

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	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.
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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	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.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 5, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the honourable Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by N. Braun, K. Braun, H. Kasprick and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Bipole III

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba, a decision for which the NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification.

Since this will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route, and given that the Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request to further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will inevitably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than the west-side route.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

And this petition is signed by H. Snitynsky, W. Brown, S. Keating and many, many other Manitobans.

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans are deeply committed to protecting the environment, and they want to be ensured the provincial environmental policies are based on sound science.

In early 2009 the provincial government announced that it was reviewing the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under the environmental act.

Affected Manitobans, including property owners, municipal governments, provided considerable feedback to the provincial government on the impact of the proposed changes, only to have their input ignored.

The updated regulation includes a prohibition on the installation of new waste-water injectors and the elimination of existing waste-water injectors at a time of any property transfer.

Questions have been raised about the lack of scientific basis for these changes, as a Manitoba Conservation official stated in the October 8th, 2009, edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, we have done a specific study? No.

These regulatory changes will have a significant financial impact on all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately placing the recent changes to the Onsite Wastewater Management System Regulation under the environmental act on hold until such time a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing a prohibition on the waste-water ejector systems on a case-by-case basis as determined by environmental need in ecological sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected

Manitobans, property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

Submitted on behalf of G. Rohne, R. Chartrand, M. Kemp and many other fine Manitobans.

Multiple Myeloma Treatments

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, a rare, progressive and fatal blood cancer.

Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Manitoba for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells.

Multiple myeloma is treatable, and new, innovative therapies like Revlimid can extend survival and enhance quality of life for an estimated 2,100 Canadians diagnosed annually.

The provinces of Ontario, Québec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta have already listed this drug on their respective pharmacare formularies.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government consider immediately providing Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health-care providers in Manitoba through public funding.

And Madam Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by S. Buchko, J. Coombs, C. Frost and many, many others.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort

who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by D. Kalynuk, P. Kalynuk, G. Priebe and many, many others.

* (13:40)

PTH 15–Traffic Signals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 5 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals

at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by D. Walker, G. Walker, P.K. Osheluk and many, many, many other Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Jim Hrichishen, Director of Economic and Fiscal Analysis Branch for the Manitoba Department of Finance, along with his three children, Laura, Daniel and Melissa.

Also in the gallery with us today are grade 9 students from Kelvin High School who are here under the direction of their teacher, Mr. Harald Hommel. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

We also have with us today Marion and Jack Kostiuk, who are the parents of the honourable member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), and they are the constituents of the honourable member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

New West Partnership Agreement Provincial Exclusion

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a growing concern over the exclusion of Manitoba from the New West Partnership. And we see, with the recent announcement about the loss of head office jobs at CanWest to Calgary and other announcements that have been made over the past few years, including the Canola crushing operation that went to Saskatchewan by JRI and other investments, that this trend of investments being made to the west of us, rather than here in Manitoba, will accelerate if Manitoba is not part of this agreement.

I wonder if the Premier can indicate why he's opposed to the New West agreement and why he's putting jobs and investment in Manitoba at risk.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): In terms of the agreement that the member references, we work with Saskatchewan already on matters of energy development. We work with them on matters of transportation development. We had the first-ever joint Cabinet meeting in January, with a follow-up next year in Brandon. We're already working with Alberta on matters of securities.

The western premiers get together every year. They were the ones that decided to proceed with how we could work together on the joint purchasing of pharmaceuticals and, of course, Manitoba is now one of the leads for Saskatchewan on following up on that. And as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitoba was a national lead on matters of labour mobility, as well as responding to the H1N1 crisis.

So we work with provinces to the east of us, we work with provinces to the west of us, we work with the territories and jurisdictions to the north of us and, of course, we work with our partner states to the south of us, such as we did in BIO 2010 in Chicago just this weekend.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, the Premier knows—he knows very well that progress in a lot of these other areas has been very slow, given the number of parties involved, which is why premiers are getting together in the west to forge ahead with comprehensive trade agreements. They've done it between Ontario and Québec, with premiers Charest and McGuinty getting together to sign a free trade agreement between those provinces. It's now happening to the west. Premiers are getting together to move forward rapidly on issues that are being managed at a very slow pace and in a very weak way through other agreements and other mechanisms.

I wonder why this Premier is putting jobs and investment and social programs at risk in Manitoba by failing to come to the table as part of the New West Partnership. Why is he so reluctant to be part of the agreement? We know that CUPE is opposed to it. Is that perhaps why this Premier feels that he can't be part of this important agreement?

Mr. Selinger: Manitoba has always seen itself as part of the Canadian economic union. We work to strengthen the economic union for all of Canada. Fifty-three percent of our trade occurs to the east of us; 43 percent of our trade, on a Canadian basis, occurs to the west of us. We want our access points and our relationships to be fostered in both directions. We also want to work with the territories to the north of us, which is why we're in relationships

with Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. We also want to work with the states to the south of us, which is why we have bilateral agreements with Wisconsin and Minnesota. And just this weekend, we expanded ourselves on an international basis with the signing of a new agreement with the state of Queensland in the country of Australia, where we will be exchanging best practices on scientific exchanges and looking at how we can commercialize the results of that scientific research.

So we are a province that is open to the entire world. And we work with everybody, without fear or favour, and look for practical ways to move forward. And that's what brings investment and jobs to Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Madam Deputy Speaker, it's well and good to have agreements with Queensland, but we don't have an agreement with Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., which are right next to us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the talks that he is referring to are all one-off agreements that deal with relatively minor items. What we're talking about is a power trading bloc to the west of us, which is going to create a market of over eight million people, over \$500 million in GDP. Those premiers are going off to seek investment from Asia. We should be part of that delegation, getting investment from Asia, India and other countries.

And yet this Premier, for whatever reason, is digging in his heels when it comes to the New West Partnership. And I want to just ask him: Is it because he's so indebted to CUPE for his leadership win that he can't bring himself to do what's right for Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Madam Deputy Speaker, the member always has that ability to take an important public policy question and to try and turn it into something else completely. You know what? That's why we're the government, because we actually work with all sectors. We work with the business community, which is why we're eliminating the corporate capital tax, which is why we have zero taxation for small business in this province. We work with working people in Manitoba to strengthen their pension programs. We work with the non-profit sector to strengthen our social programs.

We have an agreement with Saskatchewan on very important matters such as education, on very important matters such as transportation, on very important matters such as energy. We're working

with British Columbia on climate change, we're working with Alberta on securities regulation and we are also working with the jurisdictions to the east of us.

We believe in the Council of the Federation. We believe in the Canadian economic union. There's only one club we want to belong to: that's called Canada.

* (13:50)

New West Partnership Agreement Provincial Exclusion

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Madam Deputy Speaker, there's a John Donne quote that goes something like this: No man is an island unto himself. Well, it seems Manitoba finds itself as an island left out in the cold bitter westerly winds. I'm a proud Manitoban who has always believed in playing an important role in western Canada. These beliefs have been shattered by the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade.

On April the 30th, B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan signed an unprecedented historic economic partnership. Manitoba was left out like the wallflower at the prom. This minister and this NDP government has truly embarrassed Manitoba.

Why was Manitoba left out? Why were we not invited to the western Canadian economic party?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Madam Deputy Speaker, and as the First Minister has already indicated, there is an Agreement on Internal Trade that has been signed by all territories and all provinces for this fine country we call Canada, and a lot of the issues that the members are concerned about are dealt with under the agreement on internal trade.

We have also been engaged in a number of different partnerships with a number of different jurisdictions that best represent the interests that we have here in Manitoba to advance our trade and our networking here in Manitoba, and we will continue to do so, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, for supplemental.

Mr. Borotsik: Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister is obviously embarrassed and really doesn't buy his own message.

This New West economic partnership agreement will be a major impediment to Manitoba if we are not a part of it. This agreement creates Canada's largest interprovincial barrier-free trade and investment market, the largest in Canada. It focusses on trade, international co-operation, innovation and procurement. All the components that are necessary to compete in a global economy: a \$550-billion GDP, nine million people singing from the same song sheet, an economic powerhouse. At the same Manitoba is nowhere to be found.

Will the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade just tell me and this House, please, if his department at least tried to become a member of the New West Partnership?

Mr. Bjornson: One country, one people, and that's Canada, and we have an agreement on internal trade. We work with our partners right across the country. There's a number of federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meetings that we'll be engaged in to discuss issues of trade—[*interjection*] Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We are engaged in a number of different enterprises around the world to advance trade and to advance issues such as CentrePort, where we take advantage of the fact that we are the centre of Canada, where we'll be negotiating with our partners to expand to become a trade hub for all of Canada.

So members opposite are talking about a threat to the economic realities of Manitoba. The biggest threat to the economic—economy of Manitoba is if members opposite were in power and they were cutting all the infrastructure programs, cutting all the services and cutting all the programs that are important to Manitobans, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member, I just want to remind all honourable members that we are here in the Legislative Assembly and that we do need some decorum. So, please, if you could assist me with that.

Mr. Borotsik: Madam Deputy Speaker, that ministerial spin was in fact terribly pathetic.

On April the 30th when the three western provinces were signing this historic agreement, the stinging irony is that our own NDP Premier was in Kingston—Kingston, Ontario, giving a speech on, guess what? [*interjection*] Yes, you guessed it, interprovincial co-operation. How much of a sad joke is that?

We know Ontario and Québec are co-operating. We know that B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan are co-operating. Where does the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade expect Manitoba's enormous influence to play a role? Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I'm so glad the member raised the opportunity that Manitoba had to present at the Gow lecture in Kingston, Ontario, at Queens University, because we made the very point there that the members opposite are ignoring. Manitoba works with provinces to the west of us, Manitoba works with provinces to the east of us, Manitoba works with the territories to the north of us, and we've done that in practical ways. Manitoba led us in getting a labour mobility agreement across the country.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Just to remind all honourable members that we are here in front of the viewing public and people are watching us on camera, so I would appreciate if we could keep decorum here in the House.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that was the whole point: that we need to find practical ways for the country to collaborate together and innovate together. And that's what we're doing. We're innovating within the province in a whole variety of areas, including on the economy. We're innovating with other jurisdictions on climate change, for example, British Columbia and Québec. We're working with the other provinces on securities regulation in Alberta. We're working with Saskatchewan on energy, urban education and transportation. We're working with Nunavut on matters of relating to polar matters. All of these things are being done; we don't pick favourites. We decide to work with everybody because we believe in one country—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

Football Stadium Contract Tendering Process

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, it sounds like he's making a bid for federal Parliament, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that's—if that's the announcement today, then we all wish him very well. But the reality is that his rhetoric would be meaningful if he was actually a signatory to the Ontario-Québec trade agreement. The rhetoric

would mean something if we were actually at the table in the New West Partnership. But in the absence of having Manitoba's signature on these agreements, this is nothing but meaningless rhetoric.

Now, as they drag their feet, Madam Deputy Speaker, on trade agreements, one area where they are moving at breathtaking speed is on the stadium project. Just 35 days ago the Premier announced a memorandum of agreement to build a new stadium.

I want to ask him: Over the 35 days since that announcement, what process was followed on the tendering of this \$115-million project and on what date was the contract awarded for the construction of the new stadium?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is a signatory to the Agreement on Internal Trade, which encompasses all the provinces and all the territories. That's the club that we belong to: Canada. The members opposite don't get that and they don't want to get that. They want to pick which club they want to be into. There's only one club; it's called Canada and that's the club we belong to.

With respect to the stadium, Creswin has decided to pick a general construction manager that will facilitate 98 percent of the work being tendered out. They picked Dominion Construction, a firm that has been in Manitoba for 50 years, with proven expertise as a general contractor, and they did that to advance the project now so we can generate 2,500 person-years of employment and create a facility that will be owned by the university and the City of Winnipeg with benefits to students, the Bisons, the Bombers and the community.

We're moving forward; the member wants to nitpick and hold us where we are now.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, you know, when we're talking about the cancellation of addiction facilities, when we're talking about a \$600-million deficit, I think it's fair, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ask questions about a rushed \$115-million deal that's coming out of the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers. It's not nitpicking to ask government to follow the law and follow procedures to protect Manitoba taxpayers at a time when rates are going up, when the deficit is going up and when the debt is at an all-time level—high level.

I want to ask the Premier why it is that an announcement was made on May the 3rd, 2010, just two days ago, regarding the selection of the

general contractor, and yet nine days ago, that same contractor was advertising for subcontracts in the *Winnipeg Free Press*?

Can he just explain how it is that this behind-closed-doors deal was made and why there was no opportunity for an open, transparent and public bidding process on a \$115-million deal? If he wants to call it nitpicking, we'll have that argument; taxpayers disagree.

Mr. Selinger: The member, if he would have listened to my previous answer, he would have had the answer to his supplementary question. Creswin decided to pick a general manager for the project, Dominion Construction, with a long record of over 50 years' service in Winnipeg, in order to fast track and tender the 98 percent of the work that is required to be done so we can provide the 25 person-year–100 person-years of employment in Manitoba this year. And that's why the—and that's why there was ads in the paper for some of the subcontracts.

* (14:00)

So, the reality is, there will be a general manager for it. They will advance the tendering process in order to move this project forward, to generate employment and to create a permanent public asset, which will be to the benefit of the university, the city, the community and, of course, the Bombers and the Bisons. We're moving forward. The member opposite wants to find ways to stall everything in its tracks.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the only thing that's stalled in its tracks is the Women's Hospital that was promised four years ago—three years ago—which won't even be under way for another year.

So he's fast tracking the stadium. He's cancelling addictions facilities. He's dragging his feet on other projects. They've delayed schools. They're delaying addictions facilities. They're dragging their feet on hospitals, but he's fast tracking the stadium, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I want to ask him: In his drive to fast track the stadium project so that he's got a place to launch his campaign in the fall of 2011, why is it that he didn't follow the law, Madam Deputy Speaker, which in Manitoba says, and I quote: Whenever possible competitive offers are to be obtained through the use of public tenders or similar means?

That's what the legislation says. Why is he sidestepping the law? Why is he sidestepping practices, and why is he so cavalier with the tax dollars of Manitobans in order to fast track his Asper stadium project?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps it bears repeating in my first two answers. The general contractor was picked in order to fast track the tendering of 98 percent of the work to get the project working. Just like recently, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and myself, we announced the final acquisition of the Weston bakery facility for the new Women's Hospital after very extensive consultations with the community. That project is moving forward after having consulted the people that will benefit by the use of that hospital.

We are building more hospitals and personal care homes in Manitoba. We are building a record number of public school facilities. We are moving very rapidly on increasing our post-secondary institutions.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do—I am required, under our legislation, to make rules and to keep decorum in the House. I am having a hard time hearing the answers and the questions. So I just want to remind all honourable members that it's important for me be able to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Selinger: And thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My point is, is that we do have a stimulus program in this province this year that will generate 29,000 person-years of employment in order to lift the economy at a time when private investment is being held back through credit issues. And the reality is we're moving the Manitoba economy forward. We've put a budget in place to do that with a five-year plan. The members have opposed that every step of the way. The stadium's just another example of them opposing that, and, by the way, they're voting against the Women's Hospital as well, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Football Stadium Contract Tendering Process

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot absolutely understand how the Premier of the province of Manitoba can say the protection of \$115 million of taxpayers' money is nitpicking to go through the proper tender process.

When a general contractor is picked, he usually has—or that general contractor usually has all of the subtrades already in place and not tenders already put together.

Would the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) please tell me why his department or the Premier's department would not follow the legislative requirement of the Province of Manitoba to have that tender put out in place, and have the tender have bids, competitive bids, put forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, so Manitobans protected their \$115 million of their own money?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity for the fourth time to clarify what's happened.

Creswin really has picked a general construction manager for about 2 percent of the value of the total contract in order to move forward on tendering the remaining 98 percent of the contract. This is to advance the project now. Advancing the project now gets it built faster. It keeps the construction costs down. It avoids costly repairs to the existing facility. It provides 2,500 person-years of employment at a time when employment is at risk. It stimulates the economy and provides a new facility for the university, a new facility for the city and the community, a new facility for the Bisons and a new facility for the Bombers.

The members are opposed to that like they're opposed to the Women's Hospital, like they're opposed to public schools, like they're opposed to everything we're doing to lift the Manitoba economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Borotsik: Madam Deputy Speaker, the only thing that this side is opposed to is the total mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars from this government.

When legislative requirement says tenders must be submitted, what that means is a general contractor must have his subtrades in place, must have their prices in place, and they submit that as a general contractor, Madam Deputy Speaker. That did not happen in this situation. When the Premier talks about 98 percent of the subtrades are going to be tendered, we have no idea who those subtrades are. When he talks about employment in Manitoba, we have no idea if that employment's going to stay here in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are mismanaging \$115 million of Manitoba taxpayers' dollars. This Premier has to be held account. Why is he breaking his own law?

Mr. Selinger: Madam Deputy Speaker, normally it's not the case, but actually, in this case—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said where possible—where possible—those kinds of procedures should be followed.

Ninety-eight percent of the work will be tendered out here. The general manager was selected by Creswin to move the project forward. I welcome the opportunity to clarify that again.

We want this project to move forward to avoid costly repairs of the existing facility. We want to move the project forward, along with our partners, the City of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Football Club and ourselves. We want to move the project forward to generate jobs now, to build a new facility for the benefit of the university, the community, the Bombers and the Bisons. That's why we're doing it, and once again, I welcome the opportunity to explain that.

Mr. Borotsik: The only thing that the Premier, Madam Deputy Speaker, is avoiding is a fair tender process and the protection of Manitoba dollars.

The stadium can be built, Madam Deputy Speaker. It could be built with—following the proper rules and regulations as outlined by this government.

Unfortunately, the Premier panicked. He panicked, Madam Deputy Speaker. He had to put into place a construction project very quickly, and that was the stadium. He panicked, and because of that panic he is now putting \$115 million of Manitoba taxpayers' money at risk.

Why does he not want to have the best tender process possibly in place? Why does he not want to have the best price that we can get for that stadium, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Madam Deputy Speaker, again, the general contractor was selected to move forward the tendering process on 98 percent of the work. Creswin really, after reviewing the options out there—we have to remember Manitoba is actually quite active right now in the construction sector. There are many excellent projects going on in this project, which are generating those 29,000 person-years of employment. Creswin picked a proven, reliable construction general contractor,

Dominion Construction, in order to tender the remaining 98 percent of the work.

They did that to move the project forward: 2,500 person-years of employment, a facility that will be owned by the university, a facility that'll be owned by the city, and a very positive facility for the Bisons, for the Bombers, for the public, for university students that will use it all year-round with the—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know you're new to the job, and you need to enforce the rules of this House.

The rule is that the Premier, when he's finished one minute, speaking and answering any questions, you have to stand up, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's the reality. You didn't stand up, and the microphone has to be turned off.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank you for that reminder, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

On a point of order—I don't believe it's a point of order, but I will keep that as—

On the member's point of order, he's technically correct. It is a point of order. So I thank him for his reminder and I will endeavour to follow that in the future.

* (14:10)

R.M. of Cartier Rejection of Sewer Line Proposal

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Madam Deputy Speaker, the Rural Municipality of Cartier is disappointed that this NDP government nixed a plan that would have assisted the residents of the White Horse Village trailer park. New sewer lines being planned for the Lido Plage area would have also served the White Horse Village, but the minister would not allow that proposal in their development plan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, why did the Minister of Local Government scrap the proposed pipe-sewer lines in Cartier's development plan, which would have aided in development of the Lido Plage area and help the village—White Horse Village residents, stay in their home?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Madam Deputy Speaker, we're working very, very closely with all elected officials in the province of Manitoba, and, indeed, we had a meeting with the reeve and a couple of the councillors and we discussed the issue. And we went over a couple of the challenges that they're currently having with regard to residents. And some of the suggestions that they put forward, we certainly looked at them. And we also are certainly having further conversations, and people within my department are having further conversations with them.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, there are 200 homes within 500 metres of the Assiniboine River in Lido Plage. The R.M. of Cartier had a plan to run sewer pipes to these sensitive river lots, which would've also alleviated the need for septic fields and allowed the extension of these lines to the White Horse Village trailer park. But the NDP killed this idea, preferring to turn off services to 40 families when they close that park on July 15th.

Madam Deputy Speaker, is it the intent of this government to force the people to leave their homes or, if people remain because they have no place else to go and the sewer pumps are turned off, will the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) allow raw sewage to leak into the Assiniboine River?

Mr. Lemieux: The landlord, as we all know, failed to implement the required sewerage disposal in January, and the government intervened to protect the health of the tenants.

It was costing approximately a thousand dollars a day, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the pumping of the sewerage and waste water was done, and the pump-out program is in place certainly until this summer. So, we are certainly taking some action to ensure that the health and safety of those residents and the tenants are—and the initiatives we put in place, are to do that. But, we are in conversation with the R.M. to take a look at a lot of other proposals that they're putting forward.

Now, you know, we have to take a look also—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mrs. Taillieu: Madam Deputy Speaker, this NDP government has killed any chances of the sewer lines to the people at the mobile home park. They could have chosen to work with the municipality; instead, they chose to retain septic fields in sensitive areas by

the river. They've created a situation that will either force families from their homes or leave them with no services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk): When she's writing the cheque for \$115 million to the stadium, at the same time she's turning off the lights and she's turning off the water and she's turning her back on the people in the White Horse Village, does she feel she has her priorities right?

Mr. Lemieux: This government has its priorities straight, Madam Deputy Speaker. We spent almost a hundred thousand dollars helping the residents, and we're providing the emergency costs, meals, shelter, looking for ways to assist the residents of this mobile home park.

But also, with regard to the stadium, Madam Deputy Speaker, they were against MTS Centre. They're against the football stadium, amateur sport in this province. Every single time this government brings some initiative forward, the members opposite are opposed to it. They vote against it. They voted against our budgets. Not only will we help these residents of this trailer park, but we'll also build a football stadium that we can all be proud of.

Rural and Economic Development Initiatives Funding Reductions

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Madam Deputy Speaker, Budget 2010 contains 4.2 percent less funding for agrifood and rural development. In the recent agricultural Estimates, the minister stated that, through being creative, he will still be able to meet the priorities of Manitobans and Manitoba farmers.

So what are the results of the minister's creativity? In Estimates, he revealed that his department is taking \$6 million from rural economic development initiatives to pay for a nutrient management financial assistant program.

Madam Deputy Speaker, can the minister explain why he's taking money away from rural development programming? Why aren't environmental programs being funded separately?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Kind of a sweet question coming from the same guy who thinks we should focus on something else other than agriculture, health and rural issues. It's like—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind all members that all members are honourable in this Chamber.

Mr. Struthers: Let me rephrase that, then, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's the honourable member for Carman who turned his back on rural Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's also sounds like it's the members opposite who don't think that the hog industry is a rural economic development opportunity that we have in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Deputy Speaker, the government's own Web site states that Rural Economic Development Initiatives is to be used for rural and northern economic development activities. REDI is normally used in areas such as feasibility studies, assistance to rural entrepreneurs and Community Works Loans program.

We recognize the merits of a program to help producers adapt to new environmental regulations. However, we have to question why the funding is being taken out of initiatives aimed at creating new businesses and new opportunities in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, why is it this NDP government can find \$105 million for a stadium in Winnipeg in record time, but they can't maintain stable funding for REDI programs which aim to create new jobs and new opportunities for rural and northern Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to remind the member for Carman that the hog industry creates many jobs in this province. The hog industry has a ton of spinoffs in every little community, including Carman and little communities in his constituency.

It certainly is, Madam Deputy Speaker, a central part of our economic development strategy in rural Manitoba, and I can't for the life of me figure out why they would oppose that.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Finance Minister ordered the Agriculture Minister to cut his budget by 10 percent and to raise revenues by 10 percent within his department. To do this, the minister is now going to tax milk, eggs and poultry, and he has creatively raided rural economic development issues to the tune of \$6 million.

The problems caused by the NDP's spending addiction are showing in every department. Rural entrepreneurs have no confidence in this minister to represent them at the Cabinet table.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when will this minister finally begin to stand up for his department and for rural Manitoba? Why is support for rural economic development being put on the back burner by this government?

Mr. Struthers: Instead of spending his time, Madam Deputy Speaker, thinking of all these different conspiracy theories that he comes up with, I would suggest that the member look in the *Carman Leader* and review his own approach to rural Manitoba and decide that it is actually a priority of him and his colleagues. For crying out loud, his leader earlier today in question period referred to agriculture as a minor issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that's not the kind of representation we need in rural Manitoba. We need somebody who's going to advocate on behalf of the things that they see in Budget 2010 which will move agriculture forward, which will support farmers, which will support little communities that little farmers support.

They should just get on board instead of thinking of these conspiracy theories, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (14:20)

Brian Sinclair Death Inquest Status

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, for 34 hours, Brian Sinclair sat in an emergency room and ultimately passed away. In fact, the Chief Medical Officer, shortly thereafter, in the sense of—in January 2009, agreed that there needed to be an inquest, and informed that there should be an inquest. Since January of 2009 this government has done nothing in terms of establishing a date for the inquest. That is unethical for a government to be sitting on such a critically important issue when we have had the worst incident ever in an emergency services, and the government tends to not care.

Why has this government not established a date for the inquest? [*interjection*] That is true.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Deputy Speaker, and, indeed, this was a tragic incident which occurred at the Health Sciences Centre and, we're actually very

pleased that the Chief Medical Examiner called an inquest early on.

The member for Inkster needs to know the government does not set the date for that inquest to go ahead. It is the judge presiding at the inquest that has that right. We've been working—the Province has done everything it can to make sure things are ready to go. We've made an offer of—actually, unprecedented funding to assist the family to have legal representation. We are hopeful that they will allow this to proceed, but it is up to the judge presiding to set the dates. We are hopeful this can get on, and we can move ahead at improving the health-care system in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think this is a very telling tale in terms of just how much this government cares in regards to health care in the province of Manitoba. If there was an ounce of leadership within that New Democratic Party caucus, you would see the importance in recognizing the value of having that inquest.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Chief Medical Officer announced it back in January of 2009. This government and this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and this Minister of Justice and this Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) have done nothing to ensure that that inquest is being done and conducted in a more timely fashion.

My question to the Premier is: Does he not agree that an inquest into this whole affair is warranted, and it better be happening very soon.

Mr. Swan: Madam Deputy Speaker, to make it very clear, we do believe that an inquest is the right thing, and we are looking forward to it happening very soon.

The member for Inkster needs to be aware that in our system of law we have the executive branch, we have the legislative branch, and we have the judiciary. And it's not for us, as legislators, to tell the judiciary how to determine cases, when to schedule cases—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind all honourable members that the Minister for Justice has the floor.

Mr. Swan: Thank you. And I believe it was very early on that the member for Inkster, among others, said there should be an independent consideration of

this situation. We agree. That's why there's an inquest going ahead, and that's why there is a judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba who conducts that inquest, who will set the dates and he'll govern the conduct of it.

I'm very surprised that the member would suggest that I, as the minister, or any member of this government, or any member of this Legislature should try to tell the judge what to do. That would not be consistent with the way that we operate in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, as a colleague beside me points out, you know, it's a question of priorities.

You know, when you want to build a stadium, you can virtually do it overnight. There's so many things that you—when you decide as a government we want to take action on and we want to do, that you can do it with a wave of your hand.

Then, when it comes to a critical issue—a critical issue—dealing in health care, where the worst incident in Canada in terms of emergency—34 hours the individual sat in a wheelchair and ultimately died, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the government is quite content just to leave it go.

The Chief Medical Officer, over a year ago, said there needed to be an inquest, and the government, because it provides resources and so forth, has made the decision that we are not going to do anything in order to ensure that there is quick justice and decisions that are being made in regards to this issue.

My question to the Premier is: Why—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): It's very clear that the member asked for an independent inquest. We support that. We've made additional resources available to that. For him now to come and ask for the government to interfere with the judge's work and with the judiciary would violate the very principles upon which this democracy is founded. The member wants to do that, that is—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Time for question period has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Chris Thompson

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Chris Thompson of Stonewall, Manitoba, is on a mission to spread the joy to children who live in poverty. Chris has travelled to Africa with his friends Mike Kliever, Meagan Hoddinott, and they have learned the extent of child poverty in Africa. The trio left for Africa on February 28th. They have since distributed soccer balls to children who would otherwise be without.

Chris Thompson has played soccer with the Stonewall United 14 years, and has come to love the sport. However, since soccer balls are too expensive for children in Africa, they are forced to play soccer with bare feet and a coconut, water bottle, even a ball made out of plastic bags. Soccer balls can cost between \$7 and \$15 Canadian in Africa, at an average wage of \$1 a day. Money spent on recreation is simply out of the question for most African families.

Chris would like to raise enough money to purchase 1,000 soccer balls for children in Africa and, at the last count, he has purchased 62 balls. He is now working on an association with the international aid organization Right to Play to help him achieve his goal. The children display tremendous excitement when handed one of the soccer balls. Once a ball is handed to a child, there is singing, dancing, speaking, giggling, leaping and hugging. Chris has found it hard to choose which child to give a soccer ball to, since there are limited balls and many children in need.

Chris and friends have visited Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya since they started their trip over two months ago. They have faced a variety of challenges during their stay in Africa, mainly travelling throughout Africa on a small bus with soccer balls in hand. However, the cause is worth the struggle for the trio, who hope to buy a car to help them with their deliveries.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Chris Thompson is an excellent example of how young people in our community can make a difference in the world. These soccer balls are a way for children to help deal with the grief and compensate their lives. All illnesses, poverty, violence with children in Africa are forced to live every day, it's a comfort to know there has been a bright joy brought to their lives with this gift. Thank you.

International Day of the Midwife

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Madam Deputy Speaker, today is the International Day of the Midwife, giving us a chance to celebrate an ancient profession and wonder at the everlasting value of highly skilled birth attendants. Co-led by the International Confederation of Midwives and the World Health Organization, the International Day of the Midwife traces its lineage back to the late 1980s among independent midwife organizations scattered across the world. The day was marked formally in its current iteration in 1992.

The universal value of midwives lends today's celebration a sense of authentic internationalism. Every year more than 500,000 women and more than 5.7 million babies die before, during or after childbirth, the majority, though not all, in developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the UN's Millennium Development Goals made and continue to make midwives the cornerstone of their maternal and newborn and health-care strategy.

Closer to home, Madam Deputy Speaker, our provincial government recognizes the value of midwifery. The past decade has witnessed a bolstering of the midwifery tradition in Manitoba. The birth of regulated and funded midwifery in Manitoba started in 2000 when our government proclaimed The Midwifery Act. We have grown from having no funded midwifery positions in Manitoba to 45 funded midwife positions today. In 2006, the midwifery education program was established at University College of the North, and late last year we announced the expansion of that program to southern Manitoba.

Looking forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, construction is underway on a new midwife-led birthing centre in south Winnipeg. This first in-province centre will, as the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) said at the announcement, provide women and their families with seamless access to a full range of services throughout pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum and early parenting.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the government, the moms, babies and people of Manitoba, I would like to say thank you to the midwives in our province for their skilful care. On a more personal note, I would like to thank two midwives who have a special place in my heart, Annessa and Sheila from the Women's Health Centre who attended my son Heiko's home birth and provided us with months of wonderful care before

and after his birth. They will always be a special part of our lives and embody the care and skill of the midwifery profession.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (14:30)

MS Awareness Month

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm pleased to rise and put a few words on the record today with respect to Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. Today also marks a day of action for many Manitobans suffering from MS who are lobbying for access to research, testing and treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency or CCSVI.

CCSVI is a condition recently discovered by Italian researcher Dr. Paulo Zamboni, where narrow veins in the chest, neck and spine prevent proper blood flow. Dr. Zamboni found that narrow veins were present in over 56 percent of MS patients. Dr. Zamboni's procedure for opening the narrow veins has been termed "the liberation procedure," and for many MS patients it represents hope. Many patients who have had the procedure done overseas report that their MS symptoms have lessened or disappeared completely.

There's a lot of research and testing of Dr. Zamboni's findings that still needs to be done. The MS Society has put out a call for research proposals, and doctors who are interested in this research have begun to come forward.

As a former neurosciences nurse, I am very aware that Manitoba has one of the highest concentrations of MS patients in the world and, for that reason, it is absolutely critical that we stay at the forefront of research and new developments with regard to this disease that impacts the lives of so many.

That's why it's disappointing that our inquiries with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) regarding her government's position on this issue have gone unanswered. I wrote a letter to her office on March 30th, more than a month ago, requesting an update on the status of this important issue. To date, I still have not received a response, and neither have those Manitobans with MS who are waiting for an answer from this government.

Dr. Zamboni's research and discoveries may not be the final answer to MS. But, given the high rate of MS in Manitoba, there is a real opportunity for Manitoba to be a leader in research, testing and trials

related to this procedure. That's something the MS community in Manitoba would certainly like to see, and it's something I hope the Minister of Health and the NDP government will bear in mind when they're making decisions about what's more important, a football stadium or research into groundbreaking new health research.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Assiniboia Community Appreciation Night

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Madam Deputy Speaker, my—recently, the community of Assiniboia celebrated its 9th annual community appreciation night, an evening of fine dining, great company and celebration in honour of volunteers who make our community a vibrant and spirited place to live.

The event was held at Assiniboia Downs and boasted an attendance of over a hundred people from the community groups, schools, day cares, churches, sports clubs and neighbourhood organizations. Throughout the evening, these exceptional individuals were recognized for their contributions not only to the community, but also our province. Everyone went home with a prize and a feeling of being appreciated, courtesy of the organizers and sponsors.

Every day these volunteers perform some of the most valuable work in our society. They are the individuals who sit on parent councils, run our community clubs, teach us the importance of sport and physical fitness, ensure the health of our environment and care for the elderly and those in the hospital, and instil in all of us a strong sense of pride in our community.

Margaret Mead once exclaimed: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is truly the case. I would like to express my gratitude to these individuals for their dedication, and for improving the quality of life in our community. The event was made possible by a number of community businesses and individuals. Thank you to each of these organizations for their support in recognizing the deserving volunteers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a booklet has been created highlighting the volunteers and their outstanding achievements. I ask for leave to have each person's name, and the organization they support, entered into *Hansard*.

Madam Chairperson: Does the honourable member have leave to have the names entered in *Hansard*?
[Agreed]

Sheila Schepp, Crestview School

Jennifer Turnbull, Crestview School

Karen Riehl, Lakewood School

Angie Saj, Lakewood School

Leslie Watson, Voyageur School

Leanne Veltri, Voyageur School

Sandi Taylor, Buchanan School

Patti Tokar, Buchanan School

Scott Wichenko, Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

Monique Wichenko, Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

Daniel Reles, Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

Denise Reles, Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

Linda Howes, Ness Middle School

Bryan Remillard, Manitoba School for the Deaf

Shane Boyce, Manitoba School for the Deaf

Patty Wyatt, Assiniboia West Recreation Association

Brent Mahoney, Assiniboia West Recreation Association

Ryan Bruce, Assiniboia West Recreation Association

Myrna Little, Assiniboia West Recreation Association

Wendy Shrimpton, Kirkfield Westwood Community Centre

Tina Pulver, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Eileen Losier, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Irene Douglas, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Ruth Henry, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Joan Brooke, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Bobbi Sturby, St. James Assiniboia 55+ Centre

Bill Puddicombe, Care & Share Children's Centre

Bruce Wilkinson, Assiniboine Memorial Curling Club

Teri Wilkinson, Assiniboine Memorial Curling Club

Eliza Shelly, Oakview Place Extencicare
Bruce Schultz, Oakview Place Extencicare
Celeste Thibeault, Hamilton House Tenants Association
Linda Mayor, Hamilton House Tenants Association
Pat Anderson, Quail Ridge Tenants Association
Audrey Taplin, Quail Ridge Tenants Association
John Hart, St. James Rods Football Club
John Graham, St. James Rods Football Club
Joan Anderson, Goldwing Ambassador Program
Dave Thompson, Goldwing Ambassador Program
Ken Morley, St. James Legion No. 4
Linda Morley, St. James Legion No. 4
Joan Christianson, Metropolitan Kiwanis Courts
Helen MacDougall, MSOS St. James Assiniboia
Maureen Lelond, MSOS St. James Assiniboia
Warren Klassen, St. Charles Sharks
David McNeil, St. Charles Sharks
Carolyn McNeil, St. Charles Sharks
Celeste Valerie, St. Charles Sharks
Janice Eppler, Grace Hospital
Anne Veosovich, Grace Hospital
Laurelly Nickel, Grace Hospital
Skip Read, Grace Hospital
Pearl Young, St. James Elderobics
Shirley Brown, St. James Elderobics
Mary Pryma, ANAF Unit 283 Over 55 & Retired Club
Heather Collins, YMCA-YWCA
Laura Friesen, YMCA-YWCA
Karen Hendin, YMCA-YWCA
Alice Spencler, YMCA-YWCA
Sharon Larouche, Heritage Victoria Community Club
Christine Prociuk, Heritage Victoria Community Club
Kristy O'Keefe, Heritage Victoria Community Club

Jamie Pitts, Heritage Victoria Community Club
Murdock and Linda Jardine, CAVUNP
Glen Taylor, Strauss Drive Tenants Association
Geri Smith, Strauss Drive Tenants Association
Megan Davis, Lakewood Children's Centre
Brian Head, Assiniboine Watershed Network
Monica Ernstberger, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Curtis Vezina, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
David Fry, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Don Webb, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Rene Lewis, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Sham Ali, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Ken Mattes, Optimist Club of Assiniboia
Gord Ayotte, ANAF Unit 283
Donna Ayotte, ANAF Unit 283
Margaret Rixen, ANAF Unit 283
Doug Rixen, ANAF Unit 283
Carroll Dalke, Kiwanis Club of St. James
Harvey Dalke, Kiwanis Club of St. James
Jerry Jones, John Taylor Collegiate
Cynthia Jones, John Taylor Collegiate
George Morrison, CAVUNP
Narda Narick, Heritage School
Carman Ellis, Heritage School
Caroline Admiraal-Lozie, Military Family Resource Centre

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Deputy Speaker, as Muhammad Ali said: Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.

Thank you for these volunteers for paying your rent in full.

Bill 218

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to discuss Bill 218. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, protecting tenants who own pets, commonly referred to as Fluffy's law

Manitobans are supporting Fluffy's law in droves. The Facebook page has more than 4,000 members, and another page supporting Fluffy's law has over 1,500 members.

We've also collected more than 2,000 petition signatures supporting Fluffy's law. I tabled several.

A rally supporting Fluffy's law will take place this Saturday, May the 8th, at 11 a.m., at the front steps of the Manitoba Legislature. Everyone is welcome. It's being held in partnership with the Winnipeg Humane Society, which also supports Fluffy's law.

Countless studies reveal the many emotional and physical health benefits of pet ownership. Pet owners are less lonely and report less stress, depression, isolation and anxiety. Scientists in South Africa have conducted research that shows that a pet can serve as an antidepressant, increasing the release of endorphins and other hormones tied to pleasure.

A study of more than 5,400 people conducted by Australia's Baker Medical Research Institute found that pet owners had not only lower blood pressure but also lower levels of blood cholesterol and triglycerides in comparison to the non-pet owners, reducing the risk of heart disease.

Studies also reveal that pet owners recover from surgery faster, have fewer doctor visits and use pharmaceuticals less than non-pet owner. Studies conducted by Cambridge University in England, at the University of California, in Los Angeles, have found that pet ownership corresponds to overall improved health and fewer medical care visits.

Pet owners also have higher levels of fitness and activity. Since pet ownership means improved health for Manitobans, increased pet ownership translates into tremendous annual cost savings. With fewer ailments, fewer missed days from work, fewer doctors' appointments and healthier citizens, our government can save millions of tax dollars each year. The immense public savings on health care when responsible pet owners are allowed to keep their pets should not be underestimated.

By passing this law, Manitoba will be in the forefront of Canadian provinces in bringing forth such innovative and comprehensive legislation addressing pet care in apartments. The entire population will benefit tremendously from this law. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, on House business.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Hawranik: I would like to table the list of ministers to be called for concurrence.

On Monday, May the 10th, we will call the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh). These ministers will be questioned concurrently.

On Tuesday, May the 11th, we will be—we call the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Struthers), and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie). Again, these ministers will be questioned concurrently.

And on Wednesday, May the 12th, we call the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors (Mr. Rondeau), and the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford). And, again, these ministers will be questioned concurrently.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader has tabled the concurrence motion which has Monday, May 10th, the Minister of Health; Monday, May 10th, Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. These ministers will be questioned concurrently.

Tuesday, May 11th, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Minister of Conservation. These ministers will be questioned concurrently.

Wednesday, May 12th, the Minister of Justice; Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors; and the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy. These ministers will be questioned concurrently.

* * *

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, at this point the House will resolve itself into the consideration of Estimates.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you. At this time the House will resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Will all Supply Chairs please go to the appropriate room.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)
CONSERVATION**

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): 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 Conservation.

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

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Sorry, Mr. Chairman, and apologies to honourable members, but there had been a question asked just before we hit 5 o'clock yesterday and I wanted to answer that—put the answer to that question on.

I had been asked whether there was any government money that had gone to the Boreal Forest Network, the Western Canadian Wilderness Society and then the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, CPAWS. So I just wanted to put on the record that the department did not provide any funding to the above-noted organizations in 2009-10.

In the past three years, the only payment recorded to the entities below was a grant of 40,000 in 2006-2007 from SDIF to the Boreal Forest Network for a Boreal Kids Educational Project. Two instalments were actually paid, 20,000 and 16,000, and 4,000 remains in a holdback position on that particular project.

So that's just for the—in terms of answering the question that we were in the middle of when the bells rang, so to speak.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I appreciate the opportunity to ask a couple of questions of the minister today.

A first one is in regard to campsites and camping in provincial parks. I represent the riding of Turtle Mountain, which—in that riding is Spruce Woods Provincial Park, which I think is one of the finest provincial parks we have in terms of, certainly, the camping and some of the sites there.

And I do want to compliment the staff on your—work within the booking side of things. I know there

was an overwhelming amount of calls went in this year. It's certainly record calls. But still there is concerns out there. I've heard quite a bit of feedback on people not being able to get in, certainly, the first day or two. So there still is much work to do there, if we can accommodate that somehow.

* (14:50)

But one of my residents went on to say—and I'm just going to quote from his letter: I know I will never camp at Kiche Manitou again, going last year and being told there were no electrical sites available, only to find when I camped that there were maybe 20 campers there and plenty of empty spots all weekend. Hopefully, something can be done about it.

So, obviously, what's happening is, people are reserving these sites and then not utilizing these sites. And I think you know, we want—we don't want to discourage anybody from using our provincial parks, and, obviously, there is some frustration out there. So, and hopefully it's an angle that your department can have a look at, and I would appreciate any response you could give us on that side.

And the other issue I want to raise with Spruce Woods park and it's something we've battled for quite some time now, is, we do have ambulance and fire service available from the communities of Glenboro and Carberry and certainly there's people that are willing to carry out that service. The problem being is the individuals within the park—and we're talking close to 40,000 acres of park, here, that are used year round. When people get in the park, there's no way for them to be able to access 911 service. So what we need is, basically, enhanced cellular service within that area—would greatly help the people that are using that facility year round. And you would have the numbers on in terms of how many people visit that particular park on an annual basis. It is fairly substantial and there's a lot of acreage there to cover, you know, with the walking trails, hiking trails, snowmobile trails, we've got a fairly large equestrian area there as well. All areas of that park are getting utilized throughout the year and it is a real safety issue that I've tried to express to the previous minister and I want to pass on our concerns to you, as well.

So those are the two issues within the Spruce Woods provincial park. I don't know if the minister wants to comment on that particular—those issues at this point in time.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Chairman, as to the honourable member. First of all, with respect to the camping situation, I want to thank him for acknowledging that the reservation system actually is working quite well, and we had record volumes on the first day, I mean, in terms of people getting in and getting other reservations. Things went very well indeed.

But if there are—the member raises a concern about people being told there is—there's nothing available and then going to that particular park and seeing that there are empty sites. All I can say at the moment, although we'll endeavour to look into it further, is that if they don't show up, they still pay. I mean, if they haven't—and it's—I would imagine that it's difficult for park—they don't know in advance if people don't cancel and it may also be the case, who knows, from time to time, that maybe people aren't there but they show up later.

But the case that you raised sounds like there were an awful lot of these campsites that were empty when they should have been full according to the information that your constituent received. So it seems to me that merits, you know, us looking further into what may have went on and, if you don't mind, maybe we could even be in touch as to what weekend you were talking about. Maybe there was some particular—something happened that weekend that was, hopefully, peculiar to that weekend.

With respect to 911 service, we are trying to expand 911 service into the parks. Most recently, I know that that happened in the Whiteshell where that is dependent on availability of cellular service. It makes it a little more difficult for us because we don't control, you know, the cellular phone industry, but it's a point well taken. Anything that we can do to facilitate that happening quicker in our provincial parks—and I'm informed there are some hard lines in the park, but, you know, they're stationary and they're, you know—they're not every—you can't take them with you like you can a cell phone.

So, you know, we understand that in this day and age people want the same kind of access to immediate communication in our parks that they enjoy elsewhere. And so all I can say at this point is that we're aware of the—of that need and it's on our agenda.

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's comments, and certainly we will endeavour to get some more details on that situation and see if we can ascertain the circumstances around that.

I do want to mention the—a couple of volunteer organizations that are very important to working with provincial parks. I know the Spruce Woods organization, they do a lot of work there enhancing the park and a lot of fundraising efforts go into that. And there is a lot of sweat equity that's put into that park and also some capital investments that go into that park, and a lot of volunteer time and effort's put into that. And we—I want to single them out, as well as the group that does a lot of the legwork at the Criddle-Vane Heritage Park as well.

And I want to make sure that the minister is aware of that park. It's located along Provincial Road 340 between Shilo and Wawanesa. It's a great piece of history there, Manitoba history. And I know the organization is struggling with raising some finances to keep that facility and get it back to the—a state of repair where it should be, where it can be enjoyed by all Manitobans.

So I know one thing that's an issue there, in my view, is the signage going into the provincial park. We hope that the minister and his department could have a look at, see if there's something that can be done to maybe provide a little, I would think, more adequate signage there to reflect the nature of a provincial park. I think that's something that should be upgraded, and if we did that, I think it would enhance some of the activity in that provincial park.

And the other thing that I hope he would take up with his Minister of Infrastructure is the Provincial Road 340. There's 13 miles of gravel road that hasn't been paved in quite a number of years. It's one stretch in the middle of that road that hasn't been completed. We've been encouraging the government to look after that piece of road for a number of years. The minister informs me now that the traffic count actually warrants pavement of that road, but we haven't seen any movement from his department to get it done.

I would hope that your department and your staff could have a serious look at trying to sway him in the right direction to get that piece of road paved, and I think it would enhance the availability of that particular provincial park to all Manitobans.

So those are the two issues with regard to the Criddle-Vane heritage park.

Mr. Blaikie: Thanks to the honourable member for the questions with respect to Criddle-Vane Provincial Park. I guess the first thing to be said is that obviously the Province shared the honourable

member's view of the importance of the park—or importance of the historic nature of that place by making it a provincial park in the first place.

But I'll take his representations for better signage, you know, under advisement. I mean, if there's ways that we can make people more aware of the park and more likely to visit it and more likely, therefore, to appreciate it, that all seems to the good for me. I'm not sure exactly where the—depending on what signage we're talking about, what might belong to Parks and what might belong to the department of highways. But we'll have a look at that and see if there's ways that we can—no pun intended—spruce that up for the area.

* (15:00)

With respect to Provincial Road 340, I'm told that part of the road—part of that road, or the part that the member refers to, may actually be on the—on Canadian Forces Base Shilo itself. It goes through the—part of the base and, you know, there might be jurisdictional questions there. I don't know, but I undertake to look into it and find out if there—what impediments there might have been to proceeding in the way that the honourable member would like us to proceed.

But, again, I take that as a representation that that's a piece of road that needs attention, and the member has made his point. *[interjection]* Supplementary.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, just to supplement that. It is a provincial road. I don't think there's—you know, to my knowledge, it's not a jurisdictional issue. I guess the Defence Department does run adjacent to that, and I think there's farmland on other sides of it.

And I know, in talking with the base commander there, he's very interested in getting that road completed as well. It's certainly a safety issue for his staff out there as well. And then there's the school bus traffic there on a daily basis, and a lot of their military personnel use that road to, you know, go back and forth from their residence to the base, so he is certainly concerned about that particular road. I know he's brought it up with the government, but I will—certainly wanted to make sure you were aware of it as well.

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll take the honourable member's word for it. I think the understanding we had was—I may have not put it quite right—not that it was part of the base itself, but it's Crown lands that are used by the base in and

around the road. But if the commander of the base himself is—you know, shares the view of the honourable member, then my, you know, speculation that there might be those kind of problems is probably not accurate. So we'll just look into what the situation is and, as I say, take it as a representation.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I'd like to start off with a question for the minister, if he could give us a list of all of his political staff, including the names, positions and whether they're full-time.

Mr. Blaikie: I can—the best thing I can do, I suppose, in that sense, is just—I can get back to the honourable member with that if you want all the details. I undertake to do that.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that. And perhaps, then, as we go forward through—I'll just ask a number of questions and perhaps they can do the same thing with that.

There's a specific list of all staff in the minister's and deputy minister's office; the number of staff currently employed in the department; how much has this increased since the end of 2009-2010 fiscal year; the names of the staff that have been hired in 2009 and '10, including whether they're hired through a competition or appointment; a description of any position that has been reclassified; a listing of all vacant positions; and if all the staff years are currently filled.

That's a number of questions. If the minister would care to do that in writing as well to facilitate time, that would be fine.

An Honourable Member: I certainly won't be rattling it off—*[interjection]*

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister tell me if there's been any travel by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by the—his particular department, and if so, the pertinent details of that travel? Example: a location, the purpose, dates, costs, who all went, et cetera.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes. There was a Premier's out-of-province travel that was paid for Manitoba Conservation and that was the trip to Copenhagen for the climate change conference from—in December of 2009, and the total cost for that was \$7,012.84.

An Honourable Member: Would you repeat that, please?

Mr. Blaikie: \$7,012.84.

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister tell me if there's been any positions relocated in 2009-2010—for example, relocated from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg or relocated around the province—and the reason for any of this relocation?

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Mr. Chairman, to the honourable member from Emerson, there were no relocations from rural or northern Manitoba to Winnipeg this year.

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister indicate whether there were any types of contracts that were—have been awarded in his department directly or indirectly, and how many of these contracts were going to tender? And I'm suggesting contracts in excess of \$25,000.

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Chairman, I have—the department entered into 78 contracts over \$25,000 totalling \$16,333,151, of which there were 50 tendered contracts totalling \$12,900,482. I could read all these into the record or I could just provide them to the honourable member at some point.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Chairperson, if you would supply those that would be sufficient.

I'd like to ask the minister if he could—or his department could—provide me with the details of the annual advertising and the budgets, with the aim at getting the details—whether the advertising was print media, whether it was a mail out, whether it's television, whether it's radio. Could the minister's department supply me with that for 2009-2010?

Mr. Blaikie: I undertake to supply the honourable member with that list.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that.

How much money does Conservation Department contribute directly or indirectly to the Nature Conservancy in Manitoba?

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, to the honourable member from Emerson, in the Estimates for '10-11 there is no money going to Nature Conservancy, but there has been—there was grants to them in the past. But in this coming year there is no money going to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, I presume. You said, of Manitoba, but I assume you mean—it's a national organization now.

Mr. Graydon: Yes, thank you for that, Mr. Minister. In going forward there will not be—can you tell me what there was in the past year?

* (15:10)

Mr. Blaikie: A grant in the previous year, Mr. Chairperson, to the Nature Conservancy of \$3 million. If you want to go back further than that, we can provide you with that, but that's—

Mr. Graydon: The grant, if I understood right, was for \$3 million for 2009-2010 year, and that you have offered to go back. I would like to see that go back three years, if I could, just to see what there has been in staff and in grants because I understand that there has been some staff that have been supplied to Nature Conservancy as well in the past, and so it's just—kind of gives an overall view of where we've been and where we are going.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, well, we'll undertake to get that information for the honourable member and would hasten to add that the fact that there are no monies flowing to the Nature Conservancy of Canada in this particular year is not a reflection, in any way, of the ongoing appreciation that the department has and that the minister has for the work of Nature Conservancy. It's just that there were commitments made in the past for specific purposes and those have come to an end.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. We also have an appreciation for a lot of the work that Nature Conservancy does, it just—we'd just like to better understand how they are able to operate and the way they do operate in Manitoba, and so that information—if you supply that information, that will go a long way to helping us better understand the situation.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the wildlife and the ecosystem protection in the province of Manitoba, and I know that half a million dollars less funding for wildlife and ecosystem protection, and understanding that we have the possibility of a number of different epidemic outbreaks in the province. We have that possibility. It's always there. It's not an if it'll happen; it's a when it'll happen, and we've seen this happen with TB in the Riding Mountain area. We've seen this with anaplasmosis in the eastern region of Manitoba.

And in conversation with one of the Wildlife Conservation people from your staff, as recently as two weeks ago, he indicated that he had no budget for testing wildlife. It seems, that particular evening, that it was a grave concern to the farmers in that area. Those farmers in that area were and are strictly beef farmers. They make their total living

from beef and there is an anaplasmosis outbreak. I'm not suggesting that they don't get compensated for their animals and probably compensated in an economically good way.

However, it is devastating to any of their breeding program, and because the Conservation and CFIA were unable to identify the source of the infection, there was a feeling that there needed to be some testing done on the wildlife in that area, and the particular individual that was there from Conservation said, I don't have any money for that.

I think, when we look at the overall economic impact or the economic contribution that we have in the cattle industry in Manitoba, that it's necessary that all departments work together.

And so I would ask the minister if he would reconsider and can find some money for this type of testing in the area.

Mr. Blaikie: If I understand the honourable member correctly, he's talking about, in this particular case, of the being told that there was no money for testing. This had to do with testing for anaplasmosis in that area of the province that I think the honourable member actually raised it with me at one point. So you're talking about testing for anaplasmosis, testing wild animals for anaplasmosis.

Because there are—there is money for testing but, you know, it may not have been—you know, it may be money that needs to be reallocated, or people need to know it's available. You know, so, we'll look into—certainly have a look into that to see why there may have been that impression, that there is no money for testing. Because, I believe, that there is some money for testing, and—but, of course, like any budget, it has to be allocated on a priority basis but, you know, we take the concerns of the honourable member seriously that, with respect to that particular disease, as we do the concern that he's expressed in the past before and that we've been very concerned about, and my predecessor, the—now the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), with respect to tuberculosis.

And one of the things that we've been trying to do with respect to that is to get the federal government reengaged in that project. Because there was a working group, or I'm not sure if I'm using exactly the right language here with the federal government, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency,

ourselves, Parks Canada. And, at a certain point, it looked like there was, you know, a certain kind of momentum. And then the federal government, for whatever reason, didn't seem to be as engaged as we wanted them to be.

I've sent a letter off to the minister, asking them to reengage. I explained this to the Manitoba Cattle Producers when I met with them. And, you know, we were all of the view that they were—in fact, they were—I had just written, I believe, to the minister, the federal minister, just before their meeting. And they were certainly of the view that there was a need for the federal government to re-engage on this, and that they were appreciative of the letter having been written. So, hopefully, that will—you know, whatever was the problem there will soon be overcome and we can get that co-operation, with all levels of government and agencies of government up and working at the optimum effectiveness again.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that answer about the—that there is money for testing in the southeast for this anaplasmosis situation. We certainly look forward to—

Mr. Blaikie: It was in the southeast where this particular—

Mr. Graydon: It's in the eastern region of the province, Mr. Minister, in the Lac du Bonnet area is where the first outbreak was. And the second outbreak is in the outer Arbakka country in the southeastern portion of the province. They haven't outlined yet, which the outside of that disease that's covered. However, and they won't be testing again until the vector is dormant this fall, because it's pointless to do that.

We keep in mind that there was supposedly an outbreak in British Columbia, and that turned out to be false. After 18 tests were reviewed, found out that these tests were false. A number of cattle had been slaughtered. Producers—some producers had spent up to \$200,000, and to find out that it was for nothing.

At the same time, I would suggest that there are people in some of the communities, whether that be in CFIA's community or in Conservation community, that are suggesting maybe that the anaplasmosis shouldn't be a reportable disease in Canada, because it's not in the United States. But it certainly has a huge impact, economic impact, on the exportation of our animals, of our cattle. And, also, keep in mind that Canada and Manitoba, in particular, has been—always been viewed as very

high-health herds, pristine, and some of the best genetics in the world are here in Manitoba. And, if we're going to continue to have an export market, we need to maintain some strict testing.

* (15:20)

However, when we talk about the elk in Riding Mountain, just to better—have a better overview of what has taken place, there was an agreement to do a massive eradication, and somehow that fell off the rails last fall because there was some concern there wouldn't be any elk left in the park. I would strongly suggest to the minister—and I have heard from one other minister—he's sitting down there right now, actually, who had said, well, we're not going to be able to restock the park with some DNA or some bloodlines that weren't native to there. However, Mr. Minister, I want to point out that there were elk captured in the park a long time ago that had been put on farms in the province of Manitoba. And we can chase a cow or follow a cow from northern Alberta to California and back to Washington and identify that its home was in northern Alberta, and that's where it contacted BSE. We can certainly DNA these elk to restock the park with clean, clean stock. And TB is a slow-moving disease. And I would suggest that that would be the way to go and protect the cattle industry around the park.

Mr. Blaikie: Well, I mean, you know, I take the honourable member's concerns seriously. He's talking about an eradication program, if I understand it correctly, that would have happened in the park. And, obviously, the park is a federal concern. And that's why, if we're going to—if anything's going to happen on that score, or whatever happens in the park, has to have the engagement and the approval of the federal government, which is one of the reasons why we want to get them back to the table.

Mr. Graydon: There's ongoing concern raised by producers and the general public about coyotes and wolves and predators—is there any movement in Conservation to try to control these?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, I had a discussion about this yesterday with the honourable member's colleague from Arthur-Virden and I met with, you know, groups that are concerned about this—the Cattle Producers, Keystone Agriculture and a number of representations on this.

Unless I misunderstood people, other than perhaps wanting more resources devoted to what we are doing now, there seems to be, you know, a

general level of acceptance of the approach that Manitoba takes of not going after the population of coyotes or the population of wolves, in general, but going after problem predators. And, of course, in that respect, we have an agreement with the Manitoba Trappers Association that when a problem predator situation is identified, that they are hired to go out and deal with the situation.

So I know that in other provinces that different approaches have been taken, but that's the Manitoba approach, and it's the approach that we're still committed to maintaining.

Mr. Graydon: Can the minister update on the number of charges laid for fishing in the Dauphin Lake area this year for illegal fishing?

An Honourable Member: I don't—

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Blaikie: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. There I go again, jumping the gun.

I presume that the honourable member is referring to the closure of the tributaries to the Dauphin Lake, which began on April 14th and ran until noon on April the 25th. And this was a shorter period than last year by four days, and, during that time, there were 29 warnings issued and four charges laid.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I have a number of other questions for you, but it seems that our time is up, that we have another member that will be taking over from Healthy Living and we need to wrap up by 3:30. Is that—I'll turn that back to the Chair to wrap up and I'm not sure that we will get the opportunity to question you later or not, but—

Mr. Blaikie: I understand that I will be one of the ministers that will be in the House for concurrence on the Estimates, so, maybe, the honourable member will get another crack at me then.

An Honourable Member: I won't miss.

Mr. Blaikie: But I'll be—I hasten to add, if I understand the procedure correctly—because I'm a rookie at this—I'll be—I won't have my staff with me, so if you ask me detailed questions, I'll be doing a lot of promising to get back to you.

Mr. Graydon: I certainly appreciate dealing with a 30-year rookie.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department. I will now call

Resolution 12.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$70,682,000 for Conservation, Regional Operations, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$24,646,000 for Conservation, Conservation Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,531,000 for Conservation, Environmental Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,111,000 for Conservation, Minor Capital Projects, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,608,000 for Conservation, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$17,557,000 for Conservation, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 12.1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 12.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item. *[interjection]* Sorry.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I have just a couple of questions—very short questions, in any event, for the minister. And it's with regard to an area known as Mars Sandhills, and it's in the—it's a

wildlife management area within the Rural Municipality of Brokenhead and St. Clements.

And I'd had many residents in that particular area concerned about what's been happening in that area over the last couple of years. It's an ecologically sensitive area. It's an area that's—in which there are many trees and on sand hills, on actual sand hills. So any disturbance of the sand will kill the trees, and there's a lot of—apparently a lot of new trails being cut through that forest every year by off-road vehicles. And it seems to be ruining that particular area.

So I'd ask the Minister of Conservation whether—first of all, whether he's aware of the issues out there, whether any of the residents have approached him or his department and, if not, what he's prepared to do to stop the damage in that particular area?

* (15:30)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

All resolutions have been passed up to now. Is the committee agreed to pose the questions at this point? *[Agreed]*

Okay. Now, honourable minister—already question has been asked by the member of Lac du Bonnet. I will ask honourable minister to respond.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, well, to the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, I am aware of the situation that he's referring to, and I believe I have received—I'm going from memory now—some correspondence on the matter, and it raises not just a question with respect to that area but the larger question of—the question of all-terrain vehicles and how we're going to regulate them, you know, from one place to another and in a general way.

It's certainly the case that—and I've had concern expressed to me by a number of people that the increasing use and availability of these particular vehicles is making it easier and easier for people to get into all kinds of places where they didn't use to be able to get into and that there's a certain amount of environmental impact associated with the use of these vehicles.

So it is on the radar of our department, I want to assure the honourable member, and we are working—we want to work with people in the ATV community to come up with some—with a framework and with some rules for, you know, how these machines are going to be regulated in our future in a way that people can continue to enjoy them but at the

same time not have the kind of increasing environmental impact that many Manitobans are very, very concerned about.

Mr. Hawranik: Yeah, just one final question with respect to that—and the minister may or may not be aware of this but there's—on weekends, in particular in the summer, there are hundreds of off-road vehicles within that particular forest. There's lots of parties going on there. There's a lot of campfires at night and they recently had a meeting of interested residents in that area who indicated—with Natural Resources staff, and one of the Natural Resources officers said he doesn't have the resources in order to patrol that area.

And, secondly, there was even an RCMP officer present at that meeting who indicated that quite often on weekends that they patrol around that area, but by themselves, and they're afraid to go in without backup to actually enforce the rules and try to take them out of the—out of that Crown land area.

So I'm wondering whether the minister can indicate that, in the meantime, that he may be prepared to put more resources in the area to possibly reduce the number of parties and the number of people going into that area.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Chairperson, what I can do is say that, you know, the honourable member's made his point, but, I mean, if the RCMP don't want to go in there by themselves, then I'm certain the Natural Resource officers don't want to go in there by themselves.

So it's obviously something that's going to take a bit of teamwork, and I undertake to speak to the regional staff in that area and maybe try and get some people around the right table and see what can be done about the matter.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Chairperson, yesterday I shared with the minister a note regarding the—oh, were you on there—

An Honourable Member: No. I'm just waiting for Healthy Living.

Mr. Derkach: Okay. I'm sorry, I'll continue. Yesterday I shared with the minister some information regarding a small model airplane field at Asessippi Provincial Park. The field has been there for about 30 years and—well, I guess since the beginning when the park was created, and it was managed by a volunteer group of people from the

community who had an interest in flying model planes.

The sport has grown over the 30 years to a point where at the national—or at the annual fly-in, which is usually held on the July long weekend, we will have anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 people attend the event, which also spins off into the park because the park is generally full during that period of time and other campgrounds surrounding the area are full of visitors from all over the place. And we have visitors from as far away as Texas and—who fly model airplanes, and each year they have this competition. It's accepted extremely well. It's a safe kind of recreational activity and attracts a lot of spectators.

The volunteer group has always applied for a little bit of money from either government sources to help maintain the airfield or to give it some operating funds to put on these events. And generally the grants have been in the order of 2,500 or \$3,000, some small amount like that, which gives them an ability to put the show on. But there's been an attitude about it, and that is it's almost been a pain in the side for the Conservation folks. And it goes back to when I was in government, as well, and that attitude hasn't changed much.

But now the volunteer organization, once again, last year applied for some money to do the fly-in, and they were denied. And because they no longer have the funds available to maintain the yard, the flying field, they've asked for assistance from the Parks people to maintain the grounds. Now in the past, Parks people have always allowed their equipment to be used to do the maintenance, and that's always been a welcome kind of assist but now that seems to have been cut off. As a matter of fact, the individual who sort of has spearheaded this for many, many years has been told that, bluntly told, that the Parks people no longer support it. They don't want it there and as far as they're concerned, there'll be absolutely no support forthcoming for either the maintenance or for the show that's put on every year.

So, as a result of that, the organization has put out a memo that says that this July will be the last fly-in that they will be hosting. As a matter of fact, even the fly-in this year is going to be put on by the volunteer flying club out of Brandon, instead of the local area. And I've received numerous letters from flyers from all over Canada and, indeed, in the United States, wondering why we can't put a little bit of money into maintaining an activity such as this. And at the same time, we're spending—we just spent

\$1 million building a road into Dropmore West. We've also spent—we're also going to be spending significant dollars in trail paving and trail enhancement in the area, not that those are bad activities. Those are all good things, but this is an activity that has been there for a long time, doesn't take a lot of money to maintain, and it seems to me somewhat foolhardy to turn an activity like this away, and we don't understand why. Nobody can give me any rationale as to why it isn't being supported.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Chairperson, I must say this is an incredible procedural anomaly. We were in the middle of wrapping things up, and then the member for Lac du Bonnet came in, who, I presume, we gave leave—we did actually give leave to him, retroactively, to ask his question. And I presume at some point we'll give to the honourable member from Russell, retroactively, to ask his question, because we were past the point where questions were being asked.

But I'm quite happy to answer the question of the honourable member. And so, my understanding is—and, you know, there might be just a sort of a time lag here between what the honourable member knows and what's transpired, because I'm told that we have supplied—the department has supplied a special—a specialized mower to the volunteer groups to make the—to help with the event and with the ongoing maintenance of that particular area. And the volunteer group has applied for the 2010—I'm not aware that—of the correspondence having to do or the publicity having to do with the fact that they think this might be the last one. I hope not; sounds like a great event.

* (15:40)

And the department is providing picnic tables, garbage pickup. We're waiving the park entry and overnight camping fees at the site. So it sounds to me like there's a—no, if I understand the situation correctly, it is somewhat in transition from the person who normally looked after this and was the sort of point person on this for many, many years who's—and we're transitioning now to the role that this volunteer club, the one from Brandon, I believe, the one that the honourable member referred to, the role that it's playing and, you know, the department and the Parks branch remains committed to working with that group to make sure that this event continues to be the kind of success that you've spoken about.

Mr. Chairperson: I think, before I recognize the minister—member for Russell, I would ask to—give a leave if everybody agreed, further questioning, and—is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Derkach: And I'm not going to prolong this, but I would just like to ask the minister if—because there does seem to be some confusion about what is transpiring, and—I'm confused now because the group from Brandon have indicated that this was the only one they're allowed to have and that it—this is going to be the last year there will be support for this activity from the department.

Now, if that's not the case, I'd like to ask the minister if he can direct me to somebody that we can talk to directly, who has some authority in terms of getting an agreement or some kind of an arrangement so that this would be allowed to continue on into the future.

Now, the flyers from the local area and indeed other areas come in and use this field during the season, during the summer season, because it's the only field in the area. As a matter of fact, it's been dubbed as the best field between here and Texas, so it's got a name to itself in terms of—and it's a good reputation.

So we are simply asking that—if we could be directed to the correct person to be talking to, then that would be helpful.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Chairman, well, there's obviously—there is a difference—not a dispute, but a difference as to what we understand to be the case and what the member understands and I would think the member is—hope our understanding is right because, as far as we're concerned, this isn't the last one and, you know, people can apply for permits this year, they can apply for permits next year and the same willingness to help that's year—this year—will be there next year.

So, what I would suggest is, you know, that the member contact the regional director there and maybe—and kind of straighten out what's actually going on. I think his name is Luke—yes, Luke Peloquin, the director of the western region. And perhaps a conversation with him as to, you know, exactly where the department stands would be helpful to the honourable member.

Mr. Derkach: And I certainly appreciate that and I will follow that up and I thank the minister for that answer.

I have been receiving letters from the area around Asessippi regarding the amount of resource material that's available from the Department of Conservation, and Tourism, I guess, and that's a different department but, apparently there appears to be a shortage of resource materials for parks this year.

I received a letter from Terry Offow [*phonetic*]-certainly pass it along. But is there some problem in print materials and resource materials of that nature, making their ways into the-into our parks system and into our tourism booths regarding the park and its assets and what's available? Because I've never heard of this before, it just seems that this has happened this year and I don't understand why.

Mr. Blaikie: I just want to ask the honourable member a question just for clarity's sake. Is he talking about resource materials specific to Asessippi park, because obviously there's-you know, I mean the Parks guide is out, things having to do with the 50th anniversary of the parks, all these kinds of things. But, if there's-if he's claiming that there's somehow a shortage of what's normally available in terms of brochures or whatever for Asessippi park, well, then I undertake to look into that and find out, you know, why that is so. and if it's so, and to try and remedy the situation.

Mr. Derkach: And I thank the minister for that. One final question with regard to water levels in-on the west side of the province. And the minister knows what I'm talking about here and I think he's already assigned some staff to deal with the matter. I don't know if it's the deputy minister who's going to be dealing with the municipality, but if I could ask-because this is something that I think I have received more phone calls and more meetings on in the last two years than any other issue. If there is a resolution to it, if I could be apprised of at least bare details of it, I would be appreciative of that because that is an issue that has been ongoing and one that has created a lot of anxiety in the area for residents and for municipal official.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, and, as the member knows, I did undertake to-initially, actually, to try and arrange a meeting between himself and the deputy minister to explain the situation. But I understand that now what's happening is that my deputy minister will be meeting with the people who are actually from the communities that have these concerns and that meeting will be happening on May the 13th, and it's already set up. I would think the honourable member

could come. [*interjection*] That was yes? And that way I won't have to get back to him as to what happened at the meeting; he'll know.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Portage la Prairie, on the same leave?

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): No, and thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We will continue on with the committee of Estimates, and I appreciate committee's indulgence and leave that was granted to the honourable members for Lac du Bonnet and for Russell. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Now we go back to the item where we were before. The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 12.1.(a) the Minister's Salary contained in the resolution 12.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item. They already have left. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I move that item 12.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Conservation that: I move that the item 12.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

The motion is in order. Are there any questions or arguments from the motion?

Mr. Blaikie: I just wanted to put on the record that I put forward this motion, as have other members at the same time in Estimates, to provide additional clarity. As members are aware, this reduction is already in effect and legislation will be brought forward to make this reduction law. The 20 percent salary reduction for ministers was announced in the budget speech on March the 23rd and was agreed to prior to that.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass? [*Agreed*]

Resolution 12.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,659,000 for Conservation, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Conservation.

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

The committee recessed at 3:49 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:50 p.m.

HEALTHY LIVING, YOUTH AND SENIORS

Mr. Chairperson (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 Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the new Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, and on behalf of the nine ministers of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and their departments in the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy, I am pleased to present to this committee, for its consideration and discussions, the 2010-2011 expenditure Estimates for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors and the Healthy Child Manitoba office.

It's truly a honour to lead the new department dedicated to prevention and promotion across the life course, and to work with all departments and communities to prevent the major health and social problems facing our province as we begin a new decade. The province continues to be recognized internationally as a leader in putting children and families first. Our province is currently the only jurisdiction in Canada, and one of the few worldwide, that has a statutory standing committee, Cabinet committee, dedicated to the well-being of children and youth.

From the prenatal period to the transition into adulthood, it is my privilege to chair the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Manitoba's communities and their representatives in our Legislative Assembly should be proud of our province's collective achievements for children over the last decade and a half. And so it makes policy sense to extend the principles and practices of the

Healthy Child Manitoba strategy, which focusses on cross-sectoral prevention and earlier intervention for children and youth to Manitobans of all ages through adulthood into the senior and elderly years. People like Dr. Fraser Mustard say that all governments need a ministry of human development, and Manitoba is now moving closer to this by bringing healthy living, recreation, seniors and healthy aging together, and linking them to Healthy Child Manitoba strategy.

As well, the inclusion of addictions to the new department recognizes that prevention and treatment of addictions is central to the prevention of major health and social problems. The—also, the addition of mental health promotion is also an important contribution to the ministry.

Manitoba continues to learn from and act upon the latest research evidence on the importance of investing in children across the life course, especially during their earliest years. Our government remains deeply committed to Manitoba's long-term, cross-departmental, evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategy for children and youth, as well as using science to inform supports and services for adults and seniors.

In 2010-2011, it's first full year as a new department, Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors will focus on strategic cross-sectoral prevention and treatment investments in the health and well-being of Manitobans across the life course with a significant focus on preventing and treating addiction. Priority areas for investment this year will include: fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention; early childhood development; middle childhood development; youth services and supports; active living for all ages and segments of society; continued supports to communities to be age friendly and actively engage and support seniors; addictions, including an increase of \$1,069,000 for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba; support for addictions' services and education in schools; enhancement to the treatment systems.

These strategic investments continue our commitment to focus on scarce resources into the causes of the causes: alcohol use during pregnancy as a cause for FASD, early childhood vulnerability as a later cause of educational failure, insufficient physical activity and unhealthy eating as a cause of obesity and metabolic diseases, and addictions as a

root cause for suffering and physical health, mental health, crime and violence.

For one and a half decades from the creation of Healthy—from the Children and Youth Secretariat under the former government to the establishment of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet in 2000 to the present day, the Manitoba government has understood that no single department, agency or community can meet the holistic needs of children as they grow up in our province and country.

I believe all of us in the Legislative Assembly continue to share this profound commitment to working together to ensure the best start and the best possible outcomes for all of Manitoba's children, youth and population.

I also believe all members of the Legislative Assembly believe in a policy of prevention for all Manitobans, throughout their lives and into the later years, and can agree that it is more important than ever to have a department dedicated to prevention and to working with all departments and all community partners.

Our province is an increasingly diverse population, an increasingly aging population, and we will continue to work together to help our people live stronger, live better, better health, better well-being for all.

And I look forward to the committee's review of these Estimates, and I welcome the feedback and participation of all committee members. Thank you very much.

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

Does the official opposition critic, honourable member for Minnedosa, have any opening comments?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I actually don't have an opening statement. We don't have a lot of opportunity for question and answers, so all I would put on the record is, this is a portfolio that I'm very interested in, very passionate about, and I look forward to the debate with the minister and I look forward to learning more about the department and actually getting to know the staff within the department, better than on a name-to-name basis, but a face-to-face basis. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 34.1.(a), contained in resolution 34.1.

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

Mr. Rondeau: For staff in attendance, I have Jan Sanderson, she is the new deputy minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors and she's also the CEO of Healthy Child Manitoba; Marcia Thomson, who's the assistant deputy minister of Health Living, Youth—and she's also the assistant deputy minister of the Cross-Department Coordination Initiatives—whoa, hard to say, right? We have Mr. Dave Patton, who is the executive financial officer, financial and administrative services, Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors; and we have Tony Messner, who is the comptroller, Manitoba Health; we have Chad Samain, who's my special assistant—we had Chad Samain—there he is there, okay, sorry; and Andrea Ormiston, who's the management intern in the deputy minister's office. She's helping Jan.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of the department chronologically or have a global discussion?

Mrs. Rowat: Globally, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Globally. Is that agreed?

Mr. Rondeau: I'd be pleased to proceed globally.

Mr. Chairperson: So it's agreed the discussion will be globally. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Rowat: Just to get some general housekeeping questions out of the way, I'm wanting to know if the minister can provide me with a list of all his political staff in his office, a list of all staff in the minister's office and the deputy minister's office, and also a more detailed organizational chart for the department.

* (16:00)

I'm looking for a chart that would provide the names and titles of all the deputy ministers, ADMs and senior staff noted—and also a list of the department's respective responsibilities, not merely the acts and arm-length bodies for which they're responsible, but also broad policy areas that fall

under this jurisdiction. It's a new department, and I really would like to get a handle on the roles and responsibilities, and the key players in those areas.

Mr. Rondeau: I'll go through first the staff of my department, Mr. Chairperson. Right now, there's myself. My special assistant, Chad Samain; he's a political staff. We have Esther Hiebert. She's my executive assistant working out of the constituency office. Non-political staff: we have Marina Portz, who's the appointments secretary; and we have Janean McInnes, again, non-political staff. She does correspondence, et cetera. And in the deputy minister's office, the appointment secretary to the deputy minister is Armande Martine. And—so, that's what we have right now as far as staffing.

Mrs. Rowat: I know that I've asked for a number of other things—a list—and I think that, based on time, if the minister would be able to provide that to me, you know, in the next couple days, that would be great.

The next area that I would just like to have some background or information on is a request—or a listing of all print, radio, television and on-line advertisements placed by the department in the last fiscal year. So that would include the cost of each ad, the purpose of each ad, the date the ad was placed in the publication, radio station, TV station and Web site on which the ads were placed. This is, again, giving me a sense of, you know, the messaging and how the department has been functioning, and where the department is moving into the future. And, again, this is not something that I expect to get today, but I would like to see this come forward in the next short time.

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I'll get you the organizational charts and the other—I have an organizational chart I'll make sure that the member opposite gets. As far as the advertisements, are you asking since November—since the department was formed?

Mrs. Rowat: In the last fiscal year.

Mr. Rondeau: The last fiscal year. So that would—okay, we'll work on that. I don't have that at our fingertips. We'll move forward on that.

I can tell you, generally, some of the stuff has been things like the In Motion ads, and the promotions for In Motion, which is the physical activity items and that would be a lot of what we're doing right now.

Mrs. Rowat: Now, we'll get into just some of the areas that the minister is responsible for.

Taking on the role of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, I—shortly after being put into the role, the Magnus Centre situation became an issue that I was then a part of the mix on. And I just have some questions that I'd like the minister to provide answers to, that would help clarify, to me, you know, exactly this—what has happened and what the status is of that issue

A point that I would really like some clarification on is the amount of money that has been spent to date to maintain the former Sharon Home site. If the minister can give me that number, that would be a start to the discussion.

Mr. Rondeau: The maintenance fee and the security fee, and things like that to keep the operation open and heated, et cetera, are \$897,000.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister confirm that that is the entire amount of money that has been spent on the maintenance of that site, as well as any dollars that have been allocated to that project. Is that including any monies that have been allocated to that project to—for zoning and that type of thing? Or is that included in the 897,000?

Mr. Rondeau: The project has involved a lot of discussion with multiple groups. So we have worked with corresponding with our own staff time—addiction staff time to try to bring people together. And the whole concept of that facility was not just to be an addiction facility, but to be a co-occurring and provide a wide range of services and bring everyone together.

So that's a tougher question to ask, because some of those organizations which are funded by the government might have had staff participating in discussions, might have had working together. We tried to bring other community groups and other departments, also, together.

So I can tell you that our department, as far as the maintenance and the security and the staffing, did the 897,000. There's other departments that actually had people working on the project and are still working on the project to see how they work together, and I don't have a break out precisely on that. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, one more clarification on that total of 897,000. Was that in one fiscal year or is that—is there other dollars that were allocated under a

prior year or being allocated or being targeted for a future?

Mr. Rondeau: That was the budget for the previous year.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, can the minister indicate to me what their monthly costs are right now to maintain the project or the site?

Mr. Rondeau: I don't think I can do that, precisely, because what's happened is they've turned off the heat. It was a warmer year this year, so they turned off the heat a little earlier. I do know that there's security that we're spending on—there's on-site security that was requested by the community, so we have that.

We have very minimal staff there. Right now what we're trying to do is move the—forward with the project with community partners. We're committed to doing something on the site and we're just looking at what we can do and see what partners need to be at the table.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, can the minister indicate to me how much money Ian Krochak was paid as the executive director of the project?

Mr. Rondeau: Is it okay if I get that to you in a—

An Honourable Member: I can wait for that, actually.

Mr. Rondeau: Okay. His salary that was budgeted was \$100,000.

An Honourable Member: Per year?

Mr. Rondeau: Per year.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me how long Ian was paid as the executive director of the project, and is he still being paid as the executive director of the project?

Mr. Rondeau: I know that he's not being paid right now. He's left the project, and so I can tell you that there's no current salary being spent on that budget line. And I know that he was in place when I got there and I don't have at the tips of my fingertips the date that he started.

Mrs. Rowat: There's no record of when he started in the position? You have nothing available at this point?

Mr. Rondeau: I didn't hear that.

Mrs. Rowat: Sorry, can the minister—so you have nothing available for me right now on when Mr. Ian Krochak started?

Mr. Rondeau: We don't have that here, but I can get that to you shortly.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm hoping that I can get that either today or before Estimates finish, if that would be fine? No?—or tomorrow.

Mr. Rondeau: We will try to endeavour to accommodate you.

Mrs. Rowat: One further question with regard to Mr. Krochak. Could you tell me where his office was physically located?

* (16:10)

Mr. Rondeau: On the site at River Point Centre—or Magnus Centre.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister had indicated earlier that the heat was turned down and there doesn't seem to be much activity in there. What I've heard from some community members is that the building may have black mould that must be remedied.

Can the minister confirm or, you know—or qualify that statement that has been made.

Mr. Rondeau: What I can say is that there's been—we've asked people to look at the entire building, look at the potentials to renovate it or whether it's beyond renovations. We're looking at the cost benefit structure on an ongoing basis, so that we look at the ongoing maintenance and support for that building or whether there needs to be options.

If there's extensive black mould, that gives you one type of price which is much higher than if there is no mould. So we have people looking at the building. They're analyzing the cost benefits of using the existing structure and how we can use the existing structure, and we're also looking at a cost benefit analysis of maybe doing something else.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me who is doing this cost analysis, and, also, can you also indicate to me how long the Sharon Home has been vacant? I know they also had some issues with regard to not having heat on through the winter, and I believe there was some structural damage or structural issues with regard to water or heat, or there was something that caused some problems there.

Mr. Rondeau: There's been a basic engineering study on the facility. There's also been—Housing people are looking at it. And we're looking at other groups to look at it to see how they can use it, et cetera.

So, right now, what we've done is we've said it's an older facility. Some of the facility may have mould in it. Some of the facility may have had water damage or other issues in it and some of the facility might not meet current codes and might take extensive renovations.

So what we're doing is we're saying, here's a need facility. We want to do something on the facility, but we want to look at the cost benefit not just right now, but look at it for a number of years to see can we use it, how can we use it, because it's a very interesting—it's huge. I went there and checked it out myself. It's a very interesting facility, but it's huge and it was built about 50 years ago.

So maybe there's some places that part of the building has to come down. Maybe we can renovate it. We have to look at all these mitigation, and so when I have said that the project is being looked at, we're looking at not only the structure, but we're also looking at programming.

Maybe there's other groups that we hadn't thought of earlier that might use part of the building.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, one more further question on that, and then we'll move to another area. But I'm just wanting to know—you had mentioned that there's a basic engineering study that was done. Can the minister indicate to me how much that cost, who did it and is it complete?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that Meyers Norris Penny did a business plan. They did a look at it. They might have subcontracted part of the engineering because they had figures on the costs and the renovations on that. And I don't know the cost initially. I can get that for you, but I don't have that at my fingertips either.

Mrs. Rowat: You had indicated that Manitoba Housing is looking at the building. Can you indicate to me what the interest would be by Manitoba Housing?

Mr. Rondeau: The building is about 80,000 square feet. Originally, we planned to have some expansion of additions services, an increase of the spectrum of services we offered. But 80,000 square feet is a big building, and so we're looking at whether other

groups and other organizations can use it, and we're also looking at if other community groups want to use it.

And housing, there's a need for housing, because our population is expanding and there's groups that might use it. And Housing has lots of need. Just recently they did the Bell Hotel discussion and announcement. So we're just saying, is there a way of having another group again look at the project and see if they can bring some added value to it.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister has said—and I believe—that it's a fairly big project and lots of opportunity there. Can the minister indicate to me if there is a project manager that will be hired or is hired? If not hired, can you indicate to me, will there be a competition process? Or will this person be appointed, if you have somebody in mind? And more importantly, when will this project manager be hired? I think there was some discussion about that at some point.

Mr. Rondeau: Right now, what we're trying to do is bring, as a departmental level, a high level of a view as to what this project may be; at, again, a higher level, see other partners; and when the project is ready, we will be hiring a project manager. We have not got anyone in mind. In fact, Ian had brought a lot of people together, and he did a very, very good job of that. He brought a lot of community groups together. We have both said that he is a program—he runs programs. He's not a project manager and so, with respect, he thought that he wasn't the right person to move a building construction physical operation forward. So we'd be looking for somebody with those skills, and the department doesn't have them, so that we would actually go looking for somebody with those skills.

Mrs. Rowat: Just a flashback to Ian Krochak: you had indicated that he was no longer in the role of executive director. Is Ian employed somewhere else within your department?

Mr. Rondeau: No, he isn't. And I actually have a date. The staff has been very diligent, and he started—with Blackberrys—and Ian started in February '09.

Mrs. Rowat: And the minister had indicated that the department is taking a lead on this project, or that's how I understood his comments.

Can the minister indicate to me who in his department is in charge, then, of the project at this point?

Mr. Rondeau: We're having a number of people bring it together. It's not just one person, because we have the cross-departmental initiatives. We have the addiction piece to it; we might have other pieces to it. So what we're trying to do is bring a number of people to the project, because one of the advantage—if we just have an addiction system, then what happens is you have addictions looked at. But people don't work like that.

People often have co-occurring addictions, or they might have mental health issues and addiction issues, or they might have housing and employment—so what we're trying to do is figure out how we get all the services to a group of people to be able to be focussed on one facility. That doesn't mean you house them all there. Some might be housed there; some might not. So it might be bringing mental health community organizations in. It might be all the different organizations coming to assist these people, but we, at this point, don't have a view of exactly the location, how to offer it and the actual physical structure. That's what we're working through at this moment.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairperson, I agree with the minister in that we need to be looking at a seamless system where you're going to have treatment on demand and providing the services without extreme wait times. Ultimately, we agree on that outcome. So that's, you know, that's great, and we need to be working that way. And in the few years that I'm going to be the critic, I'm assuming we'll work through that process together and push each other, I'm sure.

Can the minister—you had indicated that Meyers Norris Penny has done a business plan. Is that business plan public?

*(16:20)

Mr. Rondeau: The—it was a very basic business plan and concept model and it hasn't been made public yet. As I see, on this one, we had to—we gave the board of the Magnus Centre some funding to sort of put together a business plan and get this thing looked at. We are still continuing to work at it because what generally has happened is everyone's is at work in their own silos, and what we're trying to do is bring everyone together to focus on a different way of conducting business. And it's not necessarily the structure; it's the way we conduct business.

And so there's been ongoing dialogue. The original study sort of said, okay, we need to get

addiction services co-located there, and since that time we've also looked at other services that might need to be there. And so they sort of provoked, through this business study, a look at, oh, we've got to bring the addiction services which is, you know, prevention and the actual treatment and the after-treatment and the centralized intake together, which makes sense.

Now we said, oh, wait a minute; we also might have other services also there. And so we've taken the original business plan and we're trying to work with the departments on how to create a bigger vision, and also I agree with you when you said what we want to do is have a good system. What we're trying to find out is what holes we have in the system, what additions we need in the system, and then to enhance them, and then to enhance them in a flexible way.

So today we might need certain services. In five years, we might need a different set of services, so you're trying to develop something that will be flexible over time. And so it's a very challenging thing because we haven't done it before like that.

Mrs. Rowat: Just one—you triggered a thought. I'm wanting to know if the minister can just—you had indicated there are a number of people that work within the department that are working together to move this initiative forward. But there has to be a lead person within the department, so it's the deputy minister that is leading that, is what I'm being indicated to.

Can the minister indicate to me what funding is being allocated to bring everybody together? Is there, like, a budget that is being—has been identified to do the feasibility study for Meyers Norris Penny and then also a budget to bring the people together.

I guess I'm just trying to get a sense of—it is a big initiative. I don't disagree with you there, and I know that there's a number of things that need to be taken care of to make this project a success. And I know that it takes time and it takes expertise and it takes a group of people who help to move this forward. So I'm just wanting to know if you can indicate to me if there's been a budget identified for this group, and if there's a board for this group, can you indicate to me who is on this board if it's outside of government?

Mr. Rondeau: The budget for the project this year is the \$897,000, and that does the maintenance and the staffing and the security. That's what that's for.

Now, what we're trying to do is use staff that are already in Housing or in government in all this to bring it together. That's why your original question on how much does the project cost—it's tough, because Housing will have some expertise in staff that will come, and other groups will have groups that will work part time on moving this project forward, but the budget for this department is the 897,000 for this year. And the actual business plan from Meyers Norris Penny was purchased—or paid for previously.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me how much that business plan by Meyers Norris Penny would have cost?

Mr. Rondeau: We'll have to get that number to you. I'll endeavour to get it to you very soon.

Mrs. Rowat: The minister's indicated that it was \$897—\$897,000 that was allocated for the project this last fiscal year.

How long has that building been vacant and how much money has been identified or targeted towards the Sharon Home over the period of time that the Province has had to deal with it?

Mr. Rondeau: The Sharon Home was sold to government for a dollar—or WRHA for a dollar, and it's been vacant since that time. And I'll get that date and get it to you, hopefully, soon.

Mrs. Rowat: From—can the minister give me an indication of how much has been—how many dollars have been allocated in maintenance and upkeep of that home since they received the building from the WRHA?

Mr. Rondeau: We can endeavour to get that to the member. I can tell you that I had been in the facility about 10 years prior to and it was well kept at the time. I don't think, in the last number of years, there was a lot of money spent on maintenance.

I know, from the Sharon Home basis, they had already made a plan to leave the facility and they didn't put any maintenance in for the last number of years that they've had the facility, I'm sure of that—or very little maintenance. And so that's why there is some issues in the building, and because of that—because there's issues I would rather proceed with the abundance of caution because if, you know—like, if there's some mould, there can be lots of mould. And so we're taking a lot of time to explore how

much damage was done or how much damage was done even before it was given or sold to government.

So we had to look at that and we're also looking at how much money it's going to cost to maintain 50-plus-year-old structure versus other options.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, there seems to be a number of things that the minister is wanting to gather with regard to Sharon Home. Can the minister indicate to me a time line when he would like this information presented to him? Again, the community is very nervous about the project not going forward. Different organizations have approached, you know, me or, when I've met with them, have indicated this is top of the mind issue when they're bringing it forward. So if he could give me some—

Mr. Rondeau: We have a commitment to move forward on the site so we will be doing—working with them to move forward the site. Part of the commitment on time depends on how much renovations needs to be done, whether the building's full of black mould, whether there—how much money it costs, because we do have to look at the cost of renovating a 57-year-old building versus other options. We have to look at the ongoing costs.

Now, I know what the cost of remediation of black mould is. If there's extensive black mould or extensive renovations we may have a problem, and so I want to do that before we make a commitment to do plan A or plan B. And so that's the first one, and the second one is, we will continue to enhance services on addiction services.

I have a commitment to look at areas that we need to enhance and we will continue to enhance services. In my opening remarks we talked about working with schools to have addictions services in schools, and we're working with others to enhance other supports for addictions.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairman, I'm looking forward to a discussion on the school addictions programs because that's something that's pretty important, I think. But back to the issue of black mould, how long does it take for an individual to go into a facility and identify black mould? I would think that that would be something that you could identify rather quickly. I'm just asking.

Mr. Rondeau: It's not just the black mould. It's how much—there is some water damage. There is some other—when you go into the facility it's got a very

peculiar smell and it does smell like mould. Other parts of it have some damage because of weather or because of maintenance, and it's also the question of how much it will cost to maintain a facility for a long period of time.

* (16:30)

So we're looking at all the options. When they did the first engineering study, I believe they looked at it more at the cost of general renovations and they didn't look at specific remediations of issues in the building. They talked about general costs for redoing the building. And, again, one of the other things we have to look at is how we can fill that 80,000-square-foot building to make it most effective.

Mrs. Rowat: You indicated when they first—when they did their first engineering study. Can the minister indicate to me when that was done?

Mr. Rondeau: I missed that, sorry.

Mrs. Rowat: You had indicated in your statement just now that—when the first engineering study was done. Can the minister indicate to me when that first engineering study was done, and by who?

Mr. Rondeau: It was done through the Meyers Norris Penny.

Mrs. Rowat: It's the same one that you referenced earlier.

Mr. Rondeau: Yeah, same thing, yeah.

Mrs. Rowat: So there has been no other engineering study—*[interjection]* Oh, I'm sorry. This would have been better in briefings. *[interjection]* Just wanting to know if the minister can—I forgot what I was going to ask—if there's been more than one engineering study done? *[interjection]* No, okay.

Mr. Rondeau: No, there's only been the one, and that's why we're going more extensively into the building to look at—one of the things I was really concerned about was taking a 50-year-old building and seeing what the cost of running that building was versus other options. And the other options might be it might be better to get a new facility. However, you want to look at that, and you also want to use—decide whether you can use 80,000 square feet of the building.

And, by the way, 80,000 is if you do some demolition on the site. I think it's over 100,000 square feet if you take the existing site. So it's a huge

building, and so (a) we're trying to find out whether we can fill that building, and (b) we're talking about the long-going maintenance, because I asked that question.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you. I'm going to get off the Magnus Centre for a little while there. I might come back to it later, but I want to touch on a few other things today before 5 o'clock.

One of the areas that I wanted to talk to you about was AFM. You've got a bill that's been brought forward, I believe, it's been reintroduced under—from the prior minister.

So I've got an interest in, you know—*[interjection]* Oh, it's my daughter. Sorry—and now I forget where I was going—oh, AFM. With regard to AFM there seems to be, you know, the bill's coming forward and there seems to be interest in changing the role a little bit of how they report and that type of thing.

I've a question with regard to AFM's funding. Can the minister—I know that in the past the government has had staff in various departments paid for by Crown corporations and other arm's-length agencies. Can the minister confirm that a staffperson in his department is paid for or will be paid for out of the AFM budget?

Mr. Rondeau: We gave some money to AFM to create a position, and they seconded that to the department to work on addictions. And she still will work on policy with them and us and work on issues with them and us.

So when I start talking about people who are working with us to move forward in addictions, she wouldn't just be working for AFM, she'll be looking at if there's deficiencies in the addiction system, we'll be looking at what deficiencies they are, what's the best practice, et cetera, and so she'll be working between organizations to sort of bring that to bear.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me who this individual is and how much this individual will be paid—or is paid, sorry.

Mr. Rondeau: Her name is Nicole Laping—or Laping—and she's, again, she's on secondment to us.

Mrs. Rowat: And I was asking how much she's receiving in salary?

Mr. Rondeau: I don't have that per se, but I will get that with you with the other materials.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me when this person started in her position, and you had—have already indicated what her role will be.

Who does she—who will she be reporting to? So, I guess, when did she start the position, and who does she report to? Does she report to the minister, the deputy minister or does she report to AFM?

Mr. Rondeau: She will report through the normal departmental structures and she started in April. And she was actually on staff with the AFM prior to that—prior to the secondment. She'll report through Jan.

Mrs. Rowat: Just so that I am clear. So she'll be paid by AFM. She's—will work under the organizational structure of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, and her role will be to work on policy with regard to addictions?

Mr. Rondeau: She'll be working, Mr. Chairperson, she'll be working with other addictions staff to sort of look at the entire addictions system, look at areas where we could enhance and work to develop to build the system.

The key would be—she's not just a policy person. What she has done is she has worked in addictions with AFM, and so what we're trying to do is get somebody who understands the addiction system and understands how to—where we need to go in the future and, also, that knows programs that are out in other communities, other provinces, other states, and that we could use here.

And so that's what her job is, and I have been informed by my staff who are very, very efficient—I have to compliment them—that her salary is \$62,900.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister and his staff for the information.

Can the minister indicate to me if there are any other employees within the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors whose salaries are paid for in whole or in part by other outside agencies?

Mr. Rondeau: I see a chorus of negative nods over on—against the wall, so I assume that's none.

Mrs. Rowat: How many addictions staff are under the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors?

Mr. Rondeau: I have two—Nicole and Tina—Nicole Laping and Tina Leclair.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Rowat: Can—thank you, Mr. Minister, for the names.

Can the minister also give to me the background? Where did these—where did Tina and Nicole—oh, and Nicole is seconded. So it'll be Nicole who's coming from AFM or being funded through AFM, and Tina is the other—only other staffperson. Where would Tina have been prior to coming into the addictions fold?

Mr. Rondeau: Tina was in the old Department of Healthy Living and she was transferred over, and her job was addictions and remains to be the addictions.

Mrs. Rowat: One further question: Can you indicate to me what her salary is?

Mr. Rondeau: I can tell the honourable member that Tina has had extensive experience in the addiction field, she was working in stabilization earlier, and her salary is 72,000 bucks, approximately. That—with a few—

Mrs. Rowat: One additional question: Page 53 of the Estimates book, there is an increase in funding in AFM. Can the minister provide a detailed breakdown of how this funding is intended to be used?

Mr. Rondeau: Of the 1,069,000 for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, it's comprised of the following: the Civil Service nurse parity with the Manitoba Nurses' Union was \$336,000. They provide lots of services there. The care worker cost to fully staff the adult residential facilities, so that we would staff up to the appropriate amount, was 318,000. The pension contributions to match—pension contributions, we do that now—is \$275,000; information technology enhancements for \$150,000; and then there's other things to bring it up, like miscellaneous things like taxes and all the rest that brought it up to 1,069,000.

Oh, there was also a few other items, which was giving some support to schools for addiction education prevention program and there's also—oh, one new salary and benefit and some money for Teen Talk.

Mrs. Rowat: If you can give me the fundings allocations to those titles.

Mr. Rondeau: The school and prevention, et cetera, which was 390,000; the salary and one person—new person funding was 90,000, and the Teen Talk was \$50,000.

Mrs. Rowat: Just to confirm, that's this year's budget, correct?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes.

An Honourable Member: In February we requested a copy of the—sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable member for Minnedosa.

Mrs. Rowat: In February—and I apologize—in February we requested a copy of the department's addictions strategy through FIPPA, and we were directed to the department's Web site where we located a one-page strategy that does not include any measurable outcomes, time lines or method of evaluation. So, I was just looking for something that would provide me with some, you know, more detailed information on how programs are working and how they're being measured.

Can the minister explain to me to what the specific projects are, implementing the strategy, the specific projects that are being implemented?

Mr. Rondeau: One of the reasons why we seconded a person from AFM and have Tina working on it, is to look at the whole system. So, when the strategy says to build a better system, that's what they're doing.

When you're talking about service access, we're looking at more of a centralized intake, so that people—we have a lot of providers out there. We have Salvation Army, we have Two Ten, we have numbers of groups out there that provide service, whether it's Behavioural Health Foundation—so what we're trying to do is get a centralized intake so that you get appropriate service. And we also have to co-ordinate that so that, let's say, that you can get instant service on an out-patient while you're waiting for an in-patient system. That's what we're doing and trying to figure out how to work through that system.

We're trying to increase residential treatment and see where we need to increase the residential treatment, and what's the best way of doing it. So, like, is the residential treatment best at Behavioural Health Foundation or AFM or third parties? That's some of the things we're doing.

We're looking at the—building the community-based treatment, and see what could be in the community based and what should be co-occurring, what—how you could wrap around the supports of individuals. And we're also trying to get an enhanced research capacity, so that we actually see what we're

doing makes sense, and to make sure that we have the best bang for the buck.

And so that's what we're doing. We're also working with other levels of government, the federal government, to see how we can enhance services and expand services into very targeted areas.

Mrs. Rowat: So, just based on the comments from the minister, I'm going to leave the next question with regard to time lines, the different goals of the strategy, until your staffperson or the AFM staffperson has a chance to work through that.

Who's responsible in department for evaluating the department's progress on these goals? Who will be that person to determine, yeah, we're on the right track or we need to move a little quicker on these different things?

And actually, with that question, can the minister also share with me how much time has been spent to date implementing the strategy? Like, how much money has been spent?

Mr. Rondeau: Any time that we invest in the addiction strategy, when we make an investment or we work with another group to enhance services, we just work with one organization to give them additional support and transitional housing.

When we're talking about how we're moving forward with Magnus Centre, that—those are exactly the type of things that we have to work on, on investing and creating the better system.

An example would be we want to look at FASD, look at the best practice of FASD. And, generally, in FASD, best practices, they have wrap-around programs. In Vancouver and in Toronto, they have some wrap-around programs, which are very hard to do, hard to establish. But it's areas where we want to continue to explore to see how we can do those sorts of things.

* (16:50)

And, as far as the evaluation, what I want to do is not have—I want to have people start working cross-departmentally. So, like, we have some evaluation ability in Healthy Child and people who do research and longitudinal research and we might be able to use them with some of these people working in the addictions system. And so, what I want to do is work and play well with others. And part of the difficulty is, is that we don't really have a

very good base line anywhere. And then I checked on other jurisdictions and no one has a base line on addiction. So what we're going to have to do is look at a population base to see what we're doing now, and on a population basis to see how we can have inputs, and then actually measure what the long-term changes are for different inputs.

So, does a residential treatment work better than outpatient? Those are the types of questions that we want to ask, and then we start talking about the most effective supports on—after the person, say, goes into a residential treatment. We want to look at which ones are the most effective supports. What we hear in research is it all depends on the individual, and then it becomes very, very hard to evaluate how one individual differentiates from another.

Mrs. Rowat: I believe, you know, the minister is right; there's lots of tangibles that are in play. But what I would like to know is who's going to be ultimately responsible in the department for evaluating the department's progress on these calls.

You know, the Auditor General has been, obviously, looking at value for dollar and that type of thing, and I'm just, you know—in a number of departments. And so I've got an interest in just knowing, you know—obviously, you're working with staff and you're going to be identifying, you know, a strategy process, and with that process I would assume that you're wanting to know, you know, how—what the outcomes will be and whether your programs are successful or not.

Who is ultimately responsible in your department for, I guess, evaluating the department's progress on these goals? Is there somebody earmarked to do that?

Mr. Rondeau: Part of when we're saying we're looking at the treatment, we're looking at the research as part of our goals. Part of the research that we're looking at is to see how we can evaluate the bang for the buck, and it's difficult, because, let's say a person needs to go to the Health Sciences Centre for withdrawal—very, very expensive and very intense, but for a shorter period of time. Then there's the 30 days and the 28-day treatment. So a lot of it depends on individuals.

So the evaluation of the program becomes really tough, because, let's say that you have AA programs. Well, we don't support them directly but we refer people to them and we work with them, and so it's going to become very tough to, say, figure out the

best bang for the buck, because each individual is different. And so we're working with them; that's why Tina is going to be working—Tina, who's the addictions person whose got a lot of experience in—it will be working with a team to sort of say how do we evaluate it and which is the best.

And the other trouble is, in addictions, is that—let's say that you take the FASD program from Vancouver or Toronto and you try to put it in; it doesn't work. Generally you need to have—you can have some concepts that are similar, but you can't just take one program that's been successful, that's been community developed and drop it in and expect it to be successful in our location. So it's tough.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm getting from the minister's comments that it'll be Tina and her team, who's the other individual, who will be evaluating the department's progress on these goals, working through research and developing those benchmarks, and et cetera. Okay.

Can the minister indicate to me quickly how much has been spent to date implementing any of these strategies? Has there been any money spent?

Mr. Rondeau: Nothing's been broken out per se. It's all through the entire system. So, when you say talking about building a better system, it's lots of people's jobs. The increased residential treatment—I can get you the increase that we've done to date, and I can give you the—any enhancements to the system that we've made announcements on up to now.

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate that, and whatever the minister sends to me, if there's further questions, I'll take him up on the previous comments we had before we went into this process where he—[interjection]—have a chat, and we can go through that.

The minister indicated earlier that the federal government is a partner. Has the department received any funding from the federal government for the development of a centralized intake for addictions? Have you received those dollars? If so, how much and when?

Mr. Rondeau: Apparently, we've signed an agreement, but it's in the process where I'm not allowed to announce it. But I'd be happy to announce it when—but, apparently, when you sign a deal with the feds, you're not allowed to make the announcement publicly. So, I'm sorry, *Hansard* is public, so I can't tell you how much, but I'd be happy to let you know as soon as I can. As soon as we are legally able to, we will let you know.

Mrs. Rowat: So my next questions with regard to the centralized intake system, when it will be in place and a breakdown of the money that has been spent to date would be irrelevant at this point if you've just signed an agreement and you're indicating that the money hasn't flowed yet.

So I'll move on to the next question. Can the minister provide a historical breakdown of the number of residential treatment beds funded by the department since 1999? And I know you're not going to be able to give that to me right at this point, but if you could give me a historical breakdown of the number of beds funded, that would be great.

Mr. Rondeau: With the package, I'll send you the number of beds. I do know that we've almost doubled the funding from '99 now. It's basically from—it's been up 91 percent or something like that. I'll give you the breakdown.

Mrs. Rowat: Addictions in schools—I wonder if I should save that one. I've got a few minutes. The Youth Health Survey showed that the school-age children engage in binge drinking, and a recent study by the Addictions Foundation indicated that binge drinking among high schoolers was on the rise. Yet schools have been told that AFM will—can or will not be able to provide school-based services unless the school pays for them.

The minister indicated earlier that AFM's budget does include a budget line for school-based programs, and I'm hopeful that that includes those types of services and programs in schools that have previously asked for the service but have been told there's a moratorium on funding. So I'm hoping, in some of these rural and northern schools—and I'm sure in the city, it's the same, but I'm more familiar with what happens in rural schools in that when a youth cannot get supports at home, the supports are not in school, the only way for them to get to a centre that has those supports or services, they need to drive or have their parents take them. So that creates major challenges, so.

Mr. Rondeau: And thank you for the question. Part of—the \$390,000 that we're putting in restores previously levels of support for schools. So the way it's worked is some schools provided some assistance to AFM or some cost-shared services. And, so, what we've done is with the \$390,000, we brought things back to how they were historically.

But—we want to continue to enhance services to schools. That's why we went to Teen Talk. So

we're working with them. We haven't made the announcements about the Teen Talk expansion yet, so, but, so there you have a scoop. But what we want to do is we want to make sure—we were concerned about the addiction numbers in that health stat study. And so that's why the \$390,000 went back to restore existing levels and under historical funding arrangements. And then the Teen Talk is extra.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister clarify for me whether these service—school-based services are going to have a fee attached to the school. Is the school going to have to provide a percentage of the funding to offer the programs in the school, or will the funding, the \$390,000, go into the schools without an added cost to the school budget?

Mr. Rondeau: Historically, many schools paid for the services, and what the \$390,000 does is just brings it up to the historical level. It doesn't pay all the costs, but it does bring it to the historical level. We do have a concern about how to increase it. We do—have got now a clinical supervisor to assist the schools in delivering, and we have the Teen Talk, and we are looking at other ways to enhance service to schools.

Part of the problem is there's a huge demand for the service, and we want to meet that demand as much as we can, but, on the other hand, when you're talking about addictions services, it is very costly because it's one-on-one, it's individual, intense counselling, and so it is not cheap. But what we've done in this, by pushing the \$390,000 to AFM to make up for the previous cuts, is we're back to historic levels. They—schools did get a letter saying that their costs have gone—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): 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 Infrastructure and Transportation. As has been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions and comments.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I want to ask the minister some questions pertaining to the

municipalities that were former LGDs and the agreements that they have with the Province on main market roads and on the 50-50 roads. There seems to be conflicting stories on what's—what the agreements and the deals are between the provincial government and those former LGDs, principally on main market roads, which, those municipalities feel, are the jurisdiction of the provincial government alone.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, first of all, in terms of the history, I know the member's aware of the history of the main market roads, the support that was put in place with the conversion of LGDs to rural municipalities in 1997-98, I believe. And it's important, I think, to reflect on the fact that the existence of the LGDs really was indicative of the relatively low assessment relative to the municipal infrastructure. A lot of it dates back to the 1930s, and certainly there a number of municipalities that are in that category.

There's no change in this budget in terms of our commitment to the former LGDs. I have met with a number of the LGDs. We certainly recognize that things have changed in term of some of the roads. We are undertaking a review of our relationship with those municipalities. They put forward a suggestion that some municipal roads could, essentially, really, effectively, be considered provincial roads in terms of the traffic counts, the strategic importance in the area.

So I can indicate that nothing's changed in this budget over last year in terms of funding, but we are working with the municipalities, our former LGDs, on this. And I will be, over the year, with the department, reviewing the current structure because, clearly, there are some roads which, while they are under municipal jurisdiction, have very significant strategic importance in the area and traffic count, and, by any other definition, would be provincial highways.

So we're going to look at that as part of an overall review of—not—it's not just an issue of funding; as I said, nothing's changed in this year—but really, the overall strategic mandate of the Province vis-à-vis the former LGDs.

Mr. Briese: The original agreements were—on the 50-50 roads—were 50-50 percent of the maintenance and capital on those roads between the Province and the LGDs. At least that was my understanding. What's happened is, I think, the Province is still

committing some funding to those roads, but they're still committing it at the level that was put in place at the time those municipalities became—those LGDs became municipalities, which I think was about 1997. Without any increase in that funding, it's went from 50-50 to something like 70-30 or 75-25.

Is there any likelihood that the Province would look at providing a little more funding on those 50-50 roads?

Mr. Ashton: Essentially the program is unchanged, and one of the reasons we're looking at the current configuration of highways is because of some of the legitimate arguments being put forward by the municipalities in terms of the fact that things have changed since '97. And we will be looking at that, both the—in terms of the 50-50 arrangement, in terms of the MMR, main market road, and also in terms of our overall mandate for MIT. So that is under review.

Mr. Briese: The minister referred to traffic counts a little earlier. Traffic counts aren't the only consideration on these roads and a lot of them have deteriorated.

And I think of one in particular that's in my constituency and that's the Birdina Road in the Alonsa municipality, where in places the road is now below the grade level, and a year ago last summer there was still water running across the Birdina Road in July. And that may not have huge traffic counts, but it certainly is the only avenue and the only road for school buses, for farmers moving their products and all the things that are needed in that community.

And I know at one time there was a trade-off between the provincial government—I believe it is in '91, '92, '93, somewhere in there—where some of the provincial roads were traded off to the municipalities, but they were traded off with a lump sum of money along with them that many municipalities—and mine being one of them—were able to use that lump sum of money and upgrade those roads.

Has there been any consideration of something like that in the former LGDs?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the conversion to municipalities was basically part of a series of steps that were taken by the previous government. This predates this government, so there may be members in your caucus that know a bit more of the background on

this, but I do believe there was a return of about 2,000 kilometres across the province in '92. So they—there were a series of realignments in terms of jurisdiction over roads that took place prior to the actual conversion. The conversion to rural municipalities took place in '97, I believe, as part of a series of changes to The Municipal Act.

There are only two LGDs remaining and they're both special cases. One is in my own area, the LGD of Mystery Lake. And the two remaining LGDs, actually, they continue to exist largely because of the fact that they are a signatory either to AECL, in the case of Pine Falls, or Inco, in Thompson, of agreements that would, you know—which are continuing to have importance to not just the local area but to the province.

And I want to stress that we will be reviewing the current status of our relationship with those municipalities. I've met with quite a few of the municipalities. I've—I routinely meet with municipalities generally, as the member knows from his days with AMM. I've met with a number of the municipalities that are former LGDs and undertaken to have a review of the strategic approach because obviously, that's 1997. Things have changed in some cases and we think it's—there's some legitimate issues that need to be addressed, and we will be doing that as part of the review.

*(14:50)

Mr. Briese: Actually, I think it's Pinawa, not Pine Falls. [*interjection*] Yeah.

The one other concern I'm hearing from some of those former LGDs is the costs of crossings on some of those roads, and I know we've already touched on it, but the reason the roads were—the agreements were that the roads would be funded somewhat by the Province was because they're very low on assessment, all those former LGDs. They're big areas with very low assessment and they don't have the financial wherewithal through taxation that most municipalities have.

But I know the LGD of Reynolds has had a problem with a bridge that had to go in on one of those—one of the main market roads and finally were literally forced by the government to pay 50 percent of the bridge even though it should have been a government responsibility because of the agreements that were there previous. But if they don't have the bridge, they've got to face their constituents and so they finally gave in, scraped up the money

somewhere to put this bridge in place, and I would ask only that the minister keep situations like that in mind because it is very difficult for those municipalities to provide the services that they do.

Mr. Ashton: No, I appreciate the member's point and that situation is also a similar situation you'll find in other municipalities. Well, bridges are a challenge, they're a challenge for the Province and our highway system. They're a challenge for all municipalities but they are particularly a challenge for the former LGDs. I think it's important to note, too, that, in many cases, you'll have an R.M. surrounding an urban community, you know, where the urban community may have one or two bridges and the R.M. will have 50-plus bridges and crossings, so that puts the scale, I think, in perspective. So we're certainly aware of that.

But, while the primary mandate of MIT is not assessment-related, it's transportation related, clearly we're starting the review with the premise that there are some significant arguments being put forward by the municipalities on sustainability of the highway network that's part of their current responsibility, and I've indicated to municipalities that I've met with that I'm prepared to look at it and we will be doing a thorough review on it and I anticipate that review will be completed this budget year and in place for the future. In the meantime, the support for main market roads and the 50-50 program is maintained in the budget.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I just want to clarify with the minister that the questions posed at yesterday's Estimates committee will be responded to in writing due to the time constraint allowed for in this section of the committee of Estimates.

Mr. Ashton: Yes. I can also table the 2010-2011 capital plan for regional—rural water systems with the Manitoba Water Services Board. I did undertake to find that list yesterday and I want to thank Dick Menon and his staff for responding quickly. But we will also be in a position to respond to the other questions. If the answers aren't provided by the end of Estimates, we will do it in writing. And what I was going to suggest, as well, is probably, to expedite it, I was going to recommend we respond to the critic and then the critic can distribute the response to the MLAs that asked.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I thank the minister for that, and, hopefully, that could be an expedited fashion as

to the importance of projects to which I referred yesterday and the timeliness of the response.

I would like, though, to leave the minister and this committee of Estimates with a compliment to the department under the direction of the new deputy minister, Doug McNeil, as it pertains to the intersection of provincial trunk Highway 13 and the Trans-Canada Highway. The construction late last fall of the westbound speed-up lane for the traffic entering the—from 13 to the Trans-Canada Highway for westbound travel is working extraordinarily well. And the traffic flow and the delays now incurred at the junction 1-13, for Highway 13 traffic entering the Trans-Canada Highway, has been significantly reduced. And it is a real credit to the department for construction of that speed-up lane. It was done well and it's working extraordinarily well, too. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: I thank the member, and I will pass that on to our department. Often, our department doesn't necessarily hear the kudos. They might hear the occasional criticism. So I'll make sure that they are made aware of this, and I appreciate the member acknowledging that. And, you know, I can't say enough about how dedicated the staff is and how they take their mandate very seriously. So I thank him for his comments.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): And thank the minister for tabling that information. It certainly helps us in trying to get through.

I do have one local constituency question that I need to pose, and it has to do with the New Life Church on Highway 67. And the speed limit was increased from 70 to 100, and I was going to write a letter on it, but I thought I should just get it on the record for the church. They're very concerned about the safety issue there, and I'm not sure the process that went through there, but I just did want to get that on the record so that if we don't have the answers today, perhaps we could get a response back to it at another time.

Mr. Ashton: It—well, of course, speed limits are the jurisdiction of the Motor Transport Board. They are an arm's-length body. MIT is involved in making technical presentations to the Motor Transport Board.

And, well, then, on the background of it, with your ongoing concerns, the Motor Transport Board does receive submissions from the relative—relevant traffic authorities, and does consider—reconsider speed limits. So, certainly, I would encourage the

member to advise people that, essentially, the Motor Transport Board is—or a part of the Highway Traffic Board is responsible.

Mr. Eichler: Well, thank you for the advice.

In regards to the \$3.12 million for Greyhound for, I believe, a one-year term, where does that come out of the expenditures, and is there going to be an ongoing commitment into ensure that we do have those services for the province? And how do we determine what the next step is going to be in regards to negotiations, or is there a long-term negotiation plan?

I also understand—try and roll the City in here to my question, as well—you know, they put in \$1.2 million, and is there any overlap between the provincial and city programs, or is it two separate programs entirely?

Mr. Ashton: First of all, in terms of Greyhound, we were faced with a very challenging situation, everyone knows, last year. We were faced with a situation where we could have seen the immediate loss of bus service. What's immediate? Within 30 days. We have a situation in the province where we have a regulated system, and in terms of scheduled bus service, we, essentially, for most of the province, have one operator, Greyhound. And we recognized very early on that there would be significant cost attached to the Province and to Manitobans if there was no bus service available, not the least of which would have been some medical transportation costs which the Province is directly responsible for, other government related travel and, certainly, the tens of thousands of Manitobans that rely on the bus service for access. And I think it's important to stress, by the way, that in many cases it's the only schedule form of access that is available. For others, it's certainly the only affordable element.

* (15:00)

Certainly, in terms of the specific appropriation, it's the Transportation Policy, subappropriation 15.2.(k). I believe there's a note at the bottom of page 89, to be very specific. I can indicate that we have flowed some funds both for the previous fiscal year and the current fiscal year.

I want to stress that we have an interim agreement with Greyhound. There's a couple things we're going to be doing over the next period of time. In fact, we've started the process. One is to be consulting with Manitobans on the future of bus service in the province. I do want to indicate, by the

way, that I also want to look at the overall regulatory framework because we, in addition to scheduled bus service, which is regulated, charter buses are also regulated in some circumstances.

I want to indicate that our goal is to basically—basically to try and maintain as much of the bus service as possible in the long term. That may involve Greyhound. It may involve other carriers and we are certainly open to input from potential operators from Greyhound itself and particularly from communities because, you know, the local communities were some of the key elements of calling to maintain the bus service and we're asking that those communities basically are involved in actually coming up with some of the solutions.

I really want to stress here that there's some unique factors in Manitoba that led us to do this. We could've just let the bus service shut down. It would've created chaos in the short term, but we have some very unique factors here that have historically led to a regulated environment. But, obviously, with a regulated environment you need an environment in which bus providers, bus carriers can actually make money as well, and certainly there was evidence—to be fair to Greyhound—that indicated they were losing money on a significant part of their network.

I'm a great believer, by the way, that we can also do things to improve the viability of bus service, and certainly we want to make sure that it's used as much as possible, and we've certainly, as part of the agreement, talked to Greyhound about looking at various partnerships and ways of promoting the bus service, because whether it's regulated or not, I think we all have an interest in more of an entrepreneurial approach to bus service.

So essentially, as I've said, we've saved the bus service in the interim. We're going to try and maintain as much of a network as possible. We're going to consult with Manitobans in terms of not just service levels but their alternate approaches, and I can certainly indicate to the member that I think there's been very good response, and I think that—we're really looking forward to some of the input we're going to get from Manitobans.

I think people, generally, have understood why we've done it, and I know there's a lot of interest out there, and we certainly look forward to the input.

Mr. Eichler: I thank the minister for that. I, too, believe very strongly that we have to have a strong

transportation service for rural Manitobans, in particular, you know, not only just the moving back and forth of humans back and forth, but also freight, you know, to those rural areas. It's certainly something that every community relies on and it has to be something that's predictable. And I know that, you know, the minister touched on it briefly in regards to consultation with others.

But coming back to the long-term commitment, is this just a one-year 3.12 million for this year, or is there going to be negotiations for the next year or the next year after that, or what is the long-term plan?

Mr. Ashton: This is an interim agreement. We will be in a better position to determine the long-term situation once we complete the review and once we are able to determine the next step.

So we're not prejudging the future, either in terms of financial contributions or in terms of the structure of the bus service, and that includes, by the way, the regulatory framework.

So this is—let's say it's a one-year agreement. There's some funding—900,000 was in the previous fiscal year. There is funding in this fiscal year, so it's an interim agreement. We will be determining down the line if there's an ongoing role for this. And I want to stress, by the way, this is essentially a—we don't see this as a subsidy; we see this as a maintenance of service. In fact, that's the structure of the agreement.

We as a province have transportation needs—I mentioned that a few minutes ago—as to individual Manitobans, and we moved to protect that in the short term, and our goal here is to develop a long-term, viable, sustainable bus service that provides as much service to Manitobans at the least cost to the Province. We didn't anticipate being in this situation, but we had a decision to make and we, in this case, chose to support rural and northern bus service.

Mr. Eichler: I know there's a lot goes into negotiating a contract. Is there notice that has to be given to the department—so many days prior to them ceasing service as a result of this \$3.2-million investment?

Mr. Ashton: It's important to note there's two dimensions here. The Motor Transport Board is responsible for the regulatory side. They do regulate bus service in the province. So there is a—there are processes in place in that particular case. But we've also, as part of the agreement, built in specific commitments by Greyhound to maintain the service during this interim period. Clearly, we would not

have been involved in signing this agreement if there wasn't a commitment by Greyhound to maintain service while we do determine the long-term situation of bus service.

And, by the way, that's not to say that Greyhound may not continue to be the primary bus provider. We don't know that yet, and I do want to say on the record that, certainly, we do believe there's been some significant progress made by Greyhound.

I do want to note, as well, that we also take very seriously some of the service issues. There have been incidents where service has not been provided, which has been a requirement in a number of communities. I know that's been raised with me by several municipal leaders and others. So we also believe that there has to be a full commitment by Greyhound to their regulated responsibility.

And I think it's important to emphasize, by the way, that essentially the regulation gives them a monopoly position, certainly on the bus side—they have an unregulated side with the courier side—but certainly on the bus side, and that does mean it protects their position as well. That's one model of regulation. We are going to look, though, at the regulatory framework because—I'll give the member kind of a quick parallel. What happens with rail at the federal level? I mean, there is a process—you have the class 1 carriers, you have a rail-line abandonment process, you have an ability for short-line operators to come, and so there are options and processes built in. We have a number of short-line operators right now operating in Manitoba that filled in where the class 1 operators had abandoned the line. And in some cases, they have been able to do it quite successfully financially.

So we are looking at those kind of models, as well. We're looking at all sorts of processes. I can indicate that, certainly, one of the questions I do get asked is whether we would be operating our own provincial bus system. I know in Saskatchewan that's the model. There is a significant cost element. There's also—there would be also a significant start-up cost, and, certainly, we did not see that as an option, given the immediate challenge to bus service. But, certainly, it's—it is one option. We will look at all options. We don't have a prejudgement on where it will lead, and that's where the public input will be quite significant.

Mr. Eichler: I do need to move on because, as the minister knows, I've got an awful lot of questions, and I've asked my colleagues to provide their questions in writing. And I know that we talked about that. So that's what we're going to try to do.

* (15:10)

I just want to move over to the total provincial infrastructure deficit, and has the Province calculated infrastructure deficit related to roads, bridges, et cetera? I know the Manitoba municipalities association has calculated their deficit to be excess of 11 billion, and is there a similar figure that's related to the Province's infrastructure deficit?

Mr. Ashton: I believe, in Manitoba 2020 Vision, transportation vision for Manitoba, there was an attempt to deal with that. My view, by the way is, to a large extent, we've kind of moved beyond the infrastructure deficit approach, and it's not to say it doesn't exist. The real thing we're involved now is significant investment infrastructure. You know, it's really subjective, any kind of number you would come up with. So what do you calculate? Do you calculate existing roads? Do you calculate the cost of upgrading them to a certain state? Do you include roads that perhaps should be built? How do you calculate the replacement of bridges?

So our approach, really, has been to recognize there was a deficit. There was a significant underinvestment in highways in the 1990s. And we are now investing significantly, quadrupling the capital budget from 1999. So—and I've said this publicly, too. I really believe that the municipalities did make this an important part of the national agenda, but we've sort of moved beyond focussing only on the deficit. We're focussing now on the solution, and that's a major investment in infrastructure, and that's going to continue.

Mr. Eichler: In regards to the overall budget for 2009-10—or, I guess, '08 and '09—was there any money that lapsed in the department?

Mr. Ashton: Is the member referencing the last fiscal year, '09-10, or—[interjection] Okay.

We did not lapse funds; we had challenges with the weather. And I do want to indicate, by the way, this is one of the big changes that we've seen over the last number of years, because we treat highway capital expenditures in particular as capital. Go figure. Capital used to be considered operating. What it means, essentially, is you don't have the same kind

of pressures, in more challenging financial circumstances, to lapse.

Certainly that was the case a number of years ago. There were, you know, the '90s, under the old system, what was budgeted was almost routinely underspent. So, in this particular case, we have been able to not only print a construction budget that's meaningful, but also spend it. And I want to stress again we are into our second year of a record \$366 million. So we—and we've—I mentioned the weather last year. I think the member's aware it was very wet, very similar to what we've seen in the last few days here, only it was throughout the summer. So, you know, we've had a significant expansion. In fact, I think our total spending last year was 548 million. I mean, that's about six or seven times the annual expenditure, I think, in the '98-99 budget.

Mr. Eichler: The minister referred to as the roads and that as capital. So could the minister outline the process that calculated then, so, roads that's built and bridges that are built, that's considered capital and it's paid for over how many period of a year? Like, is it a 20-year, a five-year payback, or a 50-year or a 100-year?

Mr. Ashton: Well, we—obviously, we have capital; we have preservation; we have maintenance. On the capital side, the amortization period varies by the capital asset: 20 years for pavement, bridges are 40 years. So what that means, again, is we build something; it's going to last for 40 years. We can then amortize the cost and truly reflect what the annual carrying cost is. That's made a huge difference, and the base, you know, the gravel base is 40 years.

Mr. Eichler: So, again, because I'm new to the department, if the minister'd just help me with figures, then. So the bridge is, for example, just use that one for example, is based on 40 years for payback then on that project. And is it paid for in this year then, or is amortized over a 40-year period?

Mr. Ashton: Well, essentially what happens with capital and this is—includes with—in terms of government buildings, we obviously have a cash flow, but it is amortized over the life of the asset, and that is dramatically different from before because what was capital was essentially operating for accounting purposes. We would have to, not only cash flow it, but book it off as part of our Estimates in that year. And try and imagine building a house, operating a farm, operating a business without access

to a mortgage. Some people can do it. Very few people can and that sort of accounting principle is something that's made a dramatic difference.

I can't understate how important it is. I mean, still obviously have to manage your cash flow, but allows you to dramatically change the investment picture because you're able to get the benefits and there are very significant benefits to highway upgrades, some of the permits we're seeing in terms of public facilities. And the challenge we had of years ago was there were significant benefits but there wasn't the cash flow. Now we're getting both the benefit and the cash flow.

Mr. Eichler: So, let's just pick a number then. So a bridge costs you \$5 million, for example, so then that's amortized over that 40-year period. Am I understanding that right?

Mr. Ashton: Essentially.

Mr. Eichler: Coming back to the 548 million, then, so I can understand that clarity, is that what the total projects cost or is that—was that actually spent or amortized over a period of time? So you could announce a bridge and build a bridge that was worth that same 5 million, but really there was only the payment that was made on it.

Mr. Ashton: Yes. The 366 is the pure capital, last year and this year. The rest includes some elements of transportation money, not just maintenance but winter roads and preservation, which, you know, may involve some more localized, you know, surface maintenance improvement. That's one notch up from regular maintenance. So there is a fairly strict set of guidelines on the accounting side. We can't just take the entire budget and call it capital. We have to make sure that there is a demonstrated long-term life to the asset and, you know, again, the decision to book it as capital is actually something that is done by government directly. It's not a discretion decision of the department and it really reflects a lot of the evolution, by the way, you know, the public sector of the accounting standards, and it's been a very significant shift.

What it means, I mean, just take this year where there's some greater revenue challenge, greater fiscal challenges, it means that we're not cutting the highway capital program. It's the same as it was last year. It's at a record level, and that provides short-term stimulus, but it also continues on with our 10-year plan which, again, is something that did not exist a number of years ago. In fact, highways

were basically planned on a one-two year time frame. We now print a five-year plan as part of a longer term 10-year plan. We adjusted, obviously, to new circumstances. But what we're seeing, you know, the kind of—level of construction we saw last year is really a reflection of the fact that we were able to maintain that spending, even with the more difficult financial situation we're facing.

* (15:20)

Mr. Eichler: So, really, we did spend the \$548 million. There's no doubt about that, that you're talking about. But what we did do was only pay a portion of that debt, using your example back to your mortgage, of whatever you could afford to pay. But the rest of the money was then borrowed for the next 20 or 40 years, depending on the project to be paid back over that time period. Is that correct?

Mr. Ashton: Well, there's a carrying cost that goes with it, yes, and there's—that's booked. And that's the same whether it's for highways capital or for the government services side of the department, and that's separated out from the operating.

I do want to stress there's still a significant operating budget. We've—the last number of years, we've seen some additional resources built into the operation and maintenance side, which is equally as important. But that's essentially what happens. The capital is booked off and is a carrying cost throughout the life of the project.

Mr. Eichler: So, again, coming back to the 548 million, what is the total capital, then, for our bridges and roads within the province of Manitoba? That's outstanding debt. And we know Manitoba Hydro has debt, so, obviously, this, then, is a debt that's occurred for this department.

What is that total debt that we have outstanding on the books?

Mr. Ashton: I can—we can the break out of that rather than, you know, spend too much time now. I'll make sure we do that. And what we'll do is—you know, it's a matter of essentially taking the capital that's been brought under this system and calculating it out. But we'll get back to the member with the details.

Mr. Eichler: I'm just trying to get my head wrapped around how this capital thing works because before—at least, my understanding was—when a road was built, it was paid for.

But now it's actually not paid for; it's actually incurring a long-term debt. Is that correct?

Mr. Ashton: Well, if you went back to, say, the '50s or the '60s, you know, yes, it was paid for as an operating cost. And it's interesting, really, you know, it would either be paid for through increased taxes; I mean, there was a significant increase in sale tax, for example, in the 1960s paid for some of our infrastructure: floodway, highways. In some cases, it would be through, obviously, debt finance, reflected by, you know, debts of financing.

And what shifted here really is a much more logical and close connection between the actual costs of building something and it's long-term benefit. And, really, any project you're looking at, especially on the infrastructure side, has a significant long-term benefit. And it varies, and, you know, it's different calculations you can use.

But I think every evidence we've seen is that if you want economic development, you want to grow as a province, you have to invest and doesn't necessarily pay off right away. CentrePort is a good example. We're not going to see an immediate payoff on CentrePort. Will we see a long-term payout? No doubt in my mind, and I think of anyone that's involved with CentrePort.

So what this does is I think it connects the cost and benefit far more directly. You still, obviously, have to manage the overall construction budget. You still have to manage the payments necessary to maintain it. But, you know, we've seen over the last period of time—it's allowed us to really get to the kind of level of construction that we should have had probably years ago.

When you mentioned the infrastructure deficit before, part of what's happening now is we're filling in a lot of the gaps. You know, we're bringing in RTAC, restricting roads to RTAC status. You know, we're seeing the kind of level improvement on Highway 75. I was just out in Morris yesterday, you know, \$84 million invested in 75 since 2005, another \$80 million-plus to come. So it's not just accounting theory. It's results on the ground.

Mr. Eichler: So, then, when we have a federal-provincial announcement on a particular project, the federal dollars are done the same way, then, as the provincial dollars? Are they—do they flow in the same year?

Mr. Ashton: On the accounting side, they basically, yeah, we have to make a claim to them and then the funds flow.

Mr. Eichler: So, then, just to use a specific example then, for Inkster Boulevard, when they announced a \$60-million expansion on Inkster Boulevard and the Province kicks in their share; they amortize theirs. The federal government kicks in the full 60 million, then? And the Province, then, the balance of theirs, is then amortized over the life of the road?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I mean, the key—there are different programs. I mentioned earlier, there's four separate such programs that have provided funding this year, and we've seen record levels this year and last year. A number of these programs are not ongoing, so that may be very different in upcoming years, but essentially, that's what happens. We do claim that we're faced with some pressures this year, because the stimulus funding is clearly aimed at completion by March 31st, 2011.

And one of the elements we've brought into the capital program the last year and this year are essentially the degree to which we are lining up our priorities with the federal timing and constraints. So we've moved a number of projects into the capital list that were shovel-ready. So there is some impact of the federal accounting in that sense.

As well, I do want to acknowledge the projects we're doing, though, in many cases were on the capital list, were—you know, would have been done fairly soon, but they're being done this year. And I think I listed, at the beginning of Estimates, you know, the significant on the projects—there's actually projects in every region or a part of it.

So that's how it works. We go to them under the criteria of the program and they then fund that back to the Province.

Mr. Eichler: Again, coming back to the 548 million, how much of that was federal dollars?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the—on the capital, it's 100. We also have cost-sharing on winter roads, which is 50-50, and the current—4.5 to 5 million on the winter roads.

Mr. Eichler: The total, 548 million—of the federal share, how much was spent?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I want to stress that the—on the capital, which is 366, the federal government is, on a project-by-project basis with four separate infrastructure funds, funding 100 million of the 366.

The only other area that we receive federal funding is in terms of our winter roads, which are cost-shared on a 50-50 basis, so they are responsible for about half of the 9 million.

The capital is booked as capital, but the winter roads are essentially an operating expense. There are some capital projects on winter roads. That was an initiative we took a number of years ago; I was actually the minister responsible at the time. But that is—anything that's not on the winter road system that's a capital improvement will show up on our \$366-million capital list.

But essentially, then, it's 100 million under capital from the feds and approximately 4.5 million which is an ongoing agreement with the feds on winter roads.

Mr. Eichler: Can I just maybe interrupt the Estimates process here to table a question for the minister submitted on behalf of the member from Turtle Mountain for a response back then to be recorded into *Hansard*.

Mr. Chairperson: Good. That's agreeable to all.

Mr. Eichler: Good. Thank you for that.

An Honourable Member: Maybe we should do this in question period.

Mr. Eichler: There's a process for that, it goes on the Order Paper. *[interjection]* And it works fine, pass them over and I'll answer them.

With respect to the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund, how much money has flowed from this fund related to the department, if any?

Mr. Ashton: I'll check with the Infrastructure Secretariat on that and get back to the member as part of the overall response.

Mr. Eichler: That's perfect. Thank you.

On page 39, then, each of the regional highways transportation offices had a cut in their funding. Is there going to be any change? I know in my local area, you know, there seems to be more and more pressure put on those offices. Is this going to have any service delivery impact?

* (15:30)

Mr. Ashton: Yes, our goal, in terms of regions, is to maintain service. I think the member's aware of some of the government-wide measures that are being

taken in terms of management of travel, management of overtime, management of vacancies, and that is the approach we're taking on this. Certainly, we're, you know, we're part of government. We're following some of the same guidelines that all government departments are following, and the focus is on maintenance of the kind of level of service that regional offices have so ably provided to Manitobans in rural and northern Manitoba for many years.

Mr. Eichler: On the same page 39 and also on page 84, there's a total of \$590,000 for Materials Engineering. What's involved in that, and how is the impact going to be felt?

Mr. Ashton: Again, it's a bit more of a detailed question, so I'll respond to the member in writing.

Mr. Eichler: Fair enough. Also on page 53 under the Water Control and Structures, and design, how often are the province's water control works inspected—bridges, culverts, dams—and is this work undertaken by the department or is it contracted out? And also how many water control structures and bridges are under that particular program that may or may not be able to be inspected as a result of time constraints?

Mr. Ashton: In a more general sense, I can certainly tell the member it varies by structure. Some cases, we do it in-house; some cases, we contract it depending on the circumstance. If—I can give the member a sort of a quick scan of some of the inspection policies on the highway side. We have a policy to inspect all structures at specified frequencies. This goes back to 1996 as policy: some major bridges—there's 296 of them—every 24 months; major bridges—this is on provincial trunk highways and provincial roads, main market roads—there are four, pardon me, 602 bridges, we inspect them every 48 months; minor bridges on provincial roads, main market roads, access roads and service roads—that's 345—that's every 72 months; culverts, PTHs, every 48 months, and there's 665; 72 months for other culverts, and there's 481 of them; sign structures, every 48 months; other structures, as required; all new structures, within 24 months of construction. On the water control network we have been conducting inspections throughout the system as approximately 300 water control bridges that went through level 2 inspections in '07 through to the previous fiscal year. We've got 150 planned for this year, and once those initial inspections are done, the rotational inspections will be on a 48- or 72-month period.

So, obviously this is a very significant focus for us. By the way, there are three levels of inspection. There's level 1, which is walkabout to look at general deficiencies; 2 is visual inspection; and level 3 is inspections to look at detailed condition assessments and deficiencies, and it's usually carried out one to two years before rehabilitation.

Mr. Eichler: Whenever the department goes out and inspects these bridges and so on, the criteria to determine what repairs are going to be done and, I guess, the manner of which it's going to be done, I guess that depends on how big the job is then, before you decide whether you're going to contract it out or do it internally. Do we have the resources within the department to do a number of major jobs in regards to a major undertaking?

Mr. Ashton: You know, probably the best answer is that depends on the level of work that would be required. We will have two crews to deal with minor repairs. As the member knows, when there is severe deficiencies or we have to do either a major repair or replacement, which is a very expensive and time-consuming process, in that case we would certainly contract with general contractors, and similar with design as well. So there, you know, there—many of our bridges that require only minor changes as a result of the inspections. But I think the member's aware of some more specific bridge failures that were averted, and certainly in the case of one bridge, where flooding created, you know, a significant collapse of the structure. So it depends.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, just in regards to the same department, the Shellmouth Dam and the Portage Diversion, is there any work that's being planned in this coming year in those particular facilities?

Mr. Ashton: What I'd suggest on that is I can get that information for the member. I can indicate that we obviously have ongoing maintenance of the two facilities. They were absolutely critical last year in the protection of a good part of this province in the spring flooding. We would have seen a dramatic difference, particularly in the city of Winnipeg, if it wasn't for the Shellmouth Dam and the Assiniboine Diversion.

We certainly recognize there's been some impact of the use, particularly on the Portage Diversion. It's been used quite frequent in the last few years, and we have also certain similar discussions with the federal government indicated are interested in perhaps looking at some cost-sharing in terms of the structures.

It's interesting, a lot of the origins of this go back to the PFRA and a very significant federal role in this particular area with the Shellmouth Dam, in particular. So I'll get the details of any ongoing work, but essentially, you know, we'll also be looking at whether it needs some refurbishment.

Mr. Eichler: Then on page 54, when does the department expect to complete formal dam inspection policy? Is that something that's going to be developed this year, or is it ongoing, or what's the process in regards to policy on that?

Mr. Ashton: We're reviewing it currently, and we'll certainly make sure that we're looking at all the current accepted standards in terms of dam safety. So that is under review currently.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you. On page 56, one of the stated goals is to increase the number of bridges and structures maintained and to increase the percentage of the budget expended. I think we already talked about this to a certain extent, but prior to the capitalization and that, has there been any money that's lapped over—lapsed over the past five years?

Mr. Ashton: We don't have specific tracking, you know, in the budget materials, but we have increased the priority on bridges year over year. And it's certainly a reflection of some of the circumstances that members were—the Pierre Delorme Bridge, we saw the very significant issue of the structure in around Portage. So, certainly, bridges are an increasing focus, and that's to be expected. I mean, a lot of the bridges are really, you know, being at the point in their lifespan where you would expect that inspections would pick up, you know, requirement for some refurbishments.

* (15:40)

So—and there's also been a number of new bridges that are required. So, yes, bridges are an increasing part of that. I can probably get a, you know, more specific number, and I think we're probably—and I'm advised we're about a hundred million last year on bridges, so it's a fairly significant investment.

Mr. Eichler: I know that bridges are very expensive, there's no doubt about that. But, I guess—what—what's the policy? How do you determine whether or not to build another bridge or place culverts in them? Recently we just lost a bridge at the beginning of last week, and what's the criteria you use to determine whether or not that bridge will be replaced or

culverts put in in order to try and alleviate that water, because, obviously, culverts are a lot less expensive than a bridge?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I think it would depend. I mean, certainly a number of years ago there was a situation where we had a bridge failure in—on Highway 391 towards Leaf Rapids. And at that time we were faced with either building a bridge, which even though there was a bridge that existed there, would have probably taken a year and a half to get approvals primarily from, you know who, DFO—or else put in three culverts, maintain the road and the service that people expect on that road. So we put in culverts, and that's a number of years back. That's one dimension, we have to look at the approvals

Clearly, we would look at various different factors, costing one of them, but also, believe me, maybe just because I—partly it's because I was out in Morris yesterday, I'm more than aware of a lot of the drainage elements on the highway side that we look at. So, obviously, there may be situations where, when there is a need to replace a structure that we also will be looking at some of the ongoing drainage issues in the area. You know, I think every time we build a road, I mean, I think, for every civil engineer on the general side or any structural specialist, we need a hydraulic engineer nowadays. I think that's a decent ratio, and my engineers at the table here remind me that—or wanted me to know that's—that is the case.

So there may—I mean, it really depends on the specific circumstance. There's certainly no policy to replace bridges with culverts. It will depend on the specific circumstances.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, I know, in particular in regards to, you know, and I'm sure the minister's very much aware, but we've got a number of calls in regards to Highway 8 being rebuilt and those culverts being put in, and there's just not enough drainage there. So how do we determine the water flow? Is that done again by engineer studies to determine that? Like, I know this spring there was, you know, significant backup compared to what there was, and it was not a real wet spring, but certainly, how does that be determined?

Mr. Ashton: Well, obviously, it varies to time of year, and I think the member raises an important point. You know, there's flood season and then there's kind of the normal ongoing drainage issues that are out there. It's interesting because, for example, the context of 75, which, you know, we

held the open house yesterday, I would say half the questions that came up from members of the public were related to drainage issues, water management issues, many of which are ongoing, and it really just points again to why, in a major project like that or even a minor project, you have to balance all elements.

And, you know, I know there's—there are some armchair hydraulic experts out there. I've met a few of them. And I certainly respect local knowledge because I distinguish between sometimes people who presume to be experts and perhaps aren't much of an expert as they think, and people who actually live in the local area and have a real sense of things.

But one of the things that has helped us, for example, in 75 and a lot other areas, is the significant LiDAR surveying that was done as part of the, you know, post-'97 situation. So, for example, in the Morris side on Highway 75, we have LiDAR elevations available down to the fraction of an inch or a centimetre, depending on what—which measurement you want to use, and that aids very significantly in the hydraulic modelling. We use that very extensively, by the way, with the floodway expansion, as well.

So, that plus some of the increased monitoring that's in place is useful not just for the flood forecasting and the monitoring of flood levels, but it's also an important planning tool for any of our projects. Now, having said that, you'll see with 75, we've got a new, you know, we have a specific contract that we're putting in place to actually get a full hydraulic assessment. So, you know, virtually anything you do on highways will have a hydraulic element nowadays.

Mr. Eichler: Let's move on to page 60 in regards to the motor carrier, and with respect to the Trucking Productivity Improvement Fund, how much—how many applications have been made for permits, and how much money is being collected, and how do we utilize this money?

Mr. Ashton: I'll get the details for the member on that.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Chairperson, through you, I ask permission, again, to table another question submitted on behalf of my colleague from Pembina to be included into *Hansard*, but the answer be answered back in writing to me.

Mr. Ashton: Okay. The question is from the MLA for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) for an update on 32, potential four-laning of the highway, how four-laning would connect into 428, and in case of the high school would be at one mile north of the junction of 14, 32 and 428.

So we will undertake to respond.

There's also a question from the MLA for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) who lost his voice. Just kidding.

An Honourable Member: No, I lost it for him.

Mr. Ashton: No, I know. Cut off by the critic here. *[interjection]* I know. So, on behalf of the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen)—I hope he'll remember this. I'm going to read it for him on the record.

Regarding the 2010-11 capital plan for regional rural water systems for Manitoba Water Services Board, the member has indicated there are eight projects identified. It says, understanding the Municipality of Killarney, Turtle Mountain have identified a water project, including new wells, pipeline and a treatment facility. His understanding, the wells and pipelines will be funded under this fiscal year. The treatment facility would be funded in the next fiscal year, and asked for a clarification on the funding for that project.

We will undertake to get an answer for that, as well.

Mr. Eichler: Back to my question on regards to the improvement fund: Was there any permits made, application permits for that, and was there money collected on those and utilized?

Mr. Ashton: We'll get that detail.

Mr. Eichler: So Bill 13 that was introduced in December of 2007, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Damage to Infrastructure), has anyone been charged or convicted under that act? And, if so, what was the fines collected, and did that money, then, go into general revenue?

Mr. Ashton: I'll undertake to get that information for the critic.

Mr. Eichler: Moving right along, page 82, under the Northern Airports and Marine Services, what services are going to be cut as a result of the cutbacks, and how many provincial owned airports are there?

Mr. Ashton: Again, no impact on services. We are looking at some of the government-wide approaches here in terms of managing other expenditures. And we have 24 airports. We've put a significant investment into them the last number of years, particularly on the capital side. I mentioned on the highway capital, but we have a dramatic increase in terms of our commitment to capital that is manyfold higher than '99's. But we will not only maintain a significant capital investment, we're going to continue with our commitment to those vital airports.

* (15:50)

Mr. Eichler: I know on the Red River there was a constituent that contacted me there in regards to the marine that's been—a dock—that's been pulled up and put in storage, and it was out, I believe, the year before and then it was removed. Is there any intentions of re-establishing that marine? I believe it's in the Clandeboye area.

Mr. Ashton: Not under the circumstances. It may be federal. They're having a number of issues related to federal docks either not being maintained or dredging that has not been there to maintain access to those docks, so I'm not sure of the specifics, but if it is under our jurisdiction, I'll make sure that's included in the answer.

Mr. Eichler: Also, on page 82, how many provincial-owned ferries are there?

Mr. Ashton: Five locations and eight ferries. Eight ferries in five locations.

Mr. Eichler: It might be in the book, but I couldn't find it, but the operating grants for municipal airport commissions, what is the total funding that's allocated under that department?

Mr. Ashton: \$87,900.

Mr. Eichler: Submitted on behalf—another question to be read into the record on behalf of Cliff Graydon, the member—can the minister give us a capital plan for the next five years in the highway department south and east of Winnipeg. This would include Highway 75 east to Ontario border and south of No. 1 Highway.

Mr. Ashton: Yeah, there are projects in the existing capital program that can be broken out. We don't normally do that, but, certainly, I'll undertake to respond to the member's question.

Mr. Eichler: On page 88, Transportation Policy, each year there's a number of accidents involving

ATVs. In fact, we just had a recent accident involving four young children. And the official safety practices of Manitoba has asked us to get tougher on standards and licensing for off-road vehicles.

Could the minister update us with respect to safety considerations around ATVs and if there's any legislative changes being planned.

Mr. Ashton: I certainly appreciate the issue the member is raising. We're certainly aware of the more recent incident. We have ongoing reviews of transportation safety, and certainly we will look at the current practices both here in the province and elsewhere.

And, certainly, ATVs are very important. They're important not just recreationally but also for many people in terms of their livelihood, so we certainly start from that premise. But we do recognize some of the concerns that have been expressed, so that will be part of our ongoing review of transportation safety issues.

Mr. Eichler: Yes, I agree, there certainly has to be extensive consultation. As we know, certainly in the farming and ranching industries, it's imperative that they be allowed to make their livelihoods. As a result of that, the horse days, unfortunately, for people like me that used to rely on the horseback rather than the modern technology of ATVs, they're certainly the way they go.

But certainly something that needs to be looked at and that consultation needs to be done, so we'd encourage the minister to have a look at that.

Also, in regards to the same type of thing under Transportation is the regulations with respect to the cellphones and driving. And what is the status of that? Is it—I know we passed that some time ago. When is it planned on being implemented? When will it take effect?

Mr. Ashton: We will be making an announcement very shortly on the implementation date. We're currently into the education side of it and it is a significant priority for us as a province. We do this with legislation generally in Manitoba, you know, have an adjustment period.

I can indicate to the member that if I had any doubts about the legislation which I did not, it was certainly brought home to me how important it was when I was driving back from a meeting in Portage and my vehicle was rear-ended by another vehicle. I

got out of the vehicle to exchange particulars and the woman that was driving the vehicle told me that she had been—she was breaking up with her boyfriend and she was texting him at that point in time.

So, needless to say, I won't get into internal discussions, but one of the first questions I did ask was when were we going to be proclaiming the cellphone ban. So I have some experience of the safety importance of this, and we will be making an announcement very shortly, and certainly it's our intention to move fairly soon on getting that in place.

Mr. Eichler: The minister talked about, you know, the education process. What did we spend on education on that process? I know the number of ads and advertisements on radio, and so on, was very substantive. So do we have a breakdown on what that cost might be?

Mr. Ashton: Yeah, I know MPI with Justice is doing that. That probably could be best answered through MPI. We wouldn't have the—that figure available. But they're—I think there has been a significant investment on this and I think rightly so. We want to make sure that everybody's aware of it. There's an opportunity for transition. There continues to be an ability to use both cellphones and texting devices with hands-free operation, and one of the final elements we're looking at before the proclamation is also in terms of the regulations themselves. We want to make them as clear as possible. We do have experiences of other jurisdictions. Some have taken somewhat different approaches.

But this is not aimed at anything other than safety, and the figures I've seen are quite staggering in terms of the increased accident risk when people are using text devices and cellphones. I think it's also important to note, by the way, that one of the reasons we certainly moved on this is the predominance of those devices now. I mean, more and more people have texting devices. So it's not a theoretical situation. It is—it's a reality out there that it is creating a significant risk. And it's not just separate out other distractions, some provinces have taken a different approach in terms of that. You know, our goal is to make sure that all drivers are as distracted as least as possible, and we'll have that legislation proclaimed sooner rather than later.

Mr. Eichler: The regulations—where are they at, at this point, that the minister referred to. Are we a month away, two months away, six months away?

Mr. Ashton: I think we're, you know, we're going to be in a position to have the proclamation fairly soon. I'm not trying to be evasive; we haven't finalized the process yet, and I don't want to give a date and then find out our regulations aren't finalized. I don't want to rush the regulations. And I know the bill was passed some time ago, but I really believe with highway traffic acts, having been responsible for a number of significant changes—certainly going back to graduated drivers' licensing when I worked with the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). You know, we brought that in and the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar)—actually, we have our highway traffic act brain trust here.

But, in all seriousness, you know, the principle of the bill is probably the easiest thing to discuss, you know, in this case. We want to make sure that people aren't operating cellphones or texting devices unless it's hands-free. Then you have to define the devices. You have to define what hands-free is and what hands-free isn't. And we have taken the conscious decision of not rushing them in.

I know of some other jurisdictions—Saskatchewan has it now, Ontario has it—and largely because, you know, we're in the period of time we want the transition, want people get used to it. My view, by the way, is the success of this will be when we're not handing out a single ticket. It's the way The Highway Traffic Act really should work.

I suspect, in the short run, there will be a tougher adjustment for people. Old habits die hard. But, dare I say, 20, 30 years ago, there were no cellphones; there were no texting devices, so, you know, we got to keep up with the reality. So I would anticipate an announcement very shortly, and I'll undertake to not only keep the member posted on that, but if the member wants any details on the regulations when we finalize them, I'll be more than happy to arrange for you.

* (16:00)

Mr. Eichler: I don't want to talk about this for the rest of the debate, but I do have another question in regards to the process in drafting the regulations. And if—I know the minister remembered, during the debate on the bill, we were very concerned about the agricultural sector and the rural municipalities sector. Are those people being 'consultated' in regards to the regulations, because I know there was concern about, you know, a farmer taking his tractor down the

highway, hauling a load of hay, you know, and his cellphone rings. Does he have to pull over?

Were those types of things talked about in regards to—or 'consultated' with KAP, for example, or with the AMM in regards to grater operators and—how does that all roll out?

Mr. Ashton: We've consulted for—quite widely, including, by the way, internally because certainly we recognize that there are communications needs internally and, you know, highways staff, for example. So we have consulted in that.

I think the member goes back to the bill. I wasn't responsible for the bill at the time, but there were some amendments made that recognized some of the initial feedback especially from ham radio operators. And we sort of recognized the importance of that given the fact that—as EMO minister, I know how important the ham radio operators are. So we've recognized this and, again, it's not meant to be an inflexible punitive approach. But the key issue here is we have to make sure we maintain the integrity and the intent of the bill, which is to basically get people to realize that the prescribed devices have to be used in a safe manner, which is hands-free.

Mr. Eichler: I do need to move on. On page 90, department funding related to the Manitoba Public Insurance agreement. How is that—since it hasn't increased—is that level going to be renegotiated or how does that roll out for funding from the department—for the department?

Mr. Ashton: Well, it's certainly something that is reviewed periodically and, you know, the amount that we have printed is, you know, reflects the current budget. You know, I mean it's something that could possibly be reviewed at a later point in time but, you know, for this budget the amount that's listed essentially will be the full-year basis.

Mr. Eichler: I'm sorry—was it four years this set amount is going to be?

Mr. Ashton: For this year and what's in the budget reflects this year's commitment contribution.

Mr. Eichler: So in respect to that—just so I'm perfectly clear—every year it's negotiated, rather than a set amount.

Mr. Ashton: Well, what—I guess I want to say is the amount that's there reflects this year. You know there's not a—I mean it's done—it's been done by agreement, by budget decision, you know, it goes through the various steps to recognize that, and on a

yearly basis it's ratified through the budget approval process. So it's really a—it's a yearly process. So what's in there reflects the specific decision this year.

Mr. Eichler: The Manitoba Transport Board, how often does that meet and what is the primary responsibilities of that board?

Mr. Ashton: Well, it would meet as required. It has various responsibilities under a statute and it is a—such an arm's-length operation to government. If the member wants some of the—yes, just to give you some sense—public hearings were 48; structure and access applications, 385; will consider 60 speed limit traffic control devices; by-laws were considered; 13 on-site inspections; 41 regulation sections were written; and there were four Public Utilities Board appeals.

The Motor Transport Board, by the way—to give the member a quick run through with some of the volumes here: 34 general public meetings; 43 operating authorities issued and amended; no suspension orders; 30 school bus requests; 195 PSV operating authorities were renewed; two short-line railway application discontinuances were dealt with; 143 limited CT permits issued; and 290 breakdown demo permits issued. So—and this was from 2008-2009 but, you know, that would, probably, be a very similar type of description of the current activities of the board. And it, as I've said, it meets pretty regularly and it meets as required and it meets where required throughout the province.

Mr. Eichler: So is there an annual report that's issued by the Transport Board?

Mr. Ashton: They are—their activities are included in the annual report of the department.

Mr. Eichler: So is there an appeal mechanism for that board? Or, once their decision is made, is that final?

Mr. Ashton: I'll double check; I'm not sure. Generally, no. But I'm not sure if there are any of the statutory responsibilities that may have at appeal process. But I'll include that in the growing written response that the member is going to be waiting for. I think it will probably rival the size of our annual report by the time we're done.

Mr. Eichler: Again, I ask leave to read into the record for the member from Carman. The question regards to, one, update the junction Highways 1 and 16 proposed overpass construction: What stage is the project, in terms of planning, cost projections,

anticipated start date, does the plan include interchange connection with Highway 305?

And the second question is: Highway 305 from junction 1 and 16 south to Highway 2 is currently not in RTAC service and subject to seasonal weight restrictions. No. 305 is a major truck route for grain, fertilizer, livestock, potatoes, et cetera; will there be considerations to put this stretch of highway in the plans for upgrading to RTAC specifications? What would be the time frame for an upgrade?

Third and final question: Between Highways 75 and 10, with the exception of Highway 3 and 13, there are no north-south all-season truck routes between the U.S. border and the Trans-Canada Highway; are there currently any plans to have the regional truck route in this area?

Mr. Ashton: I'll undertake to add that to the growing response and I just want to suggest that, when we do get the response, the member may need to get some way of carrying it, because I think it's going to weigh quite a bit.

Mr. Eichler: In regards to the—back to page 92 in the Highway Traffic Board, how often does it meet and what's the primary role of that board?

Mr. Ashton: It's—it meets on an 'ad-needed' basis. I think, probably, the answer I gave previously on the specifics of the kind of activities is probably the best description of it. And I won't repeat it, but I think, if the member looks at the record of, you know, some of the volume, he gets some sense of the role of the board. And I want to stress again that it meets quite frequently. It meets as needed and where needed.

Mr. Eichler: Again, this is—again, the way I understand, this is a arm's-length appointment by your department and the appeal mechanism is—is there appeal mechanism for this Board?

Mr. Ashton: Again, now the—it's appointed through Order-in-Council. The member is quite correct that it is arm's-length, and certainly, we'll—you know, I believe there is an appeal for some procedures to the Public Utilities Board, but I'll get a more detailed response for the member.

* (16:10)

Mr. Eichler: I know, in our particular situation, on Highway 415, I made it through the—one of the businesses there had expanded their operation and they needed another access, and the speed limit was, you know, 100 kilometres, so, you know, on a foggy or snowy day, trucks backed up trying to back in to

the business was certainly a danger. And the request was turned down. So I have not heard back to their appeal on that, so I think it's something that would be very interesting to see, at least from a safety standpoint. The municipalities involved, the town of Teulon, the R.M. of Rockwood, certainly felt that, you know, because of the safety issue, that it needed to have some type of an appeal mechanism.

So if there's not, I think it's important that we'd be able to figure out a way, to some way over compensate for the appeal mechanism so that that can come forward.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I stress that I do periodically receive letters either from the general public or, at times, from MLAs. My view is that it's arm's-length for a reason, which is we want to maintain integrity to the process that does ensure a fair assessment.

I do want to stress, when it comes to speed limits, that it's not a simple process, and I think the member knows that. It depends on the circumstances, and we're dealing with sort of the one need of the transportation system, maintaining flows of traffic, maintaining the efficiency of the transportation system.

On the other side, we're dealing with some local safety issues. And I do want to stress, as well, by the way, that there have been cases where things have been revisited with subsequent applications. Perhaps, with changed circumstance, there have been changes in the ruling.

The PUB, as I said, there's appeal for some processes of Highway Traffic Board decisions.

My sense, by the way, though, is—and I met with quite a few municipalities, and I've dealt with a lot of these issues, you know, in terms of initial concern. I think a lot of cases—even if people don't agree with the individual decision, I think the approach itself is important.

I don't interfere politically. I don't think anybody would want the minister involved in those very important decisions. The department provides technical advice, but, by having it as a arm's-length decision process, I think it maintains that integrity.

So, as I said, there is an appeal for some elements if there's a responsibility, but, again, they do reconsider specific issues, and that may be something that the municipalities may want to consider at some point in time. It wouldn't be the first time something was raised again, and, certainly, it

wouldn't be the first time where there was a decision that varied from the original order.

I mean, circumstances change all the time, and, in fact, in many cases we've seen the focus often on new developments, and I've heard, you know, that reference. And, obviously, when new developments take place, you will get changes in traffic volumes, and that can significantly impact on it and it can lead to a different decision.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you. I want to move over to the Taxicab Board and the recent decision with the side shields for cab drivers, and we know that's a significant issue for safety in that regard. And how well has that been received within the industry?

Mr. Ashton: Just by way of background, we made a significant move in 2001-2002 to really bring in what I think has been recognized across the country as probably one of the safest taxi jurisdictions in Canada, and, of course, that applies to the city of Winnipeg. Ironically, taxis in my home community are not under provincial jurisdiction, but the taxis in the city of Winnipeg are, and there's a stark reason. I'm not sure what it is, but that's the reality.

And one of the things we did when the, you know, some of the real problems that the industry is facing, initially is we worked with the taxi industry quite closely. I worked with Rupreet Deol [*phonetic*]. It was Rupreet Deol's [*phonetic*] father that was murdered. Actually, the current member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) drafted the report just before he was elected. It's been universally recognized as one of the best reports of its kind. And we brought in cameras and shields.

Now, to bring it up-to-date in terms of 2009-2010, as minister responsible for the Taxi Board, I—it became very apparent that there had been a number of incidences involving attacks, assaults, robberies involving taxi drivers. There were some ongoing efforts to improving safety, and a couple things are happening.

One is there's a new camera that's being installed in all vehicles. That's important. I really believe that the—probably the cameras even more than the shields have made a huge difference, and it will allow the police to catch perpetrators.

The second thing we have done, we've been working with the safety committee on getting improved shield protection, including a side panel. And there's different views on the design, but the prime type of shield that's used currently is no longer

in production. It was made by a Swedish company. So there's a need for a more customized approach. There are a couple of shields, actually, that are produced here in Winnipeg. I don't know how often the member takes taxis; I take them regularly, and he's probably seen some of them. So the—we've been working with the industry in terms of that.

We're working on a number of other measures as well. One of the issues in the taxi industry on safety is the warning light for—when incidences take place, there is a light currently. I would say most people have no idea what that light means. One of the immediate recommendations from the board and the industry—and I met with them and I asked them to come out with a report—was to prove that we actually have the taxi board following up now on putting in place a much better warning system.

I don't know how much detail the member wants, but I'll just very quickly mention a couple of other things because I think they are important to put on the public record. Working to ensure that all vehicles have a theft-based immobilizer, and we're dealing particularly with some of the hybrids that don't. There's devices that the industry is looking at right now which can immobilize and essentially protects against, you know, a carjacking.

I've met with the chief of police and other representatives of the police service because we want to ensure that there was a clear co-ordination of any emergency call on dispatch. And I certainly want to thank the chief of police in Winnipeg for his immediate response, and certainly we're looking at that.

We've raised issues related to non-payment of fare. There—I think many people in the industry have seen that there's a significant connection there, you know, the petty crimes versus the more serious incidences.

And we are renewing some of the recommendations of the 2001-2002 report that also look at training of drivers, safety awareness, et cetera, and our basic bottom line here is we don't tolerate attacks on our—or assaults or robberies involving any citizen and we certainly apply that very strongly to the taxi side.

And you know, I have regular contact with—both the industry formally and also with many people in the industry, and I would say that the general consensus was that we needed to take some

additional moves and we've done it. And we've done it in a way, by the way, that's not a financial burden on the industry. There's been an increase to drop fee. Our view is, safety is a part of doing business, quite frankly.

So we did make moves 2001, 2002. We have taken further moves now, and I think, generally speaking, both the taxi industry and the general public are very supportive of what has essentially been a co-operative approach here. It was not a top-down approach. We're working with the industry and will continue to work with them.

Mr. Eichler: I thank you for the background. I think it's important to take time to put that on the record, so I'm glad that you did.

I know that one of the major concerns that's been brought to me by a number of the taxicab drivers was the fact that they were worried about being hit on the driver's side and not be able to escape once that wraparound shield was put in. Has that come forward as a major concern to you?

Mr. Ashton: I know that the board is working with the safety committee of the industry on specific design elements, and in the past that's been a key element. You know, taxi drivers themselves know, you know, the operational basis, so those have been ongoing discussions and the general commitment is to improve the side protection. I think that's been clearly stated.

* (16:20)

But one of the advantages, quite frankly, I know, is we do have that capacity here in Winnipeg. There are a number of shields that already include some form of side panel, and that can and will be something that can be customized. I want to say customized not only in terms of the vehicle—that's important, there's a big difference between the Prius and, say, a Crown Victoria—but also in making sure that there is all the safety and comfort measures that are put in place.

I would say, as minister responsible for the taxi board, that the cameras are probably the No. 1 thing that we've done, but the combination of the cameras and the shields has been, I think, very effective. I think the taxi board has in the past, shown statistically we've reduced crime against taxi drivers by about 80 to 85 percent, and notwithstanding that there have been some incidences in the news

recently, that trend does continue. It's nothing compared to what it was 10, 15 years ago.

Mr. Eichler: I'll leave that at that and certainly appreciate those comments.

In regards to the air ambulance services on page 118, how is the rates and those services, are they contractual, and how long are they, and how do you establish those contracts?

Mr. Ashton: It's on a cost-recovery basis and, course, a very important part of our provision of services. I can indicate that we have essentially had, since the inception of dedicated air ambulance in 1985, more than 14,000 patients transferred. That, by the way, coincidentally, is right around the population of my home community of Thompson. So—and I know people personally, it saved their lives. So, we're very proud of it. It's based on a cost-recovery basis. Course, we've just recently renewed it, ironically, with a Citation executive jet, formerly owned by a bank. I know the member knows the banking industry; now, apparently, it's a buyer's market for executive jets. We're able to buy it, reconfigure it and it's going to be there for many years to provide that service.

Mr. Eichler: Just leads me to—I wasn't going to go there, but I'd be remiss if I didn't. So, is that a capital project then? Would that be amortized over a number of years? Is that paid for out of one purchase out of this year's budget?

Mr. Ashton: It's a long-term assets capital.

Mr. Eichler: So the total cost of that project was?

Mr. Ashton: The purchase was 6 million. The refurbishment, it was first thing—a refurbishment to turn it into an air ambulance, including a wide door, and it also, by the way, can carry two patients, which is quite significant. But probably the purchase was 4 and the refurbishment was 6, totals about 10 million, which, when you consider that, you know, the market, it is a slightly used executive aircraft that actually has very limited flying hours. So it was a really significant acquisition for us.

Mr. Eichler: And again, I'm not trying to get you up on a pedestal here on regards to the purchase of the new water bombers, and I know the announcement was—and I fully support the purchase. I think we needed to get some new planes. Those definitely needed replace, but how was the project—was it a tendered project?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I'm glad the member's raised the question, and I hope the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is paying attention.

I do want to stress, by the way, I appreciate the member's support in terms of this, that it's really important to recognize the air—or, pardon me, the water bombers, how important they are in terms of service they provide, how old some of our water bombers are. Some of them date back to 1970. I think I stated at the press conference Pierre Trudeau was prime minister and Richard Nixon was president when they were constructed.

There seems to be some confusion by at least one MLA. We're not the only jurisdiction that has been purchasing the new water bombers. Newfoundland actually has, as well. And I want to stress, too, by the way, the—there was even suggestion of refurbishment. Now, these are aircraft that we work very hard to maintain in terms of their air safety worthiness, but we were in a position with an old fleet, first of all, of having to replace it.

The second issue I want to raise too, by the way, is, essentially, we have a manufacturer that, of course, has been producing this aircraft for a significant period of time. It does meet the needs of Manitoba. Other jurisdictions have different approaches. One of the advantages we have in Manitoba, we have a lot of lakes, a lot of rivers. So there's an immediate ability for this aircraft to use our geographic advantage here, a safe amount of water.

So, we also, were engaged in negotiations to ensure that we could actually have this aircraft provided. I mean it is a newer version. The turbo element is going to be significant in terms of its handling. It will have significant improvements on the operational side. But we could not risk not having this replacement to our fleet. And, in fact, the first aircraft will be in place this fall.

So, we did negotiate directly with the supplier, it's a specific aircraft. And we've had a very good success with this specific aircraft. This is the new generation version of it. And I think it was the right move.

I certainly appreciate the member, as critic for the official opposition, saying that. And I have to say somebody that lives in northern Manitoba, where we rely on this, I would never criticize somebody living in urban area if there was a refurbishment of the ambulance, the road-based ambulance, to provide

service. And I think we've been part of—in the member for Inkster's constituency. I mean, through Winnipeg, we've been part of significant improved support in terms of ambulance and paramedic services. But this is it. I mean, we—every year, we face significant challenges in the forest-fire side. We get about 400 and 450 a year. Yes, you know, this is life or death for a good part of rural northern Manitoba. So, I appreciate the member's comments.

As we did directly negotiate with the supplier and, again, this a long-term capital investment. It's not, you know—we didn't find 100-plus million dollars under a mattress somewhere. We sat down. We looked at the cost benefit, and we looked at the very real situation that, at some point in time, we had to renew the fleet. And we couldn't take the—you know, any period in which, to my mind, there would be any situation where the fleet could not operate. I mean, could you imagine, say, a 1989 scenario, which was the worst for forest fires, if we—if one of our 40-plus-year-old planes could not be in service because of significant maintenance needs.

So that was a decision we made. I believe it was the right decision.

Mr. Eichler: I know the same as rain, fire knows no boundaries. And I remember back in the mid-'90s, when we had a fire in the—in our area, in the, you know, the Interlake and Lakeside area. And it was substantial, so I know without those, we would have certainly a lost a lot more acreage, and is something, as I said, I believe in.

I guess I'm concerned a little bit about how we went about it. I guess that would be a concern. Like, there's other planes out there that fight fires. And why did you pick this particular company to negotiate with, rather than go to the tender process?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I want to stress that we have significant experience with this aircraft. This is a—you know, the purchase is for a newer version. There are, I think, very few suppliers that are available. There are other aircraft that are available, but these are very successful.

I want to stress there are other manufacturers that might have planes that are used in some circumstances, but this is an amphibious water bomber. It has the ability to pick up its payload, significant payload, significant maneuverability, and that's one of the key elements we have here.

I want to stress, again, that there's virtually nowhere in Manitoba, whether it's the member's

constituency or mine, where there's not a significant body of water available for the payload. So it meets all requirements and there are, as I said, this essentially was the supplier. And one of the reasons we did move is to basically make sure that that plane could still be available to us. If we waited a number of other years, I mean, there's always the risk that planes would have to be taken out of service for, you know, the increasing maintenance that they require, but the plane may not—you know, may not be in production.

*(16:30)

So we were able to negotiate directly. We believe we were able to negotiate a fair price, and, starting this fall, you will see the first brand-new water bomber that's going to be around for many years to come.

Mr. Eichler: And the balance of the new aircraft then, when would they be delivered? What's the contract speculate there?

Mr. Ashton: This October, then January. Next year—October of next year and then the following October, I believe. So the four of them are scheduled to be delivered essentially starting this October going over the next couple of years.

Mr. Eichler: I know B.C. uses a different type of bomber but—water bomber, in regards to the fighting fires out there.

Did you look at any of those other alternatives that are a lot cheaper—a lot cheaper plane, and maybe a little more economical? Like, how did you determine which one to buy or negotiate other than the past service that you've had with this company? And relationships are important, there's no doubt about that. I don't doubt that, but I'm just a little concerned about how we went about trying to determine these planes.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I can indicate, first of all, that we work very closely with Conservation. I mean, Conservation operates our forest fire-fighting service. Secondly, I want to indicate is we're different terrain than in other provinces, B.C. in particular. Different situations in terms of fires as well. The third thing I want to indicate, by the way, is we've had increasing success with forest fire-fighting techniques over the last number of years.

We saw that, I think, '05—it's hard to remember, because I happened to be the minister when it was the second worst year, you know, in history. And

what we found is the ability to have a significant payload that these water bombers provide. The Bird Dog aircraft, which give us a very significant tactical ability to, you know, to spot where we need to deliver the payload. That combined with our dedicated, on-the-ground, forest fire-fighting crews, and I don't know if the member's aware, but, you know, the peak of the most recent difficult forest fire season—I remember visiting the front lines and it was like a war zone, I tell you. Not that far out of Thompson and there were nearly 400 people deployed on the ground.

So, one of the key elements is this aircraft can provide a very significant payload. And actually, the new aircraft provides improved capability, it can deliver more payloads in the same period of time; again, the turbo engine and some of the maneuverability that the new aircraft has, make it an improved version. So the bottom line here, it meets the needs of our forest fire-fighting service and that was the basis on which we moved to the procurement.

Mr. Eichler: I know a number of provinces have agreements with other countries. In particular, I know B.C. has an agreement with Australia. Is there any type of agreement Manitoba has with any other countries or provinces, where you share services, or remuneration back and forth, for trying to get some—recoup some of these costs during the off season?

Mr. Ashton: Yeah, we have various agreements, arrangements. When we have been faced with significant challenges, we've had assistance from crews and equipment from other provinces. We have done the same. I look at B.C., a number of years ago, where we were a significant part of that.

There's even been times, by the way, where there have been, you know, some discussions on an international basis. I note Greece had some significant forest fires a few years ago. Geography is a bit limiting but, you know, there are, you know, when you have other jurisdictions in need, we're there. So we have ongoing arrangements.

And I can say, from the EMO perspective, by the way, as well, we work very closely with other jurisdictions when they have disasters, when we have disasters. I contacted the mayor of Fargo, for example, during the flood situation, or the Premier (Mr. Selinger) did, as well, to offer our assistance. This year, when we were heading into the flood season, my colleague, the minister from Alberta

phoned. So we have an ongoing mutual aid network and we have various agreements that administer that.

Mr. Eichler: I do need to try and move on. We need to go to page 134, and that's the City of Winnipeg, for the Province's share of waste-water treatment plant upgrades. How much money has actually flowed for this particular project?

Mr. Ashton: Looking at the clock here, I—you know, I know I can get this information probably very shortly, but I can—I'll probably undertake to provide it in writing.

Mr. Eichler: Okay, and also if we can drag into that the federal government share of that, as well as how much the City of Winnipeg is providing, as well.

Mr. Ashton: Definitely.

Mr. Eichler: On page 138—when we're talking about the overall budget in regards to interest costs and, of course, we talked an awful lot today in regards to capital projects, what have we anticipated for interest rate increase costs that's going to affect your budget over the next five years?

Mr. Ashton: That's a question for Finance.

Mr. Eichler: Okay. In regards to the Crown Lands and Property Agency, one of the expected results includes implementing of a new output-based cost-recovery system for Crown lands and administrative services. Could you just elaborate on how that's going to roll out and what's going to happen?

Mr. Ashton: I'll probably—I'm just looking at the clock here—I'll respond in writing to that.

Mr. Eichler: In regards to the infrastructure works—going back to page 121 and one—to 123, there's a number of projects that's being worked on. What is the average cost to build an RTAC road now?

Mr. Ashton: For two-lane, probably in around a million dollars per kilometre. That's the—you know, sort of the all-in cost.

Mr. Eichler: So, a twin would be roughly two?

Mr. Ashton: Yeah, it's very proportional, so.

Mr. Eichler: On the south Perimeter bridge project, is there any update on that particular project?

Mr. Ashton: Yeah, I think, the member says—to mention—the project is complete. There are some legal issues surrounding what happened with the initial construction that our legal counsel are

currently involved with, so I won't comment on that, but other than to say the project itself is done.

Mr. Eichler: What was the original cost of that project then?

Mr. Ashton: I assume the member saw by the original budget—

An Honourable Member: Right. The actual cost.

Mr. Ashton: Oh, the actual cost is 20 million.

An Honourable Member: The actual cost was 20?

Mr. Ashton: Yeah.

An Honourable Member: And the projected cost was—

Mr. Ashton: I think the original projected cost was 13 million.

Mr. Eichler: Exceptionally huge difference.

I want to go to the cost for the winter road and the new road that's been projected of \$72 million, 72.5 million. How much is that going to impact on the winter road cost going into the future, and when's the anticipated start date for that and completion date?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the East Side Road Authority actually reports to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson). So, obviously the questions related to the east side road would be more appropriately put to that minister.

* (16:40)

Obviously, you know, with the construction of all-weather roads, there'll be reduced requirement in terms of our ongoing winter road system, so there'll be some cost savings, not a huge amount. I mean, our current budget annually is 9 million. Our winter roads may not be the most reliable with climate change, but they're very cost effective. So, you know, we are in a very different situation in terms of that. And we're talking very significant undertaking that will eventually take some of the pressure off in terms of winter roads. But the member would be best advised to ask the minister responsible.

Mr. Eichler: So the winter road, then, for financial assistance, was there any money that flowed out of your department to assist those communities to get freight in and out because of the early spring break-up?

Mr. Ashton: Basically, I think 99 percent of the communities are First Nations communities, so

INAC has the responsibility, both in a fiduciary sense but also in some of the specific projects. I did meet with Minister Strahl at the time that the Province—we're faced with the early closure. We have been in close contact with them. We certainly did work with the communities to try and do whatever we could in terms of the system itself, but, essentially, in terms of the airlifting of any supplies, it's essentially the fiduciary responsibility of the federal government. And they have indicated that they will be flying in essential supplies.

Mr. Eichler: I guess I begin—probably I know the answer, but I do need to know. As far as rescuing those vehicles and retrieving those vehicles on the winter road, that, again, was all paid for through INAC then?

Mr. Ashton: I'm not sure if it would have all been paid for by INAC, but you have a variety of circumstances. You had, you know, individuals that were rescued by truckers. And other individuals, communities in some cases were involved, and, you know, it's one that I travel winter roads regularly. People—you know that the person that's stuck could be you tomorrow, so there's a pretty good mutual aid system there, and I have been stuck. I've had a flat tire, and actually the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) remembers a certain trip on the winter roads.

So, yeah, we're very fortunate, you know, whether it's northerners or contractors working the north, a lot of cases the individual rescues were the fellow travellers on the winter road.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Chairperson, just in the interests of time, I'd like to read three questions into the record, and the minister can answer at a later date.

PR Roads No. 330, 332 and 334—these have been identified from—constituents of mine have raised concerns about maintenance of these roads and say, in fact, they're quite dangerous. Can the minister look at the maintenance log for these roads and perhaps increase the scheduled maintenance? And can the minister indicate if there are any plans to pave these roads within the five-year plan, or a 10-year plan?

Question No. 2: About a year ago I wrote to the minister asking him to look at extending a speed limit zone on an additional 1,000 feet on PR 424, as it passes the residential development, Nicola Place. Has there been any progress on this as I have not received a letter back yet?

And the third one relates to Government Services. The waste water from the lagoon at the Headingley jail empties into the Assiniboine River behind the jail, and often there is weakened ice or even open water at this site, even in the dead of winter. Since people use this river for walking, walking pets, skiing and snowmobiling, would the minister consider erecting a "Danger Thin Ice" sign at this portion of the river?

Mr. Ashton: I will respond in writing, through the critic, to the questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): This year, if I read this correctly, you're going to—planning to spend in terms of capital spending, 750,536,000. Of that, approximately 153 million is for the floodway expansion and the East Side Road Authority. How does that break down? How much for the floodway, and how much for the east-side road?

Mr. Ashton: The jurisdiction on the East Side Road Authority in terms of specifics is Minister of Northern Affairs, but, in terms of the actual flow, funds are at 72 million this year for the east-side road, and I've given the breakdowns previously on the highway side, but, you know, there's both highway capital and the government services capital, if you like, the, you know, the facilities that we're responsible for building.

Mr. Gerrard: Of the 750 million, how much is part of this year's expenditure, and then how much is booked as future amortized debt?

Mr. Ashton: If it's capital, it's all amortized. If it's operating, it's not.

Mr. Gerrard: Are you saying that, of the 750 million, not a penny is coming from this year's budget?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I'll have to double-check the specific line item, but if it's capital, whether it's a building or whether it's a highway or whether it's aircraft that is amortized, if it's not eligible for capital, then it's operating. So the preservation, maintenance on highways would be—continue to be an operating expense.

Mr. Gerrard: My understanding is that when you amortize, you put—you have some allocation the first year toward debt. But what you're saying is that there's no allocation of funding the first year; it's all paid off as amortized debt in years two, three, four, five, what have you?

Mr. Ashton: Yes. It essentially depends on the construction time frame or the purchase time frame. But on the construction side, once an asset is completed, then it is amortized. And I mentioned earlier that, you know, 20- to 40-year time frame, for example, is the amortization period for highways. And we have similar amortization principles that, you know, for government buildings and for capital equipment.

Mr. Gerrard: Of the 750 million, then, none of that would be booked as part of the Estimate of expenditure for this year? I mean, in terms of that would be booked as current expenditure, it would all be booked as future expenditure and amortized as debt?

Mr. Ashton: Some of the interest costs would be. It depends on the type of the asset. There are various accounting principles that are applied, and it does vary on the type of the asset. But there would be some interest costs that would be applied in that—in the specific year.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, the amount that is amortized and for—as future debt, is that part of the Province's general purpose debt, or is that booked elsewhere?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, that'd be a question to Finance. I—you know, we can certainly provide answers in terms of these Estimates in terms of the specific, you know, budgets for capital, and—but, yes, that's—essentially, that's a Finance question.

Mr. Gerrard: Since you've got in the 2010-2011 capital investment Estimates which add up to a total of 750 million, you've got—it must be about 80 million which is floodway. Is that floodway going to be completed, and would not be, then, necessary for—continued next year?

Mr. Ashton: We're all but complete and, I think, maybe one more winter on the outlet structure—inlay structure, pardon me. And so we're sort of one project away from total completion.

Mr. Gerrard: Are you saying that that would be completed by the end of March 2011 or—?

Mr. Ashton: That's correct.

Mr. Gerrard: So there would be a decrease of approximately \$80 million needed next year for the floodway?

* (16:50)

Mr. Ashton: Well, basically, with the completion of the project, that there would no longer be a need for

a line item on the capital side to reflect that. That's—that would be correct.

Mr. Gerrard: Of the capital projects this year, how much of that is part of a—the economic stimulus package?

Mr. Ashton: I mentioned earlier in Estimates that, on the highway side, there's four different federal programs, some of which could be classified as stimulus, some perhaps not. But to give a, you know, a sum total figure, it's \$100 million this year, and our total capital is, of course, 366, which I've mentioned earlier. But these are four separate funds. Some of them aren't necessarily what you would consider to be stimulus, but that's the total federal contribution.

Mr. Gerrard: Are you saying that where you've got a \$750-million capital and your highways infrastructure is 366, that 266 of that is non-stimulus and 100 million, approximately, is stimulus spending?

Mr. Ashton: Again, without, you know, I'm just using a broad definition here of federal funding, because, for example, we have some funding out of the border services, the Asia Pacific Gateway. So these are funds that are ongoing. I know the member's the former minister responsible for WD. You know we have WD funded so it's not all stimulus, but it's, yes, essentially of the \$366 million this year on a project-by-project basis, the federal government is contributing 100 million.

Mr. Gerrard: Of the 266 million, which is there for, I take it, provincial, straight dollars and not coming from the federal government; that that 266 million is part of the base budget then, is not a stimulus budget? Is that right?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I want to be careful here of the terms because, you know, we are, some—if you take what is part of those infrastructure agreements and call it stimulus, their 100 million is essentially their share, and we have, you know, this project-by-project basis. So, you know, we have our 50 percent share that's in place. So you could describe a couple hundred million dollars this year as coming from, you know, stimulus related, whether it's our contribution or theirs.

As I said, I'm a little bit careful using the term stimulus. I mean I could have used the term federal, because then you don't get into, sort of, what is stimulus and what is an ongoing infrastructure expenditure. So essentially, if you were to take

federal projects, that is about 200 out of the 366 million. A lot of it is on CentrePort and CentrePort related investments, but not strictly so. We're seeing some investments elsewhere in the province as well. But that's the sum total of cost shared—about 200 million, 100 from us, 100 from the feds.

Mr. Gerrard: Of the 366, is some of that money flow-through from the federal government, or is that 200 million just provincial dollars which are matching similar dollars from the federal government?

Mr. Ashton: Essentially what we do is we have an agreement. We have designated projects; it varies according to the four programs. In this case, we have access to the funding. We build it and then we basically submit the relevant invoices to the federal government, and they cash flow after that. So it's still our project in terms of construction. The funding comes after the construction is complete, and after we meet all the claiming requirements under the specific program.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Chairperson, I did make an agreement with the minister and my House leader that we will—we'll start line by line so we can conclude today.

But, before doing that, I do want to thank the minister and the staff for their patience with me as a new critic. I will do better next time, and I'm certainly looking forward to the questions and responses as they come back. So thank you for that.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the opposition critic for that.

Mr. Ashton: I promised I wouldn't do this, but I want to commend the critic for his constructive role here, and I know it's been a difficult time on a personal basis, so I really appreciate his dedication.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks to all. Hearing no further questions, we'll now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

Resolution 15.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$76,025,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Highways and Transportation Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$48,307,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Government Services Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$171,672,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Infrastructure Works, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,933,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Manitoba Water Services Board, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$56,788,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Canada-Manitoba Agreements, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$239,355,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,404,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Emergency Measures Organization, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$750,536,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Thank you, committee members.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 15.1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 15.1. Minister's staff have already left.

Floor is open for any comments or questions at this point in time.

None? Seeing none? All right. Therefore, we put it to:

Resolution 15.1: RESOLVED that there be granted—

Mr. Ashton: I've got to be careful here. I may not have a salary left after this.

I move that line item 15.1(a) be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is in order. It has been moved by the honourable minister—any questions or comments?

It has been moved by the honourable minister that line item 15.1(a) be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000. Motion is in order.

Shall the motion pass? *[Agreed]*

We will now revert to resolution 15.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,720,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. The hour being 5 o'clock, give or take, committee rise.

* * *

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Last week, when the Estimates for the Department of Education were passed in the Chamber section of supply, an incorrect dollar amount was read on the record during the passage of resolution 16.5. The amount of \$180,000 was read instead of the amount of \$108,000. In order to ensure the record is correct and that the correct dollar amount is approved, the resolution will now be read again and the committee will be asked to approve the resolution again.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,150,108,000 for Education, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TRAINING AND TRADE

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): We shall now proceed with the consideration of the Estimates for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade.

The floor is open for questions and the minister can call in his staff.

For a reminder of all members, we are on page 71 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I just, for the benefit of the staff and the minister, would hope to conclude these Estimates by 3:30 this afternoon, which will leave some time for—well, leave some time beforehand to do the line by line. But the member from Morris would like to ask some questions at this point in time, if you would please, and then I'll take over from there.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Before I begin, I'd want to clarify, I believe that the business stream of the Department of Immigration is now falling under Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): That's correct.

Mrs. Taillieu: I want to then ask some questions in regard to the people that are granted into the Nominee Program through the business stream, and I know that, originally, people who wanted to come here and start a business in Manitoba were—initially, they had to provide a \$50,000 line of credit. And, after 2002, they were required to put forward a cash deposit of \$50,000, and after 2003 until present time, unless something's changed, they're required to put down a \$75,000 deposit.

And I'd like to ask: How many of these deposits get returned if they—people do not start a business in Manitoba?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, Madam Chair, individuals who come through on this program have two years to commence a business and, in that particular time frame, if they don't do so, the deposit is forfeited, after two years.

Mrs. Taillieu: In 2004-2005, there were 99 deposits, six defaulted. In 2005-06, 109 deposits, 82 defaulted.

In 2006 and 2007, 109 deposits, 36 defaulted. In 2007-2008, 190 deposits, 32 defaulted; 2008 to '09, 222 deposits received, 62 defaulted. And, when you do the math, the amount of money received by the Province over this time would have been upwards of \$16 million.

Can you tell me what that—where that money is?

Mr. Bjornson: The program is self-financed in that we—staffing needs are addressed through interest that has accrued on the deposits as well as deposits that are forfeited and the money sits in the Manitoba Development Corporation.

Mrs. Taillieu: And I know from doing the calculations that the interest earned on this money is approximately \$15 million, what—that is separate from the 16 million that they collected, and I note that—in—the interest was paid out in the rate of just over a million in 2006-07; 1.1 million in 2007-08; and point—and 2008-09 was about 3.3. That was for the program administration that the minister is talking about.

So what—where's the rest of the money?

Mr. Bjornson: The remainder of the funds that the member's asking about would sit on deposit in the Manitoba Development Corporation.

*(14:50)

Mrs. Taillieu: And who has control of the Manitoba Development Corporation?

Mr. Bjornson: The Manitoba Development Corporation's governed under the same policies that govern government departments and Treasury Board approvals.

Mrs. Taillieu: To what minister does the Manitoba Development Fund administration report?

Mr. Bjornson: That would be me.

Mrs. Taillieu: So can the minister tell me, what is the intended use of the \$1.016 million that was collected from new immigrants coming to Manitoba, hoping to start new jobs and, for whatever reason, could not get that together within the two-year time frame and they were not allowed to get that money back? So why did they keep that money? Why didn't they return that money?

Mr. Bjornson: Essentially, the program provides an incentive, and a penalty, if the individuals that apply and subscribe through this program are successful in establishing a business as they intend to when they

make the deposit, then the money is returned. In the event that they don't meet the parameters of the two-year time frame to establish that business, as they proposed under that particular program, as such, they would forfeit that deposit. As mentioned, it's a self-funded program in that the interest and the forfeitures do go towards staffing and management of the program.

Mrs. Taillieu: I've spoken to some people who, with all intentions when they came here, wanted to be able to start a business here in Manitoba. But the reality is that business starts here in Manitoba are quite different than they are in some of these countries that people come from. You can't just start a street vendor here, or open a little shop the way they thought that they might be able to do.

Now, I would like to ask the minister, what help did his department provide to assist people if they were having difficulty in establishing a business? What help was provided to help them get started?

Mr. Bjornson: As I said, this program is self-funding, and the default and the interest that is accrued. And part of the program that is funded as such would be a business service settlement program that provides counselling to the applicants. It allows them to get an understanding of the business environment in which they hope to conduct and establish their businesses. And I have actually, as minister, very early in my tenure, toured the department buildings where I did see this in operation first-hand, where people, who had subscribed to this program, had been in to receive some counselling to understand the business requirements that would need to be met and they would need to understand in order to be successful.

Mrs. Taillieu: And as I noted before, '04-05, 6 percent default; '05-06, 75 percent default; '06-07, 30 percent default; '07-08, 17 percent default; '08-09, 28 percent default.

Now, the department is also allowed, I guess, to make exceptions, but only one exception was made in five years between '04 and '09 to actually return money if the people were unable to start a business. It sounds more like the incentive is for the government not to help these people get started so they can just keep the money.

I'm really curious as to why there's such a big default with people coming to start businesses here, if the money that is—that they pay up front is

supposed to be helping them get settled into business.

Mr. Bjornson: First of all, I should clarify for the member that the percentages that she's calculating would not be accurate, because the program applications in one year don't necessarily reflect the forfeitures, because the forfeitures are after two years. So the forfeitures that you cite in the same year as the program applications would, therefore, not be accurate. So I would just advise the member as such.

And they are forfeitures and, as I said, there is a incentive and a penalty. The reality is that some of the individuals who apply through this program to settle here in Manitoba never settle here and, as such, forfeit the deposit that they made.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I don't know if the minister is saying that his department has provided me with false information, but it's a Freedom of Information request. So I have the numbers right in front of me. So I don't know whether he's telling me they gave me the wrong information. Is that what he's saying?

Mr. Bjornson: Madam Chair, and I did not mean to imply that—like, I should check with the member the information that she had received, if the forfeitures were, in fact, applied for in the same year that the individuals applied for the program. If that parallel had been drawn, I apologize to the member for suggesting otherwise.

I was just trying to clarify that it is a two-year window in which there would be a forfeiture, and, if she was citing the number of applications from one year in the same context of the forfeitures for the same year, then that would not be an accurate representation.

But if she asked specifically for the number of applications and the percentage of forfeitures, then I could assure her that the department would have provided the accurate information and I apologize to the member for that.

Mrs. Taillieu: Madam Chair, when there is occasion to reimburse the business owner because they didn't come to the province, but they did have the deposit before they came—I think that the deposit is up front, and then the money would be returned if the people did not come to Manitoba. Do they get the interest returned as well as the \$75,000?

Mr. Bjornson: If they do not come to Manitoba they forfeit the deposit.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Taillieu: So if they forfeit the deposit, they forfeit any interest accrued on the deposit as well?

* (15:00)

Mr. Bjornson: They would not receive interest even when the deposit was returned, if they were successful in their application or their establishment of their business within the two-year time frame. As I said, the program is funded by the interest and the forfeiture.

Mr. Borotsik: If we can go back to where we left off yesterday with the minister, I think it was the MIOP program, and the minister at that time had indicated through his staff that there were two loans, two outstanding loans that were in arrears. There are 19 as identified—19 active loans as of March 31, 2009, two in arrears. Can the minister tell me just how large those loans are, and just how long or how far they've been in arrears?

Mr. Bjornson: For privacy reasons, we do not disclose that.

Mr. Borotsik: No, I appreciate the privacy and as I had mentioned yesterday with respect to actually giving names, I'm not asking for names; I'm not asking for any details with respect to the loan, the terms. I'm not asking for the corporations. I do believe that there's privacy issues. But I do believe that the government is responsible for the funding of those, and just simply telling me the two loans, how much they're for, and how much they're in arrears is a requirement of the government.

Mr. Bjornson: Because of the small number of loans that we are talking about, it would not be appropriate to disclose the amounts that the member is requesting, because people could figure out, as MIOP program is public information, people could figure out who the companies are that might not be current.

Mr. Borotsik: Did I hear the minister properly where he said the MIOP program is public information? Well, if it's public information, then I should absolutely have the opportunity of finding out what the arrears are.

Mr. Bjornson: The outstanding loans are listed in volume 3 of the Public Accounts and, as such, if we were to discuss the amounts that are outstanding, then obviously people could connect the dots and

figure out who it is that would currently not be current. And as such we can't disclose the amounts that are outstanding.

Mr. Borotsik: I will be—I will have a copy of the Public Accounts. I do know the loans that have been issued to certain corporations in the city. That's not a secret. We do know that. There are two loans in arrears. Can you just tell me the amount in arrears for both of those loans together? That way nobody could identify what the loans are, and just tell me what the arrears and—are the arrears 30 days, 60 days or 90 days? And nobody can figure out who they're for. If you can tell me it's a 90-day receivable or in arrears, or 120 days in arrears, that's not going to be anything to do with The Privacy Act.

Mr. Bjornson: The request that the member is making, that information has never been publicly disclosed and I'm not prepared to make a precedent. As the member can understand there are privacy issues around these loans.

Mr. Borotsik: Can the minister tell me if there's a write-off contingency for this fiscal year?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, there is.

Mr. Borotsik: Can the minister tell me the amount of the write-off contingency, because that has no bearing on what the loans are outstanding because we have 19 loans outstanding, so I'm told by the—page number 29 of the Estimates book. Can you tell me what the write-off contingency is for this fiscal year? Can he also tell me what the write-offs were for the last fiscal year?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, for '09, it was 12.8 million that was set aside, but that's not what was written off.

An Honourable Member: Sorry, I missed that.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, 12.8 million was set aside, but that was not the amount that was written off.

Mr. Borotsik: In '09, 12.8 million was a contingency for write-off.

Can the minister tell me what the actual write-offs were for '09?

Mr. Bjornson: Don't have that information here, but they are made public.

Mr. Borotsik: I'll do my research and we will find it.

For '10-11, can you tell me what the contingency is for write-off?

Mr. Bjornson: We haven't established that number yet, as we're still considering the program.

Mr. Borotsik: On page No. 31 of the Estimates book, it shows Interest Recovery of \$8,810,000. That's recovery. Needless to say, the MIOP has 11 million budgeted for its programming as well as other programs.

Can you tell me where the 8,810,000 comes from in Interest Recovery, which program?

Mr. Bjornson: That is the interest that has accrued on the MIOP loans.

Mr. Borotsik: As of the last time we were here, I was told and it was confirmed that there were \$77.2 million active loans outstanding from MIOP, and the minister is saying we're going to recover \$8,810,000 off of that 77 million.

Can you tell me what the interest rate is on the majority of those MIOP loans?

Mr. Bjornson: The interest rates vary by loan and they're published in the MDC financial statements. They are public.

Mr. Borotsik: I will find them in the MDC statements.

Now, if we can go on to, very quickly because we don't have a lot of time, go on to the Apprenticeship program that the minister had issued a press release not that long ago saying that, in fact, he was going to put an additional \$2 million into the Apprenticeship program. On page 45, I believe it is—on page No. 47, maybe the minister could just help me out here. There was a press release. There were going to be an expansion of apprentice seats up to 4,000. He wanted the 600 additional seats. There was a \$2-million program, but if you look on page 47, the Apprenticeship budget in the Estimates book, it goes from 14,160,000 to 13,738,000.

Can the minister point me in the right direction as to where this additional \$2 million is for the Apprenticeship program?

Mr. Bjornson: I'll refer the honourable member to page 55. If you look at Training Support from the Estimates of Expenditure '09-10, it was 8,016,000, and if you look at Estimates of Expenditure 2010-11, Training Support, 9,995,000.

* (15:10)

Mr. Borotsik: Just looking at the different scheduling here, from the 8 to the 9 and where that's going up, it doesn't seem to add up.

Can the minister point out where the \$2-million difference is from 8 to 99?

Mr. Bjornson: Actually, Training Support is a separate line that, in of itself, if the member was using the numbers above to add it up—that's—I can see why he might do that. But the Training Support line is a number in and of itself from 8,016,000 to 9,995,000.

Mr. Borotsik: Okay. And I can see that it is a separate line. Actually, it still has a reduction in the total overall budget, and the reason for that is there's an agreement that's been identified as a \$2,497,000 recovery which is an agreement. Can the minister explain what that agreement is—that 2,497,000 recovery?

Mr. Bjornson: That particular item is from the labour and market development agreement that's funded by Canada and Manitoba, and it is through employment income assistance—or Employment Insurance, pardon me.

Mr. Borotsik: It's credited back to your department. Where does that money actually flow? Where does it go to?

Maybe, while the staff is looking for that particular answer, I could go on with some other questions because we're running out of time very quickly and I do have two areas that I'd like to deal with. Is that fine by the minister?

Staying on page 55, and we talked about, yesterday, contract employees, and the minister was kind enough to point out that the one contract employee was identified under supply and services. In going through the Estimates book since then, I find out that supply and services stays the same amount from the previous budget year and the—this budget year. On page 55, supplies and services is \$875,000. Are there any contract employees identified or included in that supply and service?

Mr. Bjornson: No, there are not.

Mr. Borotsik: Yesterday, the minister said that he would try to come up with the five, I believe he said, contract employees that they had on contract. Has the minister come up with that list and can he identify where those contract employees are funded from?

Mr. Bjornson: Yesterday, I didn't say there were five. I said best guess was less than five. As we—I just wanted to be sure we were providing accurate information to the member opposite because we wanted to check on that and there is, in fact, one contract employee.

Mr. Borotsik: Was that contract put out as a bulletin at all? Did you look for anybody else to fulfil that contract for that contract employee? Were there any conditions that were placed in any types of ads that you may have placed for that contract?

Mr. Bjornson: In—when I was appointed, it was a matter of the renewal of the contract. When the individual was originally brought under contract, there was a need to move very quickly because of what was happening on the Agreement on Internal Trade as such. That expedited the process and the individual was hired.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, that's a wonderful segue into trade. Let's very briefly talk about trade. Has the minister read the document, the New West Partnership, that's dated April 30th, 2010?

Mr. Bjornson: I will say to the member I haven't read the entire document. I have read some notes that I have on the process that had been undertaken and my department had been analyzing the trade agreement.

Mr. Borotsik: Will the minister agree that a New West Partnership between British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan may well impede any kind of trade opportunities that Manitoba may well have for that trading bloc?

Mr. Bjornson: No, I would not agree with that statement.

Mr. Borotsik: Can the minister tell me if any of his staff have actually contacted counterparts in those three western provinces to indicate or have given to them a reason why Manitoba was not invited to those talks and to this agreement?

Mr. Bjornson: No.

Mr. Borotsik: I'm led to believe that no one in—no one out of 441 employees in the Department of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade has not been in contact with any counterpart in any of those three provinces to ask the simple question as to why Manitoba cannot be a participant in those discussions.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Bjornson: There was no staff participation, and our staff has been working very hard on the Agreement on Internal Trade, which, as the member knows, is a agreement that was signed with the federal, provincial and territorial partners. All are signatories to the Agreement on Internal Trade. I should also tell the member that we've been engaged in a number of other trade missions, and we are certainly working very hard to promote the very diverse manufacturing sector and products that we have here in Manitoba around the world and looking for new markets and we continue to do so.

*(15:20)

Mr. Borotsik: Well, if the staff of the department weren't even mildly curious with respect to a trading bloc of \$550 billion in GDP, did the minister have any discussions with any of his counterparts, the three ministers, his counterparts from either one of those western Canadian provinces? Has the minister not had any open communications with those counterparts?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, as the member knows, it was raised by the First Minister in question period today in one of his responses to this question. We did have a joint Cabinet meeting with Saskatchewan, the first time that that's happened, and we had the opportunity to meet with our—with many of our economic infrastructure and local government counterparts in Saskatchewan. I have had a conversation with my counterpart in Saskatchewan, and I intend to follow up with my counterpart in Saskatchewan and how he could best advance some of Manitoba's concerns and partnerships that we can continue to negotiate with our neighbouring jurisdictions.

Manitoba's position has been and continues to be that the Agreement on Internal Trade is the option that is preferred. And we continue to work with other jurisdictions on a number of different files, whether it's cap and trade, and a number of different provinces and states, whether it's the southeast United States-Canadian provincial alliance, which I had the opportunity to attend in Mississippi, and whether it's working with the NIM to find trade opportunities among the Francophonie.

There are a number of different opportunities that we pursue, including promotion of CentrePort. We take advantage of the geography that we have in this country and we're very well positioned to be the central distribution hub for the country, for the

continent. So we have a number of different interests that we're pursuing, and the main objective for our province, as far as internal agreements on trade are concerned, is the internal agreement on trade.

Mr. Borotsik: With all due respect, when you have a western Canadian trading bloc, an economic trading bloc the way that's been identified in this particular New West agreement, with all due respect, I think that Manitoba should not only be embarrassed, we should, in fact, be trying to attempt to include ourselves in that trading bloc.

And I'll just, for the minister's information—he may well be dealing with his counterparts in Saskatchewan, but I can honestly say that, from this quote that I'm about to read, there doesn't seem to be an awful lot of respect there from Saskatchewan to Manitoba. And it's a quote that says Manitoba is not a part of the New West Partnership.

Premier Wall—this is the premier of the province of Saskatchewan, who we've just been told by the minister they've got such a wonderful working relationship, was quoted as saying: Manitoba was not included in the partnership partly because it receives equalization payments from the federal government, while B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan are have provinces. That in itself, I think, should be a wake-up call to the minister, and a wake-up call to the department, and a wake-up call to his government to, in fact, insert themselves into the trading arrangements and agreements that have been developed between our western Canadian allies—B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Now, does the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade say here today that he has no intentions of attempting to insert the province of Manitoba, or at least have some kind of influence from the province of Manitoba in this trade agreement, or is it absolutely not important to him at this time and that he go off on his own to try to develop all of the other trading partners that he sees that he can develop as a province of Manitoba individually? So is there no desire to be in partner in this particular trading agreement?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, I believe we've stated repeatedly in the Chamber today that our priority has been and continues to be the Agreement on Internal Trade, which, the last time I checked, had signatories from coast to coast to coast, and that has been our priority.

So it's—I'm not sure why the member is so concerned. We are in a very good position here in Manitoba to advance our trade agenda. We're in a very good position to advance our position as the CentrePort hub for trade and transportation here in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Good luck with that.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the member is—the member seems to be ridiculing CentrePort—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, he's saying good luck with that. And, you know, I have to take exception to that because CentrePort is, in the words of the Chamber of Commerce and members of the CentrePort delegation that I had the privilege of leading, a game changer here in Manitoba, and I would hope that they're on side for CentrePort.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, for the record, please, Madam Chairman, no, I was not opposed to CentrePort, nor have we ever been opposed to CentrePort. But I would like to just say to the minister, CentrePort is and was anticipated to be a free trade zone. What is happening now with the trade arrangements that are going on with Alberta, B.C. and Saskatchewan, I would think it would be to the benefit of the department and the minister to discuss that with his counterparts in those three trading partners so that CentrePort, in fact, can be all that it should be here in the province of Manitoba. This minister is not taking that seriously and, quite frankly, may well be putting CentrePort in jeopardy, which, I think, is wrong for this province and wrong for this department.

So that was my editorial rant. Thank you for that.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, if he's giving license for editorial rants, perhaps I'll seize the opportunity.

As the member knows, a big investment in CentrePort includes capital investment and that capital investment and infrastructure investment is a critical part of our budget. So to have the member vote against our budget and say that CentrePort is critical to the progress of Manitoba is a rather interesting editorial statement, if I may.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chairperson, I have a few questions that I would like to ask the minister related to the Provincial Nominee Program, the certificates that are requested and approved through this department. I wonder if the minister can give some indication as to how many

certificates were issued through his department in the last fiscal year, and what he anticipates will be in the next year or two.

Mr. Bjornson: The approved applicants for '09-10 was 386.

Mr. Lamoureux: So each one of those 386 would've given the 75,000 deposit?

Mr. Bjornson: The applicants, some of them are pending, as they still have to get federal approval, and they don't actually have to submit their deposit until such time that they are in Canada.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister indicate for last fiscal year or the last record that he would have on file, as to a fiscal year in which the number of deposits of \$75,000, because I suspect there is no—my understanding is there is no certificate issued unless there is a \$75,000 deposit? Is that not true? And, if that is true, can the minister indicate the number of certificates that would've been issued in the last fiscal year?

Mr. Bjornson: The deposits received '09-10, 31,045,200, to be precise. The deposits retained '09-10, 4,814,200. The deposits released, 8,352,600. The trust account balance is approximately \$60 million.

* (15:30)

Mr. Lamoureux: Does the department have a listing that is public or that he's able to share in regards to those businesses that would've been created through this particular program for the last year?

Mr. Bjornson: Since its inception there have been 336 successful business ventures, with an initial investment of \$150,543,224.74, but to provide a list of individuals' businesses would not be allowable under privacy—for privacy considerations.

Mr. Lamoureux: In terms of the top—let's four or five countries where we have investors coming from, could the minister give indication over the last couple of years, and what he would anticipate over the next year or two—a one through five type of thing.

Mr. Bjornson: Madam Chairperson, I'll just be a moment before I can provide that information for the member.

Madam Chairperson, there are a number of files that, year to date, from Korea, China, India, from the Middle East, a few from the United Kingdom and another category of other. Now the member

asks what I can anticipate. That's a very hypothetical question to answer in that—and that certainly depends on some of the political or economic realities in other jurisdictions that would be push factors for individuals to leave their homeland, as the member might know.

And, of course, we are benefiting from chain immigration, where individuals who have been successful setting up businesses here and know the business environment, would certainly promote a new—or promote the environment that we have here and the success of their companies. And, as such, I would suspect that's why we have a large concentration from certain regions.

And, you know, you never know—to pose a hypothetical question what world events could impact, or local events or regional events could impact the continued immigration from particular countries. So it's very difficult to answer that hypothetical question.

Mr. Borotsik: Just one other question, and then we'll go to the line by line. But I'm curious, as it was identified yesterday, the contract employee that is contracted by the department is identified on page 23 under Supplies and Services at \$92,000.

Could the minister please tell me—if he could go to page 55 and go to supplies and services, which is exactly the same budget amount as it was the previous year at 875,000—can the minister of the department please tell me what's included in that Supplies and Services of \$875,000?

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, I can refer the honourable member to page 90 under supplies and services, operating supplies, materials, office supplies, maintenance, other services, rentals, professional services, utilities, other fees—that could be tendered goods and services contracts, feasibility studies, trade designation requests, consultants, things of that nature.

Mr. Borotsik: Yeah, in page 90, it does talk about salaries in the first area of the components that the minister's identified, but nowhere in there does it talk about contract employees. Is that just something that's been neglected from that, because, as we've seen, Supplies and Services does include contract employees?

Mr. Bjornson: That would be categorized as professional services.

Mr. Borotsik: Professional services of what type, other than the contract services that are being provided?

Mr. Bjornson: It could be consultants on IT projects, for example. *[interjection]*

Professional services could include consultants on IT projects, as an example.

Madam Chairperson: Is the House ready for the resolutions? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 10.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,706,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Business Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$120,069,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Labour Market Skills, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,217,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Community and Economic Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,650,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, International Relations and Trade, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,539,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,146,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 10.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

* (15:40)

Mr. Bjornson: I move that item 10.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

I have put forward this motion to provide additional clarity. As the members are aware, this reduction is already in effect and legislation will be brought forward to make the reduction law.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved that item 10.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

Shall the resolution pass? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 10.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,408,000 for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates of Local Government.

Shall we recess briefly to the—allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 3:41 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:43 p.m.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Local Government. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I do. Just a brief statement.

As many know—that the former department of Intergovernmental Affairs—and it's changed to Local Government which I think most appropriately reflects what's happening across the country. Many provinces refer to themselves as local government—internationally people use the term local government. Whether it was in Copenhagen or other locales, local government seems to be the terminology used and, indeed, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities uses that term often when in reference to their membership.

Just a few statements with regard to what has transpired recently as well as going forward with regard to the Estimates in this budget. Maybe I'll make a couple of comments just with regard to funding support to municipalities and provincial funding to the City of Winnipeg and a few other funding opportunities that had been provided to municipalities throughout the province.

I'm not sure how much time we have for this particular review of Estimates of this department—

An Honourable Member: Lots.

Mr. Lemieux: —so I'll try not to be too lengthy. But if we have lots, as the member from Steinbach pointed out, then maybe my statement will be longer.

But I'll just comment that funding support to the municipalities in Manitoba provides generous funding support throughout. Sharing provincial revenues from a variety of funding sources, including income, fuel taxes, and providing municipalities with stable and predictable funding each year has always been very much appreciated from the municipalities, but is an important part of what this department does. This is the broadest funding support of any province across the country, and Manitoba is still the only province to share income tax revenues with municipalities, and has expanded its revenue sharing to include new fuel tax sharing through Building Manitoba Fund, starting in '05. The approach our government has taken is to assist municipalities through grants-based support, goes farther to meet their needs and sales tax sharing. Funding for municipalities is a priority for the Province, and it has increased its funding to municipalities for 2010.

While most other provinces have held funding flat for '09 levels, most notably Saskatchewan deferred a planned increase in revenue sharing to a full 1 percentage point of PST, and they held—they

have deferred that. I'll use the term deferred and not just cancelled it or—but I know the municipalities in Saskatchewan are very disappointed with that.

And, in Manitoba, what we've done, for example, to the City of Winnipeg, we've increased their funding by almost 2.5 percent over the '09 level. We've also done—we have also increased to municipalities outside of Winnipeg by about 6.5 percent over the '09 levels. So our funding is, bar none, is very, very, very, very, I know, much appreciated by the municipalities and the president and many other reeves and mayors throughout the province of Manitoba, because they saw and have seen what's happening throughout the country, not only in Saskatchewan, but also in other provinces where municipalities were given an idea that—or suggestion—and commitment that certain funding would happen. And it's been either cancelled outright or, certainly, delayed. And I know that not only do we provide the funding that is really needed by municipalities, but they are wanting funding that they can count on to plan and to budget, and we have tried to work with them to try to give them some indication of the kind of funding they can expect in days ahead.

We provide plenty—a lot of support for roads and bridges, rapid transit, waste water. And other commitments that we've made are to rural and northern water and waste-water projects. Also, I would be remiss in not stating that we have made a \$4-billion, 10-year plan to renew our highways in Manitoba and bridges in Manitoba.

Economic development has also been raised by the municipalities as being a very important issue, and this year marked the final year of the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement. It was a five-year initiative of our federal-provincial governments and the City of Winnipeg to support community and economic development in Winnipeg. This tripartite agreement brought significant benefits to Winnipeg and its citizens. In the absence of federal commitment to renew the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, Manitoba has dedicated resources to continue to support priority economic, social and physical development needs of Winnipeg's inner city.

I know, possibly, we will touch on many other areas that I would certainly like to give my critic the opportunity to ask questions, so I won't go through all the things that the Department of Local Government has done in the past and is going to do into the future.

But I would, at this point, certainly, want to thank all the staff within Local Government and the former Intergovernmental Affairs department, and all the hard work they've done, day in, day out, for the citizens of Manitoba. And, I know, often you will hear people make—not often, but, certainly, on occasion, people make comments about civil servants and the role that they play. In my tenure in this building, they have shown that Manitoba receives the highest, the greatest, I would say, commitment, bar none, from any civil servant—you can compare any civil servant across this country—a great country of ours—and our civil servants, as I mentioned, bar none, would be right at the top, in all the hard work that they provide the citizens of the province.

* (15:50)

So with that, I'll just maybe pass over to my critic and to see if he has any—and he may not have any questions at all because he knows all the great work that the department does. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Ste. Rose, have any opening comments?

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Certainly, I do concur with the minister on one thing and that's the great work the staff does. And looking through the Estimates book, I see that staff in this department is ever shrinking and so I expect that increases the workload.

But something that raised quite a concern to me is all the various different things that have been moved out of this department, out of what used to be Intergovernmental Affairs. There's been a number of things moved into other departments that I think rightly belonged in Intergovernmental Affairs or in Local Government. And so I'm somewhat disappointed on that.

Another thing that I just caught out of what the minister was talking—presenting here was he mentioned funding to municipalities, and he mentioned fuel taxes to municipalities. And I would remind him the fuel taxes he's talking about to municipalities are actually federal fuel taxes, not provincial. That provincial fuel tax all goes into the provincial coffers for highway upgrades and maintenance and not to the municipalities. So [*interjection*]*—*the federal fuel taxes are distributed to

the municipalities and they're distributed through the infrastructure committee in this province. And the Province like to take credit for it, and they're not providing anything into that.

I think we'll probably, with the minister's permission, go directly into the—and do questions and answers on the department.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the critic for his comments.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply.

Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber, and once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Lemieux: I'd like to introduce the staff that's with me today, and it's—Linda McFadyen is the deputy minister, and with her is Claudette Toupin is assistant deputy minister of Community Planning and Development division, and also, Brian Johnston, is the chief of Financial Services, as well as Beverly Kachanoski, director of Human Resource Services.

Madam Chairperson: Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mr. Briese: Global, please.

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed that we will proceed in a global fashion?

Mr. Lemieux: Yeah, it's—I think the norm to go global, but I just want to state that we have Community Planning and Development here now, and we have Municipal Finance staff outside the—outside this Chamber. So some of the questions, if they refer more to Municipal Finance and Advisory Services, we may have to ask other staff to come in. That's all. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: The first number of questions I want to ask are standard—the standard list of questions about staffing and along that line, and I think you probably have the right people here for that. So if I may proceed with those.

Madam Chairperson: So it's agreed that we will go in a global fashion? *[Agreed]* Thank you.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Briese: I'd like a list of all political staff, including the names, positions and whether they are full time or not.

Mr. Lemieux: Okay. We've got Eric Plamondon, who is my special assistant in my office. We have—are you asking just for political staff or just all the staff in my office? Sorry.

Mr. Briese: Political staff this time.

Mr. Lemieux: Just wanting to clarify about political staff compared to technical staff. Political staff, Mr. Tom Garrett and Mr. Eric Plamondon; technical staff would be Ann Tardiff, Jennifer Nicholson, Margaret Richards; and, let's see, and another political staff would be Michelle Scott.

Mr. Briese: Could I have the numbers on the number of staff currently employed in the department and also whether that's increased since 2009-2010 fiscal year?

Mr. Lemieux: The total staff is 244.9. Number of vacancies is 23.2. The fill positions are 221. But, as the member mentioned—my critic mentioned earlier that some staff have moved out of the department virtue of programs moving out of the department, and so, virtually, the staffing is the same with the movement of some of those staff that left with different programs.

Mr. Briese: What is the vacancy rate in the department, then, at the present time?

An Honourable Member: 9.5 percent.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Lemieux: Sorry. Sorry, Madam Chairperson, 9.5 percent.

Mr. Briese: How does that compare to the vacancy rate last year, in the last fiscal year?

Mr. Lemieux: It's approximately the same, I believe.

Mr. Briese: Have there been any positions reclassified in the department?

* (16:00)

Mr. Lemieux: Two positions.

Mr. Briese: Would the minister expand on that? They've been reclassified. What's the classification now?

Mr. Lemieux: Yeah, the classifications were reviewed, but they were maintained, no salary increases.

Mr. Briese: I'm not really clear on that answer. If they were reclassified—the minister said they were reclassified, so what's a job description or what are they reclassified to?

Mr. Lemieux: Sorry, I misunderstood the question. There are no—there were no reclassification.

Mr. Briese: Do the staffing levels identified in the departmental budget, do they reflect a full complement of staff or is it, do you work in a vacancy percentage rate when you're doing your budget into the department? Is that a full complement of staff, like if—as if 100 percent of the positions in your department were full?

Mr. Lemieux: I just need a little bit more clarification. I'm not sure. Just if I—if we wouldn't mind indulging my critic a little bit further, just to explain a little bit more. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I'll try to put it a little more simply. What I want to know is, when you're doing the budgeting in the department, do you do it with the assumption that you have 100 percent of the positions full, or do you use a percentage of vacancy against that and develop a number for the budget?

Mr. Lemieux: Yeah, we always assume that the positions we have are going to be there. There's some turnovers. Some people leave, some people retire, but the funding we have within our budget is sufficient to certainly pay all the employees.

Mr. Briese: So, then, if you're running a 10 percent vacancy rate, there should be a certain percentage of money left at the end of every year, which, I presume, either becomes somewhat of a slush fund or goes back into general revenue of the Province.

Mr. Lemieux: We do—we pay for the positions that are there. There's anticipation that there's a turnover or maybe turnovers. So that's certainly all built in. So we get enough money to pay for the salaries or the positions that are there.

Mr. Briese: Yeah, what I'm getting at, though, Mr. Minister, is the—if you're 10 percent understaffed, do you have 10 percent of staff salary left over at the end of the year, then, in all likelihood?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, you may or may not. I mean, I can't anticipate what turnover there will be. There's projected—there's a projection of possible turnover,

but I can't project that. So, I mean, the salary that's—the amount of money that's there is to pay for the salaries that—or the positions that are in place.

Mr. Briese: Are there any contracts, outside contracts, awarded through your department?

Mr. Lemieux: It would be very minimal. I can't think of any at the moment, but I certainly can find that answer for my critic, and we can look and see. But, currently, I don't believe there is.

Mr. Briese: We mentioned earlier, and you mentioned it, and I mentioned it, the transfer of certain parts of the department into other departments. Could you tell me how many positions have been relocated and what sections of your department actually have moved? I noticed a couple in the Estimate books, but which ones have been moved and where?

Mr. Lemieux: Maybe I'll go through the list, if that's—and then you'll have it on *Hansard*. I'll just go through the positions: 7.23 staff years for the Public Utilities Board were transferred to Family Services and Consumer Affairs; seven staff years for Neighbourhoods Alive! were transferred to Housing and Community Development; four staff years for Human Resources were transferred to the Civil Service Commission, and 24 staff years for the Emergency Measures Organization, EMO, were transferred to Infrastructure and Transportation. They went to that department with the previous minister who was responsible for EMO. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Have there been other staff in the department relocated from, for instance, rural to urban to large urban or from northern to other areas?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. Two thirds of the staff, I believe, in my department are—their positions are outside of the Perimeter Highway, and they're in rural Manitoba, as I would classify them and probably as he would classify them. So, two thirds of the department are outside of Winnipeg.

Mr. Briese: I was thinking a little beyond that. I've been told that the Deloraine planning office will be closing, and it's going to be relocated into Brandon. And that's the type of scenario I'm asking about too.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you. No positions were moved from rural locations to Winnipeg or vice versa.

With regard to the Deloraine office, the lease on the Deloraine office expired, and the office houses a

regional manager and an admin assistant. Walk-in traffic from the public in Deloraine was extremely low with an average of only two or three subdivision files per month.

There were a couple of pending retirements in Brandon office. The regional manager and the admin assistant participated in the looking at the closure of the Deloraine office and moving the Deloraine regional manager and admin assistant to Brandon. Both Deloraine staff members had previously requested that they be moved to Brandon, but—and I know the member opposite would want to ensure that all the offices are functioning to the best capability or capacity, and this particular location, as was pointed out, there was very little walk-in traffic at all from the public in Deloraine, and that's the reason why that office was looked at.

But, just to reiterate, no positions were moved from rural locations to Winnipeg or vice versa.

*(16:10)

Mr. Briese: My concern is even from smaller areas in rural Manitoba to larger urban centres, which would still be considered rural Manitoba, but you get a town like Deloraine, where, because of their size, one or two jobs is very critical to the town in more ways than one. There may be children in the school, and then maybe—you lose three or four of those types of jobs, and maybe you lose one schoolteacher; then it mushrooms on you. And we're always faced with that in rural Manitoba, in keeping our communities healthy and keeping them surviving. So it's exceptionally important to keep these jobs in the smaller communities if at all possible.

Are there any other movements in your department to—from smaller urban centres into larger urban centres, on staffing?

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to repeat that two-thirds of the staff of the department work outside of the Perimeter Highway, and that's a large number of people, and the regional manager in this particular office made sure he contacted all the clients to make sure there was a smooth transition and there was an integrated regional office to make sure it was to better serve the municipal clients. I would like to note, though, that Local Government will continue to provide a full range of planning services to the five planning authorities currently served from Deloraine out of the Brandon office, and staff will continue to travel to meet with clients in the municipal office and

municipal office locations when need be. So—and the answer to the member's question is no.

Mr. Briese: Has there been any travel by the Premier, a delegation led by the Premier, that was paid by this—by your particular department?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I'm certain that my critic is not going to be critical of a Premier who travels outside of the province of Manitoba in the best interests of the citizens of Manitoba, to either have more companies invest in the province, whether it be CentrePort, or having others outside of our borders know all the attractive opportunities that are here. And, well, I guess I'd like to hear from him. I'm sure he doesn't object to that. But, with regard to my department, I have travelled on a couple of occasions, but that's the extent.

Mr. Briese: The question was specifically: Has the Department of Local Government paid for any of the Premier's travels outside the province?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, as I mentioned, I'm the one who travels on the department and I have made a couple of trips in this particular department and that was the extent of it.

Mr. Briese: I still haven't got an answer. My next question was about the minister's travel, but I'm still curious about whether the Premier has travelled and the trip—the travel expenses being paid by the Department of Local Government.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, we all have budgets for travel and many departments do. The answer is no.

Mr. Briese: Thank you. How many out-of-province trips has the minister taken in the past year, and I'd be interested in the purposes and dates and who went and—

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I certainly didn't hear the answer from my critic, whether he's totally opposed to the Premier travelling or any other minister, but the minister—I travelled on a couple of occasions. One was to attend a North America works conference. Some would know it as NASCO, and another trip was to attend a forum on global cities, in Toronto, dealing with local governments and the issues about economic development. And I also travelled as an invited guest to speak at the Conference Board of Canada as one of the provinces that was in attendance to deal with issues related to greening local governments and also rural economic development.

But, if I could add, our government—I believe I could stand to be corrected—but it was one of the first governments to post our travel and our expenses so the public of Manitoba can see there's a transparency there with the amount of money invested on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba. So we publicly post our expenses and I think that is something that, I believe, we were the first to do so in Manitoba.

Mr. Briese: I certainly—I know I'm supposed to be questioning you, but I certainly have no problem with the Premier travelling. I just want to know whether he travelled under—the costs were allocated to your department or not.

Does the Department of Local Government have an advertising budget?

Mr. Lemieux: The department doesn't have any funds budgeted specifically for advertising and doesn't usually do any advertising. The department does usually have a few sponsorships each year such as a Association of Manitoba Municipalities, which may result in a small print ad and in a brochure or something related to the event, and the department will also have some minor communication expenditures relative to printing brochures or mail inserts that relate specifically to the delivery of some programs that we have.

Mr. Briese: So you don't in the department specifically do any ads around things like reassessment year or some of those types of things informing the public that we are into a reassessment year?

Mr. Lemieux: I wouldn't necessarily classify that as advertising. It's—that—those particular items that the member raises are related to the printing of brochures or mail inserts that relate specifically to the delivery of a particular program, as one that he suggested.

Mr. Briese: Could you—I guess, first, I better ask again because I just got off a little bit at the start there on which staff you have available right at the moment. What—I can go in—I can accommodate you on the direction I go here on the staffing, but I do need to know who's available.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, that would be helpful. I mean, I can—is he referring to—*[interjection]* oh, are you? You—I gather the member's asking who's here today. Claudette Toupin, is the assistant deputy minister of—

Mr. Briese: Well, I was just wondering—like, you have—do you have your provincial planning staff or

the ones pertinent to that here, and those are here then, okay?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, yeah, they are.

Mr. Briese: Thank you. Okay, I'll start in on the Estimates book. And I would like to know somewhat of a breakdown of the functions that were transferred to the Family Services Consumer Affairs, to the various departments. Those jobs you mentioned earlier that were transferred out, I guess, specifically, why were they transferred and what function have we lost in this department by them going somewhere else?

Mr. Lemieux: Neighbourhoods Alive! staff went with the Neighbourhoods Alive! program to that particular minister and EMO—EMO, sorry, went—the staff went with that particular program with the current minister that has it, but he was also a minister that's had that program for many, many years. To have absolute consistency in such an important area would be truly important. I believe that that would be seen, I think, by most people that, when you're dealing with flooding and dealing with emergency measures and emergency issues, that you want to have that consistency with that particular minister. And, I might add, I know I'm biased, but the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, the MLA from Thompson, has done a spectacular—tremendous job, and dealing with the flooding we experienced last year and with the potential flooding this spring it was a—I think it was a very wise move to ensure that consistency remained there.

* (16:20)

Mr. Briese: I'll move to—and I can give you page numbers if you want, but—that may make it easier. At page 20, on the Brandon office, is the staff in the Brandon office, are they political appointments or are they provincial staffing?

Mr. Lemieux: Which Brandon office is the member referring to? Sorry.

Mr. Briese: The Brandon office that's on page 20 which is the—it's called the Brandon—Westman Regional Cabinet Office in Brandon.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, they are.

An Honourable Member: They are political appointments?

Mr. Briese: I believe I heard him say they are political appointments, and so.

The Provincial Planning Services—and I'm up to page 32 in here right now. Could the minister—and I know there was a lot of movement at one time to encourage municipal amalgamations. There were a number of initiatives taken by the department and there were a number of initiatives taken by the AMM, and I know there is one more amalgamation in the process right now that should be done before the civic elections of the fall, but are there any initiatives being taken by the department at the present time toward amalgamation of municipalities?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, in my short tenure as the minister of this department, I've heard it mentioned on numerous occasions by different municipalities that that may be a wise way to go sometime into the future. No one is forcing any amalgamations at this point and no one is contemplating it, but I know there's Shoal Lake—I believe the Town of Shoal Lake and the R.M. of Shoal Lake—it has gone to the municipal board. I don't believe I've received anything back yet but I know they are working closely together. They share a lot of infrastructure, which makes absolute sense for them to ensure that they get a better bang for their tax dollar. And I believe that a lot of other municipalities—and I know that my critic as the former president of the—I'm not sure if it was called AMM at that time—but he has heard this himself, I'm sure, from a lot of his former members of the municipalities.

And 198, I believe, municipalities are in the province of Manitoba and I know Doug Dobrowolski does a tremendous job as president and Ron Bell before him, but it is a challenge. And I know many of them are certainly taking a look at their options with regard to amalgamation, but it's—I can say it's not coming from the Minister of Local Government, it's—they're looking at it themselves. And 12 communities have been involved in six amalgamations since 1999, since we became government.

The R.M. of Shellmouth-Bolton and the R.M. of Shellmouth and the R.M. of Bolton; the R.M. of Gimli: the Town of Gimli and the R.M. of Gimli, who have a great MLA that represents them; and the R.M. of Brokenhead: the village of Garson and the R.M. of Brokenhead; Town of Powerview, was previously Pine Falls, village of Powerview, and Tembec owned Pine Falls; municipality of Killarney: Turtle Mountain, Town of Killarney and the R.M. of Turtle Mountain; and the R.M. of Shell River: the R.M. of Shell River and the R.M. of Park North; and the R.M. and the Town of Shoal Lake are

amalgamating and look—or at least wanting to. And that's been put forward, so I haven't, you know, I'm not sure where that is. I can't say right now where that is. But there are many that are looking at amalgamation on their own and they feel that that's the best way that they can provide a better service for their taxpayers. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Part of my question was around the—what tools are the department and what assistance are the department giving at the present time to these municipalities that may be considering that?

Mr. Lemieux: There is a program. I'm not sure if it's called a program, but there is a support network called Tools for Change, and this is something that the department is certainly doing this in co-operation with AMM in trying to have municipalities that are interested in amalgamation taking a look at a number of different issues. With the lack of—well, with respect to what they look at, essentially, it's a checklist of what makes sense and what doesn't make sense for them. And it's something that the department is working with AMM on and it's—the department has always provided a tremendous amount of support for a lot of municipalities no matter where they are and what their financial wherewithal or situation is. And, again, I believe, just Tools for Change is just another way of assisting these municipalities that might be looking at amalgamation on their own.

Mr. Briese: Thank you. I'm very familiar with the Tools for Change, and that was—that goes back, I think, about seven or eight years now. I was certainly still involved at the time. It may even be longer than that.

But I wondered if there were any new initiatives, is what I was looking for, in the department to encourage the amalgamation of municipalities.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, we certainly had been looking and working with the municipalities with regard to integrated sustainability plans. And we will try to work with them to ensure that, whatever their move will be, that it's done in a very pragmatic way, but also a way that makes sense for them.

It sounds like my critic is in favour. He would only know, but he sounds like he's in favour of amalgamations taking place and on a voluntary basis. I'm not saying that, you know, if he were the minister that he would force them to amalgamate, but it sounds like he would be open to some amalgamations happening on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Briese: And I don't mind going on the record on that. I am in favour of voluntary amalgamations of municipalities.

I know that municipalities—and being I was a municipal councillor for quite a period of time—and municipalities co-operate on a lot of levels beyond amalgamation, and I think that's always important to note. It's—I remember at one point we did a—my municipality is the R.M. of Langford and we surround the town of Neepawa on three sides, and I remember one time doing a list and had 17 or 18 things on there that we overlapped on: fire department, waste disposal, everything. So it—we had two separate governances. Although we have a combined office between the two municipalities, we had two separate governances by council that we shared an awful lot of services to the citizens.

* (16:30)

I know the minister said a moment ago in referring to services provided to municipalities by the department that you had a lot of services available to the departments. But I also believe, in my own mind, that I've seen quite a significant reduction in staffing in some of those service areas in the department over the last number of years, and it is something that does somewhat concern me.

At one time, and in the time that—since I was on council, like, since I first got on council, there were six municipal service officers. There were at least two financial officers that were available to the municipalities. There was Roger Dennis, that was kind of an overall liaison with the municipalities, and a lot of those positions have disappeared. I think there are now maybe three municipal service officers, I believe, and possibly one person on the financial end of things. And there does seem to be still somewhat of a need out there for some of those services to be provided. And I know some of it was changed because of changes to The Municipal Act and felt that the municipalities had taken over more responsibility for keeping their own house in order. But I'd like your comments on that.

Mr. Lemieux: Some of these staff positions, the service officers, municipal service officers were reduced in '97, I believe, to four, at that time. And then, what we've done is we have—well, there's three filled positions now, and there's also a person responsible for—he's a supervisor of accounting, and also there's another person in Brandon, so there's actually five positions with regard to the municipal services.

Mr. Briese: I'd like to move on to the Provincial Land Use Policies, and just a few questions on—in the Provincial Planning, and I know I touched on the Deloraine office already, but the Provincial Land Use Policies were under review, and I know there was quite a bit of feedback, and they decided to take a further look at some of the policies that were being developed. The original consultations took place in early 2009, and has that analysis of the consultations been completed, and has a report gone to Cabinet yet? Or is this still out there waiting to come to fruition?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you for the question. There's a—we call it, What We Heard, after the consultations, and that's posted on the Department of Local Government's Web site, and some of the comments that What We Heard and some of the suggestions, for example. But there are seven departments, I believe, or six or seven departments that have a relationship with regard to the Provincial Land Use plans, and it's important to have that consultation take place. So, prior to any drafting of any kind of language, we want to make sure that we review *What We Heard* and also the consultations between the departments are taking place, I believe, I've been advised, as we speak.

Mr. Briese: Are there any major changes that you envision happening in the Provincial Land Use Policies?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, in my short tenure as minister, I think it's—I believe it's really important to ensure that we have a sustainable Provincial Land Use plan in the sense—but what I mean by that is that there always is and have been always requests from municipalities to expand their population base within their municipalities. Some want to use good agricultural land to do so. But we want to ensure—I believe anyway—speaking for myself, obviously—but, as I mentioned, there's other departments that come into play with regard to provincial land-use plans. But you want to make sure you do it in a sustainable and a—way that, whatever land-use plans you have in place, that land is going to be protected essentially for the generations that come after us. So, with that comment, that is my own comment, obviously, but there are other ministers, other departments that are involved in that discussion as well.

Mr. Briese: You probably know that I have a likely background on planning board, too. There's been—there was some concerns when they first aired out the proposals on the Provincial Land Use Policies

that they were being too restrictive on some things in especially the rural areas, and the concern was that, once some of those policies carried forward, it would actually result in a depopulation in the rural areas, and I want to very carefully caution the minister on that issue. We have to have—the municipality needs people as well as area, and that becomes quite a problem if the land-use policies are too restrictive you can't develop some subdivisions and some of those type of activities.

In my own municipality a number of years ago, we looked at keeping our population up, too, in the municipality, not just the taxable base or the land base, and what we did was develop a couple of rural residential areas in areas that were very poor agricultural land, and it certainly helped to keep the population stable in our municipality. But I know some of the municipalities in the southwest corner of the province are losing population at an alarming rate and, in all likelihood, are not going to regain it, and it would—it could even further 'expediate' the loss of population if we're too restrictive on the Provincial Land Use Policies.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, then, I certainly can appreciate what the member is saying, and I know he's not in favour of just a holus-bolus approach that happened in the past. I won't look in the rear view mirror, but I believe he doesn't want that approach either. He wants a sustainable approach where there's good planning involved and all the circumstances looked into. By that, I mean, there are some communities that are experiencing depopulation. When we take a look at provincial land-use plans, it was meant to be somewhat flexible too. To address depopulation in many communities, people are trying to come up with innovative ways to increase their population base and, indeed, their taxation base too, but their population base because that stimulates a lot of activity. But the key areas of concern really dealt with the removal of the provision for retiring farm subdivisions and, overall, the limiting rural residential development to areas designated for such use, particularly those regions seeing population decline.

* (16:40)

That, I think all—as a rural MLA, as a person that's lived in Manitoba for the majority of his life, I certainly have an appreciation for that, and not only having relatives in communities that are depopulating—and it's a real concern, but, again, I want to reiterate that I know the—my critic, the MLA

for Ste. Rose and former president of AMM doesn't want to see a holus-bolus approach. By that, I mean, just slap up sub-divisions everywhere and anywhere just because people—there's a depopulation taking place. There has to be good, sustainable planning and I think he agrees with that too. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: I think part of that revolves a—I thank the minister for that answer, but I think part of that revolves around a few years ago. We were doing our—implementing the livestock policies and our development plan. And one of my concerns at the time was, basically, we're dealing with four departments of government, when—that are the most interested in those types of issues we had, and, I think we were being very responsible in our planning district. We were—we identified some sensitive areas and put policies in place to suit those areas. But we had one particular department of government that wasn't agreeing with the other three and it became quite a nightmare for us.

And I guess my message then as it is now was, let's see the bureaucracy, the departments of government get their act together before they come out and unload it on the planning districts. And it was certainly noticeable at the time. And I'll name the department if you want. It was Agriculture that was causing us all the grief. The other three—Conservation at that time, Rural Development and Water Stewardship—were all pretty well in agreement, and Agriculture was stymieing us.

On that issue though, I would like to ask, what state are we at on the implementation of the livestock policies and the development plans?

Mr. Lemieux: Just, I guess, partial answer to the previous question to this one is that, within government, your point is noted that government absolutely needs to get their act together first before coming forward with anything, whether any kind of regulation or policy. And there's an Interdepartmental Planning Board that is working a cross section of different departments, working together to ensure that a lot of the issues raised and have been raised are dealt with.

And just wanting to address the current question, the dealing with the planning authorities in Manitoba, there are 88 local planning authorities, and 30 planning authorities have draft livestock operation policies. And out of that—out of the—for status of the livestock operation policies, there's 44 that are complete; there's another 30 under review and some had made some limited progress—14, for the total to

add up to 88. The complete ones the livestock operation policy adopted and are in force. So they were at varying levels. So that's where, essentially, I've been advised, we stand today.

Mr. Briese: This may be my own curiosity, but are there any municipalities not in planning districts now? I know the goal was to have all municipalities in planning districts, and I don't know whether we ever reached that. We were very close, but—

Mr. Lemieux: There are 46 planning districts and 42 municipalities not in the planning district.

Mr. Briese: Then I presume all those ones not in the planning district have development plans that are—that's similar to being in a planning district, I would think.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, they have development plans.

Mr. Briese: I had one more question that I neglected on the provincial land-use policies. Do you have a time frame for completing them?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, the goal we set is the fall, but, that again, that's the goal.

Mr. Briese: Madam Chairperson, just moving on here, I know and I don't know where I put it, but I know there's been over the years quite a number of Capital Region reports done, and I think the last one was about 2004, if I'm right—'04-05.

And there were a lot of—the one that Paul Thomas was involved in, I can't remember the exact year. I know I was still involved with municipalities, so it was at least 2003-2004, and there were a lot of recommendations in that report. And there were at least two reports prior to that in—since the year 2000, and I'm just wondering what is the status. What is happening with the recommendations that came out of the Capital Region's reports?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you. That report was, I'd been advised, it was November 2003. I think it was Paul Thomas that was referred to, and there is a Capital Region Partnership Act. And, within that, it's asking the municipalities to come forward with a report or to come forward with recommendations. There are 15 municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, which is a chair of their partnership.

And about 10 days ago, I believe it was, I attended a meeting in Headingley, which was well attended by many municipal officials, and they were

putting together, taking a look at the guidelines that would govern them. They were taking a look at governance, how governance would be looked at. How would they come up with recommendations that would be binding but yet would be flexible enough that all municipalities could buy into it? Very, very difficult issues that they have to tackle, but I believe it's important to note that Winnipeg is the chair, and that all the municipalities, to me, when I observed and heard the speaker that came from Alberta, talking about their initiative. It was called the Calgary Regional Plan, I believe. That's their approach, but there was—it was very, very well received.

* (16:50)

And I believe there is a real opportunity here for the Capital Region and the City of Winnipeg to work in a very, very co-operative way to ensure that—you take a look at the amount of population growth that's going to be happening in this province over the next while. Just a rough guess would be, you know, over 200,000 will be coming to the Capital Region, yeah? The majority of that may come to Winnipeg, but certainly the municipalities that surround the city of Winnipeg are going to be getting the share of that quarter of a million—that's a population that's going to be coming to this region.

And so there's a lot of issues they have to deal with, and there was a—I believe the good faith that was in that room. And what I heard back from a lot of the municipalities, including Winnipeg, that they really want to work together and they don't want to work at cross purposes. And they want to ensure that whatever comes forward in their report, a report that they'll be submitting, that they're going to come forward in a unanimous way, which is important.

So what's been completed thus far is a Capital Region vision framework. And it's—they're working on a report on creating a strong partnership amongst the municipalities, the 15 including Winnipeg, and also working on the growth management plan.

And so, when they—as I've mentioned, without belabouring the point too much, is that there's a great deal of co-operation happening in the Capital Region, and the elected officials and the officials that work for them want to make this work. They know that there is no other way to go. They cannot be at cross purposes any longer. They have to work together on their plans and make sure that whatever approach they take it has to be a unified one. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: It's certainly always been my view, Mr. Minister, that there was room for a lot more co-operation between the City of Winnipeg and those Capital Region municipalities. And I guess the City of Winnipeg, really, is a Capital Region municipality along with the others. But there was—and some of it was political and there were other reasons besides, but there always was—to me, it seemed like a strong reluctance to share services. And some of those things and some of the—there's some real advantages to shared services, and I'm pleased to hear you say that there appears to be some co-operation there at the present time. And I see municipalities just outside the Perimeter putting forward waste-water treatment proposals, when possibly a plant just inside the Perimeter could handle what's coming from that municipality, and tremendous cost savings and situations like that.

And I've often thought that maybe the Province should pay—play more of a role in making that—getting that co-operation going. And that's why I'm quite interested in what happens with—since that last Paul Thomas report, because I haven't been hearing anything about it. And I did see the minutes of that meeting that you referred to, but I haven't been hearing anything about it since. And so I was wondering, and you referred to the regional vision framework for the Capital Region municipalities, and is there an actual document? Is that available or has a document been turned out that—a vision document?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, the quick answer is yes. The vision document is public on the Capital Region partnership Web site, and, you know, we try to do as much as we can to encourage municipalities, obviously, to work together. There won't be any dictating coming from my office that they have to do this or they have to do that. But we certainly encourage them to work together. And part and parcel of this answer is also related to amalgamation question that my critic, the MLA for Ste. Rose, raised, that they will do this in partnership with which what makes best sense for them.

Even though we encourage people to work more in a regional—take a more regional approach, not necessarily just around Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba, whether they're dealing with waste or sewerage and so on. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: It goes beyond that to—I think it also ties in to what we discussed earlier on the Provincial

Land Use Policies and some of what happens from the government direction is how the land-use policies are drafted actually very much affects what happens in the Capital Region but also affects what happens in sharing those services. And so it all ties together, and it's extremely important that you get these things right when you're doing them. Unless you have a response, I'll move on.

Mr. Lemieux: The Capital Region, a partnership, or the Capital Region approach doesn't only deal with infrastructure, but it does deal with a number of different areas that the member made note of. But I know he has other questions, and for today we don't have much time left. So I'll just—maybe I'll just allow him to ask another question.

Mr. Briese: On page 34 of—I don't understand this, and I wish you could explain it to me, what is recoverable from Urban Development Initiatives? What does that mean and how do you recover and what is it you recover? It looks like it's money you recover, but I just don't know where it's coming from.

Mr. Lemieux: Yeah. In the page that—page 34, I think the member was referring to, and it's, as I say, it just provides for the recovery of expenditures related to the Capital Region initiative from the Urban Development Initiative program. There is a staffperson that's dedicated there, and the department recovers that amount of money and the operating back. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: But what is the money from? I still don't quite understand this.

Mr. Lemieux: I believe the member, or the critic, is asking about UDI—the UDI amount of money or pot of money itself, and I'm sure—well, I won't go into a long definition; he knows what that is. It's essentially 25 percent of lottery dollars generated in the city of Winnipeg and essentially that's what UDI is. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable member for Ste. Rose, short question.

Mr. Briese: So you—is it the Lotteries money that the—the Lotteries money or the VLT money?

An Honourable Member: VLT.

Mr. Briese: VLT money is collected, and this is the share that the Province gets out of the VLT.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister, for a short answer.

Mr. Lemieux: I'll try to be quick about this. The staffperson we're talking about on page 34 is a person that works with the Capital Region and with the Province, and that money that's come—that they get is paid for by Urban Development Initiatives' money which is VLT money, and they are there as an

admin or they're a support for the Capital Region as well as to the department as well.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. The time being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Marilyn Brick): The hour being after 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 5, 2010

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