got, what, another 60 or so to go for front-line relief, and we'll work with the authorities to make sure we're getting the best bang for our buck with the placement of those new resources.

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to recognizing the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), if the minister could please introduce the two staff members who joined us here at the table.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes. Deputy Minister Martin Billinkoff, and ADM Carolyn Loepky.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes. I'd like to ask the minister: With the situation in Norway House, where there have been, I think it's 37 children who have been looked after at a very considerable expense by the First Nation, and Councillor Mike Muswagon has talked about this as, you know, important relationship to Jordan's Principle, that the child should be considered first. There were some statements over the weekend, I believe, from Health Minister Tony Clement. Can the minister provide an update on the status of the children at Norway House, and of the status of the implementation of Jordan's Principle?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, in the last go-round in Estimates in the fall, we also had a discussion about the pilot project or the initiative that Norway House had undertaken as a result of accessing some funds that they had available to them, and I remind the member that this project was begun by the band itself. This did not engage the Province in any way, but I understand that it was ongoing for some period of time, serving 20, 30 or so children who had some complex needs in the community. When it looked like the funds were running out, clearly there was an interest in continuing with that program, and recognizing that the medical services jurisdiction, resting with Ottawa, was an important part of any solution, I had undertaken with the chief and with Councillor Muswagon to make approaches formally and otherwise with federal officials and political leadership.

The next I had heard, then, was a concern that the monies were going to run out again. I mean, I think there have been some different time lines here. As a result, it was our concern that the federal government was not showing an interest in stepping in to fill that funding void, but recognizing that there was an important service at stake, the Province indicated to federal officials and to senior officials, actually, in Ottawa that we were bound and determined to see a resolution of this on a timely basis and asked the federal government to move with us to resolve it.

You know, we can talk about Jordan's Principle, and I'll just put on the table again that Jordan's Principle is accepted by this government, but for Jordan's—and I'll just assume for a moment that this is about Jordan's Principle because I think the member confuses and, I think, helps to confuse the public sometimes, perhaps unwittingly, in terms of what Jordan's Principle is about. Jordan's Principle is about where there's a dispute as to whether the

services should be provided by the Province or the federal government that the immediate jurisdiction, in other words the jurisdiction where the child is currently receiving service, will pay the amount and then the bickering will be worked out. Without a dispute resolution process, Jordan's Principle is simply code word for federal offloading of fiduciary responsibility so the dispute resolution process is critical on how we move ahead with Jordan's Principle. That's assuming, by the way, that there are available services in the First Nations community, then.

We see this as an on-reserve service. There's no dispute about whether it's provincial or federal. It's on-reserve services, and last time I challenged the member, you know, Madam Chairperson, was he advocating that provincial jurisdictions now get involved in providing medical services on-reserve because that would be quite a remarkable position to take and one that I know would be of interest to all the provinces and premiers across the country.

There comes a time when there are established programs that are unique, that appear to be working, that we can sometimes step out and rise to a challenge to be part of a solution, and we proposed to the federal government that the Province was prepared to help these children with complex needs in Norway House to maintain the program, and that was offered to the federal government.

I was pleased to hear the federal government—and this is all third-hand because I have not had a discussion—the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) actually is a lead on Jordan's Principle on the one hand and, second of all, on the Norway House issue on the other because it crosses departments. It's not just a Family Services issue whatsoever. There would be significant funding on the Health side and Healthy Living side.

* (15:30)

I understand that the feds are prepared to step in, and I think that's a real win-win for everybody. I think they're doing the right thing, quite frankly. If the federal government wants to continue with discussions following our correspondence to them where we had offered to try and help out, then we're prepared to have that discussion to solve the problem and get it behind us. The federal government has a role to play and so do the provinces, but this area of jurisdiction is becoming, I think, more marked.

As the provincial government, through Changes for Children, has increased significantly and will continue to increase investments in child welfare for one, and the federal government's contributions, according to the Auditor General yesterday, are stagnant. I shouldn't say stagnant, actually. The member was at the table in Ottawa and pushed the button and stopped the indexing of payments on reserve for child welfare, and it's cost Manitoba, apparently, disproportionately more than any other jurisdiction in Canada. I think we're up to—what was it, \$27 million?

I think the Wen:de Report, commissioned by INAC, said that Manitoba children had, as of even 2005, lost \$27 million as a result of the loss of the indexing of that dollar.

So, when the member speaks about Jordan's Principle and on-reserve services, I immediately have to remind Manitobans and the member, you know, of the role that the member played in hurting the well-being of Aboriginal children on reserve. You know, you can talk all you want, but you have to be measured by when you are in position to make a difference. When you are making decisions, you have to be measured against that, and the member was there when that decision was made.

Mr. Gerrard: Just clarification as to whether the federal government has indicated their willingness to help out, just in Norway House or to have a broader role for the federal government in other communities where there are similar issues.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well the odd thing is, you know, we're getting information through the newspapers—or through the media, I should say, and we've been communicating with them. I can tell you the ADM, the DM, others at the political level as well, you know, and with Mr. Bruinooge. I mean, we have been going and going on this issue with the federal government to get a new partnership to get them to address No. 1, child welfare on reserve; No. 2, Jordan's Principle; and No. 3, the Norway House situation in particular. But they're moving on it. I know they're concerned about it, and I think with the recent pronouncements that we are hearing about through the media, I think that's a very positive indication that at least with Norway House they recognize that they have a role to play and they have to step in.

In terms of the next one then, the issue of Jordan's Principle, there have been active discussions. I think more recently we're getting

concerned that it's too quiet on the federal side. They appointed someone to the working group with Manitoba, and then they said they wanted to study the cost of disability services, and to my understanding it's been quiet for some time now.

What we saw from the federal government, though, was a recognition of the importance of Jordan's Principle. There was a resolution of the House that the government spoke to and supported, and as well, there have been other statements in support of it. So I'm optimistic that we're going to have a deal with them because that's what they're saying publicly. It was just that we have not had a positive communication back. We have from officials a real keen interest, I think, in coming to a conclusion, but we need the political level to sign off. Not surprisingly, that's where it goes. So we're optimistic that we can have a new relationship there.

In terms of child welfare on reserve, yesterday in this room we talked about how the federal government has now earmarked dollars for child welfare in Alberta, and they are interested in the differential response model being supported on reserve in that province. So we're going to be in line, and I'm sure other provinces are too, especially those that are developing differential response. Alberta is the first on differential response, but Ontario was there and Manitoba, I think some other jurisdictions.

So, you know, there's some room for optimism right now. It's just that political assurance, at least we heard it on one of the three issues with regard to Norway House in the last few days.

Mr. Gerrard: I hear the minister and gather that, while there is some optimism, there is still no agreement or anything firm at this juncture.

Let me move on to another issue which I've been raising, and that is that there are individuals in Manitoba with, whether it's Asperger syndrome or brain injury or complex medical cases, mixtures of autism and seizure disorders, for example, where individuals have an IQ above 70. They don't meet the criteria for support. I would ask the minister why he would not use an adaptive function index, as is used for the disability tax credit, instead of just using an IQ in making this assessment.

Mr. Mackintosh: I haven't done the latest number crunching, but I believe that we have, since coming to office, I think, increased the budget for Children's Special Services by over a hundred percent and for community living and persons with intellectual

disabilities by even more than that. Having said that, the question remains, is the money flowing to help those that need it? In order to determine that, it's important that we know what the internationally recognized measures of need are as best we can. Of course, IQ has served for a long period of time as a relatively objective measure of intellectual ability.

Oh, and by the way, it's my understanding that an IQ of 70 has been used as a measure not just in Manitoba, historically, but far beyond our borders—I think across North America or the western world. Having said that, though, the department has a built-in flexibility, and it has admitted clients to services with an IQ over 70 depending on other circumstances. I know, even with the IQ number, that there's some flexibility with in excess of IQ of 70. I'm advised that persons with IQs of 75, for example, as high as 75, perhaps even some flexibility on that number depending on certain particular circumstances of the individuals.

So that's been the approach in Manitoba, and I say it's not one that was invented here in this province. The department, though, continues to look at how it can assess need, but that has been a determination that is shared. The determination in Manitoba is one that has been shared across jurisdictions. If the member has other approaches, I welcome advice on that one, and the department can consider that, obviously, because we're always interested in making sure that those increased resources are, as I said at the outset, going to address what is our best analysis of need.

Mr. Gerrard: I would advise and suggest that the minister and the department look carefully at moving to something which would be an adaptive function index which would look at how people are functioning in the community rather than just relying on the IQ, and that people with Asperger syndrome are an example. They're often very bright, but their functional status means that, with some help, they can be productive citizens. But all too many of them, right now, are falling through the cracks.

* (15:40)

The same applies to individuals with brain injury who may have a high IQ but because of the defects or the results of the brain injury, and certainly, there are adults with autism and seizure disorder. I give you an example. I've raised a number of these in question period in the last couple of weeks, and I think that one of the problems at the moment is that, because these individuals are not

picked up, or they're falling through the cracks in the current system, that it's not as if there are not costs to the provincial government. There are substantial costs in very different ways as a result of these individuals falling through the cracks and not being supported. Those costs may be seen in health care or costs in Justice budget and various other things, and surely it would be desirable to make sure that a small amount of help, given in the right way, can make a big difference and move people to being productive citizens and taxpayers instead of being adrift because they're falling through the cracks.

Madam Chairperson: The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thanks, Madam Chair. Just at the outset, I'd like to welcome the minister's staff. It's the first chance I've had to do that and would like to start to ask some questions on child care. The minister may know some of the issues that I have in my constituency, but first I'd just like some overall information on child care.

If the minister could just go back—and I don't know whether he can provide for me, I would hope that he would have at his fingertips, or his staff would have, the number of new licensed spaces that were created last year and where they were?

Mr. Mackintosh: One of the staff is just going to see if we have some papers with us on that. For '07-08, there was an announcement of 500 more funded spaces, 500 more funded spaces last fiscal. As I recall, I think that was the number to conclude the five-year plan. The five-year plan, I think it was 5,000 that we had said we would additionally fund since that initiative was launched in '02. As well, I have some more information on this one, but as well, capital funding was allocated for '07-08. That was a \$2.8-million capital program. I do have with me at least a regional breakdown if the member wants that, I can read that into the record. I mean, Winnipeg region, there were—no, we'll have to get that for the member.

Did the member want the actual child-care centres or would she like a regional breakdown?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I want to make sure we're talking apples and apples. So, I know that, I think the last five-year plan that I know has been fulfilled. I have to say, in many instances, there's been a lot of good work that's been done on the child-care front. So I want to say that up front. I think sometimes very often, we always look at the negative. There isn't any

government that does everything wrong or everything right. I do want to say on the child-care side that there have been some improvements, so I want to indicate that.

But I just want to make sure that I have all the facts and the information in front of me. I know that the commitment for the last five years, I believe, was 5,000 spaces which now, I guess, I would like to have some clarification on what those 5,000 spaces mean. Does that mean 5,000 more spaces in the system or does that mean 5,000 more licensed spaces? Well, I'll leave it there and then I can ask a subsequent question.

* (15:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, very early on in my tenure in this department, I became aware that there was an important distinction that had to be made publicly always through this. The government does two things. It either it can license spaces and it can fund spaces. The commitment in the five-year plan was to fund spaces, additional spaces, as is the commitment in Family Choices, the new five-year strategy. It's to fund—the new strategy is 6,500 and the first one is to fund 5,000. Now, there may be licensed spaces that aren't funded.

In other words, the child-care centre doesn't get any operating grants in order to meet the operating costs for putting a child in that space. So, if you have a space that's unfunded, there's always a risk then that that space will not be filled. The commitments of the Province has been in respect to funding spaces.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, then, in the last five-year commitment, the 5,000 spaces were funded spaces. How many of them were actually new spaces as opposed to old spaces that hadn't been funded in the past?

Mr. Mackintosh: We can provide that. That number is available. In fact, I just saw a national study that had measured the number of licensed spaces as a separate measure. We'll get that for the member.

There will be some correlation between the growth in funded spaces and the growth in licensed spaces but it may not necessarily be the same.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I was hoping that I might be able to get that fairly quickly because my line of questioning would follow from that information. Can I get it within the next half hour?

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand efforts are being made. I might just add, as well, just by working with the media and educating them on the difference between funded spaces and newly licensed spaces, that's always a part now of our press conferences and addressing that.

Madam Chair, we have committed in the Family Choices plan, with the 6,500 new, funded spaces, that approximately three-quarters of those will be newly created spaces. About a quarter of them will be to fund existing unfunded spaces.

Mrs. Mitchelson: When the minister talks about newly created spaces, are these newly created licensed spaces?

Mr. Mackintosh: It would work out to about 5,000. I think actually CKY did an analysis of 4,900 or something but it would work out to about 5,000 newly created and licensed new spaces.

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: So that is not then taking spaces that are unlicensed that presently exist and counting them in the number of newly created spaces?

Mr. Mackintosh: In calculating how many of the 6,500 would be newly created and newly funded there was some analysis that indicated we had about 1,500 existing licensed spaces that were unfunded and were causing a real pressure on child-care centres and not, I think, fulfilling as well, the potential of those licensed spaces to be filled. But not always. Some of those spaces can be filled, but then the child-care centre has additional and sometimes very onerous operating cost demands.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have a Freedom of Information response that we received on April 15 of this year that indicated that the total number of licensed spaces today is 27,189. And out of that, 23,396 were funded. I'm just doing a quick calculation here. That would tell me today that, rather than 1,500 spaces that aren't funded, as the minister just indicated, that there are 3,793 spaces as of April 15 of this year that are licensed but aren't funded.

Now I believe the commitment for this year was to fund another 500 spaces in the new plan. So 500 of these almost 4,000 spaces that are unfunded today would receive funding, and that would still leave 3,300, 3,400 of the licensed spaces today not funded in the next fiscal year. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. Mackintosh: We're just reconciling those numbers, but there may be different periods of time at play here. The 500 last year was about newly funded spaces, but in this fiscal year, we're going to fund an additional 1,500, just to correct the record.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the 500 spaces last year were not newly created spaces. They were spaces that already existed but just became funded. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. Mackintosh: The funding was for 500 more spaces. We have to provide, then, a breakdown for the member on how many were new spaces, new creations, and how many were funding of existing spaces, of the 500 from '07-08.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wonder if, then—and I would like the information for last year if we can get that, and if we can get it for all five years, that's okay, but I'm hoping that very quickly we'll be able to get at least last year. I would like, then, a commitment from the minister to provide for me how many actual new spaces were created in the last five-year plan and how many new spaces were funded?

Mr. Mackintosh: We'll obtain that information from our number cruncher over in the Child Care office and try and get that for the morning, if not earlier. What I'm also advised in terms of the numbers is that, what often happens is that child-care centres create spaces and put their name, then, on the list to get funding for those spaces. So there's that whole grey area there in terms of spaces being created in anticipation of funding, and sometimes there are commitments made for funding, and sometimes they're just on a list.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And then, I guess, if we're getting that information for the last five years, could we have a breakdown, also, of where those new spaces were created? And I would like it facility by facility, and I know it's not all facilities. There are many home day cares, so you may not want to identify an address of a home day care, and I understand that. But if we could have it, sort of on a regional basis, for the home day cares; for the centres I would like it on a centre by centre basis.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I'm certain the information exists, so we'll get working on it.

* (16:00)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Over the period of the last five years, were there any day-care centres or child-care homes that closed down? Was there any reduction in

the number of centres or child-care homes that occurred?

Mr. Mackintosh: First, I just want to make it clear that the Family Choices plan commits to 6,500 newly funded spaces, but that's net. That also, though, recognizes that, from time to time, centres do close down. We've seen a couple of those just recently, but for other reasons they may close down. The commitment is net.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So could the minister indicate, then, over the last five years—I know he says there are a few that have closed down just recently. Can he give me a guesstimate of how many spaces would have been shut down?

Mr. Mackintosh: Did the member want the number of centres or the number of spaces?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Spaces, please.

So is the minister indicating, then, in the five-year action plan that's been fulfilled whether the 5,000 number is net more spaces or whether there would be a subtraction from that number?

Mr. Mackintosh: The last five-year plan, I understand, was a net 5,000 more funded spaces net.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That wasn't what I asked. I wasn't asking funded spaces. I asked creation of spaces, was it net? With the spaces that closed down and the number of new spaces that opened, were there 5,000 new spaces created?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the commitment was for 5,000 more funded spaces, which would be a net. It's not about the number of spaces because some of those funded spaces will be existing spaces that have never had funding. I mean, that's what the government can control is the number of funded spaces. That's within its direct control, and so that was the commitment of the five-year plan. That was delivered.

The member's asked how many new spaces created. We'll get that number for her in terms of those that aren't necessarily funded but those that were created.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Of the new spaces that were created, would they be licensed spaces or would some of them be unlicensed?

Mr. Mackintosh: The department only funds licensed spaces.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'm not talking about what the department funds. I'm talking about whether there are new spaces that have been created that would be unlicensed.

Mr. Mackintosh: The challenge of the question is that unlicensed child care isn't within the ambit of the Province with the licensing requirement or the act, and I guess that one could say, from time to time, we relied on people we knew or people that we got to know in the neighbourhood to take care of our children when we couldn't get into licensed child care or have other arrangements. Those aren't within the numbers that the Province has access to. Those are just informal, if you will, arrangements that are made outside of the legislative scheme.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There were several facilities within my community that were child-care facilities, and they were child cares in schools that were classified as licence-not-required. Circumstances have changed, and now the Child Care office has forced them to become licensed. I know that there were four in schools in my area, and there were another three, I believe, that were licence-not-required facilities, that have recently, in the last couple of years, been told that they have to become licensed.

Was this unique to northeast Winnipeg, or is that occurring right across the province?

Mr. Mackintosh: What I'm familiar with, just in a general way, was that there was a unique program run through the school division, I understood later, where there would be some before and after activities for children in—was it three or four schools? Then, as I recall, the school division decided that they didn't want to continue that program as part of their school operations, but that would be operating outside of the child-care system. That was just like a before and after program that, you know, people can voluntarily agree to operate. But where we became familiar with it was, as I recall, the department then was solicited to determine if they could get involved in maintaining those spaces and, in which case, then the act would have to apply, and I think we then started funding those programs, Madam Acting Chair. That's my recollection of that situation, which I understand, to the department's knowledge, is rather unique.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So can the minister indicate and confirm then that there are no other facilities that have an exemption granted or a licence-not-required status in the whole province?

Mr. Mackintosh: We don't license on reserve unless requested, but, I mean, if there are child-care—you can call them spaces, but child-care programs operating that aren't asking for provincial funding, then they operate outside the system and, you know, that's happening all over Manitoba, I'm sure, in terms of people's homes especially. But it may happen in some schools. It may happen in some community centres, but where the Province gets involved is when there's a request for funding and a request for licensing. But we only fund licensed spaces is the advice is I have.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But I don't think the minister is getting the point. These weren't facilities that asked to be licensed or asked to be funded. They were programs that had been running in the River East School Division, some for over 20 years. I think the latest one that began to organize was in 1992, but there were programs that were running that were meeting the needs of families in the River East School Division dating back more than 20 years, longer than I had been in the Legislature, that, from all accounts, have been running. I know that some are running in the River East constituency, some in Rossmere constituency, and have functioned extremely well over the years. There's never been one complaint about the before- and after-school program from a parent, from the school division, from a child, from anyone who works in the system.

All of a sudden, a couple of years ago, there was a question, and yes, initially, the group that banded together from the four facilities, thought it was the school division that had changed the direction. The Child Care office appeared to say it was not their issue, it was the school division who had changed the rules, and said that they were not prepared to support the facilities and that they would have to become licensed. Anyway, when they got together and made representation to the school division, the school division, all along, indicated that it was the Child Care office, not the school division, that had changed the rules.

Anyway, the school division was prepared, as a result of that meeting, to send a letter back to the Child Care office and indicate clearly that they were prepared to continue along the same rules as that had all existed for 20 years and that they were prepared to continue to support the before- and after-school programs. When that information went to the Child Care office, the Child Care office said, no, you will

have to become licensed and, therefore, these facilities have now had to jump through some additional hoops and, quite frankly, are not very happy about the circumstances that exist. The school division is quite prepared to continue those programs as they were before. But it's the Child Care office, now, that is demanding that they become licensed.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

So I guess my question would be to the minister, because I've indicated to my community that I would raise this issue and I would work with them to try to find some common sense and some common ground. Now, some of the things that they're having to do is get another fire safety certificate on record. They're being told that the safety inspection certificate that the school has, is not good enough. They have to go through another process to get a fire safety certificate on their record.

Now, we've got one department, the Department of Education, who is saying, a safety check, fire safety, is good enough. The certificate they have is good enough for children attending school all day long, but it's not good enough for the before- and after-school program. So we've got two departments, within government, that don't have the same criteria or the same guidelines for activity that's going on inside those four walls on a daily basis. It just doesn't seem to make sense to me. They have all kinds of things that they're having to do now that they didn't have to do before.

Madam Chair, they're also being told that they now have to employ a certain number of early childhood educators in their program. Now some of the people that are running these programs are teachers with teaching degrees. They're being told now that they have to go back and take an early childhood educator program, which really doesn't deal with—I mean, these are strictly before- and after-school programs. These are school-aged kids. The early childhood educator program, in the two-year program, has about 20 hours of school-aged training. But they're being told they have to go back and learn infant care, and they're not looking after infants. They're being told they have to get training on pre-school care, when they're not looking after pre-school kids. They're looking after children before and after school, and you've got a teacher who has taught a classroom of 30 students who is now not qualified to run a child-care program. So it just seems to me that there isn't any common sense in this whole process and that somebody needs to sit down

and say, look, let's try to work to make this program continue, a program that's run successfully for 20 years. Why would we have to change the rules now?

I guess I just look at that and say, is there not a better way to spend the time in the Department of Family Services, in the Child Care office, than to go back and try to change something or fix something that isn't broken. So I just would like the minister's comments on—and you know I'm not—I'm here and I could probably go on, Madam Chair, but I guess for me my main goal is to try to ensure that the children in my community have safe before- and after-school programs.

I look at the model and I think this is a model that maybe could work in other communities. It might be able to work in some of our smaller rural communities. It could be a model that could be very successful, and I don't understand why we're having to change the rules now.

One of the points that they make too is that because it's only part-time work, it's before school for a couple of hours and then after school for a couple of hours, we're training early childhood educators. You can't tell me that an early childhood educator is being trained to work two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.

They're going to take jobs where there's full-time employment opportunity, in infant and pre-school programs. So, when we have a shortage of early childhood educators, I question why we would be demanding the same kind of rules for before- and after-school programs when there might be a very workable solution and in many instances, there are teachers that have great qualifications that may want part-time work.

It just seems to me that there needs to be a bit of common sense and boy, I'd sure be prepared to work with the minister and the department and with those too that have run successful programs to see whether this isn't a model that shouldn't be looked at. Again, they're not asking for money. They're not asking for funding. They've been able to manage, and they've been able to pay their staff adequately based on child-care guidelines.

I would just ask the minister for some comments and again my main goal in this whole process and in raising this issue, is to try to ensure, No. 1, that families in my community have the safety and security of a good program and that children in the

rest of the province might be afforded the opportunity to have the same kind of good programming in their schools, before and after schools. I would just ask the minister if he might comment on that.

Mr. Mackintosh: I really appreciate these remarks. Now, first of all though with regard to the initial issue of the fire-safety certificates, it is true that child-care centres, the child-care standards are different in many ways from the standards in educational facilities for older children. I suspect that they may be generally more onerous. Like for example, the ratios are definitely—the ratios are much smaller for child care than anything in the public school system but in terms of fire safety, it is my understanding that there may well be some different standards, more onerous standards there and that may be, you know, that would be based on best practice. It would be based on some international analysis of what the appropriate fire standard should be.

* (16:20)

So I don't want to send any signals that we want to lessen fire-safety standards for child care but the member raises a point that, you know, I'll ask the department to analyze. But where I really appreciate the member going was this need to provide greater flexibility for before and after schools. In schools, she's, I think, really on the mark when she talks about the need to attract people to the field, and it may be difficult to get ECEs doing the odd hours that before- and after-school programs provide.

I think it's really interesting that she would say, the member would say, that some teachers would not be qualified in this particular program to be in the position of early childhood educators because I find that worthy of some timely exploration, Madam Chair. My understanding from senior officials is also some question about why that would be the case when we were under the impression that there had been developing as a result of working with the faculties of Education, some incorporation there of the ability to provide early childhood education.

So I think what the member is saying deserves some urgent consideration because we are planning to move in the next five years in a very concerted way with the expansion of child-care facilities in schools, and, in particular, the member's point is actually reflected in Family Choices. Madam Chair, under the Family Choices Building Fund, which is the \$37 million of which the majority is for

school-located spaces, it says that during the next five years Manitoba will also work collaboratively with the school system to develop improvements to school-aged child care to make it more responsive to the needs of parents. What was intended there was trying to work with the school system for more flexible arrangements for before and after programs. The department had advised me that there perhaps were even some regulatory barriers—and the member may be on to some of that with her experience—that were making it difficult for before and after programs in schools.

But the member is right, too, that there may be some teachers, there may be some TAs, who would be interested in staying on for another hour or two or coming in earlier in the morning to provide before and after programs. It would be really handy for parents, so I take the member's point. I'll commit to looking into that, as well looking at how that can dovetail with what is recognized in Family Choices as a need that has to be addressed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I have another concern—oh, go ahead.

Mr. Mackintosh: But I neglected, as well, though, just to say that it was our—we'll just double-check our information, but in terms of the school provision of child care, as the member was talking about, in River East, it was my understanding which, I stand to be corrected, is that the school division wanted out of the business of funding those programs. So I'll just double-check that information, but that was my understanding. Therefore, there was then a question that was posed to the department: either we fund the spaces, or we're going to lose them out of the system. So let me double-check, but I think I had some information even in writing on that. That may be an historical point that might be moot by this time, but the member, anyway, has raised some very good contributions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, I do know that the school division did write to the Child Care office and indicate that they were prepared to continue the former arrangements before all of this—whatever—took place. I guess we don't need to blame anyone. I think what we need to do is recognize and realize that they have run good programs, that they're not pushing to become licensed. If, in fact, there are other options and opportunities to find other licensed spaces for new children in the system that can't get into these programs, I don't know why we wouldn't be focussing our energies and our efforts as a

province or as a government on trying to find new spaces now.

Mr. Mackintosh: The department advises that we are going to be able to get those numbers crunched in terms of the last five-year plan. As well, I'm just advised that, in terms of the unfunded spaces, the total numbers will also reflect commercial, for-profit spaces, that we do not fund. That would be in the unfunded spaces category as well, just so the member knows that on a preliminary basis that explains the difference between the 1,500 and the other numbers, the commercial, for-profit spaces. We don't fund those spaces under the current regime.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, so that will be in the breakdown too, which ones are for profit. Although I've never seen a for-profit child-care facility that is extremely rich, or those that are running them extremely, millionaires, in any way. Most of them are doing it for a salary because they care about children.

I just want to follow up again on the whole issue in River East because I do know that of the four elementary schools that were running before- and after-school programs, there were 294 children and well over a hundred families that were being served, and are still being served by those child-care centres. I guess for me a question would be, because they are already existing spaces in the system and because they are now being forced to become licensed, are they included in the numbers of new licensed spaces?

Mr. Mackintosh: Based on the information that I had, which I say we'll double-check, the information I had—I think this goes back, actually, a couple years—was that the school division did not wish to continue funding that program. I say the member takes issue with that, but that was the information that I had. In other words, those spaces that were not known to the system were going to become unavailable to parents in those school communities.

In other words, we would have lost them if they did not become then funded and licensed under the provincial act. So that was my understanding, based on that historical occurrence.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'm not sure I quite understood what the minister was saying. Those 294 spaces are now being including as new spaces?

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Chair, I also understand there may have been issues of a liability insurance, and I think it's important to correct the record with

either the member's understanding or the minister's understanding of what happened. If, in fact, the province got involved in licensing and funding those spaces, we'll look to see how that is reflected in any tallies. If it, in fact, was the school division saying we are not going to continue this program, then those spaces would have shut down. We would have lost that to parents. If the department stepped in, then those spaces would be now licensed with the standards in place and presumably funded.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But then that leads me to a question of are there other circumstances in the province where the same thing has occurred, where spaces presently or did exist and that the government has come in and indicated that those spaces have to become licensed. So they're really not new child-care spaces. They're spaces that existed or presently exist, but they're being counted again as new spaces when they become licensed. You know, if that's the case, then we've got a little bit of a shell game. How are we to believe anything that the minister says when they're double-counting spaces that existed before? So, really, there are no new child-care spaces. They are just spaces that now have become licensed and included in the numbers that the minister's provided.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first of all, it's my understanding from the department that any situation as the member describes is certainly not a common situation. But, I mean, the numbers are crunched in all, you know, different ways. Madam Chair, you can look at the number of newly funded spaces, which is what the MCCA and the Child Care Coalition, the government, all of us have agreed that that is the necessary focus. Those are all net new funded spaces from the provincial government.

In terms of the number of licensed spaces, there are national figures available, and I saw them just recently that came out of Toronto that show the increase. But, either way, you see very significant increases in Manitoba and on a go-forward basis as well with 6,500 new net funded spaces, about 5,000 of which will be newly created spaces. Any way you look at it, we're looking at very significant enhancements to the availability of child care for families.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, I'm not sure whether we're talking apples and apples with the minister. Yes, there have been more funded spaces. I'm wondering if the minister might be able to indicate out of the new ECE positions—there have been several new

ECEs graduating—I just don't have it at my fingertips here—but some 300-and-some, if I recollect. Maybe the minister can indicate to me how many—okay, here it is—in the last five-year action plan, there were 450 more ECEs trained and 350 of those graduated. Can he indicate how many of those actually entered the child-care system?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that's a good question because we know that we just aren't getting the number of ECEs that we need. So I suspect that the inquiries might indeed indicate that we're not getting them all that are graduating, and we have to do a better job of that one. But we'll make inquiries to determine, first of all, how we can gather that information. The department may have a good grasp on those kinds of numbers. If not, we can perhaps contact the Red River College, for example, or maybe we could do some sampling like that because they may well know of the placements.

But I think the issue is this: It's not even where they go on graduation, but we also know that there's been a retention problem. Many of them go on to become EAs, for example, in the school system. It's very attractive and that's why a significant part of the investment under Family Choices is going to wage enhancements and the pension plan.

I think the member will recognize—I think the issue of pension plan, by the way—I'm just so pleased that, you know, as a result of all of the work that was done to create Family Choices and the number crunching and all the approvals necessary that the pension plan remained as part of the 20 percent overall increase over the five years, because I saw it, I think the member would agree, as a gender issue as well, not just a retention issue. But, while we have got to do a better job on the recruitment and increasing the number of spaces and making the field more attractive by wages, we know that the later in life you get—not that any of us around here is—it is really—it then becomes quite an important consideration, whether you have a pension plan or not. When I began employment, it wasn't something I thought about and even really understood the significance of.

So, absolutely. This is a very serious issue. I think I can fairly say at this table, because I have at others, that Family Choices is in no small way built on the investments in recruitment and retention.

So we'll find those numbers. I think it can be instructive, but I think that we already know, though, that the numbers aren't appropriate to maintaining a

strong workforce right now. That's where significant changes and improvements have to be made over the next five years. The first five-year plan moved it along. Madam Chair, there were some significant salary enhancements, but the next five years are going to take it to a whole new level.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister indicate how many facilities have exemptions as a result of staffing ratios not being met?

* (16:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: The number of child-care centres operating with the provisional licence due to the absence of a viable and approved training plan decreased from 151 in April '07 to 74 in March '08. Now, since April '07, the number of centres with an approved staff training plan has increased from 74 in April '07 to 121 this March, though those centres have a regular licence with an exemption to the required staff qualifications because they have a viable training plan.

Since April '07, the number of child-care centres with provisional licences or a staffing exemption has gone from 225 down to 197. So there's a 5.5 percent decrease. We're seeing some steady progress here, but it's not good enough. Madam Chair, we do, by the way, in Manitoba have, I understand, the highest qualification standards in the country. That's part of it and we don't want to relax that. We want to, instead, redouble our efforts for recruitment and retention.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, if I understand the minister correctly, there are about 28 facilities that now are staffed up to the full complement that weren't last year, or is it—do they just have a plan in place to staff up? I had a little difficulty understanding or, I guess, maybe I was listening to the first part of the answer.

The provisional licence, those with provisional licences because of staffing went from 151 to 74 because they had a training plan in place? They weren't up to full complement, but they had a plan. What does that mean?

Mr. Mackintosh: Those are centres where there have been assurances of a staff-training plan with time lines and where the department has been given the commitment that they will meet their targeted level of training by a certain time.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Then the other number of 225 down to 197, those would be ones that have staffed

up to their full complement so that we have less facilities now that are in need of trained staff. Would that be correct?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's provisional licences or the staffing exemption, yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just under the new announcement that was made for the next five years, the next five-year plan, how much money is in the budget this year?

Mr. Mackintosh: New spending in Family Services and Housing is \$5 million. That's in this department. In addition, there is some funding in advanced training and education to equalize tuition fees for Red River College at, you know, for ECE training at Steinbach and Portage, as I recall.

As well, in this budget, there's \$2.5 million in the Department of Education for capital for child-care spaces in schools. Madam Chair, that adds up to 7 point-some million.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the minister give me a breakdown of the \$5 million? How much is for each category? I know that, you know, there's money to enhance salaries and there's the pension benefit, which are all positive—

An Honourable Member: Not this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Oh, there's nothing this year. Well, what is the \$5 million for, then, in this year's budget?

Mr. Mackintosh: There's a 3 percent salary increase this year effective July 1, and then there are 1,500 spaces, the 100-more children for nursery-enhanced funding for nursery and, in December, we will be starting a wage-adjustment initiative targeting the lowest-paid workers in the system. There's a great discrepancy, I understand, in the wages that are paid to workers, and we want to move to a minimum wage base over the five years. We're going to start this year. The target is to begin that in December. In the meantime, between now and December, we will be determining where those workers are and earmarking then increased funding to address those lowest-paid workers. There will be some lessons that we can learn from other sectors within the department where we've had that kind of special wage adjustment to bring people closer together. That will commence this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, could the minister give me a breakdown, then, of how much of that

\$5 million in his budget is for funding of the 1,500 more child-care spaces?

Mr. Mackintosh: The amount attributed to the spaces is approximately \$3 million.

Mrs. Mitchelson: How many spaces, then, will that leave unfunded?

Mr. Mackintosh: The department was targeting about 600 newly created spaces and about 900 of the existing spaces that are unfunded, with the view to getting about half of those unfunded spaces cleaned up so that, on a go-forward basis, we can focus more on the creation of new spaces, resting on a better planning capacity and focussing on the location of spaces in schools. That was the plan for the immediate year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the 600 new spaces that are created will be funded?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It's my understanding that several spaces have been on the wait list for funding that have been licensed for a while. What would be sort of the minimum and the maximum wait list time?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, recognizing that we can't fund all of the unfunded at once, the department will make an effort, as it has in the past, to look at where the waits have been the longest, also factoring in some regional balance.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What is the longest wait for funding, once you're licensed? We must have some that have been waiting for a while. What would be the longest wait?

Mr. Mackintosh: We'll have to check on that. We don't have that figure at hand today. So we can get back to the member.

* (16:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: What would be in the budget of the \$5 million for funding of a hundred more children in nursery schools?

Mr. Mackintosh: We believe, that document we can get very quickly, or that information we can get quickly, in terms of the breakdown of the other components.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What is in the budget allocation for the 3 percent overall increase for wages, effective July 1, plus the low-wage adjustment?

Mr. Mackintosh: We will get that number crunched for the member in short order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister undertake to have that by tomorrow morning?

Mr. Mackintosh: We will make best efforts.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I heard the minister say that the equalization of the tuition between rural and urban college sites is going to be funded out of the Department of Education.

Mr. Mackintosh: I shouldn't go by memory here, but I think there was about 125,000, something in that range; 120,000, I think, that was a number there. It was in respect of Red River College programs, and I think it was at two places, Steinbach and Portage la Prairie. There had been some ongoing concerns about a differential fee there because I think there had been some increased costs in delivering the program outside of Winnipeg, but that allocation is from the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

Mr. Briese: Just on that same point, I know we're talking about early childhood educators here, but there were a number of other, I guess they're called off-campus training programs, out there that were faced with the same problem. I just wondered if the Province is dealing with them all, where the tuitions were double in rural areas. I think LPNs was one area where that might have been happening.

I know it's not your department, but I heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) on the radio one morning, and he was quite surprised to find out that was happening. So I was just wondering if the—

Madam Chairperson: Honourable Member for Ste. Rose, I'm sorry to interrupt. I just have to make sure that the topic you're talking about is relevant to Family Services and Housing. I'm not sure if you're going to tie that back in.

Mr. Briese: I'll tie it back in. I just want to make sure that those tuitions on ECEs, that is going to change immediately and in all the places where those courses are offered.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know the amount was for the current fiscal year. I can determine when the tuition adjustment would take place in terms of what time of year.

That was part of a broader commitment from Advanced Education to equalize some tuition. I think there were some other programs that were affected

by that announcement, in addition to the child-care training.

Madam Chair, I had heard about this first in terms of a program that was offered in the Portage la Prairie area. Based on some concerns expressed from that area, I know that the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) then looked at options on how we could fund some equalization support, which was necessary to offset the increased costs.

I wasn't aware of this differential fee existing in other communities, but I do recall a document that said that Steinbach was another location. I'm not aware of any other locations.

Now I can't recall the other programs where there was equalization being funded. I think the initiative was roughly 300,000, overall, or maybe a bit less, but I think the biggest chunk of that was for child-care training at those two centres.

Mrs. Mitchelson: For the \$5 million that's in the budget, is there any portion of that for administrative costs within the department, or is that all for child-care workers and spaces, and nursery schools?

Mr. Mackintosh: There are other expenditures in addition to that \$5 million that would go to some costs for staffing, like, for example, to support, you know, helping with the implementation of the child-care safety charter, Madam Chair, and to begin the development of a planning capacity in the department. So we can break those down for the member, along with the other breakdown.

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Acting Chair, I do know, just from past experience, when a budget is developed and the minister and his department get approval from Treasury Board for new initiatives, that there is a breakdown, and that that is presented and that is what is approved, which ultimately becomes a part of the new budget.

So I'm just looking at all of the different components for this year. I would imagine that the first year—I know the minister has indicated there is about \$3 million that goes to funding 1,500 more child-care spaces. I'm wondering if when he is getting detailed information on the funding for more children in nursery schools, for the overall wage increase, it sounds to me like in this year's budget there's no pension, maybe the minister could indicate to me in what year of the five-year plan that might be implemented?

Mr. Mackintosh: Looking at the budget for the five-year plan, there were notional allocations, I think it came out to about an additional \$92 million expected over the five years. The pension plan, there were notional allocations there, but we really, I think, within the 20 percent overall funding increase, it was just assigned as part of that 20 percent. But, for the purposes of calculating that \$92 million, the plan was to have a pension plan starting in year three.

We advised our stakeholders of that. In the meantime, we can now get to work to devise what the pension plan should look like. Whether, for example, should it be the United Way plan that's available for other sectors in the department? Should each centre have its own plan?

Madam Acting Chair, I hope we can do something that's comprehensive, though, where there is symmetry across the different centres. That was the plan as we announced. I met with the regulatory review committee and the Child Care Coalition, the MCCA was represented, and that was the target.

We can have discussions. There is going to be a lot of work necessary in order to implement this plan in consultation with the sector. We can have discussions about that. But the notional allocation was for year three. Hopefully, we'll be ready to start it right at the beginning of that fiscal year.

As the MCCA rightly told its members, there's a lot of work to do. We've only got just over a year to pull this together. I hope that we're able to come to some early consensus on what this pension plan will look like. We know, just from the pension plan here, of the challenges in implementing something like that, all issues of portability and issues of buybacks, and so on. So we have to get to work immediately now with the sector to put this together.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for that answer, and I know that there certainly will be issues to work out.

I'm wondering, then, because I know it's getting close to 5 o'clock, whether I could just put on the record now for staff, the minister indicated there would be \$3 million for funding of the 1,500 child-care spaces. Could I get a breakdown of that \$3 million and how that \$3 million funds the 1,500 spaces, and a breakdown, again, for the funding of the hundred more children in nursery schools, what the dollar allocation is, and how it might work. I did want the breakdown, then, for the 3 percent overall increase starting on July 1, then administrative costs

that would be included in the \$5 million, and how much it will cost to implement the safety charter.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Erna Braun): The time being 5 p.m., committee rise.

CULTURE, HERITAGE, TOURISM AND SPORT

* (15:30)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Mohinder Saran): 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 Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Yes, Mr. Acting Chair, a brief one.

It's my pleasure to introduce the 2008-2009 Estimates for Manitoba Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport. I'll keep my opening remarks brief.

To begin with, I'd like to invite all members in this Assembly in acknowledging some of the recent achievements of our fellow Manitobans.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Chairperson, in the Chair

Allow me to highlight a few: last October's celebration of the 20th anniversary of Manitoba Film and Sound, On Screen Manitoba, formerly known as MMPIA, M-M-P-I-A, and MARIA; the 2008 Junos for the talented roots quartet Nathan, and for our Brandon native, James Ehnes, a classical composer and musician; the success of *The Encyclopedia of Manitoba*, which quickly sold out in its first edition of 5,000 copies and is now into its second printing; 27 national and international awards for Manitoba recording artists; the national Cree gathering hosted by the Misipawistik Cree Nation last summer; the March 2008 reopening of the rejuvenated Science Gallery at the Manitoba Museum; the town of Morden's designation as Culture Capital of Canada, the first Manitoba community to be so honoured; hosting the 2008 Tim Hortons Brier; 2007 Native Canadian Fastball Championships; the first Canadian Stick Curling Championships and many other regional and national championships; the heritage community celebration of the designation of the Hudson's Bay Company records in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is something that we're very proud of; and of course, the successes of

the Jennifer Jones and Kaitlyn Lawes rinks at the world champion curling events.

The department's Estimates include increases of over \$400,000 to continue implementation of recommendations of the Public Libraries Review and to respond to recommendations that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities put forth to our government. Mr. Chair, I should thank Mr. Ron Bell, who has been a tireless advocate on behalf of the municipalities of the province of Manitoba, and, prior to him, of course, the now-Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese), who was previously the president of the AMM.

We will be doubling the grant available for library establishment of \$10,000 to encourage greater municipal participation. We have included \$230,000 in new funding to support the establishment of additional libraries in First Nations communities and the R.M. of Springfield, and over a hundred thousand dollars for the Winnipeg Public Libraries to upgrade and update collections and technology.

Partnership between the Province and the Winnipeg Public Library has already resulted in the launch of the popular, new eLibraries Manitoba Web site offering 24/7 access to downloadable e-books and audio.

In partnership with the Building Manitoba Fund, we're continuing to assist rural and northern facilities with new technologies, enhanced services, and improved public access. Funds of \$300,000 for these purposes are budgeted in the current fiscal year.

Again, Mr. Chair, as part of our government's commitment to increased funding available for northern and recreation sport infrastructure, these Estimates enable a 50 percent increase to grants in the Community Places program budget. An announcement of the grants awarded under the 2008-2009 program will be made very shortly.

Budget 2008 also includes new funding for cultural industries in keeping with our campaign commitments. These include increased funding to Manitoba Film and Sound, the National Screen Institute and MARIA totalling \$550,000.

The Province has once again enhanced the Film and Video Production Tax Credit, and I'm very pleased, for the fifth consecutive year, the film industry has exceeded \$10 million in production volumes here in the province of Manitoba. We anticipate more work because we've, I believe, developed a climate of Manitoba and Winnipeg

being a good place to do business for these offshore movie companies.

So, with those brief remarks, Mr. Chairperson, I look forward to a dialogue with the critic of the official opposition.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those opening comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Minnedosa, have any opening comments?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): My comments are very brief. I want to thank the minister for sharing the update on the initiatives that have been taking place in his department over the past year. I also look forward to the dialogue that we'll have over the next few hours, and I welcome the departmental staff that'll be able to share their expertise with the minister so that we can have a strong dialogue on question and answers during this process.

I also want to acknowledge the two curling teams from my communities, Doug Armour, who's senior champion, and Jean Garbolinski, the senior women's champions, both of them from my communities. One is from Souris and the other one from Minnedosa, so hit north and south in my constituency, but, Mr. Chair, I'm very proud of the accomplishments they have achieved this year. I want to thank the minister for hosting a recognition reception earlier today. It gave me an opportunity to visit with my constituents and be very proud of the work that they've done in representing Manitoba in their curling areas.

On that, I'm just going to close and just look forward to a global discussion on the Estimates of culture and heritage. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the official critic for those opening comments as well. 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 14.1(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 14.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we would ask the minister to introduce them to us when they've arrived.

Mr. Robinson: I'm joined by the deputy minister of our department, Sandra Hardy, and the director of the Finance division, Mr. Dave Paton.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good.

Now, does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates in a chronological order or to have a global discussion?

Mrs. Rowat: Global, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Robinson: Sure.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. It is, therefore, agreed the questions before this department will follow in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once the questioning has been completed. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairperson, I'll start with just some general housekeeping or general Estimates questions regarding staffing. If the minister can indicate to me or provide for me a list of all the political staff including the name, position and the status of whether they're full-time or part-time for my consideration.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the special assistant is Matt Williamson, full-time; the executive assistant to the office of the minister is Kevin Hart. Mr. Williamson, as the special assistant, commenced employment, I believe, in July 2007 and Mr. Hart commenced employment in November 2008. *[interjection]* I'm sorry, I'm ahead of myself. Actually, Mr. Williamson commenced employment as the special assistant on November 13, 2007; Mr. Hart, on November 13 as well, 2007, as executive assistant.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me, or share with me a list of all the staff in the minister's office and also in the deputy minister's office?

Mr. Robinson: The secretary to the minister is Barb Robson. She commenced her employment on September 26, 2002. The administrative secretary, who is very helpful in our department as well, as all of them are, because of her bilingual abilities, commenced employment on August 13, '07. The administrative secretary is Rema Chandran, who commenced employment on March 24, 2001.

In the deputy minister's office, we have, of course, Sandra Hardy, who commenced her tenure as the deputy minister on October 1, 2002. The administrative assistant to the deputy minister is Beverly Beck, who commenced employment on April 18, 1997, and Laura Shwetz, who commenced employment on October 28, 1999. She's the assistant to the deputy minister. The bilingual administrative secretary is Brigitte Lavitt. The spelling of that name is L-a-v-i-t-t. She commenced employment on August 27, 2007.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister please provide for me a description of any positions within his department that have been reclassified?

Mr. Robinson: I don't have that information readily available, but I don't recall having any staff that have been reclassified in recent times. From last year's Estimates process, I believe that I provided the information to the critic on some of those areas. I've asked the staff that are at the table with me to check into that. If, indeed, there have been some reclassifications, I will provide to the member by writing some of these in case I may have omitted something or I'm saying something incorrectly.

* (15:40)

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister provide for me a list of all vacant positions that are currently available or open within his department?

Mr. Robinson: In the Administration and Finance division we have two positions, I believe, that have been vacant, an accounts administrator and a manager of information services. I'll break these down by division, if that is what the member so desires.

Mr. Chairperson, in the Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs division, we have a position for director that's been vacant; library technician; administrative officer. Now, I should point out that the library technician is a part-time position; also, another position in the LY1 category for a library technician. In the Historic Resources branch we have a vacancy for a heritage resources data manager, an archeological services officer, a community heritages consultant.

Mr. Chairperson, in the Recreation and Regional Services division, there is a need for a recreation consultant, a regional consultant for Westman and an administrative officer as well, an AO1 position.

In the Provincial Services division, we have a vacancy ahead for the collection development section. The Archives of Manitoba, the archivist of Manitoba, there's an open position there, a vacant one; a heritage resource officer 3; a heritage resources officer 2; an administrative assistant.

In the Communication Services Manitoba, Mr. Chairperson, there's a requirement to fill a vacancy for a communications co-ordinator and the Sport Secretariat, a senior administrative assistant.

Totally the vacancies in the department are 17.20. The vacancy rate is 6.15 percent.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister provide for me the names of staff that have been hired in the '07-08 year, including whether they were hired through competition or hired through appointment?

Mr. Robinson: I'll go through the list of names and also the areas where they work in.

For the bilingual administrative secretary in the minister's office, Claudette Lambert-Johnson was hired through a competition on August 13, '07.

In the deputy minister's office, Brigette Lavitt was hired on August 27, '07, by way of competition in a position of AY3.

In the Administration and Finance division, we have an administrative secretary. Lisa Armstrong-Rieu was hired on May 22, '07, by way of competition.

In the Administration and Finance division, we have an administrative secretary, Kristi Doerksen, who was appointed on April 11, '07.

In Administrative and Finance, a financial officer, Betty Jubinville. She was appointed on May 14, '07.

The Public Library Services area, a library consultant, Crystal McGregor. She was hired on June 4, '07, by way of competition.

Recreation and Regional Services, a bilingual administrative secretary, part time: Sarah Bekeris was hired on April 23, '07, by way of competition.

Recreation and Regional Services, for the regional manager in the Westman division, Kris Doull. The name is spelled K-r-i-s D-o-u-l-l. She was hired on September 1, '07, by way of competition.

We have some archivists that were hired: James Gordon was hired by way of competition on September 4, '07; Rachel Mills on October 1, '07, by competition; Ian Keenan in a temporary capacity on September 4, '07; Michelle Rydz, a temporary position on August 28, 2007; Erica is a Manitoban, manager, Government Records Centre, Jolyne Jolicoeur by way of competition. Mr. Chair, she was hired on September 1, '07; Communications Services Manitoba, Michelle Wallace hired on April 23, '07, competition; the Archives of Manitoba Senior Policy Analyst, Kim Riddell, appointed on November 24, '07; the Archives of Manitoba Senior Policy Analyst, Karen Meelker, she was appointed November 24, '07; Legislative Library Stuart Hay, by competition

hired on November 13, '07; Historic Resources Mark Stroski, hired on January 5, '08, by way of competition; Translation Services, Teresa Collins, October 15, '07, by way of competition; the Legislative Library Acquisitions and Serials Library Technician, Lisa Girouard, November 7, '07, and that was by way of competition; Legislative Library, the Head for Reference Services, Louise Ayotte-Zaretski, hired on November 26, '07, by way of competition; Communication Services Manitoba, administrative assistant to the assistant deputy minister, Jill Bemi, by way of competition, hired on January 21, '08; Recreation and Regional Services, administrative officer, Charlene Brown, hired on April 21, '08, competition; Translation Services, Guylaine Arbez, January 5, '08 was the date of her hiring by way of competition; Communication Services Manitoba, accounting clerk, Raquel Diez, hired on March 25, '08, by way of competition; Finance and Administration, a clerk, Marie Jane Manigogue, hired on the 28th of March, '08, and that was hiring done by competition.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me if there was any travel by the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, and, if so, the pertinent details of the travel, the location, purpose, dates, costs and who all went?

* (15:50)

Mr. Robinson: In about the third week of March of 2008, just recently, the Premier, at the expense of our department, travelled to Vancouver to finalize the memorandum of understanding with the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee. I can't provide full details to the member because we haven't received the full update of the records relating to that trip, but the cost of that trip, certainly the Premier's travel, was at the department's expense. Mr. Chair, once the information becomes available to us, we'd certainly be happy to provide it, but no staff from the department were a part of that trip.

Mrs. Rowat: Were any staff from other departments travelling with the Premier on that trip?

Mr. Robinson: To my knowledge, Mr. Chair, the persons that accompanied the Premier were his own staff, political staff, as I understand it. That was, as I said earlier, to finalize the memorandum of understanding with the VANOC folks to ensure Manitoba's participation at the 2010 Olympics.

Mrs. Rowat: Was there anybody in the delegation with the Premier that are not employed by the provincial government, but whose costs were covered by the government?

Mr. Robinson: Not to my knowledge. As I said, once we are fully in receipt of all the details of the trip, I'll certainly pass them on to the member gladly.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me what type of meetings—other than the signing of the memorandum of understanding, were there any other meetings that the Premier would have attended that he would be willing to share?

Mr. Robinson: No, not to my knowledge. If the member so wishes, I'll ask the Premier what he did in addition to the meeting that he attended on our behalf.

Mrs. Rowat: I thank the minister for offering that and maybe in passing he might want to just ask.

The next question would be regarding ministerial travel. Have you made any trips out of the province in the past year, and if so, can you provide pertinent details of these trips such as the purpose, dates, who went, who paid and what were the costs.

Mr. Robinson: We talked about FIPPA earlier on today in question period. I know the colleague from Morris will certainly want to probably ask questions in this segment of Estimates with respect to that.

But there are three major changes I wanted to talk about with respect to FIPPA. That's, one, the creation of a privacy commissioner—we call it an adjudicator, a new independent office of the Legislature; changing the period that Cabinet documents remain sealed from 30 years to 20 years; and legislation that requires ministerial expenses be tabled on-line annually.

The following material that I'm going to be reading off to the critic, Mr. Chair, will be certainly available on-line in due course. I met with the minister, Olga Ilich, from British Columbia, to talk about a couple of areas that we had some shared—this was on April 2, 2007; she, at the time, was the Minister responsible for Culture and Tourism, much similar to the ministry that I have here—in Vancouver.

In June of 2007, I met with the Ontario Minister of Sport to do some ongoing work with respect to some of the national sporting issues that are of great concern to not only our government but, indeed, other governments across Canada. Another one, that

I know that the member will raise, probably, in this segment of Estimates, is the violence in hockey. Certainly, the minister from Québec has raised that to be an issue, and that will be a topic of an upcoming federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting responsible for sport, in Victoria, B.C., in the next couple of weeks.

I attended the Western Canada Summer Games to support our athletes from the province of Manitoba. We had a meeting regarding the World Indigenous Games in August. I believe that was about the same time as the Western Canada Summer Games. I attended the Canadian Country Music Awards in Regina, and then I attended the Western Canadian Music Awards that were held in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. I also attended, on behalf of the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), in November, a Northern Development Ministers Forum. I attended that on behalf of the minister. I met with the Tourism Council of Minnesota in December '07, and meetings with the Minnesota legislators on energy in March of this year, '08. Those are pretty much the areas I went.

The other travel that I've done in recent times would not be applicable, because they'll be in next year's Estimates.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister give me a little more detail on his trips to Michigan, March '08? Could you give me some details on that? Who did you attend with and who did you meet with—in Minnesota, sorry.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, in that trip we went to meet with some senators and people that have similar jobs as we do, as being representatives of the good people of Minnesota, some House representatives, some senators. We also attended a dinner with the Minnesota State Chamber of Commerce. I also had the opportunity of meeting with tribal representatives from the Prairie Island Tribal Council. I believe that was the extent of the meetings that were conducted.

I certainly spoke on behalf of our government's position, along with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), to the Senate committee that was considering a repealer bill, a repealer piece of legislation to a bill that was passed last April, which required Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to report on actions with respect to the Northern Flood Agreement in northern Manitoba as part of their requirement of purchasing the power that they do currently from the public utility.

* (16:00)

Mrs. Rowat: Just for clarification, you indicated you were speaking in support or against the bill that the Senate was putting before.

Mr. Robinson: What happened last year about April, while we were busy trying to get re-elected in our respective seats, you in the beautiful country and constituency of Minnedosa, and myself in the rough and beautiful, wonderful territory they call Rupertsland, Mr. Chair, which encompasses the beautiful, ancient boreal forest of the east side of our province, what they did in the Minnesota state Legislature was they passed a piece of legislation which requires Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to report to the Minnesota state legislators reports on progress being made on the Northern Flood Agreement.

We felt, as a government, that this was unfair. I don't believe that we as a government in Manitoba would require our neighbours, whether they be in Saskatchewan or Ontario or Minnesota or North Dakota, to provide us with reports and provide financial details of certain things when we do business with them, and I just found that to be not a very good practice. The Minnesota House representatives and the people that serve on both committees as House representatives or as senators saw it our way and, therefore, after our visit, introduced a repealer bill in the state Legislature and in the Senate. Those two pieces of legislation are currently being considered, both by—I believe they're in the Senate Finance Committee at this time; and, beyond that I believe, if I understand their procedure properly, it'll move to the Minnesota Senate floor for an open vote by the senators in that assembly.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, can the minister indicate to me who accompanied him on this trip in March to Minnesota?

Mr. Robinson: I was accompanied on this trip by Matt Williamson, who is my special assistant, and also by Anna Rothney, who's an employee with the Cabinet Economic Development Committee. That was the first trip.

On the second trip, I was accompanied by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister had indicated that they had met with members of the Senate committee. Did they also meet with any outside agencies or

organizations while they were visiting down in Minnesota?

Mr. Robinson: Only the tribal leaders from the Prairie Island Tribal Council. However, the context of that conversation was simply in the area of possible two-way business, in the area of, perhaps, tourism, cultural exchanges.

As the member knows, Mr. Chair, we have had tremendous success with the Manitowabi Festival, something that we're very proud of that's going into its third year here in the city of Winnipeg. It was born out of a dream of Aboriginal people and we're making it a reality. So the discussion was centred around that as well as the advances that they have made in the area of gaming. As well, we are going to be, at some point, with not only the Prairie Island Tribal Council but, indeed, the Shakopee Tribal Council, a further meeting to discuss the possibilities of doing business on exchanging ideas on wind energy and other such possibilities that both sides could possibly benefit from.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister had indicated earlier that he was concerned that the Senate committees were asking for information, were asking for a report on the Northern Flood Agreement status on—I can't remember exactly what he said, but regarding financial obligations and responsibilities.

Can he elaborate on what the issue was with regard to the Northern Flood Agreement and the challenges that the Minnesota Senate were putting forward?

Mr. Robinson: The reason why any government—and it doesn't matter what our party stripes may be in this province, I don't think that we would be in favour of allowing another government to require us to provide details before we do business.

Now, Minnesota is a customer of ours in terms of the purchase of energy, Manitoba Hydro in this case, and an effective lobby occurred about this time last year, actually in April, in Minnesota which was led by an environmental group—and the name escapes me at the moment—who without having anybody from Manitoba do a rebuttal on some of the propaganda that they were issuing in the state of Minnesota were saying things that were not true.

Now, we contribute a fair amount—and that was led by Cross Lake, which is my home community. The community enlisted the help, unbeknownst to the larger band membership of Cross Lake, of these people to carry out a lobbying effort. As a result,

they were able to convince some of the legislators, senators and House representatives to bring through this bill on the eleventh hour prior to the closure or prior to the rising of their House as we do here in Manitoba. So it kind of was one of those bills or pieces of legislation that kind of went under the radar, and we did not know anything about it because we were in the middle of an election here in the province of Manitoba.

So we didn't become aware of this until after the election, and then the Premier (Mr. Doer) expressed his displeasure by way of letter to the governor of the good state of Minnesota and as well the work we did in trying to secure the opposite side of the story, that, in fact, the Manitoba government has gone above and beyond the recognition of not only the Northern Flood Agreement being a modern-day treaty, something I had the pleasure of doing in I believe it was in the year 2000 when I was then the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, when I stood in the Legislature to talk and proclaim the Northern Flood Agreement as per one of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry to be a modern-day treaty. In fact, that was done on December 15, I believe, of 2000, if my memory serves me correctly. So I had the pleasure of doing that.

Further, I also want to say to the member that we had, for the first time, an opportunity to meet with the senators and House representatives of the governing structure of Minnesota and the first time they've had the opportunity to hear an opposing view as opposed to the erratic presentations that were given to them by these environmentalists that were there.

* (16:10)

So we obviously wanted to maintain good relations with the State of Minnesota. I don't think that we, whether we're an NDP government or a Conservative government in the province of Manitoba, would ever require another government to provide us such details about our domestic affairs as they did, and I think that the senators recognized that shortcoming and are currently now trying to repeal that legislation and, to the best of my knowledge, that's at some stage of the way they do business in Minnesota currently.

Mrs. Rowat: Would you be able to share with me whether you had the opportunity to meet with any energy companies while you were down in Minnesota.

Mr. Robinson: No, Mr. Chair. Even though I may have shaken hands at the Chamber of Commerce dinner of the state of Minnesota with a representative from Xcel Energy, but that was all there was, was a handshake, but I never had a meeting nor did I have any lengthier discussion than just a pleasant hello and greetings from Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: At the chamber reception that you're indicating, who was the guest speaker or who was the speaker at this chamber dinner?

Mr. Robinson: The guest speaker was the Governor of the State of Minnesota, the Governor, the Honourable Tim Pawlenty, and as well, some House representatives and some senators who spoke in a panel style to talk about some of the key issues that they're faced with in the state of Minnesota and if anything, I found the evening quite amusing.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for sharing the background on that trip.

As the minister had indicated earlier, that we would likely be asking some questions on FIPPA, he is correct.

We understand, Mr. Chairperson, that there is a bill before the Legislature with some changes. We obviously have some concerns with regard to the privacy commissioner not being a full-fledged privacy commissioner being part of that model. So I'm wanting to just put some questions forward, as well as the Member for Morris.

But, to start things off, I know that last year when we asked or were waiting for the annual report to be tabled, it took a while to be presented.

Can the minister indicate to me when he expects the next annual report to be tabled so that we have a sense of when that we will have a chance to review that document?

Mr. Robinson: Yes. I understand that the report is at the printers right now and we hope to distribute it before the House rises on June 12. If not, then we'll distribute intersessionally, as the term is used, I believe.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I did want to ask some questions just in regard to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I noticed on page 5 of the supplementary information, department Estimates—and I was at one point the critic for this department. I don't recall seeing this committee at that time, so that's why I'm

interested. There is a Privacy Assessment Review Committee. I wonder if the minister can tell me when that was formed and who is on it.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I'm advised that the Privacy Assessment Review Committee has met periodically on occasion, when warranted, on serious issues that have arisen. It's a committee that's rarely used. It's my understanding that, when we have the necessary bill passed in the Legislature, it's more than likely that this committee will be done away with because there's just no call for it.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, the question was: When was this review committee formed? Who was on it, and who is presently on it because it sounds to me like the minister's saying, well, we have a committee in name, but there wasn't really anybody on it, and we really didn't meet? Is that really the case?

Mr. Robinson: The Privacy Assessment Review Committee was a committee of senior civil servants, continues to be, actually, who, upon request, would provide advice to ministers and to other heads of public bodies regarding proposed disclosures of personal information on a bulk basis or for data-base linkage or matching, the PARC as it is known through that acronym. The process itself was a transitional provision and unique in Canada. The experience has shown it was cumbersome and rarely used.

The amendments for integrated service delivery program and evaluation will give government departments and agencies direct responsibility for assessing the appropriateness of using or disclosing personal information or database linking or matching. Departments and agencies will also be able to decide whether to make bulk disclosures. Over the last decade, departments have gained considerable experience with privacy protection and have developed policies on bulk disclosure of personal information in their public registries.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister please identify who the senior civil servants were and how often they would have met on this committee?

Mr. Robinson: I'm advised that the chairperson was the provincial archivist. It also included some other senior staff, and they met about a half a dozen times in the last decade. However, I'll provide more information to the member by way of writing if that would be acceptable to her, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Rowat: So what the minister is saying that this committee has met six times in the last 10 years, is that what I heard him say?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Taillieu: It seems to me that the government certainly doesn't take the issue of privacy and information too seriously if they only met six times in the last 10 years. But, certainly, if the minister can provide for me the names of the people that were on the privacy review committee. I know that if that is being discontinued, I guess I could use that word "discontinued" very loosely, because it never was continued. Just what the minister did say, when he was reading out the mandate of that committee, he did talk about data linking and matching. Can he tell me exactly what that means?

Mr. Robinson: It was used for such things including—what I was talking about was, for example, the creation of data bases in the areas of program development, as one example. An example I could give is the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet which would draw linkages to such departments as Family Services and Health and health itself, by taking into consideration some of the considerations for privacy. That was the meaning of the material that I recited to the Member for Morris.

Mrs. Taillieu: I'm wondering if the department has a privacy assessment done and has a privacy assessment officer.

Mr. Robinson: Within our department, we have an Information and Privacy Policy Secretariat, which monitors, not so much the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, but, indeed, there aren't as many sensitivities in the department of CHTS.

However, there are other departments that have certain sensitivities; however, the co-ordination, if you will, occurs within the department that we have responsibility over. Therefore, that is why we have that on the organizational chart as the member is reading.

Mrs. Taillieu: I do see that on page 46 of the Estimates book, Information and Privacy Policy Secretariat. When was this secretariat formed and how is it different from the Privacy Assessment Review Committee?

Mr. Robinson: This group, their function is to start developing their own systems of achieving the objective as outlined but, at the same time, providing

information. This is sort of the replacement for the part that I just described, that the member and I just spoke about. This is the first time that this has appeared in the Estimates documents, and this will give support to the legislation that is currently before our consideration and has been introduced for first reading.

Mrs. Taillieu: How many people are employed in the Information and Privacy Policy Secretariat?

Mr. Robinson: We have four people employed in that division.

Mrs. Taillieu: I know that, currently, there is a Manitoba Assessment Privacy Conference. It's actually going on today, yesterday and today here in Winnipeg. I noticed that in the book here it does say that one of the expected results of this Privacy Policy Secretariat would be delivery of a corporate learning opportunity for departments, government agencies and local public bodies through the second Manitoba Access and Privacy Conference in May of 2008.

How much do the government—and I'm not talking about money right at this point; I'm asking who and what agenda the government proposed for this conference.

Mr. Robinson: We have this conference that's occurring in Winnipeg, as the member rightly pointed out. We have experts on access to privacy laws that are part of this conference workshop, including Mark Vale from Ontario, who's the privacy commissioner in that province. Apparently, he was the keynote speaker, which, unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to attend. We also have our Ombudsman from our own province that's been an active participant for the conference. We are told that there are 250 registered delegates. Our staff from our department are the ones that are responsible for its co-ordination, as well as ensuring that the conference is run in an organized fashion. There are three plenary sessions, I believe, in addition to the 15 workshops that are occurring so our staff from our department, and our government is very active for the duration of this conference that's being held in Winnipeg.

Mrs. Taillieu: It's interesting that we here in Manitoba do not really have a privacy commissioner in the true sense of what privacy commissioners do in nine other provinces and two territories across this country. Instead, Manitoba has decided to only go with a privacy adjudicator, which really does not provide to the public the access that would be offered

in other provinces with a privacy commissioner. It's interesting, as well, that the keynote speaker would be the privacy commissioner from Ontario while we sit here and talk about the lack of a privacy commissioner in our province, but it's also interesting that the government is driving the agenda. I'm wondering how many department staff would have been speakers or on panels or provided agendas for the conference.

* (16:30)

Mr. Robinson: I'm told that all of our staff from the information on Privacy Policy Secretariat are a part of this, including other civil servants, including people from Civil Legal Services, people from the Ombudsman's office.

I just want to advise the Member for Morris that there are only four other provinces that have commissioners which have order-making power, quite radically different from what we're proposing in the province of Manitoba. These other provinces that have commissioners are Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta and Québec. We heard this yesterday, repeated again by the Ombudsman who was attending this conference, so this is something that was quoted of what she had to say at this conference currently being held in Winnipeg.

I think that the underestimation of the adjudicator that we're proposing in the province of Manitoba is something that we ought to be careful in doing because this is going to be a new, independent officer of our Assembly. But, certainly, I think that because there may be some problems or some hesitation in supporting that because of the name not being a commissioner and rather using the term "adjudicator," I think that the effect is the same.

This person will have certain powers to ensure that these issues that are of concern to all of us as citizens of this province, certainly, I think will get the needed action that we require, and like anybody else, we're not perfect. However, we have striven to make FIPPA a little more effective for our fellow citizens in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: It's interesting that if there was a will to establish a privacy commissioner, then I think it would have been called a privacy commissioner, and that person would have been given the order-making powers that we see across the country. Because it was not, it makes us suspect that, of course, there are really no powers assigned to the adjudicator and will simply be another member of the Ombudsman's

office and perhaps not really fulfil the role of a privacy commissioner.

That being said, is this a full-time or part-time position?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, as much time as the Ombudsman feels is required to deal with a particular issue. There may be a time when the adjudicator will have a lack of time to act on certain issues, so whatever amount of time is required.

Now, let me repeat for the members of this committee that there are three major changes that are being proposed under the new legislation. First of all, Mr. Chair, the creation of a privacy adjudicator, a new, independent office of the Legislature; changing the period that Cabinet documents remain sealed from 30 to 20 years; and legislation that requires ministerial expenses to be tabled on-line annually.

The adjudicator will be, as I've said, an officer of this Assembly appointed in the same manner as the Ombudsman. He or she will be equal to and independent of the Ombudsman. So they have the same power. However, for the limited number of cases that require order-making power, it did not seem to be in the public interest to establish a full-time officer at this time. Having said that, I'll repeat what I said earlier, that whatever amount of time it requires to work on a very complex case, as one example, this individual will then be required to do that. So this means that we will continue to benefit from the experience of the Ombudsman office in investigating and resolving issues under FIPPA, while ensuring that the office ultimately resolving those difficult cases has order powers equal to any order-making review officer in the country.

I'd like to note, also, that the Ombudsman's office is taking steps to strengthen their outreach to Manitobans and guidance to public bodies under the act, including settling time lines for responses which will expedite the resolution of problems, and we'll have made other amendments which, I believe, will, also, update and strengthen the act and that FIPPA will continue to serve our fellow citizens in a proper and efficient manner.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, it sounds to me, then, that this is a person that will be called in on an issue basis and is not really employed in a full-time position. It sounds like it is part time. It will be, basically, issue-driven if something comes up that the Ombudsman refers to the privacy commissioner. In all likelihood, that's not going to happen. So is this just window

dressing to appoint a privacy adjudicator that, really, isn't going to be used very much? That's the sense of what I'm hearing here.

With a full privacy commissioner, in the provinces that do have them, part of their role is public education around protection of privacy and personal information, and that type of thing, which extends to the broad public base, and when I say public base, I mean all Manitobans and not just in the public sector.

So I think that we are lacking in that way that we should be able to have a person that would be able to take on that educational role. Certainly, in times that we're seeing, with information technology that moves ahead at light speed, and our understanding of it in the general public, is moving at the speed of a tortoise, we can't keep up. We need someone to take on these issues and alert the public to any dangers that are occurring. Certainly, education is one of the ways, of course, to make sure that people don't give out their information so that it can be used in a very negative and detrimental way, which we see with identity fraud and all of those issues that we have.

The minister did mention that one of the things that the proposed legislation will do is decrease the record ability to 20 years from 30 years. But I also see that, in the same subsection, the consent to disclosure, now, for Cabinet documents is going to be given to the President of the Executive Council, which, I believe, is the Premier (Mr. Doer). Is that correct?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, that is correct.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Taillieu: So, in the old legislation, it was the Cabinet that would decide on release of Cabinet documents, but, now, in the new legislation, it is the Premier that decides on the availability of Cabinet documents.

Mr. Robinson: I'd like to view it as being more streamlined. I think when we talk about the Executive Council—[interjection] So I think that whether it's the President of the Executive Council or the Executive Council, the meaning is pretty much the same.

I just want to point out that last year journalists from across Canada, across the country, made identical Freedom of Information requests of all governments in the nation, and out of that, Manitoba came through on all three requests by the media and

ted for fourth place overall for openness, ahead of even the federal government. So Manitoba, more than any other, according to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, in an article that they wrote in September of '07.

Also, in April of 2000 we extended Freedom of Information legislation to bodies that the opposition had excluded specifically. So I think that we're making progress, Mr. Chair, little by little, and we're not perfect, nor were the opposition when they were in government. Mr. Chair, to more than 350 municipal governments, we've extended that to school divisions, universities, and RHAs. On May 25, 2005, the results of a national survey by the Canadian Newspaper Association looked at how free and accessible government information was, and they declared Manitoba was second best in Canada with a disclosure rate of 88 percent. Now, Alberta was No. 1 with a rate of 93 percent, so I'm very happy that we are making progress. Even though things may not look perfect—and we always have a problem patting ourselves on the back—we ought to be very happy about the progress we have made in improving FIPPA here in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: It's interesting that the minister says it's essentially the same thing, because if it's essentially the same thing, I don't know what the purpose was in changing the act. And it has been changed. I mean, the act said before that it was Cabinet, and now it says consent to disclosures given by the president of Executive Council, who is the Premier. So, obviously, the Premier doesn't even trust his Cabinet; it's got to go right to the top and be allowed to go through him and him alone, which I think is—if I was a member of his Cabinet, I think I'd be questioning why he had that absolute power over the issues that are coming out of Cabinet. But, certainly, the minister says it makes no difference; I would say it does make a difference, because if it didn't make a difference, it wouldn't be in the proposed legislation, and it is. So I don't think the member can say it doesn't make a difference.

Again, I'll just say: Is the Premier (Mr. Doer) going to be the one that sanctions any release of Cabinet information from now on?

Mr. Robinson: That's not how I understand it, so I think the Member for Morris and I will just have to understand it differently. Let me try and do it this way: The new act proposes that a privacy adjudicator be appointed as an independent officer of our Assembly, creating a new independent office. Mr.

Chair, the privacy adjudicator will have the power to issue binding orders on departments where the Ombudsman has requested that the commissioner review a case. Under the current system, the Ombudsman cannot order a department to comply with her decisions. Under the new system, the privacy adjudicator will have this power. Also, under the new proposal, when the Ombudsman can't settle a matter or get a department to comply with her recommendations, she refers the issue to the privacy adjudicator rather than to the courts, so that's, I think, fundamentally different than previously.

Mrs. Taillieu: I wanted to also clarify that—this is a question that I'm seeking clarification on—if information was to be made available within 90 days, a FIPPA request could be denied, based on the fact that the information was going to be made available publicly within 90 days.

My understanding is that now, in the proposed legislation, if the information has not been provided in the 90 days and that is the reason given for not providing it, and then, after the 90 days, that information has not been made public, the request is considered a new request, and the time starts over again to seek that same information. Is that true? *[interjection]* Could I put that on the record?

Mr. Robinson: Let me take the last part of the question under advisement and get back to the member. I know that there is a briefing that has been scheduled, I believe, for both the official opposition critic and the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) on this very issue. Perhaps at that time, there will be further explanation. At this time, I'm just not comfortable, Mr. Chairperson, saying something that could be completely wrong with respect to the question.

On the issue of the Cabinet confidences, this part of the amendment corrects the existing provision that is not workable; I believe it was 19(1). This amendment corrects the existing provision that is not workable. The previous Cabinet no longer exists, so it cannot make a decision. The amendment identifies a person who can make a decision on behalf of the previous Cabinet. This provision is rarely, if ever, used. I think that will explain the first part of her question, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Taillieu: Not really, because it's an amendment that's proposed in the bill; it obviously has a reason for being there, giving the Premier that discretion.

Just one more question because I know that other members want some time—the data bases of Crown corporations, how do they link up with the government data base?

Mr. Robinson: I'm sorry, I just don't have that information. I'll just have to say, I just haven't got a clue; I wish I did.

* (16:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I suspect that the minister for recreation and sport is delighted that his government is committed to spending \$60 million on community centres.

I would just ask the minister where that is reflected in his own budget, and how that money will be allocated and what decisions, criteria are going to be used in terms of the spending.

Mr. Robinson: That commitment that was made, of course, was \$60 million over four years. That will come from a variety of departments. In our own department, we've had an increase of 50 percent for the Community Places program, which I know the members around this table are quite familiar with. In fact, for a program that is not well financed, allow me to put it that way, for the amount of applications that we get from the entire province, it's proven to be one of the most successful, well-used programs that we have in the province of Manitoba. It certainly has gained a lot of respect and also anticipation whenever we announce it in early February or mid-February.

I just want to respond to the Member for River Heights that this was a commitment that we made and it will come from a variety of departments.

Certainly, Mr. Chairperson, the member will agree that, throughout the province of Manitoba, we have a huge challenge in terms of the recreation infrastructure deficit that we have. If you travel to any rural community in the province of Manitoba, most of the arenas and the indoor facilities promoting recreation were built around the year of the centennial in 1967. A lot of them are in need of bad repairs. We have been impressing upon the national government that we need to employ a strategy with the help of our provincial officials to make an effort to addressing this huge deficit that we have across the province.

I don't think I have to get into much detail because I think as members we represent many communities that have dilapidated and not yet

modernized facilities where hockey games and the like are played. In some of these facilities, they don't have, for example, facilities for handicapped exits and entrances, so it's huge.

We obviously will make good use of whatever moneys become available, but this has to be spread throughout the province of Manitoba. I know I've been to arenas in the constituency of the Member for Minnedosa (Ms. Rowat) and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) and Interlake and others, and particularly The Pas, there's a dire need if we are indeed committed as Canadians that we want our people, our citizens to become more physically active in their everyday lives, that we indeed need some buy-in.

It's been my deputy minister's priority, along with her staff and myself, that we are committed to working with the national government in securing a long-term partnership to address this huge deficit that we have here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: I just have to be very quick because we have only a moment, but I would just ask, are First Nations and Métis communities being treated fairly and equitably under this program?

Mr. Robinson: Absolutely. I take those words very seriously from the Member for River Heights. As a matter of fact, when the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and I were opposition members in this Legislature, one of the deficiencies that we came across immediately was Community Places. That was not even made available to people living on First Nations reserves in the province of Manitoba. In 1999, when we came into government, we ensured that all Manitobans had accessibility to these programs. I know that the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and The Pas and other constituencies here can attest to that, the huge difference that it has made to reserves across this province.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we will move to resolutions.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,591,200 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,377,300 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and

Sport, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,662,800 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Tourism and Sport, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,605,000 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$649,100 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

Last item to be considered for the Estimates for this department is item 14.1.(a) Minister's Salary contained in resolution 14.1.

We thank the staff for their time and appreciate their timely departure from the front table.

Seeing no questions—oh, yes, honourable Member for Minnedosa.

Mrs. Rowat: I just wanted to also thank the staff before they leave the building for their support and help in answering the questions today. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that.

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,286,200 for Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

Is it the will of the committee to see 5 o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

**COMPETITIVENESS, TRAINING
AND TRADE**

* (15:00)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 51 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): When we broke yesterday, I was in mid-anecdote because my friend had asked me a very good question about different measures that we can encourage more young people to pursue jobs and careers in the trades, in manufacturing, other areas.

I was actually relating, I think, a very good story from the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association event I was at a few weeks ago. I spoke with some students who'd won an award. They were from Windsor Park Collegiate, I believe, in the area of the MLA for Radisson (Mr. Jha). They'd won an award for their construction techniques in building. I'd spoken to one student who was on the winning team; in fact, he'd failed the grade because there wasn't anything that really had him turned on, if I can call it that, to the school program. He was lucky enough to have a few teachers at that school that were very interested in attracting students to become more interested in manufacturing and their working with their hands. This student who, I think, had been at risk of dropping out of school altogether, really caught fire and was part of the team and was looking forward to a career as a tradesperson.

That's just an anecdote; I realize there are many other good stories out there. We don't have time to relate them all, but I think it does highlight that we certainly need to make interesting, young people in technical vocational areas, making it a priority.

I can tell the member opposite a little bit more about the technical vocational education initiative which, I think, is where he was heading. The initiative, or the TVI, was first implemented about four years ago in April 2004. I can confirm for him that it was extended last year into a second phase

from April 2007 through to June 2011. The idea of the initiative, is to keep expanding what worked in the first round to create a cohesive, seamless, province-wide, technical-vocational education system across high school, and also complement that with post-secondary programming to provide Manitoba students with more options, more career pathways so they can see the benefit of remaining in school.

Hopefully, through that process, we're going to accomplish a number of things. We want to encourage more young people to stay in school, to get their grade 12; we want to encourage people who stay to grade 12 to take the math courses, the science courses, which are really the key to working in many technical and vocational areas, and also prepare them for the jobs which we know are waiting for them upon graduation.

There are a number of pillars of action that are at the core of these activities. The first—I know my friend will be heartened by this—we want to improve the image of careers in technical and vocational areas. Again, I'm using the word "careers," not "jobs," because these are tremendous opportunities for people, whether working for someone else, or, indeed, when they get their trade or their vocation to become an entrepreneur and go out there and work for themselves.

It's enhanced student awareness of various areas of technical-vocational programming. both in their high schools and in college. It's to do our best to make sure that programs are going to be relevant to the labour market needs, and maybe my friend and I will discuss later how we partner with industry and with colleges to do that. We want to increase the communication and the articulation between high schools and our colleges. We want to develop strategies to make sure our tech-voc teachers remain up to date in the latest techniques so the information that they're presenting is useful for the students and ultimately useful for their future employers, and also deal with some shortages in tech-voc teachers and also increase our funding to support those equipment upgrades.

So, for the 2008-2009 school year, the initiative is going to provide up to \$700,000 to schools for equipment upgrades. We've put in \$100,000 for professional development for teachers in this area, \$525,000 for provincial demonstration projects to really heighten the awareness of this initiative for students across the province, and I understand for the

current school year, for 2007-2008, there were 26 demonstration projects in 20 different school divisions across the province that are participating in this initiative. I'm told there were 27 equipment upgrade grants to schools in 18 school divisions across the province for this year, and now that there's enough of a history of some of these successful projects taking place, there's a best practices catalogue being developed so that other school divisions—maybe in the member's own area—that are interested in pursuing these initiatives will be able to build on the success that we've now had in a number of situations.

I could give more detail if my friend wants, but I think it's fair to say that we think promoting careers in the trades and technical and vocational areas is something that's good for all Manitobans.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I appreciate the minister's response to this area. It's very important for the future of Manitoba in regard to making sure that we have opportunities for our youth in training in many of those areas. I want to ask some questions today as well—we had a few yesterday—on the Apprenticeship Futures Commission, but before I do that, can he advise me as to the exact number of schools that will have that opportunity of looking at enhanced training and technical training in their schools in Manitoba for the coming year?

Mr. Swan: With the Technical Vocational Initiative alone, there are 26 projects in 20 school divisions that have already been funded for 2007-2008 and 27 equipment upgrades to schools in 18 school divisions in '07-08. Now there is an application process that's under way for schools which want to participate in the upcoming year.

I can't give the member a number right now because each of those proposals has a different dollar value attached to it. Some may be—especially if they're building on what already exists—they may be lighter on the capital and equipment side. Some projects in areas where maybe they aren't as far advanced are going to have greater equipment needs so that would—I'm afraid I can't tell you right now until the application process is complete exactly how many schools are going to benefit from the program.

Mr. Maguire: But I think the minister just—did I misunderstand him? I thought he just mentioned that there were 20 schools that would have programs?

* (15:10)

Mr. Swan: That's for the current year, the school year that we're in right now, for 2007-2008. For the 2008-2009 school year, starting in September, again, there's \$700,000 set aside for equipment upgrades to schools, \$100,000 for professional development for teachers, and \$525,000 for provincial demonstration projects. So again, it'll depend on the complexity of those applications before I can tell you exactly how many schools and how many projects. My guess is it would be roughly the same, but that would depend on the dollar value that different schools are looking for.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister enlighten me as to what he means by school upgrades?

Mr. Swan: Equipment upgrades when perhaps it's a situation where the shops class has been left behind and may be 20 or 30 years out of date. It may be more and better woodworking equipment, for example. It could be better metalworking equipment; it could be technology—whatever the schools believe would be appropriate so that their students can get a better head start in working in the technical and vocational fields.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate whether those kinds of programs would be from his budget, or would they more than likely come from the Education budget?

Mr. Swan: In my comments at the start of Estimates yesterday, I spoke about the increasing co-operation between government departments, and I'm pleased to tell the member that Competitiveness, Training and Trade partners with Education, Citizenship and Youth and Advanced Education and Literacy to deliver this program. The contribution of this department for the upcoming year is \$635,000.

Mr. Maguire: Does the department track the success of the programs once the students are coming out of high school into—whether they actually do proceed with their courses into our community colleges, and can he just enlighten me on that?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can tell the member that, of course, the initial phase was from April 2004 into 2007, and as that first phase was coming to an end, there was an external evaluation done of the results. I understand that the evaluation was very positive and led us to extend the project into the second phase from last April—April 2007—onto June 2011.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate whether they look at the number of students that are coming out of the high schools in the apprenticeship program

of the ones that graduate in Manitoba? Do they tend to go to the community colleges we have, or do they—I'm hoping the large percentage do, but does he have an idea of what percentage, or how many of the students that the minister has indicated to me would be perhaps going to other community colleges? Notwithstanding that, I'm aware that there's a flow of students from other provinces into Manitoba as well, I would assume, but I just thought he might have an idea how many weren't leaving the province.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'm not sure if I can answer the member's question directly, because some students who come out of the Tech Voc Initiative might enrol directly in college, whether Red River College or Assiniboine or UCN. Some may enter right into an apprenticeship program, and, although they would take classes at a college for some periods during the year, they wouldn't necessarily be considered college grads. The best I can probably do for the member is to talk about the success, for example, that Red River College has. Red River actually does a, I think, a really good job of tracking their graduates, and the latest numbers that Dr. Zabudsky provided to me was that approximately 94 percent of Red River College grads remain in Manitoba and, actually a shocking percentage, I believe it's 97 or 98 percent, are actually employed in the fields in which they're trained. So I don't think I can give you a perfect number from the Tech Voc Initiative into the trades or into college, but we know that, from college into the work force, the Manitoba experience right now is extremely positive.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, the number of students that are entering into the particular types of work here, I wonder, you know, he's just indicated that the Red River College has a pretty good tracking process and others, colleges, I'm assuming, in Manitoba do the same in regard to where their students go. Can he just provide me with an update on the results of the University College of the North?

Mr. Swan: You know, again, each college may have a slightly different way of tracking their own numbers. I know that we use the figures that Red River College provides in their annual report. My understanding is that Assiniboine Community College and also University College of the North also provide annual reports; my department actually doesn't have their own independent figures on that. It may be that Advanced Education and Literacy does, but I would think that the report for each of those colleges is probably the best place for all of us to look for their experiences.

* (15:20)

Mr. Maguire: With the minister's indulgence then, not today, necessarily, but, as well, as far as the few items that he mentioned yesterday that he would provide me, I wonder if he could just check into that and see if there is a number available in regard to the question that I just asked, the number of students that are staying in Manitoba from each of those three community colleges.

Mr. Swan: I'll have my staff review the information provided to us by the colleges and, if that's available, we'll certainly provide it to you.

Mr. Maguire: Some of the other programs not necessarily go through those colleges. Madam Chair, can the minister just indicate to me how things like the training programs for the northern dam developments are working and, whether or not a number of those students have taken the opportunity of using the University College of the North, or any of our other technical community colleges that we have?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I thank the member for his interest in this area. I do have some fairly comprehensive information to discuss. The first area that I can touch upon is the focus that this department has on Aboriginal apprenticeship training that's delivered through the Apprenticeship branch. We've been developing community-based training for ways for northern and rural First Nations, Métis and Inuit apprentices, greater opportunities to complete the technical component of their apprenticeship training in or near their home communities.

Madam Chairperson, if we do the on-site training, we find that we also give those communities more chance to develop or enhance facilities to complement their local infrastructure. Community-based training has also been combined with some improved prior learning assessment and recognition techniques and some essential skills initiatives, with our goal being getting more certified trades people trained in Aboriginal communities and also an overall increase in the number of Aboriginal apprentices.

First of all, what's very important to us is improving the retention and completion rates in apprenticeship training programs and also increasing the success rates and certification examinations. I can tell the member there are some additional challenges for Aboriginal apprentices working in remote communities. Of course, your ability in most

cases to get your levels of certification as an apprentice depends on the hours of work and, unfortunately, in many remote communities, it's hard to put together a full year of work. If a program is normally a four-year program, but you've only got work half the time, that extends the apprenticeship process to seven or eight or nine years, which can be a barrier to some people.

As well, we know there are additional challenges in getting our students through the certification examinations. So there's more work that we are doing on making sure that, aside from simply being able to manually perform the job, to make sure that students can express themselves when they're writing their exams.

Madam Chairperson, the first community-based training opportunities began back in 2001-2002. Since then—this number may have gone up from the last count—we have had 301 apprentices from 13 different Aboriginal communities participating in this community-based training. I'm told that there's been 34 sections of training being delivered, primarily. Given the availability of opportunities in some communities, most of the training has been provided in the trade of carpenter. But it's been expanded to the trades of construction, electrician and plumber.

The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualification Board actually established a committee to deal with this, to see what we could do to improve access for Aboriginal and northern people. Overall, the results for Aboriginal people have been quite positive. I'm told that, as of April 1 of this year, there were 1,330 self-declared active apprentices of Aboriginal ancestry in Manitoba. As a matter of fact, Aboriginal apprentices are just over one-fifth, about 21 percent of all apprentices in Manitoba, which is actually above the overall rate of the Aboriginal population, so there have been some great successes in inviting people into pursuing apprenticeship.

I can also tell the member that in the north, almost two-thirds—that's 64 percent—of apprentices are Aboriginal for a total of 343 apprentices.

We're working with communities such as Nelson House, NCN, I'm not going to try and pronounce it because that would be difficult, as well as Opaskwayak Cree Nation in The Pas, and other communities to see what we can do to continue delivering on that Aboriginal apprenticeship training.

Then I can tell the member about the Hydro Northern Training Initiative, which is very exciting. As the member knows, there are some tremendous plans to continue developing our hydro-electric resources in the north and I think we're doing a better job every time at involving our First Nations partners, involving Aboriginal communities in the process of planning for and building hydro-electric dams. It's a tremendous opportunity for us to have a happy by-product, being the training of Aboriginal people.

Up to the end of last calendar year, up to December 31, 2007, I'm told that about 1,800 participants have been assessed for involvement in the training initiative, and since the program began in 2001, Madam Chairperson, about 1,600 individual trainees have participated in nearly 4,000 training interventions so work has been done on adults upgrading their skills. I work on designated trades and non-designated trades and there are some great statistics. In the area of those designated trades, up to the end of last calendar year, 15 trainees had become certified journeypersons. There are 146 active apprentices on their way to becoming certified as journeypersons. There are 135 trainees in designated trades pre-employment programs, and it's our hope that a substantial number of those will go ahead and enter apprenticeship training. As well, there are over 160 trainees who've completed interventions in upgrading their academic background. Over 325 trainees have completed training in non-designated trades. Important jobs and solid jobs such as truck driving, heavy equipment operating, warehousing and labourers that actually aren't designated for apprenticeship but still very important to construction in the north.

Over 77 trainees have completed training in project supports, which includes areas that would be ancillary to building a hydro project, like catering, security, environmental monitoring, administration.

I'm told that over 300 trainees have participated in work experience placements and the results have been quite positive. The overall completion rates, I'm told, are about 58 percent. Four hundred and seventy-two individuals are now actually employed and of those the great majority, 88 percent of them, are employed on a full-time basis.

We're continuing with the on-the-job training and employment. Again, getting the necessary work experience right now is the biggest challenge we

have for the large numbers of trainees who are interested in being part of this development.

One of the exciting happenings is that we're increasing those communities' capacity to plan, to manage training delivery through professional development of staff in areas like management, counselling, computer skills, project management and accounting. There's some great examples where Hydro and the Province have partnered with First Nations communities like ATEC, which is a learning facility that's located in Nelson House, a training facility at Split Lake, the York Factory Learning Institute and also the Fox Lake Learning Centre.

In total, we'd like it to move quicker than sometimes it is due to the realities of the work that's available, but overall, we're happy to say that individuals, that communities, that the north and, really, the whole province are benefiting from the training initiative because of increased skill development and increased capacity for training as well as employment and economic development in the north.

* (15:30)

I don't want to downplay the importance of industry in all of this. The Northern Manitoba Sector Council represents seven large employers in northern Manitoba. They tell us, quite frankly, they have a tremendous need for employees, for skilled employees, for semi-skilled employees and I'm very positive that as we go forward, we're going to keep working with that sector council. They're going to be giving us the best possible advice on what their needs are at present and in the near future. Hopefully, we can keep working with industry and the communities and the people to try and make sure that we are focussing our efforts in a way that's going to provide solid, long-time employment for northern people.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's taking the time to provide me with that information in regard to a number of the areas where courses are ongoing and working in a great deal of the work that will be very, very beneficial to developing our northern part of Manitoba. But I just might have missed it. Can he tell me if a number of those training programs have used the University College of the North or any of them or are they separate?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that University College of the North is continuing to play an increasing role in providing training. Again, because

of the nature of apprenticeship, apprentices may spend a relatively short period of time in that college as they get some of their training. UCN is also being used for some of those ancillary areas that I've talked about. Although it's great that UCN is in Thompson, The Pas, and with some satellites in some of the northern communities, that being said, there remain communities which are very remote. Even though going into UCN may be more attractive than coming to Winnipeg or to Brandon, the truth is that we are continuing to invest in programs right in people's home communities.

Some of the challenges are that if it is a community like Nelson House or Norway House, decent population, maybe four or five thousand people, it does limit the kinds of programs we can run. That's why the greatest emphasis to date has been on some of the larger trades like carpentry, construction, electrician, plumber, where there is enough critical mass that it's most effective to run courses right in the First Nations.

The goal, of course, is to reduce the barriers to any young person, or older person for that matter, who decides they want to take on a trade. We've got some challenges in terms of balancing the remoteness of the territory and the relatively low population density with the overall need for jobs in the North.

Mr. Maguire: The minister mentioned a number of communities in some of the more remote areas. Perhaps I would call them more rural areas than some of the major centres that he mentioned in the North. Are there others that he could add to that, where courses have been offered as well, or taken up on?

Mr. Swan: Sure, it's a good question that my friend asked, given the geography of the north. In addition to the five specific communities I mentioned where there are training facilities, there's actually a partnership with MKO, the organization which represents the northern First Nations communities, and they offer additional training programs in more than 20 other northern communities.

As well, the Manitoba Métis Federation receives funding, and they offer training in certain Métis communities which usually, but not always, are located close to First Nations communities. There's actually quite a broad network of different communities that have some measure of training provided by the Hydro initiative.

Mr. Maguire: I just noted with interest—I believe it's page 56 in the Estimates supplement—under the Apprenticeship program, there's about \$11.6 million being used in that area, 59 persons involved, small increase in full-time equivalents.

Can the minister indicate to me, just not for each one of them, but where those five extra—what the duties are of those five other persons? I can see that there are three in professional-technical and two more in administrative support; where would those be located?

Mr. Swan: My friend is correct, that there is an increase of five full-time equivalents. In fact, there was an increase in the last budget year as well of five full-time equivalents in the Apprenticeship branch. Of course, there was the commitment made by this government that we would increase the number of apprenticeship seats by 4,000. These are important investments that we're making to make sure that we can ramp up the number of spaces in all areas of the program.

I'm told that some of those increases—as I think you've pointed out on page 57 of the Estimates—some of those are clerical staff, administrative support who are simply helping us process this year a further 1,100 available positions, as well as there are some professional and technical assistants in terms of designing programs, improving programs, and making sure that the apprenticeship program is as strong as it can be.

Madam Chair, I should give credit not only to our branch which does a great job; they do rely heavily on the investment of time by industry and by labour to have, really, volunteer time, helping the Apprenticeship branch do its work. I'm very pleased that labour and industry believe that it's worth their while to be part of it.

I had a chance, when I went for my tour of the Apprenticeship branch a couple of weeks ago, to see a couple of groups in action, going through certifications and going through exams, some apprenticeship board staff, but also a lot of commitment by industry and workers to improve the apprenticeship program.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, just for clarity, the minister, these are departmental people within his staff?

Mr. Swan: That's correct. I can tell you we'll be looking for more volunteer labour from industry and

labour as well but, yes, those are positions within the department.

Mr. Maguire: My other part of that question was, the location will be here in the city then, as far as technical staff, and helping ramp up to meet the needs of the training program we have?

* (15:40)

Mr. Swan: I can advise the member that all of this wave, these five new employees were all located in Winnipeg. Of course, there are staff located in Brandon and also in the north. There may be further investments in Brandon and in the north. In particular, we may, as the numbers increase in future, be looking at more apprenticeship liaison officers to do their part to make sure we're getting the numbers that we want going into the program and that people are having a positive experience when they get there.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you.

The numbers that the minister's indicated earlier in his answer was that they filled about 1,600 of the 4,000 training spaces that he had hoped to develop. Am I correct in that number? Is that the same number that was coming out of the Apprenticeship Futures Commission?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that for this year there's a further 1,100 spaces. There have been increases in each year. I can get the member the overall increase over the past couple of years, if that would be helpful.

Mr. Maguire: Well, just for clarity, the minister has announced that there'll be four in the budget, that sort of thing, the Throne Speech, I think that there were 4,000 new apprenticeship training programs that there would be coming forward over the next four years, I believe it is. Can he enlighten me as to whether the 1,600 that he referred to have any part of that 4,000?

Mr. Swan: The number, the recent investment was \$3.8 million for the first 1,100 of those 4,000 seats that were committed. In year one of four we've now provided for just more than one-quarter of those 4,000 spots.

Mr. Maguire: Well, 1,100 would have been in what time frame here, over the last fiscal year to the end of March or—?

Mr. Swan: I'll try and explain this as best I can without confusing the member opposite or myself. Of course, we think in terms of the budget of fiscal

years, ending on March 31. Of course, that's not how the college sees it. So those 1,100 positions, it's a blend. Some of these new seats would have opened up before the end of last fiscal year. Some are going to open up now in the new fiscal year. There will a point where we can look back over a 12-month period and say, there you go, there's at least 1,100 new spaces. It really is the first of a four-year commitment.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister give me any indication then of what that 12-month period will look like? What 12 months is he using? Well, first of all, I'll ask that question.

Mr. Swan: Right. Again, I'll try to do my best to answer the question. Going back then to the fiscal-year approach, the commitment that we made to the colleges is to purchase a further 1,100 training seats in the colleges in the upcoming fiscal year, but the training doesn't fall neatly within that period. The apprentices will come in for eight-week blocks, in most cases, for their training, so if we look year over year, I suppose, if we look at '08-09, you'll be able to see 1,100 more spaces than in fiscal year '07-08. But, if we take a snapshot of any particular day, because there's always different groups coming in in different levels and in different certifications, it'd be difficult to give you a snapshot that will be clear as mud.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I appreciate that, I appreciate the minister letting me know that the 1,100 positions that he's looking at this year would be in the fiscal year then, up until end of March '09, and that perhaps, you know, the actual training and the dollar flow and those things—I wasn't asking about the dollar flow as much as the actual number of people that will receive training. Now he's indicating to me that 1,100 spots have been made available and can he just enlighten me as to the process that they'll go through to fill those spots and how successful the previous year has been?

Mr. Swan: Madam Chairperson, because of the unique nature of apprenticeship and being truly a partnership of government with colleges, industry and the individual apprentice, there's no really clean answer that I can give you.

I mean, the first step in somebody pursuing the path to apprenticeship is them being hired on by an employer and pursuing work with that employer. In many cases, they have to put in a certain number of hours; 600 hours would not be an unusual amount of time they would have to spend before they can then begin their first level of technical training. I can tell

you that employers across the province are generally telling us they have a tremendous need for workers. We just want to make sure that that translates into them being prepared to take on apprentices that can then start their way through the program. But we are confident that by opening up these additional spaces, there's going to be enough demand and enough pressure there, both from individuals wanting to pursue apprenticeship and employers wanting to find ways to fill their positions, that the government and the colleges are going to be successful in pulling more people through the system. I acknowledge there's no simple answer because of the complex partnership that is part of the apprenticeship process.

Mr. Maguire: So the minister's 4,000 positions, then, over four years is totally—I guess it's left up to whether or not there's enough people out there willing to hire the apprentices to fulfil the jobs that they require.

* (15:50)

Mr. Swan: Yes, thank you, I think you've really hit at the meat of the Apprenticeship Futures Commission. We know that there's a tremendous demand for workers. We know that industry is telling us they need more skilled workers. The colleges tell us they're ready, willing and able to help us train more people. Government has stepped up and is committed to doing that. We do want to continue to build that partnership to make sure those things can happen, but again, I mean, the key building block of the relationship is an employer being prepared to take on an apprentice. Once that commitment is made by both sides, we are very pleased that, with the colleges' assistance, we are able to clear that pathway and provide the opportunities. That's why, of course, in the budget there were some additional incentives both to individuals and to employers to make the apprenticeship process that much more attractive.

In particular, there's a tax credit which will now be offered to employers who hire journeypersons after they have received their highest level. As well, for the individuals who go through the program, they'll now be eligible for the 60 percent tuition rebate for the money, modest as it is, the money that they spend on being trained as an apprentice.

Mr. Maguire: So, just to go back to it one last time, and I won't dwell on it too much longer, but the 1,100 positions that you're making available this year is the first year, this is the first year then of the 4,000 that you are hoping to do over four years.

Mr. Swan: That's correct. The experience has been though that there's been a steady increase in the number of people entering apprenticeships. There's been a steady increase in the people obtaining their journeyperson status over the last several years. Having said that, that hasn't been enough to meet the labour market needs. Here in Manitoba we've had employers very interested in seeing what they can do to improve the flow of people through systems, attracting more people to become involved. So we will be working with all of our partners to improve it.

I can mention that there are certain trades where there are waiting lists right now. It would be my hope that we would give priority to areas where there are waiting lists. Madam Chair, there are employers and apprentices that are engaged to the process, that are telling us that they don't want there to be any wait at all for the training to occur. That'll probably be the easiest place to start, to simply open up more spaces, more slots for people to go and do their eight weeks of block training.

I can tell you though, when Minister Solberg and I were out at Red River, speaking with some of the carpentry students and masonry students, it was pretty busy in there. I can tell you that they didn't make a lot of room for the ministers to walk through the sawdust without being at risk of being sawed in two. It's a very busy school, as are the other colleges. They are going to be creative with us to keep opening up more slots. Certainly the easiest way to go is going to be to deal with any trade for which there is a wait list.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, notwithstanding the number of tradespeople that we need in Manitoba, at the present time I think that there'll probably be—there is a greater demand. I see the Hydro Northern Training Initiative is part of his responsibility here as well. Can he just indicate to me then that that is a totally separate initiative from the apprenticeship 4,000 seats that he is speaking of at the present time?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that the Hydro northern development initiative is a separate program, although the experience has been that there are a certain number of individuals that go through that program that then pursue an apprentice trade. So there will be some people coming out of that program that enter into apprenticeship, but there are a whole range of occupations, jobs, careers, that I set out a little while ago that are available to people who are involved in that initiative.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me how many persons would have gone through the Hydro Northern Training Initiative to date, and what is the government's support for those individuals?

Mr. Swan: You can tell the member these numbers are up to December 31, 2007, so there may be a bit of an update, but so far there have been 1,800 participants that have been assessed to be part of the program. Of those 1,800, about 1,600 individual trainees have taken some measure of training. The term the department uses is a "training intervention." That may be specific technical training. That may be a pre-apprenticeship or a pre-work program to try and make sure that their literacy, numeracy, other essential skills are up to a standard where they can safely and adequately fulfil the job.

Of those people, as I said, there has been some flow-through to apprenticeship. Of those 1,600 individual trainees, a little bit less than 10 percent, 146 of them have actually gone into the apprenticeship program—85 of those 146 are in levels one to four; 20 of them are levels three to four, so getting very close to getting their journeypersons status, and of those, 61 are working toward their level one. That's what I was talking about earlier. There are a certain number of hours that the employer and the employee have to commit to each other before the apprentice can then begin the level-one program.

Madam Chair, I'm also told that, as of that date, December 31, there were 135 trainees in designated trades pre-employment programs. Again, those pre-employment programs are intended to assist people who may have a lack of work experience, who may have a lack of the essential skills to fill the job. The approach that's been taken is to work with those individuals, give them general training to get them into a position where they'd be able to enter an apprentice trade. So the hope is of those 135, there will be a certain number who will then be in working toward their level one, which again means a period of time working with the employer to get there, and of those, hopefully a large number will continue on to move up and get their journeypersons status.

Again, of those people involved in the initiative, there are some large numbers that are involved in other non-designated jobs and I'll give you some examples. There are truck drivers, heavy equipment operators, those working in warehousing, labourers, all valuable jobs but that don't follow the apprenticeship process in Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister provide me with some examples of what the 61 level 1 individuals would be working toward?

Mr. Swan: Madam Chairperson, I understand that most of the 61 individuals are in the sort of what we call the big three trades that we said were the major focus for First Nations communities, being carpentry, construction electrician, and plumbing. Again, because of some of the economies of scale and some of the difficulties in getting the critical mass, that's been where a lot of the focus has been in some of the remote communities, so I would expect you would find a large chunk of those 61 in one of those three areas.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister indicating those numbers to me. He has indicated that there were 1,800 assessed persons came forward, 1,600 trainees involved in the project, so there's—am I correct in assuming there was 200 that, for one reason or another, weren't able to make the program?

* (16:00)

Mr. Swan: As my friend has indicated, there are 1,800 participants assessed and 1,600 individual trainees who have moved ahead to one or more training interventions, so I think the member is right. There'd be about 200 individuals who were assessed and, for whatever reason, chose not to go and pursue the Northern Training Initiative. I mean, it could be a number of reasons.

It could be somebody who'd hope that they'd be getting a—or perhaps, maybe, who didn't fully appreciate the length of training. Maybe somebody who was hoping that they would get the job they wanted right in their home community and there simply isn't a possibility of that occurring. There could be other people who'd be assessed and then are able to find employment in a field, or in another community. So you're right, there are 200 people that would've been assessed that didn't then participate in the initiative. There's a host of reasons why that might be the case.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. I don't think it matters what area of training you're going to go into. The people that start out into it aren't necessarily going to find that it's to their liking when they end it, end their training, but it's important, I think, that as many people have the opportunity to get the training as can be. I know that there are people moving into particular hot spots, if you will, in industries across

Canada and North America in relation to the development of, you know, new industries. Whether it's the oil industry in Alberta; mining and some of the potash industry in Saskatchewan, or even our own mining industries here as well, which are expanding.

I know that the power development here though is more of a government industry, and it certainly will be government-run in regard to any construction of a Bipole III line as an example, or the Wuskwatim, Keeyask projects, Conawapa, that are going to take place as well.

So, I guess I'm wondering if the minister can just provide me with a bit of information in regard to how many of these roughly 1,600 people that were trainees would've been local. I'm assuming quite a number of them would've been, and is there much—I would call them transient at this time—is there much—have we had a fair number of those people coming in from other provinces? I do know that folks from Labrador—I've got some in my own constituency—from other parts of Canada moving into the oil industry, not only the small industry we have, which is the big oil industry of Manitoba compared to Saskatchewan and Alberta. But, Mr. Acting Chair, there are opportunities there and first, if he can just provide me with some kind of a—well, and there's—first of all, if he can provide me with somewhat of a number of local persons that would be taking this training.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'm pleased to tell the member that, indeed, every single person who's part of the Hydro Northern Training Initiative is local. It's a program which is set up for northern communities in Manitoba, so each of those 1,600 individual trainees are coming from First Nations and Métis communities.

Mr. Maguire: That's, I think, great; I mean, as far as the type of training that's there. The skill set and opportunities that could be raised by those individuals that maybe never had the opportunity to have that training before will last them a lifetime in regard to other opportunities that will come along as well, hopefully. Has the minister looked at—I mean, I guess if he feels that they've got enough opportunity there with that or will they be looking at expanding the northern training programs, or programs like that for the Hydro development projects that intend to be going down the road? Or would they just look at hiring the tradespeople that are already trained from other provinces if those positions came open? Of

course, they are then public positions to be filled, so they would, I'm assuming, look at hiring persons from out-of-province as well.

Mr. Swan: As my friend's pointed out, development in the North is public in some sectors and some areas. It's private in others. The Northern Sector Council has Hydro as one of its seven members. The other six members are private firms who tell us about their tremendous needs for employment. Mr. Acting Chair, they have been quite interested, very interested, very supportive of finding ways to engage more Aboriginal people in their work force for a number of reasons, a large number of reasons. Certainly, they want to attract and to retain people from the province who are most likely to remain in their employ, that are least likely to go elsewhere, with respect to Hydro.

I'm very pleased that it is a public utility and, indeed, we can use Hydro as an instrument for social development for our northern people. I would expect, as long as this government is in control, Manitoba Hydro will continue to expand its role as a means for economic opportunities for our northern people, something that I'm personally very proud of.

Mr. Maguire: Of course, the projects that are ongoing now, can the minister just inform me as to how many persons have graduated then? I'm assuming that they are already in the work force in the north. Can you provide me with an update on just where those projects are at?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that the Hydro training initiative was set up as a seven-year program; we're now in year five, so there are two more years for this particular initiative. If I can run through some of those numbers again, of the 1,600 people—we could set up a tote board to figure out where everybody is at—we've got 15 individuals who have now completed all of their training and are certified journeypersons. If you think that, in most cases for most trades, it takes four years to become a journeyperson, given the challenges of getting enough work experience in the north, it's actually a pretty solid achievement that 15 people have already been able to get their journeyperson status.

We've got another 146 apprentices who are either working toward their first level or in levels 1 to 4, all at different levels. There are another 135 people who are in pre-employment programs who, we are hopeful, will enter apprenticeship training. There are 325 trainees who've completed their training in other trades. There are 77 trainees that

have finished their training in the various project supports. The overall number I can tell you is that, as of December 31, 2007, 472 individuals are employed and of those the great majority, 88 percent, are employed full time. So the initiative has resulted, as of December 31, 2007, in about, that would make it between 400 and 450 full-time jobs for northern people.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the ongoing efforts in working in that area. So a number of these graduates then would be working on the Wuskwatim project?

* (16:10)

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member that the individuals would be working in a number of different capacities. Some would be working in the initial stages of Wuskwatim. As the member knows, the actual construction of the dam itself has not yet begun, but there has been work in terms of preparing the road, in terms of preparing the site and doing those things. Some of these individuals will be working as general Hydro workers, not assigned to the Wuskwatim project or any other, but doing the general work that Hydro does.

Some of these individuals will also be employed by contractors and suppliers to Hydro. There are six contracts that have been signed for, and contractors can take advantage of this program to get workers.

Some of these people would also be—may have chosen to leave the Hydro orbit, if I can call it that. They may have found employment or they may have created employment in their home communities with their skills. Other people may have gone to other communities to be working. So there's a whole range of places in which those 400 to 415 individuals could be working.

Mr. Maguire: The minister has indicated that that seven-year program, there's five years of it going and, of course, it was brought together to continue to work on the projects because of the discussions of power line Bipole III, because if we're going to do that we'd need a Conawapa project, I'm assuming, somewhere down the road, with the sales being generated, provided they are.

Can the minister indicate to me then whether or not it's his intention to extend this program?

Mr. Swan: You know, as my department hasn't made any determination of that, I think it's important to remember that the goal of this program is—although a happy by-product is providing more

employees for Hydro, a key driver is building the community capacity, which works in a number of different ways. Chances for individuals to gain their skills so that whether they work with Hydro, whether they work in their home community or another northern community, they can build up those skills.

Certainly, the availability of role models. Our hope would be that individuals who are able to get through the initiative, whether they take a trade or whether they do something else, can go back to their home communities and tell young people and their own peers about the opportunities.

So it's intended to provide a work force for Hydro and for other northern operations. A big piece of it, too, is the building of capacity for our northerners.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I certainly acknowledge the fact that there's a great deal of work that could be done if future projects continue. Hydro is not—I agree with the minister—only one of the areas that they could be working in. There are other areas as well.

I'm wondering what the situation is, I guess, with the number of the graduates of the program at the present time, and whether he has any record of the number that might have gone out of province to take up jobs once they've got the training for those jobs. As he indicated, there are different types of work that people are training themselves for and it wouldn't all be for Manitoba Hydro in the types of initiatives that would be needed there and the types of skills that the minister pointed out: the carpentry, construction, electrical. I mean, these are in high demand not only in northern Manitoba, but in other parts of Manitoba, as well as out of province.

So maybe my question is more relevant to, are we getting a benefit out of this in the rest of Manitoba, as well? Some of these persons may be relocating within our province until they can get a more secure job on the other larger projects, when they get going, and can he just provide me with any information on that, as well?

Mr. Swan: The idea of graduates of the program, it's a bit of a slippery concept because there are so many different training paths for individuals who are part of the initiative. Again, for some that may mean one or more training interventions. That may mean one or more areas in which their essential skills need to be upgraded. For some people it may be a defined training program. For example, learning a different project support field like security, or catering, or

administration. For some, it would mean a longer path if they're going down the road of apprenticeship.

So it's difficult to simply say, well, what are grads of the program doing? Because it's really in flux.

I don't think I can give a firm answer to the member, except to put it this way. The reason why Hydro and the Province of Manitoba have made this commitment is because of the acknowledged difficulty in encouraging people, especially those living in more remote northern communities, to become engaged in the work force. These are individuals for whom the idea of packing everything up and coming into Winnipeg or Brandon, or even Thompson, is something that's very challenging. They may have spent all their life on a fairly remote community. Sometimes they may have family or friends in communities, but it's a big step to more into one of the larger centres.

The intention of the initiative is to try and lower that obstacle, to make it more attractive for people to become involved. I would expect, I don't have any science that I can point to to prove this, that individuals who would enter into the Northern Training Initiative from a remote community would more be likely to want to continue to work and to live close to their home community than anyone from the south, that we would also invest in, in terms of getting them through an apprenticeship or other training program. The whole goal is to raise up the capacity of northern people and, again, I think, when we look at all those factors, I think I'm pretty safe in saying that northerners being trained under this initiative are more likely to want to stay, if not in their home community, at least their home area to continue to build the province.

Mr. Maguire: I know what the minister means. I was campaigning, I think it was 1999, in fact, and I came across a farm couple in, probably, their late seventies, let's just say, mid-'70s to late '70s age group, in my constituency. So they said to me, what do you want to go to Winnipeg for? Of course, I was running to be the MLA. So I queried them a little bit. I told them I'd been very involved in a number of organizations across the prairies and had been to Winnipeg hundreds of times to different meetings and opportunities, had family there, that sort of thing. Their only relation to me was, well, you can have it, we've never been there in our lives. I really was taken aback on that one.

But, anyway, I can assure you that's the only couple that I've ever come across in my constituency that, at least, had not been to Winnipeg once in their lives. They'd been to Regina a few times and, of course, Minot is closer than any of them to them from where they're located. So, just to relate that to the minister, I know what he means about when people are in their home areas and they're comfortable with it and they want to be there. I would encourage him, though, to look at the training opportunities that there might be because, of course, while they may not want to move, obviously, if there's work locally, they would be encouraged to take that on. I would encourage them to do that, too. But I think those jobs, in this type of trades programs, are not like getting in your car and going to a—nonwithstanding, the member was a lawyer before becoming an MLA, but a law office or, in my case, going to my particular vocation of farming every day. They will be going from job site to job site as one is completed and another one is started.

So I think we need to encourage those individuals to work into the work force across the whole province of Manitoba as opposed to one particular location. Not to make them transient, but to encourage them to become part of that larger work force and integrate, I think, more, and I don't mean that from a First Nations perspective, I mean it because the persons that I just talked about in my area were integrating somewhat into the rest of Manitoba as well.

* (16:20)

Mr. Acting Chair, I note that the largest budgetary increase the minister has in the department is about a 25 percent increase in the operating expenditures of Competitiveness, Training and Trade this year, from, I think it's on page 8, 81.7 million to, roughly, 104.2 million; a 25 percent increase, virtually. I'm assuming that's in Training. Can he provide me with just the short version of where those funds are being expended?

Just while the minister is looking that up, I'll just continue. Obviously, I can see the pie chart on the next page is 73 percent of his budget is Operating, in total of the 104 million of his 119, but my question was just as to where the increase has been majorly put, I guess, if you will, and if he could explain the Less Recoveries somewhat there, the larger 17.5 million in Recoveries as well.

Mr. Swan: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I'm looking at the chart my friend's talking about on page 8, and, indeed, there's an increase in Operating Expenditures. The main driver of that has been the Labour Market Agreement that was signed just on April 11 between myself, representing Manitoba, and Minister Solberg, representing Canada.

Under that agreement, almost \$110 million is going to flow from the federal government to Manitoba over the next six years so there is just a shade short of \$18 million; \$17,993,000 is coming from the federal government into this department. This department is then going to be working with other departments such as Family Services and Housing, Labour and Immigration, Advanced Education and Literacy, Education, Citizenship and Youth, and it's going to be handled by way of a recovery.

So, if we look at the overall budget for the department—maybe it's most helpful if I just walk through the budget to show you each area that has increased. Then maybe you can ask questions about specifics. Does that make sense to you?

The increase in Operating Expenditures, for example, the money which we use to buy seats at Red River College. Those aren't salary expenses for the department. Mr. Acting Chairperson, those are our operating expenditures. So, of course, we've announced \$3.8 million as an additional expense for Apprenticeship. That's only the five full-time equivalents that we were talking about earlier. The great majority of that \$3.8 million is going to be an operating expenditure because it's being used to buy the seats. That's part of the explanation.

In terms of the Labour Market Agreement, of the \$18 million, just shy of \$18 million, \$6 million is going to be retained by Competitiveness, Training and Trade. The other \$12 million is going to be spent by other departments and will be handled by way of a recovery.

Also in the budget for this year is a \$1-million increase to the work force investment fund, or the flex fund, which is going to be used to assist sector councils in being more responsive and giving us better information on how we should be investing our dollars to train people. Again, those investments won't be salary or employee benefits. Those will be treated as operating expenditures.

Mr. Acting Chair, I think those items would make up the great majority of the increase in the Operating Expenditures that you've mentioned.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I have a series of questions that I'd like to ask the minister, the first being in terms of Manitoba's work force, does the minister have a list of occupations that participate in the economy? Is there a listing of 550 different types of jobs that make up the Manitoba economy, or anything of that nature?

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Swan: I can tell the Member for Inkster that my department publishes an annual publication. It's done in sort of a newspaper format and it's called *Prospects*. In it, it outlines a great number of potential occupations. It's actually a tremendous amount of detail on the nature of the training that's expected as well as the expected salary range. I was excited because it has Israel Idonije on the cover this year.

It's geared toward young Manitobans so that they can begin to put together their career plan and begin to consider what kind of training they would need to get jobs which are available in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Much like Human Resources and you can access it through the Internet, it's a listing of different occupations.

What I'm looking for, is there something of that nature that the Province has where it says, for example, you have janitors, you have aircraft maintenance keepers, just a listing of the different types of occupations in the province?

Mr. Swan: I understand that there's really a national categorization that takes place where the federal government sort of assigns a code or has different occupations that are available. My understanding is that each province really uses those federal classifications. Of course, some of those jobs would not exist in Manitoba. Some may not exist in other provinces or territories.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am aware of that. That's why I was more curious if Manitoba has anything that defines or refines or reflects just the Manitoba situation. It is a very lengthy list that Human Resources provides.

I'll ask the minister then, as a follow up to this, if he was to indicate the top, let's say, 20 occupations that are in high demand in Manitoba, what would those be?

Mr. Swan: Again, Madam Chairperson, I'd refer my friend to the *Prospects* publication that's brought out by the department each year which does provide information on the jobs which are in the greatest demand here in Manitoba. If my friend doesn't have a copy, we can arrange to get him one.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, I would appreciate if the minister would arrange to get me a copy of it.

I guess it's maybe the numbers that we might be most concerned with, but as of today, could the minister indicate what would be those occupations that are in the greatest demand?

* (16:30)

Mr. Swan: I don't have that with me today, but, again, I think when we provide that information to the member, that will provide him with an answer.

I think, though, my friend is picking up on one of the more difficult issues that we are trying to deal with. That's knowing the current labour market information. We rely heavily on Statistics Canada and Human Resources to give us the labour market information. It's not always that nimble. That's not a criticism against the federal government, it's simply a function of the amount of data they collect. Oftentimes we feel, and I can tell you that employers in Manitoba feel, that we don't have the most nimble ability to find out which occupations are in the most need. That's why I think the sector councils which are now becoming more and more numerous and more and more helpful are so important. There's now 15 sector councils in Manitoba. A new one, the Construction Sector Council, will be coming into existence later on this year.

We believe that working with industry, we can get a better handle on those labour market issues and try and get ahead of the curve instead of always following nine months or 12 months behind the latest statistics that come our way from Ottawa.

So, I think that the point my friend's making is are there things we can do to improve the flow of labour market information? Sector councils, I think, are a great way to do it. I'm very excited that we've introduced legislation to provide for the advisory council comprised of sector councils across Manitoba to work with my department so that I can work with other government departments to make sure that we're being most effective and most efficient at filling jobs that are in need here in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chairperson, the last thing I want to do is to create a burden on the minister in terms of requesting a lot of information, but it would be beneficial if there's somewhere in the Estimates books, I didn't actually get a copy of it, nor do I necessarily need a copy of it, but if there is a document that I can look to which makes reference to the sector councils, I think that would be beneficial.

Let me ask, because the minister is somewhat getting to what it is that I'm hoping to draw out at least in part: Is it safe to say that issues or areas like construction and health care, when we talk about the need for employees, that those are two areas that there is a fairly high need?

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, first of all at this point, I don't think the member's been unreasonable in what he's asking for and all you've asked for before this question was that prospects document. We will certainly provide you with a list of the sector councils in Manitoba. You've raised the bigger question of, for example, the construction industry and health care. Those are areas like, frankly, most other areas in Manitoba where there are needs. Those needs aren't equal across every classification. So, even within construction, although I would expect you would find most particular trades in need, I can't tell you that every single sector, or every single job would be in demand. Similarly, in health care, I can tell you, of course, that we are looking to continue increasing our human resources in health care. Again, that wouldn't be equally across every health-care profession and every health-care job.

Mr. Lamoureux: What I have found is that in the need for workers in different occupations, doesn't necessarily mean that it's just occupations where formal education is required in terms of a post-secondary university degree as an example, that quite often, even high school graduates that have a certain amount of work experience in a certain sector could also contribute toward meeting some of those shortages.

That's why I try to draw the comparison, let's say between a health-care worker versus in construction. In construction, if you have someone who has graduated from a high school and has been working in carpentry for 10, 15 years, there's a very good chance that they would be able to pick up a job coming into the province of Manitoba, even though they didn't get a degree. Whereas, in nursing, there's a requirement in terms of getting your credential

recognized. Would the minister agree with that generalization?

Mr. Swan: You've asked some big questions there, and I'll touch on the first one. You've talked about some of the demands of the labour market and the possibility of people at different levels filling jobs, and you're absolutely right, it's a pretty good time to be a high school grad if you want to find a job. We want high school grads to find careers.

Something that I think you may be touching on is us doing a better job of what we like to call career laddering, where you may have a position that's open, but you may not have any workers that are unemployed that are suitable to fill that position, and what I'm very proud of my department, actually, is, they've been pursuing opportunities to help employers to take a low-skilled, potentially low-wage, loyal, devoted employee and help them to find ways to get the training to fill that more skilled, higher-wage position. It then means it's a lot easier for the company then to replace that employee with someone who may be at a lower skill level.

So, certainly, we're working at different ways to give people different career paths, better career paths, and some more creative ways to keep moving everybody up through an organization or through different organizations; taking maybe some smaller steps than facing the prospect of four years of university, or two years at college.

In terms of the overall levels of education, I think it's simply the way the world has moved, that jobs are now requiring higher levels of education, higher levels of technical knowledge, and in many cases, higher levels of essential skills and literacy. In terms of dealing with some of those needs for higher levels of education, that is one of the reasons, first of all, that we've invested in universities and colleges. But, as the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) and I have spent a lot of time discussing, yesterday and today, apprenticeship is a great way to encourage people to become involved and to get their training so they can really pursue a career.

For a lot of Manitobans it's a bit daunting to go to university for four years, to receive no income except what you can earn evenings and weekends and during the summer. It's fairly attractive, comparatively speaking, for someone to start apprenticeship, start earning money the first day they show up at the job site and then have relatively shorter periods of non-employment when they're going and taking their technical training.

The other point I sense my friend from Inkster is getting to is credentials recognition. You've talked about the example of, I believe it was a carpenter with 10 or 15 years' experience. As I mentioned to the Member for Arthur-Virden, I believe the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) the other day, as you know, we're in the middle of trying to find ways to improve that process, that somebody that comes to Manitoba and brings with them skills and experiences is going to be given some assistance to show what they know, and if they can successfully challenge the exam, to actually go and avoid some of the steps of apprenticeship. We've put more supports in place so if it is somebody coming from the Philippines, for example, they may have the skills, they may have the experience, they may be able to demonstrate on the job their know-how. They may not have the skills in English, especially in technical English, so what we want to do is find more ways to help that person. Right now we provide translators to help them with the exam, but we can always do better to help that person get their credentials sooner and be employed at a higher level.

*(16:40)

As the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) knows, the bill that was passed dealing with the recognition of credentials anticipates that there are going to be different moves taken in the years to come. Right now, there's a push on with the various professions to make sure that their entrance qualifications are fair and transparent.

We also are going to be working with trades to make sure, just as you should be able to find out at a glance what the requirements are to become an engineer or pharmacist in Manitoba, so, too, should there be a fair and transparent process to find out how you get certified as a carpenter or as an electrician or any other trade or craft in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: It's interesting in terms of how, through time, we proceed and I do think that to the benefit ultimately, but I think it's important that we recognize something. When the government decides to get involved in terms of setting up of associations, professional organizations, establishing criteria and licensing and so forth, there's also a responsibility to ensure that the government is proactive at acknowledging where skill is and in making sure that individuals are not being denied the opportunity to do the things that they're very skilful at doing.

I could go back to the early '70s and I can recall my father had a mechanic working for him. He never

went to any formal school at all but he would tell you that he was, by far, the best mechanic he ever had, even if he contrasted him against licensed mechanics back then. Now, again, things have changed. We could talk about the immigrant credentials. How sad is it when we see someone who's a professional architect or a medical doctor and they're driving a taxi or they're washing dishes?

Government as an entity puts in all these licensing and qualifications that allow for people to get recognized and as well we should. Government does have an important role; I suspect it will continue to grow but, at the same time, we need to acknowledge that there are certain people within the work force that are wanting to be able to shift over, or certain people that are coming to Manitoba and need to get credentials recognized. I think it's between this department, the Department of Labour and the Department of Education that there needs to be overall co-ordination to ensure that the skills that are there are, in fact, being best-utilized and maximized.

I know the minister is responsible for apprenticeship. I'm a big fan of apprenticeship. I think that that can provide a lot of opportunities for a lot of people but it's getting them in which is probably the most challenging. At times, government says, where are the ideas, where is the advice? I think investing in good solid apprenticeship programming, ensuring that seats are available, ensuring that we have credentials being recognized would go a long way at meeting some of those occupations that are in demand. I think it's an area in which government needs to actually expand in, apprenticeship training.

I would end by—because I know we have limited time—asking a question in regard to the manufacturing industry.

Does the minister have any sort of a graph that clearly shows the number of full-time manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years?

Mr. Swan: I thank the member for the question about manufacturing. I can advise the member that Statistics Canada regularly provides those figures on the number of Canadians and Manitobans employed in manufacturing. I had all these numbers at my fingertips during manufacturing week a couple of weeks ago. I know that in the past year Manitoba did very well and actually bucked the trend by having more people employed in manufacturing than the year before. I don't have those exact numbers at

hand. But again, Statistics Canada regularly provides that information.

On the manufacturing front, there's a lot of challenges out there, as I'm sure the member understands. There's been a slowdown in the United States. There's been the high Canadian dollar and also increased competition from overseas. Despite all that, Manitoba's manufacturers have actually done very well both at increasing their sales, increasing their exports and increasing their work force. I know I've had the chance so far as the minister to get around to a number of manufacturing firms across the province. Even in light of all these things, it's a pretty exciting time.

In 2007, manufacturing shipments in Manitoba actually increased by 8 percent. They rose from about \$15 billion in 2006 to \$16.2 billion in 2007. Manitoba grew by 8 percent. Nationally, the growth in manufacturing was only 0.3 percent. You saw major slowdown in Ontario and Québec. You saw Manitoba actually moving ahead.

I'm now looking at the number I think you wanted. In 2007, Manitoba actually led the entire country in new manufacturing jobs. Our work force in manufacturing increased by 6 percent over 2006 to reach the highest level ever of 70,600 Manitobans working in the manufacturing sector. So you had an increase of 6 percent in Manitoba. The overall Canadian experience is much different, and across the country there was actually a 3.4 percent decline in individuals employed in manufacturing across the country.

I'm very pleased that we've got manufacturers here in Manitoba. I do believe that a great majority of them do care about their work force. They want to work with their employees, whether unionized or not, to try and succeed to win contracts, to have the jobs to offer to their employees.

I'm very pleased that we partner with a number of companies to improve the training of their employees, Madam Chairperson. One example is the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative. That's a program that's funded jointly by the federal government and the Province of Manitoba that encourages companies to become more efficient. It allows their employees to take training to reduce waste, to increase productivity and it's been just a tremendous program. I was very happy, one of my first jobs as minister was to announce the extension of that program with the federal government.

* (16:50)

Since 2005, 4,400 manufacturing employees in Manitoba have taken training. They participated in 50,000 hours of Advanced Manufacturing Initiative activities. I can tell you in some companies there's a bit of nervousness at first from workers when they hear about lean manufacturing and ways to reduce waste. The experience so far in Manitoba has been that companies which have pursued that road have been able, not just to reduce their costs, they've been able to increase their sales to win more contracts, keep their employees employed, and in many cases expand their work force.

So we're cautiously optimistic, but, as the member knows, the downturn in the American economy continues to be a major concern. The Canadian dollar is not going down. It's still pretty close to par, and we still face increasing challenges from overseas.

So we're holding our own in Manitoba, but we're not popping the champagne. We know that industry has to do its level best to keep expanding.

Mr. Lamoureux: Now, distribution centres wouldn't be classified as manufacturing jobs where a product is coming and just to be redistributed, correct?

Mr. Swan: The member is correct. Distribution centres would not be included in those figures.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Chairperson, it pleases me to hear what the minister is saying.

I would still like to see a 10-year graph of the manufacturing jobs that have been here in the province. I realize that statistically you could probably get it somewhere from Stats Canada. I believe the most important, one of these most important stats that a province can provide is related to manufacturing jobs. I believe there are certain sectors of the economy that will always do relatively well compared to other jurisdictions, whether it's—particularly I'd say service industries and things of this nature. The manufacturing jobs, I think, speak in terms of the potential future for the province, and that's why it's very important for us to recognize the number of manufacturing jobs.

The only other stat that would really interest me is, in Canada there is X number of manufacturing jobs. What percentage of the manufacturing jobs does Manitoba actually have of those manufacturing jobs? Are we actually getting better? Are we going

down? I would assume that we're getting better based on the minister's comments.

I don't know if that stat is actually available. I'm not that much into stats, except for the issue of manufacturing jobs, because as I say, Madam Chair, I do think that that's a critical key to Manitoba's overall performance. We don't have the oil from Saskatchewan and Alberta. We rely very heavily on diversification of our economy. The only area that concerns me to the degree in which I think is worthy that we have to raise here, right now, is the manufacturing sector. As long as we can maintain the manufacturing sector, I think we'll be able to maintain the diversity of Manitoba's economy.

So if he can get that graph to me, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Swan: Yes, again, Statistics Canada has issued that, but we will pull that together for the Member for Inkster. I think he's hit on the key point that Manitoba actually has a very diverse economy, both in terms of the general diversity among different sectors, but even within the manufacturing sector. We have fairly nimble companies that have been able to pursue new opportunities, to retool—so to speak—to go after different markets.

I think if we look at Ontario and Québec, you've got some much larger firms that don't have that same kind of diversity. There's a lot of firms in Ontario that may have had a very successful 40- or 50-year run supplying the big three automakers in North America. They are having a very difficult time, as the member knows, retaining their revenues and retaining their staff.

Again, Madam Chair, the member is right. I mean the percentage—Manitoba's share of the overall manufacturing jobs in Canada certainly increased from 2006 to 2007. Again, Manitoba's new manufacturing jobs increased by 6 percent. The rest of the country declined by 3.4 percent. So from 2007 to 2006 there's certainly been an improvement. We've agreed to provide that information going back for several years as we can find and that we'll take a look.

You know it is exciting working with Manitoba's manufacturers. One of the most exciting industries is the aerospace industry, and we're quite lucky in Winnipeg to have a number of firms. There are three or four major firms, but also a number of smaller firms that supply the aerospace industry in Manitoba. Many of them are high-paying, technical, solid jobs

for the province, and I look forward to seeing what we can do in the years to come to help that industry expand.

Mr. Lamoureux: A final comment, I'm going to go back to the apprenticeship or the training of skills that Manitobans have, or future Manitobans have, and just point out the three words of time, process, and money. It's those three factors, I believe, that prevent a lot of people from being able to get their skills recognized or to be able to do the things that they could or should be doing.

When I talk about money, if you have to rely on money in order to sustain a family, quite often it'll keep you working in a place in which you don't necessarily want to work. When we talk about process, if you tell someone that does X type of work that it's going to take them three or four years in order for them to be able to do that X type of work that they've been doing elsewhere, it becomes a huge, huge barrier.

So processing, trying to get things done quickly is very, very important and that feeds into the whole issue of timing. With that, I appreciate the responses from the minister and thank the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for affording me the opportunity to ask a few questions.

Mr. Maguire: Just a couple of quick questions, given the time. I appreciate the minister's indulgence to deal with Trade and some of the competitive aspects, because I've spent a fair bit of time on the apprenticeship training side of things.

Just a quick question in regard to the floodway training initiative, similar to the northern flood plain, where is it at? I noted that there's still the partnership plans to be served in this—on page 59—as floodway training initiative. Is that 40? That's 40 personnel? Can he provide me with an update of how many people in total have been trained under that program?

Mr. Swan: With respect to the floodway training agreement, this department considers it to be a partnership with the Floodway Authority. In the last election, there was a commitment made to invest a million dollars a year in apprenticeship and pre-employment training for upcoming infrastructure projects and the—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., 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 (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

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