

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVI No. 49 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 28, 2014

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 28, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 63—The Advanced Education
Administration Amendment and Council on
Post-Secondary Education Repeal Act**

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 63, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment and Council on Post-Secondary Education Repeal Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: This bill will merge the Council on Post-Secondary Education into the Department of Education and Advanced Learning to reduce red tape for our post-secondary institutions and allow the post-secondary sector to be more responsive to labour market and student needs. By streamlining the system and having the government directly regulate and fund institutions, it will help maintain the quality, affordability and accessibility of our education system.

The bill will also establish a new advanced education advisory committee to provide advice to the minister on the education system as a whole, from kindergarten to career.

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

**Bill 65—The Workers Compensation
Amendment Act**

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 65, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: These proposed amendments will broaden worker protection by increasing penalties and requiring an employer who takes discriminatory action against a worker to prove action was unrelated to the worker making a claim. These amendments will also put in place a prevention committee which will oversee prevention services.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Effects on Manitoba Economy**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Premier of Manitoba is on record calling the idea of a hike in the PST ridiculous.

Economists calculate the PST hike has cost the average family \$437 more in taxes after only six months.

Seventy-five per cent of small businesses in Manitoba agree that provincial taxes are discouraging them from growing their businesses.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association estimates that a 1 per cent increase in the PST will result in a loss to the economy of \$42 million and threaten hundreds of jobs in that sector.

Partly due to the PST, overall taxes on new investment in Manitoba recently stood at

26.3 per cent whereas the Alberta rate was 16.2 per cent and the Ontario rate was 17.9 per cent, according to the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are concerned that the PST hike will make an already uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive to job creators in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the job-killing PST increase.

To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to reject or approve any increases to the PST through a referendum.

This petition is signed by T. Smith, B. Malyon, A. Koop Steigewald and many other fine Manitobans.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Premier of Manitoba is on record calling the idea of a hike in the PST ridiculous.

(2) Economists calculate that the PST hike has cost the average family \$437 more in taxes after only six months.

(3) Seventy-five per cent of small businesses in Manitoba agree that provincial taxes are discouraging them from growing their businesses.

(4) The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association estimate that 1 per cent increase in the PST will result in a loss to the economy of \$42 million and threaten hundreds of jobs in that sector.

(5) Partly due to the PST, overall taxes on new investment in Manitoba recently stood at 26.3 per cent whereas in Alberta rate was 16.2 per cent and the Ontario rate was 17.9 per cent, according to the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

(6) The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are concerned that the PST hike will make an already uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive to job creators in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the job-killing PST increase.

(2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to reject or approve any increases to the PST through a referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of E. Davidson, O. Hradowy, S. Chrisp and many other fine Manitobans.

Beausejour District Hospital— Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

* (13:40)

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by V. Stobert, M. Drewlo, T. Loes and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports?

The honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer)? *[interjection]* No. Okay.

Any committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Multiculturalism and Literacy's 2014-2015 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, ministerial statements.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): Today, Monday, April 28th, 2014, we join people from all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day, and honour the millions of victims who were murdered in Nazi death camps during World War II. Though the Holocaust took place decades ago, the names that appear on the monument here at the Legislative grounds are evidence of the direct, vital connection that all Manitobans have to this atrocity.

There are Holocaust survivors living in our province, and thousands of Manitobans are relatives of Holocaust victims. Today, on Yom Hashoah, we remember them and renew our commitment to vigilance against heinous human rights violations.

On May 1st, 2000, Manitoba's Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Bill 19, the Holocaust memorial act. We recognized then, as we recognize now, that such a dark period in our history can never be forgotten.

Over the last few months, Manitoba has demonstrated its commitment to promoting diversity and mutual respect around the world. In March, Manitobans observed International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Our dedication to ensuring equality for all people, regardless of ethnic or cultural origin, is an enshrined principle in Manitoba's multiculturalism act.

There are over 250 flourishing ethnocultural organizations and more than 148 languages spoken across Manitoba. We are a province that truly celebrates diversity and values the contributions of those who have made Manitoba their home.

I'm proud of all the work that has been done and the progress that has been made by the people of Manitoba, who continue to teach and promote cultural diversity in our province. It is evident that we are moving towards creating a society where people of different faiths and cultures are respected and appreciated.

Today, we not only remember but we also recognize that many people are still being persecuted because of their ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation. As Manitobans, we have a shared responsibility to stand up against these grave injustices and ensure that such a tragic event is never repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members observe a moment of silence in memory of those whom we lost during the Holocaust and for those who continue to suffer in our world today. May their courage and strength continually inspire us as we move forward towards a better and brighter future.

Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I want to thank the minister for her statement today as we join with people around the world and observe Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Memorial Day.

This morning, I, along with other members of this House, participated in the Unto Every Person There is a Name ceremony held here at the Manitoba Legislature. And the purpose of the ceremony is to perpetuate the memory of the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust through public recitation of their names to personalize the individual tragedy of those who died and those who survived.

The annual national program was presented by the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, and I want to personally thank Jeff Lieberman, the program chair for this year's ceremony, and his group of volunteers who helped put this morning's ceremony together. I also want to thank David Kroft, the master of ceremonies, and all the participants and

volunteers who made the memorial event on the Legislative grounds this afternoon a successful commemoration of those who needlessly, brutally and tragically lost their lives.

It's important that we never forget those who perished and always remember to comfort those who still live with the loss of loved ones. My hope is that by remembering, we can prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

In memory of the 6 million Jewish victims and countless others who perished during the Holocaust, I want to read a poem printed on the back of this morning's program, entitled *Unto Every Person There is a Name*:

Unto every person there is a name bestowed upon him by God and given him by his father and mother, / Unto every person there is a name accorded him by his stature and the manner of his smile and given him by his style of dress, / Unto every person there is a name conferred on him by the mountains and given him by his neighbours, / Unto every person there is a name assigned him by his sins and given him by his yearnings, / Unto every person there is a name given him by his enemies and given him by his love, / Unto every person there is a name derived from his festivals and given him by his labour, / Unto every person there is a name presented him by the seasons and given him by his blindness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I join others in the Legislature to recognize Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, and to remember how important it is that we all speak up for human rights and how important it is that we speak against genocides as happened in the Second World War, which resulted in the loss of the lives of 6 million Jews.

I applaud the work of Jeff Lieberman and others, the chair of *Unto Every Person There is a Name*, who was organizing the ceremony in which I and others participated earlier today. I also want to recognize Richard Swyston, who was on the board of governors of B'nai Brith, who were also playing a role in this ceremony.

Just as we take this occasion to remember not only the genocide that happened but the individual people, that they have a name, that they were people, so it is important as we move forward for us to be concerned about what is happening elsewhere in the world. And as Dr. Mukwege pointed out on his recent visit, that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo there are ongoing atrocities and we need somehow to reach out to be able to build upon the effort to decrease genocides, to decrease atrocities as has happened as we remember today with the Yom Hashoah to have an impact elsewhere in the world as well.

* (13:50)

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

The honourable members please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further ministerial statements?

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the 2014 Day of Mourning.

April 28th is the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. Today, we remember the men and women who did not return home safely from work last year. Last year, 13 workers died on the job in Manitoba and 21 more died as a result of illness related to their work. Many more were injured significantly, enough that they required extensive treatment and rehabilitation, and some may never return to work. The significance of these workplace incidents is enormous, and their toll on families and communities in Manitoba is all the more tragic because they are preventable.

The Day of Mourning is a reminder to us of the ongoing challenges we face in eliminating injury, illness and death in the workplace. After all, these are our sisters and our brothers, mothers and fathers, and we all have an obligation to make sure our family members come home every day.

This year's annual workers' Day of Mourning Leaders' Walk, organized by the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow, consisted of a walk from the Union Centre to the Manitoba Legislative Building and was followed by an event at the Grand Staircase.

This year's theme, Visions of Tomorrow, and student group from Tec Voc High School presented their vision of a safe and healthy workplace, what their current reality is and what they feel needs to be done to reach their vision.

SAFE Workers of Tomorrow is diligent in training today's youth the importance of workplace injury prevention, and 10 SAFE Schools grants were awarded to Manitoba schools this year.

At the event, I spoke of the continued work of our government is doing in implementing Manitoba's Five-Year Plan for Workplace Injury and Illness Prevention, which was announced last year on this day. We're committed to making Manitoba the safest place to work. To that end, we recently proclaimed new measures and we are introducing legislation today that more resources are being put in place to help workers know their rights.

Today, as we remember and honour those workers who were killed and injured on the job, we must strengthen our commitment to work together to put an end to these preventable tragedies.

I would ask the following statement from—that following the statements from other members of the House, we stand together for a moment of silence to honour the memory of the men and women who were injured or killed in the workplace this past year.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): As the official opposition critic for Labour, I was honoured today to join with leaders in the labour community, community members of all ages, families who have lost loved ones and MLAs from all sides of the House in the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow Leaders' Walk to remember those who have been killed or injured on the job.

April 28 is the National Day of Mourning for those workers who have been killed or injured, and today we pause and remember these individuals. The National Day of Mourning was declared on April 28, 1991, by the federal government, thanks to the work of the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian Labour Congress.

It is important that all workplaces have safe environments to work in for all employees. Employees should feel safe at work and it is important that the government, employees, employers all work together to create safe workplaces.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the walk today, all the speakers who spoke today, and I'd like to commend the organizers for the work they did to organize this important event, and we hope that one day no employees will be lost in the line of work.

Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others in—on this Day of Mourning. It is vital that all of us join in the effort to have safer workplaces. This morning our Manitoba Liberal leader, Rana Bokhari, and I joined many, many others in the walk from the Union Centre to the Manitoba Legislature to emphasize to all Manitobans the importance of improved workplace safety.

I want to congratulate the students from Tec Voc High School who spoke so eloquently at the ceremony after the walk, and to speak out, as have others, to look for improvements that we can make and still must make in terms of improving workplace safety here in our province is important for us, for all of us, and particularly for workers.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

The honourable members please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

Mr. Speaker: Other ministerial statements?

Flooding Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I rise in the House today to give an update on the evolving flood situation. We've seen significant flooding with added future flood risks which increased over the weekend in specific areas of the province.

An embankment protecting the town of Birtle, the Waywayseecappo First Nation, Birdtail Sioux First Nation, the rural municipalities of Birtle, Rossburn and Miniota from high water on the tributary of the Birdtail Creek is in serious risk of failing following high levels of precipitation. We are continuing to monitor the situation. At-risk homes

have been evacuated and we are ready to respond with additional evacuations should it be required. If the town of Birtle suffers a loss of water and sewer service from this flooding or if roads were washed out, we will be there to help them recover.

*(14:00)

Water may go over some roads in the area and there could be damage to bridges and other municipal infrastructure in the town of Birtle. The Waywayseecappo First Nation, the Birdtail Sioux First Nation, the rural municipality of Birtle, Rosburn and Miniota and the town of Birtle all have plans in place, are in the process of evacuating people at risk from the valley. Provincial officials have been in constant contact with these communities in preparing for the flooding and will remain in contact to support them through the recovery period.

Mr. Speaker, 20 homes and 43 people in Birtle and the surrounding area have been evacuated. A reception centre has been opened at the Town of Birtle municipal office. The length of the evacuation will depend on how long the river remains high.

Approximately 64 people have been evacuated from the Waywayseecappo First Nation. Evacuations are being co-ordinated by the First Nation.

PTH 45 has been closed between the junctions of PR 264 and PR 476, and traffic is being routed back to PTH 16. Flag staff and signs have been placed in the valley to stop traffic from entering the possible flood plain.

Municipal officials in Birtle are working to raise earthen dikes to protect critical infrastructure. Tiger tubes provided by the Province are also being used.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada advises the flooding has resulted in the evacuation of 131 people from Peguis First Nation. Officials are working with the First Nation community, emergency management partners to ensure local emergency response activities are properly supported. Evacuations are being co-ordinated by the First Nation.

The federal government, through AANDC, is responsible for flood preparedness and response on First Nations. The Province of Manitoba provides AANDC and First Nations with flood forecasts and projections regularly.

As forecast, the Fisher River did experience over-bank flooding in Peguis over the weekend.

In addition to these conditions, last week Peguis requested 100 Tiger tube dams to flood-protect every home that AANDC had identified as needing protection. This equipment is—it was provided within hours by the Manitoba government to assist with the floodfighting efforts.

Approximately 25 homes in Peguis have been protected with sandbag or water tube dikes. An impact assessment of damages has not yet been completed. Water levels appear to have crested in the community. A further 100 were staged in Hodgson for deployment if requested.

Due to larger than average precipitation in the month of April coupled with the snow melt, many rivers and creeks in western Manitoba are experiencing increased flows. Flood warnings are in place for all points along the Birdtail Creek downstream of PTH 45 due to the failure of the embankment that will lead to a surge of water on the creek, the Assiniboine River from the Shellmouth Dam to Brandon due to high flows, all points along the Little Saskatchewan River due to high flows and all points along the Fisher River due to high flows and possible ice effects.

Water levels and flows on the Red River and on most tributaries in Manitoba are declining. In the US, a flood warning was issued for the Red River at Fargo effective today due to recent precipitation. However, flows are expected to be well within the banks by the time they reach Manitoba.

States of local emergency have been declared by the RM of Westbourne, the Town of Roblin, the RM of Hillsburg, the RM of Birtle, the Town of Birtle and the RM of Rosburn. The Province has deployed floodfighting and mitigation equipment strategically around the province. Our regional staff are supervising and monitoring watering levels in the affected areas.

As always, we will continue to update the Assembly and all Manitobans on these developments as they unfold. We will continue to incorporate the changing weather information into our flood forecasts and communicate that information to Manitoba families and communities.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Thank you to the minister for his statement.

We have been watching the flood forecast and the water movement for a while, and we know that the residents of the town of Birtle, Waywayseecappo First Nation, Birdtail Sioux First Nation, the rural

municipalities of Birtle, Rosburn and Miniota as well as Peguis First Nation have been working hard to protect both property and people.

We hope the best for those communities and their residents. We all know here that this is a very stressful time, but it is also a time when the people of those communities come together to support each other and to help fight the floods. We trust the minister and his staff will work hard with those communities to keep them safe and to get the residents back in their homes as soon as it is safe to do so.

Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others with concern about the flood events which are occurring. I want to thank the minister for his statement and his concerns.

Let me start with the Peguis First Nation, which has seen repeated flooding over many years. It is unfortunate that we have, again, a flood with more people having to be evacuated. And, certainly, it points out an issue that I have raised many times in this Legislature, that is, the need for a long-run solution for the Peguis First Nation community, and, you know, it is something which we should be doing better on, I think there's no doubt, and it's something that should be moving forward more quickly.

I have followed what is happening in western Manitoba where the First Nations Birdtail Sioux, Waywayseecappo, the rural municipalities of Birtle, Rosburn and Miniota and the town of Birtle are threatened as a result of an embankment which may give way. And we hope it doesn't, but, certainly, this is a threat to people. I express my concerns for people in that area and hope that we get through this without any major tragedies. It certainly highlights the need for a program to inspect such structures and to figure out a way that we have them in really, really good shape before any flood season so that, you know, we don't get into this rather precarious situation that we're in at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's also worthwhile and should be mentioned that the RMs of Westbourne and Hillsburg and the town of Roblin are also facing

their own local flooding situations. I'm told that in Westbourne, for example, that, you know, there could've been a better flood prevention this year, and maybe that's something that the minister will look into for next year.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move to introduction of guests, and we have a number of guests with us here this afternoon.

Sitting in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today the honourable Byron Wilfert and Ms. Christine Zhao.

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

And also, seated in the public gallery we have with us today from Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary Anna Fullerton, Diana Hamiwka, Lil Dushanek and Gayle Dunnett, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Mr. Kostyshyn).

And also seated in the public gallery this afternoon we have with us from St. John's Ravenscourt 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Matt Henderson. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Jockey Club Lawsuit Responsibility for Legal Fees

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The government's attempt to intimidate the horse racing industry in this province failed miserably and it failed on many fronts. In fact, it failed the government itself, though they perhaps don't recognize that.

It was an unfortunate saga. It was deeply disrespectful of Manitobans. It was disrespectful of the people not just in the industry but of anyone who cares about the rule of law. It was totally unprofessional and it was totally avoidable. And the problem, of course, is manifold. The problem of stress that it caused for the 500 workers and their families whose jobs were placed in jeopardy in that

industry was very real, and the cost to Manitoba taxpayers also very real.

Now, given the fact that the government has used Manitoba taxpayers' money as hush money, essentially, to limit the bad public relations that ensued from its own actions, I want to know: What percentage of the costs and legal fees will be absorbed by the New Democratic Party of Manitoba?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): We know that the history of the horse racing industry in Manitoba has been one of a quest for sustainability, and we believe that there should be a sustainable horse racing industry in Manitoba. We've been clear on that from the beginning. We also believe that that industry has to be made sustainable without a continuing draw on public funds.

* (14:10)

And for the first time, we now have an agreement with the Jockey Club that will allow for sustainability of that industry as the amount of money that comes from the public decreases to support that industry, that allows for the partnership that they are developing with Peguis First Nation to take hold, to hopefully blossom and put that industry on a more sustainable path. That is at the heart of the agreement that we've negotiated.

Mr. Pallister: There were no government subsidies involved in the first place, Mr. Speaker. It was a share of VLT revenue. Everybody knows that. Same—similar to the deal that's done with the Jets. Is the minister saying the same thing about the Winnipeg Jets as she's saying about the Downs? I don't think so.

The Selinger government abused its power. It broke the law—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'm sure the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition knows that we can, even from quoting from third-party sources, not reference an individual's specific name. Members are to be referred to by their constituency and ministers by their portfolios.

So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. Please stick within the boundaries of our rules here.

Mr. Pallister: Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

The government abused its power, broke the law and waged a belligerent campaign of deception and

deceit in its failed effort to undermine the Manitoba Jockey Club.

These are not my words. These are the words of the Winnipeg Free Press editorial published last Friday. It goes on to say the settlement reached this week can fairly be described as hush money to silence the feisty Jockey Club.

Now, this government has, through intimidation tactics, forced many different Manitoba groups into court so they have to stand up for themselves using their own resources against the government, which uses the resources it takes from those very people.

So I'm asking the minister to explain today, and if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would stand and answer this, I'd appreciate it: Is this the new practice of the government? Is the government going to pay hush money to the groups that it's forcing into court just so it can do public relations damage control for itself?

And if it's going to do that, I ask again: How much of these costs will be absorbed by the New Democratic Party rather than the working families of Manitoba?

Ms. Howard: Well, the reality of the agreement that we've reached with the Jockey Club is that it allows for horse racing to continue to Manitoba. It allows for a VLT agreement that is similar to VLT agreements in restaurants and bars in this province and similar kind of revenue sharing. And it relies, over time, for that public support to diminish as that industry is put on a more sustainable footing.

This is an agreement that we believe can help that industry to be sustainable, can reduce the amount of public money that has to go into making that industry sustainable and is a pathway forward for what has been an issue that has been around for a long, long time with that particular industry.

So we have reached that agreement. We believe that it is a sound agreement. And for a party that purported to support the horse racing industry, I am a little bit puzzled why they don't see this agreement as a good way forward to sustain those jobs, to sustain that industry and to reduce the amount of money—the amount of public money that's going into that.

Assiniboia Downs Casino

Mr. Pallister: That's pretty convoluted, Mr. Speaker. The government's trying to take credit for solving a problem which it created. Millions of dollars thrown at the horse racing industry, which it jeopardized

with its own misconduct. And courts have found that.

Now, taking credit for solving a problem of their own making is funny, but it is revealing of a rather pathetic desperation. And the legal fees that this has incurred that the people of Manitoba have to pay is really adding insult to injury. It's brazen bullying. It's jeopardizing—it has jeopardized an iconic Manitoba attraction.

And most importantly, the government's practice has totally and unnecessarily placed into jeopardy the employment of 500 Manitobans, and their families' insecurity was very real to them and very real to us on this side of the House, who met with them. Now, the government should not pooh-pooh that or belittle that.

And I have to ask for, finally, a serious answer to a serious question: Is there a deal as part of this—is there a deal to put a casino at Assiniboia Downs?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I think we have been clear all along that the research that we've seen, the information we have from Manitoba Lotteries, shows that the market for casinos is saturated in and around the city of Winnipeg, so that isn't something that we are entertaining.

What this deal does is it puts the horse racing industry on a sustainable footing. This has been an issue that has been around for some time. For the first time, we have an agreement that, instead of seeing increasing public funds, increasing shares of VLT revenue going into horse racing, we see it actually coming down over time so that the share of VLT revenue will be the same as other bars and restaurants in the city and so that the amount of public money will go down over time as the Downs works with their partners to achieve a sustainable future for this industry.

That is the best path forward, I believe, to protect those jobs for the future.

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

Immigration Agreement Resolution Senior Staff Involvement

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Here, again, the government's its own worst enemy. A simple yes or no would suffice, and this is another one of these clumsy cover-ups.

And speaking of clumsy cover-ups, this Rallygate affair continues to be unanswered and unaddressed by the government, and they're their own worst enemy in this.

Now, the Ombudsman for Manitoba is now forced to investigate why he received information only days after the government told us there was no information on the same question and there was. And the evidence would have clearly established the innocence of a senior civil servant, and, ironically, had the Ombudsman had that information or had it been released to the public, there would have been no reason for the Ombudsman to do an investigation in the first place. Now the public's asked to pay for not only one but two Ombudsman's investigations caused by the cover-ups of this government.

So I'll ask again for the government to stop the cover-up. I'd ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to tell us: On what day did he first become aware that a senior member of his government attempted to involve the civil service of our province in a partisan organization of a rally?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I want to say in response to the question that the member has posed, I believe that the Deputy Minister of Labour and Immigration was quite clear on this matter, that the email that the members are referring to was missed in the first FIPPA. When it was discovered, it was forwarded.

The Ombudsman investigates all sorts of complaints that come to him. Every freedom of information response that goes out includes in it the right of the people who apply, if they aren't satisfied with the answer, to ask the Ombudsman to investigate. So there's nothing unusual about that.

But I will say to the member opposite, we—when we stood on the sides of Manitobans, when we stood for a Provincial Nominee Program that has been a successful economic driver in this province, we did that proudly. We proudly stood with those Manitobans, and we continue today to hear from business owners and leaders in this province dissatisfaction with the current immigration program under the federal government, dissatisfaction with language requirements that make it more difficult to get people—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Manitoba and his colleagues claim they didn't know for

months. They hid the information. They caused an investigation to occur which took over a year and a half for the truth to come out when it could have come out within days. Now, plausible deniability doesn't work if it's not plausible.

Now, I understand, given the amnesia of his former Cabinet colleague, he may not have been aware from that source, but I also understand that there are people in the civil service who were aware, including the assistant deputy minister himself. So there were really only three people between the Premier and the truth: the assistant deputy minister who knew, the deputy minister and the clerk of the Executive Council.

Now, I have to ask the government to explain how it is that the largest issue before the public at that time remained undiscussed by the deputy minister and his assistant deputy minister, because that's the thesis they're advancing.

If the deputy minister did not discuss this with the assistant deputy minister, the government is implying that the bureaucrats in this province are totally unprofessional. Is that what the government is implying?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's increasingly hard to follow the conspiracy theories from the other side of the aisle. The convolutions that they have to go through to try to continue to sling the kind of mud that they've been slinging is quite amazing.

But I will say on this issue that we have been clear, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has been clear, and that when we stood with Manitobans on the side of a very important immigration program, an important economic driver for this province, we were proud to be able to stand with them.

We take the Ombudsman's recommendations seriously. We are acting on those recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

And it continues to astound me that they are unable to stand with Manitobans and Manitoba businesses who are looking for an immigration program that answers Manitoba's needs. That's what the Provincial Nominee Program was at one time, and we will continue to work to make sure it becomes that yet again.

*(14:20)

Mr. Pallister: I'm sorry it's not simple enough for the minister to understand, but Manitobans understand it.

The assistant deputy minister knew the first day that the minister had instructed people in his office to engage civil servants in a partisan organization of a rally. He knew that the first day. His deputy would've known the first day of the accusations; they were raised in this House. His deputy would've asked the assistant or the assistant deputy minister would have cleared his name within minutes. The deputy knew what was going on. The assistant deputy knew what was going on.

Is the Premier saying that the head of the civil service of the Province of Manitoba didn't know what was going on? When the integrity of the civil service of Manitoba is at stake, that the clerk of the Executive Council did not raise it is unbelievable.

The Premier says he meets with his clerk on a daily basis. Do they have those meetings with a cone of silence over their heads, or is the Premier simply hiding behind the civil servants of this problem to try to protect himself using their integrity as his chip on the table?

Ms. Howard: Well, I know that the Leader of the Opposition has a unfortunate habit of taking hypothetical accusations and running with them and smearing whomever he can in the process. I know that he has had—he was quoting earlier from a Free Press editorial. I know he's also been taken to task for the Free Press for taking this kind of tack where he makes allegations and then he says, oh, no, I was just being rhetorical, I was just being hypothetical.

So on this issue, this has been investigated by the Ombudsman. He has made recommendations. We are following those recommendations.

But we on this side of the House, unlike our opposition, remain committed to an immigration program in Manitoba that is made in Manitoba, that answers the needs of Manitoba businesses. That isn't what we have right now, and anyone who travels and talks to the owners of this businesses will hear they're having increasing difficulty getting the kind of qualified people that they need. They're having increasing difficulty because of things like language requirements, and one only has to look at the current difficulty that the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is in to know that cutting provinces out of immigration is not the way to create a stronger program in this country.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Income Tax Rates Provincial Comparison

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, it's the end of April. That means it's tax season and Manitobans are focused on getting in their tax returns.

But Manitobans are reminded that they continue to pay far more income tax here than in any of our neighbouring provinces. In fact, a two-earner family of four pays 1,500 bucks more than BC. They pay twice as much as Alberta. They pay \$3,000 more than in Saskatchewan.

And while they chirp, will the Minister of Finance admit that because of her spendDP government's inability to manage the finances of this province, Manitobans pay more than families in neighbouring provinces?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I know that if the member takes a look through the budget papers, he will find information that compares all of the costs in—for different families in different provinces. You can look at one piece of the costs, but you also have to take into consideration some of the other costs that people in other provinces pay.

In other provinces, many people, many families pay health-care premiums. In some of those provinces they have seen those things increase.

Other provinces do not have as generous a system of property tax credits as we do in Manitoba. Manitoba has one of the most generous tax credit—property tax credits in the country. So you will also see that factored into the amount of taxes that a family pays.

We know that in Manitoba we continue to have one of the most affordable places to live, and part of that is because of the commitment we've made to keep those costs of running a household, heating, electricity—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Manitobans want answers. Just a week ago, a gentlemen named Brad contacted me concerned about what he called an appalling difference between Manitoba and Saskatchewan income tax rates.

But I brought the budget papers this afternoon. I want to remind this Finance Minister that the

government collected over \$150 million more in income tax in 2013 than the year previous. But again this year they are on track to take in another \$150 million more than the previous year.

The economic philosophy of this spendDP government is clear: Manitobans pay more so they can spend more.

Why does the NDP government continue to mismanage its spending and make hard-working Manitobans pay more?

Ms. Howard: In our time in government we have seen tax reductions worth more than a billion dollars in this province. So when the member opposite asks about taxes, I think he has to ask himself and ask his leader, why was it acceptable when they were in government for families to pay more taxes than they do today? Why was it acceptable when they were in government to have a higher corporate tax rate than we have today? Why was it acceptable to have a higher small-business tax rate than zero, which is what it is today?

We have made those kinds of moves to reduce taxes for Manitobans. At the same time, we have protected those core services that we know are important to those families: health care and education. And we're investing in infrastructure in a historic way because we believe that that is the way forward to create good jobs for young Manitobans so they can stay here—

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

Mr. Friesen: A Finance Minister who promised to eliminate the deficit by this year. Another broken promise.

Mr. Speaker, clearly other provinces do not share this government's exuberance for raising taxes to fuel their spending. Other provinces are getting on board with helping hard-working families.

Everyone understands this Finance Minister is cherry-picking her numbers. She points to lower rates for core services when she knows full well that not only do those families have to pay their bills like their hydro bill, they have to pay their income tax bill. When you factor it in, it still comes out to \$2,300 more here than in Saskatchewan. I challenge this Finance Minister to do the math.

Why does the NDP government continue to rake in record revenues from Manitobans while refusing to reduce the income tax burden for Manitobans?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an individual who campaigned on not balancing the budget 'til 2018. That was the promise that he made. That is the commitment that he made to Manitobans.

We remain committed to balancing the budget in a way that protects the core services that Manitobans count on and in a way that invests in infrastructure so we can continue to create those good jobs and invest in skills.

Today, we have seen a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer which shows us that in the quest to balance the budget, the federal government is at risk of stalling the economy, of shaving half a per cent off of economic growth and seeing the loss of 46,000 jobs. That's from the parliamentary budget office.

There are different paths to balance, absolutely. Our path protects services, creates jobs, creates growth, balances the budget in a responsible way. That is the path forward, and I believe that is what Manitobans are looking to a responsible—

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

Child and Family Services Provincial Travel Policy

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans recently have been made aware that child and family services dollars have been used to send staff to holiday destinations for insurance seminar training.

My question's really quite simple: Does the minister believe that this is the best use of child-welfare dollars?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as minister, I believe that provincial funding should be used for services for children and families with the authorities and the agencies. I think all Manitobans expect that.

I also believe that we need to ensure that all travel policies follow that standard and that belief. Therefore, I have asked that the—that people of the department—the officials of the department meet with the authorities and the agencies and find out: Has money been used?

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that the agencies and the authorities work very diligently to protect Manitobans' children every day.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, it seems as though this problem came up once before.

A review of services offered by the insurance group offering the seminar suggests that most services provided are, in fact, employee benefits, nothing to directly benefit the child and family services clients.

Does the minister think this is something child-welfare dollars should be used for?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I believe that money that is being used by agencies and authorities across this province—provincial funding—should be used to support children and families across the province. That is what their mandate is. That is the work that they do every day.

Since 2006, we have doubled the money to child-welfare agencies to over \$440 million. I know that that money has gone to hire more than 280 new individuals to work within the system, has gone to provide better support to foster families and has also provided support to families in the Family Enhancement Program.

* (14:30)

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, how many more could have been hired?

Numbers of children in care continue to rise. Workloads for child and family services staff are heavy. Priorities for CFS should be to the children and their families.

Does the minister not provide some guidelines for the use of public dollars? Where is the leadership from this minister?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We work every day with authorities and agencies across this province to ensure that we are providing the best quality of service to Manitoba families. And in doing so, we have doubled the amount of funding for child-welfare agencies to over \$440 million.

And with that added funding, we have been able to enhance training opportunities for staff, we've hired over 280 more staff to provide services, we have provided services to foster families, and we continue to work together as partners to ensure that we are building strong communities in order to support families across the province.

**ER Services (Arthur-Virden)
Opening Hours**

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago this Health Minister told Virden, effective May 1st, our local emergency services room will be closed two days a week. Last week the Health Minister told Virden its local emergency room is going to be closed three days a week. Today the Health Minister told Virden that the Virden ER is going to be closed four days a week. Is it next week we're going to be hearing that it's going to be five days a week?

Why is this minister cutting ER services for rural Manitobans?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I thank the member for bringing this to the House.

We know that Manitoba families want health care that is safe and we know they want it close to home. It's why we've been committing to bring a family doctor to everybody by 2015.

Certainly, we know that in the Virden ER there were two doctors that have left to go to another jurisdiction within Manitoba. Unfortunately, that leaves only three doctors in the ER, and we do have to look at patient safety first. It means we cannot keep that ER open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We just don't have the staff there right now to do it. But the doctors have advised us that they want to keep the ER open during those peak times, and we're working to do that.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the funding is always on the table, we're always looking to recruit and we're going to keep working to bring doctors back to Virden.

Mr. Speaker: I'm having difficulty hearing the answer to the question that had been posed by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, and I'm sure all honourable members would want to hear the answer, as would the honourable member for Arthur-Virden himself.

So I'm asking for the question of all honourable members, please keep the level down a little bit. I want to make sure that our guests have an opportunity to hear both the questions and the answers as well.

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the sign that was placed in the door of the ER in Virden, Manitoba. The sign was stated, no emergency room

services at the Virden health unit this—for weekdays, from Tuesday at 8 a.m. to Saturday 8 a.m.

How can this Health Minister say this is to ensure patient safety when she is now closing ERs four days a week?

Ms. Selby: As I said earlier, two doctors have left the region to go to another area in Manitoba. It's left us with three doctors in the Virden area, and that is not possible to keep the ER open seven days a week, 24 hours a day with only three doctors. Now, these doctors have agreed to provide ER coverage. They told us they would like to provide it during the time that they feel the ER is most busy, which is on weekends, and that's what they're working towards.

But, Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, we're going to still keep recruiting for more doctors. The staff funding is still in that ER in Virden.

Mr. Speaker, we brought more than 562 net gain more doctors to Manitoba since we've been in office; 120 of those doctors are working in rural Manitoba. And I can tell the member we will keep working to bring more doctors to rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Just a few moments ago I asked honourable members to keep the level down a little bit. I'm having difficulty hearing the answers to the question posed by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, this Health Minister stated last week, patient safety first.

Now, with the Virden ER closure, and on top of 20 other emergency room closures in the province of Manitoba, including Vita, why is this Health Minister breaking her promise to provide access to family doctors for all Manitobans when so many ERs are closing throughout the province?

Ms. Selby: I notice that the regional health authority put up a sign saying, Virden physicians will be providing regular emergency room services from Saturdays at 8 a.m. until Tuesdays at 8 a.m. Now, Mr. Speaker, we want to have that ER open all the time, but the local doctors told us that that was the busiest time and that they wanted to ensure that we had the ER open during the busiest time.

But in the meantime, we're going to keep recruiting. We're training more doctors. We have more rural residencies.

And the only people who failed on health-care funding was when they cut \$37 million from rural health care.

Vita & District Health Centre ER Reopening Timeline

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): It has now been 557 days since the emergency room at the Vita hospital closed.

This minister on Health has been asked this question several times and has not been able to provide a response. She may be tired of being held accountable, but the residents of southeastern Manitoba are tired of not having an ER.

When will this Health Minister wake up and reopen the ER at the Vita hospital?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I think it's important to remind people, of course, that the Vita health centre is still offering clinical and hospital support. But, of course, patient safety is our first priority, and, unfortunately, we cannot keep the ER open unless we have enough doctors in there to do it.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the money for the staffing is still there, we still intend to put doctors in that ER, and we're going to keep recruiting until we can open that ER again.

Mr. Smook: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health promised, and I state, promised, the residents of southeastern Manitoba that the Vita hospital emergency room closure would be temporary.

After 557 days, this promise seems to be another broken promise. Another doctor is leaving the community, making it next to impossible to open-reopen the ER.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister guarantee that the Vita ER will reopen, yes or no?

Ms. Selby: I can tell the people of Vita and across Manitoba that the funding for staffing is still on the table and we will keep recruiting.

We know we want more doctors. It's why we have a commitment to everyone in Manitoba having a family doctor by 2015. We know there's more work to do, but we have more family doctors practising in rural Manitoba per capita than anywhere in Canada, and we've recruited more than 120 doctors to rural Manitoba since we've been in office.

We're going to keep doing it. We're training more doctors, we're keeping more doctors, and we're going to keep retraining more doctors.

Mr. Smook: Well, it has been 557 days since the bags have been over the hospital sign at each end of town. The minister ensured us that this would be a temporary closure and that the ER would reopen in a few weeks.

We have just heard that the Virden ER is having their ER close. More and more ERs are closing thanks to this minister.

Mr. Speaker, why did this Minister of Health break her promise to the people of Vita, and can she provide the people of southeastern Manitoba a date for reopening the ER at Vita?

Ms. Selby: As I've said, we've seen a net gain of doctors since we've come in because we do have a plan.

Our plan is to train more doctors. We train 110; they only trained 70. In fact, they cut the medical seats. Our plan is to hire more doctors, which is why we've hired about 3,500 more doctors after they fired 1,000 of them. Mr. Speaker, our plan includes training more doctors and nurses. It means recruiting more doctors and nurses.

And the only plan we've heard from their side of the House is to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget and to get an American, two-tile-two-tier health-care system where people have to pay to be at the front of the line.

Time-Loss-to-Injury Rates Provincial Comparison

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards reports that the number of time-loss injuries have remained around 15,000 in Manitoba each year since 2010. Fifteen thousand injured workers, severe enough to result in time off work, is a lot of injuries each year. In that same time period, Saskatchewan has experienced a drop in the number of workplace time-loss injuries from almost 13,000 to about 11,000.

* (14:40)

Can the NDP government explain why there has been no decrease in Manitoba's time loss to injury for the last three years?

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you to the member for the question.

Our goal is to make sure that Manitoba is the safest place in North America to work. Every worker deserves to come home safe at the end of their workday. And as a result of our five-year plan for injury in work–injury and health–illness prevention last year, we are working forward with the Workers Compensation Board to ensure that everyone will come home safe at the end of the workday.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the government's goal may be one thing, but what they've delivered is something else: the worst record in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the time-loss-to-injury rate in Manitoba has stagnated to 3.3 per 100 full-time employees while other provinces continue to reduce their time-loss-to-injury rates. While Manitoba has a high 3.3, Alberta is now 1.39; New Brunswick, 1.18; and Ontario, 1.01. Manitobans' rates are so high and so out of line with other provinces that a full and independent investigation is needed.

Will this NDP government call a full independent inquiry into why they continue to fail at bringing our workplace safety record into line with that in other provinces?

Ms. Braun: I would like to remind the member opposite that over the last decade our worker injury rate has decreased by 40 per cent. Our goal is to continue working on that, continue to reducing those numbers, and we are doing that together in collaboration with the Workers Compensation Board to ensure that our workers will be safe and that the injury time loss will be reduced.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this government is still got the worst record of all provinces.

I have asked many times in this Legislature why this NDP government has done so poorly in more than 14 years in improving workplace safety that we have a time-loss-to-injury rate which is far higher than other provinces. Each time this NDP government uses a long list of excuses and excuses. Manitobans are not interested in excuses; they want better results and safer workplaces.

When will this NDP government call the full independent inquiry that is needed into why our time-loss-to-injury rates are so far above other provinces' rates and more than three times higher than the rate in Ontario?

Ms. Braun: I wonder if our member opposite recalls that last year we passed amendments to The Workplace Safety and Health Act which allow us to have stop-work orders, workers have the right to refuse unsafe work, and we've created a new Chief Prevention Officer. We have doubled our health-safety officers and we have doubled the number of workplace inspections.

I wonder whether the member opposite supported that.

Highways and Roads (Brandon) Infrastructure Investment

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, our government has invested in Brandon at levels never before seen in the history of Manitoba. We've transformed the Brandon general hospital from a 1960s-era facility into a world-class regional health centre and we've built the western Manitoba cancer treatment centre. Both investments were opposed by members opposite.

We are today building with Assiniboine Community College western Canada's finest college campus on Brandon's North Hill, work that has so far yielded the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts and the Len Evans centre of trades and technology.

Mr. Speaker, we are building Brandon and western Manitoba. On this side of the House we believe in making strategic investments to core infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation if he can please advise the House on our \$5.5-billion infrastructure investment and how that will benefit Brandon and western Manitoba.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to have a question from the member of Brandon East, who always puts Brandon first.

Mr. Speaker, we recently announced an additional \$30 million worth of projects to southwest Manitoba—\$80 million. That's on top of the announcements we've made already for Highway 10. That's on top of the announcements made for Highway 1, and in Brandon—and I'm pleased to say, once we're done Victoria Avenue this year, there will not be one section of highway in Brandon that we have neither restored or repaved.

And if you want to put it in perspective, this is a historic day, because while Manitobans in 1997 were throwing sandbags, the Leader of the Opposition was

packing his bags for Ottawa. And when he left government, the PCs spent \$152 million on roads and bridges. This year it's \$707 million.

Highways and Roads Infrastructure Spending

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, Mr. Speaker, that's pretty rich, because just late last week CAA released the list of the 10 worst roads in Manitoba as voted on by Manitobans. Manitobans got an opportunity to vote. How sad it is—how sad it is that there were 500 roads on that potential list, 500 roads for Manitobans to vote on, 500 roads that have been ignored by this NDP government and now at risk of being named one of the 10 worst roads in Manitoba?

The NDP government has ignored critical infrastructure for years by underfunding repairs. There's \$1.9 billion that they have underspent over the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister just admit that his underspending on infrastructure has led to this core infrastructure deficit and the 10 worst roads in Manitoba history?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I—you know, I'll just remind the member for Brandon West that he needs to do his research.

I'm just reading from the Brandon Sun, and a local constituent pointed out, Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s they closed rural maintenance yard. They cancelled projects like Trans-Canada, projects like the 18th Street, two bridges. They did nothing in terms of the eastern access route.

So I suggest, first of all, the member for Brandon West do his research and, second of all, if he really cares about Victoria Avenue, he might actually want to vote for our budget because this year we're going to finish the resurfacing of Victoria Avenue.

Manitoba Hydro Office Closures

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): As we know, today we mourn the losses of loved ones from unsafe workplaces and we feel the pain of those losses.

Mr. Speaker, some of those was on the walk this morning was from the IBEW, and what they would like to know is why this government closed the Hydro offices after they said they were not going to do so.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite felt the pain of 500 IBEW workers when they privatized MTS and fired those workers.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can put the T-shirt on and he can parade around in front of the IBEW workers all he likes, but there's only one party in this House that has said they would privatize Manitoba Hydro and they're sitting across the way today. The biggest threat to IBEW workers is sitting across the aisle from us here today.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this government has no credibility. They stood—their words on the PST when they were asked about a PST increase, they said it was ridiculous. And they're saying we're going to sell Manitoba—I think not. We will save Manitoba Hydro.

I will ask this minister again, Mr. Speaker: Will he tell those workers why he misled them when he said he would not close Hydro offices and he turned around and did exactly the opposite?

Mr. Struthers: Isn't that something, Mr. Speaker? Isn't that quite something, like they saved MTS—like they saved MTS? Who was that that tried to privatize home care in this province? Who was it that ran in the last election on a campaign to privatize MPI? Who was that?

Mr. Speaker, since 1999, 646 new IBEW workers have been hired in this province. It's very clear that the ideology of members opposite is what threatens good Hydro jobs, threatens good jobs in this province, threatens IBEW jobs, Mr. Province, drives rates through the roof, Mr. Province. That party—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member—the honourable minister's time has elapsed.

* (14:50)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It's time for private members' statements.

Connie Rapko

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, on April 23rd, I was proud to join with important dignitaries from the Selkirk area, including the MP for the Selkirk-Interlake, the mayor for Selkirk, the mayor of St. Clements, the mayor of West St. Paul, the mayor of St. Andrews, for the 29th annual

Citizen of the Year award banquet, honouring a very special citizen in Selkirk, Connie Rapko.

Upon graduating from high school, Connie acquired her hairdressing licence and opened her own business, Hair Fantasy. In that time, she has worked with Lord Selkirk School Division with the hairdressing program, and has worked with ARC to create an employment program to go along with an apprenticeship program.

Connie has been active—an active member of the Chamber of Commerce, serving as the second vice-president since 1985, the first vice-president since 1986 and president in 1987. She once again took on these roles, beginning in 2011, serving as president in 2013, and has been very active in her current role as past president.

In 2006, she was elected to the town council where she served on the heritage committee, Rivers West, Communities in Bloom, Festival of Lights and the Selkirk and District Handi-Bus committee. Even though she is not on council anymore, she still serves on many of these committees while maintaining her successful businesses.

For many years, Connie has volunteered for the summer Triple S parade, and the Christmas parade, bringing many people from different parts of Manitoba to Selkirk. This helps boost tourism and the local economy.

Connie has played an active role in building of the recreation complex fundraising committee, helping the community to reach their goals and complete the construction.

Mr. Speaker, Connie is a great example of a dedicated community volunteer, and as someone who has given her heart and soul to the many projects she has dedicated her time to over the years, she deserves to be recognized by all members of this House. I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Selkirk Citizen of the Year, Connie Rapko, who is in the gallery with us today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): This year is the 65th anniversary of a wonderful organization, the Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary group. This group is a caring women's organization that spend countless hours volunteering in selflessness, serving others. They do not receive any financial

compensation for their work, but they generate a great sense of self-respect and community spirit in Swan River. And I would like to highlight some of the amazing work these women have done.

Mr. Speaker, the health auxiliary women have worked many thousands of hours since their inception in 1964. In 2003 alone, they amassed an astronomical 3,466 hours of volunteer hours with only 16 members. The average is nearly an hour a day for each volunteer.

From 2006 to 2013, their work has raised over \$100,000 for the local health centre equipment supply. They have continued to fundraise over the years with cash donations, bake sales, concession sales, plant sales and their annual May strawberry tea.

Mr. Speaker, their contributions do not stop there. Their efforts are also planting the seed for future health-care professionals. These women put a portion of their fundraising towards an annual bursary for a student going into the medical field. The hours of this group has volunteered has indirectly translated into hundreds of lives saved. Their work is something that we cannot take granted enough.

Mr. Speaker, according to the recent national study, Manitoba still leads the way when it comes to giving to charities. Organizations such as the Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary are definitely one of the reasons we are trailblazers.

Mr. Speaker, the volunteers of Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary, are role models for all of us, and families in Swan River will remember their legacy for many years to come.

And I also want to leave the tables of volunteers' names so they appear in Hansard.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to include the names that the honourable minister referenced in his private members' statement? *[Agreed]*

Members of the Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary: Audry Doak, Erna Betcher, Isobel Kushniryk, Anna Fullerton, Gloria Kutynec, Gayle Dunnett, Diane Hamiwka, Melba Bouvier, Ronaele Greig, Grace Livingstone, Shirley Thompson, Lillian Dushanek, Ann Nemez, Pat Richenhaller, Helen Shadbolt and Mona Shehata

Kalena Green

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me today to pay tribute to Kalena Green, a resident of Carberry who is a recipient of a young woman of distinction award hosted by the YWCA of Brandon, Manitoba. This was their 27th annual awards banquet recognizing women in western Manitoba for their efforts to improve their respective communities.

Kalena was nominated for her dedication to her community. She is a multitalented young woman who gives freely of her time. She volunteers with the Canadian Blood Services by organizing a student blood drive, and she helps provide meals to seniors in Carberry. Since the 8th grade in school, she has served as a peer mentor to help students with academic and personal problems. She played the alto saxophone in the school music program and was a member at large of the Carberry Collegiate student council, where she served as a photographer, organized social activities and collected for the Christmas Cheer Board.

Kalena is a very physically active young woman who has played soccer, basketball, baseball and is a distance runner that ran the half marathon in 2010 to raise money for the mentally disadvantaged. She also participated in the Rick Hansen run across Canada to raise money for spinal cord injuries. She was a lifeguard and swimming instructor for seven years and was manager of the Carberry swimming program.

Kalena graduated from Brandon University in 2013 with a bachelor of physical education, majoring in physical education and French. She is currently working on her bachelor of education program and is student teaching in Carberry. For six weeks in 2011, she was accepted into the Explore program at Laval University in Quebec City to improve her knowledge of the French language and culture.

In 2010, she was a recipient of the Premier's healthy living award, and in 2011, she received the Carberry chamber of commerce youth volunteer of the year award for community leadership and youth role model—and as a youth role model.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Kalena Green and to congratulate her on her efforts and accomplishments at making our communities a better place to live, enjoy and appreciate. She is truly setting an example for all of us. Thank you.

Western Canada Cup

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): Hockey fever is sweeping through Dauphin and the Parkland this week, as we are hosting the Canadian Junior Hockey League's Western Canada Cup.

Five of the best junior hockey teams from western Canada have all met in Dauphin to compete for their spot in the RBC Cup National Junior A Championship. Our very own Dauphin Kings are competing as the host team, while the Winnipeg Blues are representing Manitoba after winning the Manitoba Junior Hockey League championships. The Yorkton Terriers, Spruce Grove Saints and the Coquitlam Express round out the competition as winners of their own provincial championships.

The event theme, Come for the Hockey, Stay for the Party, could not be more appropriate for Dauphin. The opening ceremonies kicked things off with a bang last week as the all-as all teams were welcomed by a roaring crowd at Credit Union Place. Later that evening, country star Charlie Major treated athletes and hockey fans to an incredible performance. The festivities will continue all this week with games each night followed by a concert at the Countryfest Cabaret.

The 13-game tournament will include a round-robin schedule followed by two semifinal games and a championship game. We will all be cheering hard for our local Manitoba teams as they fight to earn their spot in the championship game.

This is the first time that the Western Canada Cup has been held in Manitoba, and Dauphin was chosen for the strength of our local junior hockey team, the dedication of the host committee and our record for hosting incredible events.

The whole community has stood behind this event and has spent over a year working hard to make it a success. I want to thank the host committee, including co-chairs Randy Daley and Kirk Dawson, the sponsors and all of the volunteers whose contributions have made this possible. All of your hard work has made this a once-in-a-lifetime experience for all these young athletes.

Good luck to all the teams. Play your hearts out, and go, Kings, go.

Major Road Improvements in Westman

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, western Manitoba is a unique part of our province. Westman boasts Manitoba's oil patch and is a thriving transportation region for businesses that drive our provincial economy.

Our government is committed to helping Westman thrive. That's why we're investing millions to upgrade roads, highways and bridges in southwest Manitoba. Supported by the provincial sales tax, Manitobans are building Manitoba.

* (15:00)

Manitoba's petroleum and mineral industry has an economic impact of \$3 billion. It has created more than 5,700 good jobs and another 18,000 people are employed in spinoff businesses. With such a strong impact on the provincial economy, we need to make sure that Westman has the right infrastructure to support these growing industries.

On April 24th, during his state of the province address in Brandon, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) spoke of the valuable role Westman plays in the Manitoba economy. In order to keep this region prosperous, the government of Manitoba is investing \$29 million to improve the roads near Westman's oil patch. This is in addition to the Hartney bridge and the recently opened Coulter bridge so strongly championed by Shirley Kernaghan and her community team.

Mr. Speaker, the Trans-Canada Highway and highways 83 and 256 are among the roads to be slated to undergo major construction this year. In the next few years, our government will be investing an additional \$83 million in the Westman region to improve highways 2, 3, 21 and others. Projects like these mean western Manitoba will have the roads it needs to keep growing.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear why our government is investing in Manitoba. Better roads, bridges and flood protection mean that western Manitoba will continue to be a great place to live and raise a family. With these record investments, our infrastructure will be able to support the communities and the thriving petroleum industry for years to come.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Yes, could you please call Committee of Supply.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

* (15:10)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Order. 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 Justice.

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

I think last—Honourable Minister.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, while my staff are coming to the table, by agreement with the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I'll put on the record some responses to some of the questions from Wednesday which undertakings were given.

We started off Wednesday with a discussion about the lobbyist registry, and the member had a number of questions about particulars of details of lobbyists that register as lobbyists, quote, for the purposes of influencing a contract, end quote. So we've got some more information I can put on the record now. The lobbyist registry can be accessed by any interested person, and therefore the information is public. The deputy lobbyist registrar has given me some details on the numbers of people who have registered for the purpose of influencing a contract. The registry shows seven that are active and one lobbyist who has terminated their lobby by way of their declared end date passing, and I understand that some of them registered in two instances for a total of nine.

And I actually accept the member's statement that it's kind of strange wording, the way it's set out.

And I understand that for those jurisdictions that have lobbyist legislation, there's very similar provisions related to the ability of lobbyists to contact government to lobby for contracts. Quebec expressly excludes the ability to lobby for contracts where there is a call for public tender; all of the provinces do not. The act which requires lobbyists to register makes the process more transparent. So we did again look a little bit more closely. Lobbying legislation across the country is similar, but it's not identical. Typically, it's fair to say that provincial lobbying legislation in Canada captures communication by consultant lobbyists with public officials in an attempt to influence the awarding of a contract by or on behalf of a government is lobbying activity for which a return must be filed. So I'm told that the registration legislation in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta is also very similar to Manitoba's. BC and Newfoundland-Labrador capture the activity as lobbying as well, but their wording differs. And, again, maybe not surprisingly, Quebec's legislation has gone a slightly different way.

The member also asked about the website intended to give parents and others more resources to keep kids out of gangs. The project referred to is the Project Gang-Proof project that has been—it's been added to over the years. I can confirm, indeed, that that project is the responsibility of Children and Youth, so those can be referred to the CYO Estimates process.

The member also asked about legislation that would allow for the recovery of legal costs for legal aid from a parent, and that legislation, of course, was introduced as an additional tool in the tool kit to be used by Legal Aid Manitoba to recover costs from parents if necessary. I'm pleased to say that to date, as far as I'm aware, Legal Aid has not had to use that legislation and that so far parents who can afford counsel for their children are actually obtaining counsel as necessary.

The member also asked on proceedings under the human-trafficking legislation as well as the number of civil remedies. I'm told that under the child exploitation and human trafficking act there have been five applications for protection orders and all five have been granted. I can't really provide any information on the number of civil remedies that might've been sought as there really isn't a way of identifying them in our civil court records.

I can advise that two operations have been shut down by the Public Safety Investigations unit linked

specifically to child sexual exploitation, and one of these closures involves some indications of human trafficking.

There are yet—oh, we have some late breaking news, even as we speak. The member also asked about the body armour act, and we did say on Wednesday that the Public Safety Investigations unit has issued 50 permits for body armour. Of these, there are seven business permits which have been issued to permit the sale of body armour, of course, to appropriate individuals. I am told there are 27—sorry, 29 possession permits for University of Manitoba patrol officers; seven possession permits issued for competitive firearm users; three possession permits for bailiff service staff; two possession permits for individuals working in close proximity to prisons and police stations, contract staff and non-government employees; two possession permits for firearms trainers.

In terms of the question about MPI benefits being withheld, I have only a partial answer, which I'm going to put on the record. There may not be a lot of context for it, and I'll get back to the member with more details. There was a question about certain Criminal Code provisions and actions related to MPI benefits. I'm told there were 633 convictions for the Criminal Code sections listed under section 161.1(3), which was the legislation referred to in the question. I don't yet have any information on how many claims were denied due to those convictions but we'll try to get that back to the member as soon as possible.

The member also had questions about the number of accidental releases in Manitoba correctional facilities. I'm told—and I suppose this may come as a surprise because certainly from a media perspective it'd been a very quiet year—there were nine accidental releases in the fiscal year 2013-2014. And we do report on those formally in the department's annual report, so the information is publically available but I am providing this here today.

The member asked where the releases occurred. The great majority, of course, of releases occur from correctional facilities because that's where people in custody are. I can say—again, it's been quiet and I know even a few media officials reflected on that—is, the member knows, when this is discovered, Courts and Corrections work very closely with our police services, and the police service will go ahead and make a notification if the police decide it's useful to help get the person back into custody or if they think

there is any public concern. And I did want to find out how many times a warning to the public was issued. And as far as we know, there were not any occasions when the police determined that it was necessary to do that. In most cases, the person was brought back to custody fairly quickly. Of course, thanks to the information that's gathered by Corrections, information that may be in probation officers' hands and information the police have, they are able to move relatively quickly to get people back into custody, which is why maybe it's been a very quiet issue for past the year, but certainly a number is there.

I do want to put on the record that each release is taken very seriously. It involves many complex factors, and we continue to take steps to tighten our risk management. There's a protocol in place to thoroughly investigate each incident with a systemic lens to look at every factor and the various agencies involved. The idea is to identify better processes to ensure that consistent steps are taken to address errors or risk factors that come to light through the process as soon as possible. That work is ongoing, obviously. Courts and Corrections are focused on working together to identify and act upon lessons learned, by ensuring that there is a rigorous process of review in place. And, effectively, what we can call a deconstruction takes place after each event.

Systemic training, needs and process improvements are identified, based on the investigation and tracking of each incident, which has led to the enhancement of formal training. It has also caused changes in process intended to better manage risk. I suppose it's somewhat frustrating when we get details that each incident is unique. We're trying to work hard to close those gaps, in part because of the manual processes that we continue to use as we transition to more modern and effective ways of doing business.

I have to say as well that it's in part because of the complexities of criminal process, which can result in reams of paper sometimes containing the details of whether somebody should be in or out of custody.

So I think that is an answer, or at least a partial answer to the things that were outstanding. I expect that the member for Steinbach will want to move on with a number of questions this afternoon.

* (15:20)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Thank the minister and particularly the staff who worked to get

some of those answers back, whether they were—hopefully, they weren't tied up on the weekend with any of those. I think we'd also asked about the population numbers. I don't know if, for the correctional centres, maybe you just want to table those as opposed to reading through them all individually.

Just a couple follow-ups to the answers that were provided by the minister on the issue of the lobbying and the influencing of the contracts, is he able to disclose which contracts those were that the nine individuals or consultant lobbyists were influencing on?

Mr. Swan: Sure. First of all, with respect to the lobbyist registry, the registry doesn't deal with the type of contracts that somebody would like the government to engage in. The nature of the disclosure is the type of business that the lobbyist is involved in. So, for example, it would not be surprising to have a lobbyist who is employed by or is an agent of, for example, a software supplier. In terms of the institutional rate of capacity and concentration, we can table this later. It wouldn't take me more than about three minutes to put it on the record if the member prefers.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, time being precious, I'll just take it as a tabled document. Thank you.

A question regarding the accidental releases: Were any of the individuals recaptured after they'd committed another offence or did they all recognize the error and then turn themselves back in, or was it the matter of a warrant being executed and them being reacquired that way?

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, I can put on the record that we're not aware of any instance where an individual has reoffended while they've been accidentally released into the community. The general occurrence is that, of course, Corrections will provide as much information to the police as possible. The police do a very good job of dealing with this. They use the information, again, that the police have, as well as information that's gathered through the intelligence and the corrections system. And, in the majority of cases, they're able to recover the person quite quickly. In some cases that's done by a call to the person's lawyer if the still—person still has any contact with the lawyer or if the lawyer has any idea where to find the person, they may turn themselves in and return themselves either to police custody or back to a correctional facility. But I suppose that's all the information I can give.

Mr. Goertzen: This question would fall under the one-off categories, and it's something of a—I'm doing this for a friend who asked me to ask, so I'll disclose my conflict there. Apparently, the water services at the courthouse across the street on the third floor haven't been working for some time in certain parts of the courthouse on the third floor across the street. Is that about to be fixed any time soon?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'm very familiar with the issue up on the third floor of the Law Courts building. Being the owner of a house over a hundred years old, I suppose I have some sympathy. Apparently, the challenge has come not with finding skilled plumbers either within the provincial system or hiring contractors; it comes with the historic nature of that building. It has been a long-standing issue.

Of course, Justice is not the owner. We are the tenant of the building, but Shauna Curtin, who's the assistant deputy minister of Courts, who joins us, gave me great joy when she told me just a minute ago that it sounds like that problem is going to be fixed in the very near future. It gives me great joy to have that dealt with. I can tell you that lawyers, whether defence lawyers, Crown attorneys, family law lawyers as well as their clients, will be very happy to have that issue resolved.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll pass that bit of good news on to the person who asked me to ask it without trying to take any credit for it. I'll just say this happens to be a work in progress or something that's near completion.

Can we get an update on the status of electronic monitoring in the province? I understand—or remember, in the 2011 election, there was a discussion about the extension of that, and can the minister tell us sort of the number of units and the application of electronic monitoring in Manitoba right now?

Mr. Swan: Sure. I can try and provide some information. The most recent numbers we have are as of February 18, 2014. What I can say at the outset is that the electronic monitoring pilot project continues. It has been renewed for another year, and as the member is likely aware, we did give notice that we would be considering expansion of the electronic monitoring program. Up to now it's—up until recently, it was for high-risk auto theft youth and high-risk adult—rather, before it was high-risk auto theft youth.

We did announce our intention to expand the program to high-risk adult domestic-violence offenders, and I understand that there was a suitable case that was identified and a domestic-violence offender did have the electronic monitoring bracelet put on. My understanding is that, I suppose in that case, the electronic monitoring device was either successful or unsuccessful, depending how you look at it. My understanding is that there's an allegation that the individual breached and that individual is now back in custody.

Our Crown attorneys continue to have the ability, in appropriate cases, to ask for electronic monitoring of domestic violence offenders. To this date, there has not been much take-up of those kinds of cases. As we've said many times, we don't sell electronic monitoring as being an alternative for someone who should be in custody. It's another tool that can be used out in the community to—as one more thing to assist police and probation services in ensuring people are complying with their conditions.

* (15:30)

So the sort of ongoing tally of numbers for this project, there's been 88 potential cases reviewed for the project up to mid-February 2014. There was three youth who were in the project who have passed away. Thirteen cases were deemed unsuitable. There were five exceptional cases received where there was no consultation or referral received in advance. Sixty-eight individuals have been outfitted with EM devices in Manitoba between April 2008 up to February 18, 2014.

Response has been varied. Again, we knew when we started with high-risk youth that we were dealing with a group of individuals who were certainly having difficulty managing their activity. We also knew this was a group of individuals who, no matter what anybody preferred or had asked for, would be back in the community because of the terms of The Youth Criminal Justice Act. And, as the member knows, there has been some success. There's also been some frustration with individuals who've failed to comply, a couple of cases where individuals have tampered with or removed their devices, some of them more than once. There has been a response to those cases, and some of those individuals have found themselves back in correctional facilities.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and his staff for that response.

Just for clarity, then, there were 68 individuals up to February 14th who are under the EM program, the electronic monitoring program, but all of those except for one would be high-risk auto thieves? Only one was classified for something other than auto theft?

Mr. Swan: That's correct.

Mr. Goertzen: The one individual who was using EM for the domestic violence case, when they breached, were they—was the breach alerted immediately or is that something that was determined after the victim had to report a breach?

Mr. Swan: We'd have to go back and look at the specifics. I do know the individual was breached and has been returned to custody.

Mr. Goertzen: So then that individual is back into custody; then there's no one other than auto thieves who are using the electronic monitoring currently?

Mr. Swan: At the current time, that is correct. The electronic monitoring device can be asked for by a Crown attorney. It must be requested and also ordered by a judge.

Again, we do not use electronic monitoring as an option or an alternative to someone being in custody. It's only if an individual is being released into the community that, in appropriate cases, there can be a request for an electronic monitoring device.

Mr. Goertzen: And does the minister know, were there no more than one request for EM outside of the auto-thief classification, or is it because the others who were requested weren't deemed suitable candidates?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can only speak to the one case in which it was ordered. Of course, Crown attorneys have been given this as an additional tool to use in domestic violence cases so I actually don't know whether Crown attorneys have made other requests to have electronic monitoring used as part of the management for someone in the community.

Mr. Goertzen: The EM technology that we're using now, is it still considered that passive technology where it doesn't track an individual immediately at a location? It can tell you where the individual is not, if they're outside of the radius of where they're supposed to be, but it doesn't actually tell you where the individual is, is that correct?

Mr. Swan: In fact, the devices being used are GPS based and they have been from the start of the

program, so they do tell the monitors where the person is at any given time.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister, you know, maybe talk a bit about why he thinks there's been such a lack of pickup? I mean, it's something that the government or the party—the NDP party ran on in 2011, about expanding electronic monitoring. And it's certainly something I've talked about and supported, and particularly on the issue of domestic violence.

When I've spoken to people in Alberta—where I think this is used much more extensively—that there has been broader success. I mean, is the issue the nature of the technology? Why would we seem to struggle with being able to expand electronic monitoring? And I understand, as well, and I appreciate the fact the minister says it's not a catch-all. It's not going to solve every problem. It's not intended to, and I agree with him on that. But I have a hard time believing that it's not better than, in some cases, the kind of monitoring that exists.

So is—can he explain why it hasn't obviously—I would assume he's going to have to say it's not as successful as he thought it might be in the old—the 2011 campaign when they ran on this. But can he explain why it hasn't been as widely picked up in other applications?

Mr. Swan: I can add a little bit of information to the record today. I understand that there's been six additional referrals for domestic violence offenders that have been made to the electronic monitoring project that maybe individuals who are currently in custody and we'll review that when—if there's a possibility of being released into the community. So, although there's only been one offender who's had the device, there may be others. You know, we started the program with, frankly, a very volatile and difficult group of individuals to monitor, high-risk youth, and, again, I think it's fair to say that the results were a little mixed. I wish that we could've reported that the electronic monitoring devices resulted in increased compliance and very positive results. That has worked for some individuals. For some individuals, it doesn't seem to have had an impact.

We think there is still more that can be done with adult offenders who may not have the same—some of the same challenges as youth. There is another challenge, though, and that is the nature of people coming to the community. As I've said, every single youth, no matter what they've done, the Youth

Criminal Justice Act says that they shall spend a portion of their sentence in the community which gives, perhaps, a bigger pool of potential individuals to have electronic monitoring devices. That same situation doesn't necessarily extend to adult offenders. So there is a pool of individuals. Crown attorneys have the opportunity to move ahead with an application for electronic monitoring. If they believe that it's appropriate and if the Crown attorney and the judge thinks it's appropriate, it will occur.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister perhaps table, along with the statistics on the current capacity in the correctional centres, the number of times that the devices have been tampered with or removed under the current program, recognizing that the vast majority are the auto thieves and the youth who are at the high risk. And you've—it's already talked about the one breach that wasn't a removal of the 'branklet.' I'm assuming that was—I'm assuming that's a breach on the order, but if you could provide those details and the summary data.

Mr. Swan: Okay, keeping an eye on the time, it'll take me about a minute to go through some of those details. I can advise that 28 individuals either removed their devices or tampered with the devices which is a cause for breach and results in a consequence. I understand that three youths removed their devices between two and three times. There were four individuals who actually removed their devices four times, and one individual who has removed his device five times. So, unfortunately, youth who are able to steal cars quite easily can, if they put their mind to it, deal with the monitoring bracelets. Again, that is considered a breach and certainly probation services and the police take it very seriously.

Mr. Goertzen: And that's just in the past from the minister and, I think, previous ministers as well, but I continue to hear from people who provide this kind of technology for other jurisdictions, probably more so in the US who use it who don't have the same issue with the brace that's being removed, not because the individuals who are wearing them wouldn't try to remove them, but because it's different technology that can't remove. Is there something particular about the technology we're using that allows itself to be removed more readily?

Mr. Swan: I can say for the record that device tampering is actually common to all electronic monitoring programs that we're aware of that are operating in North America. It remains one of the limitations on the program. Of course, the—it can be

useful, but it's only useful if there is an immediate response if somebody tampers with their device or removes their device. So it is a—it would not be unique to Manitoba. It would, in fact, be very, very common with similar programs elsewhere.

* (15:40)

Mr. Goertzen: Changing gears a bit, just as a follow-up to one of the questions I was asking last week about the Deveryn Ross case, looking on the department's website, there is a policy directive regarding disclosure, and I think that policy directive was a follow-up to the Driskell situation, the recommendations from the Driskell report. Can the minister tell me, the non-disclosure issues that resulted or are at play in the Deveryn Ross case, would those have been dealt with differently had this policy directive been in place at the time?

Mr. Swan: Well, certainly, there's an obligation under the Stinchcombe decision of the Supreme Court to make a full disclosure of the case to a defence counsel. I really can't speak about details of this case. As the member's aware, the appeal period from the federal court decision continues to run. I don't know what the federal government intends to do. I think it'd be inappropriate for me to speculate on that fact situation.

Mr. Goertzen: There's another fact situation, which I know the minister won't speculate on. I'm not asking him to speculate on the particular case, but there's been a bit of media reporting around the death of a mother and a daughter who were involved in a traffic fatality. And the family has been expressing concerns about the inability to get charges laid under the Criminal Code against the drivers who were responsible in some fashion for the death. Now, I'm not expecting the minister to comment on the case in particular, but can he walk me through a little bit about how these processes work? It's my understanding, in our system, that the police are responsible for the laying of—of a charge, but they would normally do that in consultation with the prosecutor, is that correct?

Mr. Swan: Yes. Well, the member's right. The police are the ones who lay charges, but the police certainly have the option of pursuing an opinion from the Crown attorney at any point. And I think it's really important, generally speaking, to note that that can be a fluid process and police may ask for a Crown opinion, based on the facts that are available, based on the police investigation at that time. It is not unusual for the police to return to the Crown

attorneys if there's more information that becomes available because that may result in a different opinion.

And the main factors which are important to remember for Crown attorneys is that for a Crown attorney to proceed with a prosecution where a charge has been laid, there must be a reasonable likelihood of prosecution of whatever the charge is and it must be in the public interest. Of course, the great majority of cases are—it is in the public interest for the Crown attorney to proceed, but it is the Crown's independent opinion of whether there's a reasonable likelihood of a successful prosecution.

Mr. Goertzen: And those are the same requirements that govern police as well, right? The—there is a reasonable likelihood of a conviction and whether it's in the public interest to proceed, those are the same considerations the police would undertake in their determination of laying a charge. Is that correct?

Mr. Swan: It's a different test that is used by police in their decision whether or not to lay a charge. I understand that the test for police officers is whether they have reasonable and probable grounds that an offence has been committed by an individual.

Mr. Goertzen: In a scenario where there's back and forth between Prosecution Services and the police on information and maybe something hasn't been settled upon about whether or not there's going to be a prosecution, how much information is provided to the family at that point? Does the Victims' Bill of Rights in Manitoba provide information to the family, or is it—is that at the discretion of prosecutions at that point? Do they not fall under the victim services bill? Would a family know that there—that something is maybe more active than they believe at a certain time?

Mr. Swan: There's a number of ways that victims or families of victims could receive information about a case, even at a precharge state. Of course, the police investigating the alleged crime have the ability to communicate with victims. For example, the City of Winnipeg Police Service has its own Victim Services unit which can make contact with victims or victims' families.

Crown attorney can make contact and provide information to victims. And, as well, the provincial Victim Services office will make contact and provide service if it is a designated offence or in other areas where, due to policy, the Victim Services provides that information.

Mr. Goertzen: In a situation where a family is unhappy with how something is proceeding or they believe that there should be a charge—a criminal charge and it's not happening, what other options are available to them? Is there an option of—the private prosecution, could they lay in information before a judicial justice?

Mr. Swan: Well, if individuals are unhappy with the decisions that are being made or not made, I mean, certainly those individuals have the opportunity to meet with police. If they believe that the police investigation is a concern, they certainly would have the right to let their views be known to the Crown attorneys or to let their views be known to Victim Services.

* (15:50)

I mean, generally, of course, criminal law is a state responsibility. The police and, ultimately, the Crown attorneys take on these cases on behalf of all of us when a crime is committed. Individuals can move ahead with a public prosecution, but, generally, even if that started at some point, the question is going to be, does this public prosecution have the necessary elements and is there sufficient evidence to reasonably conclude that there's a likelihood of a successful prosecution?

Mr. Goertzen: And in a case where a citizen decides to—and I think the terminology, whether it's private or public prosecution, maybe there's a distinction to that that I'm falling short on—the—is it the situation where they bring forward a complaint or lay information to a judicial justice and then that judicial justice can determine whether or not they can issue a warrant in a situation like that if they believe there's cause?

Audio system failure.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll have a short recess.

The committee recessed at 3:54 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:07 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. We'll resume where we took off.

Now, the honourable minister was, I think, answering the question at that time.

Mr. Swan: Okay. I recognize—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Order, please. Order. Yes, committee's back to order, and the

honourable minister was answering the question and he will restart it.

Mr. Swan: Okay, I'll restart the answer.

When there's an individual who wishes to proceed with a prosecution when no charge has been laid, that individual can go and swear in information very much like a police officer would. That would be done in front of a judicial justice of the peace, or a JJP, then what would happen is a process hearing would be scheduled. That process hearing would take place in front of a judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba. Before that process hearing, an individual who wishes to proceed with a prosecution must provide the Crown attorney's office with particulars of why they believe a prosecution is appropriate, which would basically be a summary of the evidence that they believe should be relied upon. When that's done, the Crown attorney's office may take the prosecution over and go ahead and turn it back, I suppose, into a public prosecution through the Crown's office. If it is apparent that the evidence which is provided would not be sufficient to justify proceeding, there may be a stay of the matter that's then taken by the Crown.

The exceptions to that are section 810 orders, peace bond type orders where individuals can proceed with that. It is a special kind of prosecution under the Criminal Code of Canada because it is really an individual—to generalize very much, it's an individual wanting the equivalent of a peace bond to get someone to stop bothering them or their family members to not attend at various places. The Crown's office does not play a role in that. Somebody can go ahead and file for a peace bond and not have the Crown's involvement before they have their hearing in front of a judge.

* (16:10)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that answer. Does he have any statistics on how many private prosecutions there have been in the last two or three years?

Mr. Swan: We don't have that information at present, but we can try to take a look. What time frame is the member looking for?

Mr. Goertzen: If he means in terms of the answer, I'd like it right now. If he means in terms of the time frame of the private prosecutions, just over the last three years would be fine. And if he could also—how many of those would've been picked up by the

Crown and proceeded with by the Crown themselves?

Mr. Swan: With respect to the first request, yes, indeed, we'll do our best to gather that information for the past three years. With respect to what has occurred as a result on whether the Crown has taken on those cases, we'll take that under advisement, because I'm just not certain what information is available.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and his staff for that undertaking.

Moving into—and I'm going to have probably do a lot of the corrections stuff tomorrow, just the way things have gone with the questions and answers and the downing of the microphone system. Can I get an update on how many individuals are serving conditional sentences in the community in Manitoba today?

Mr. Swan: Okay, the best I can provide on the record this afternoon—the number of conditional sentences managed by Corrections are tabulated—I understand they use the month-end population statistics, so, it's—as of the fourth quarter of 2013-14, there were an average of 728 individuals under conditional sentence managed by Adult Corrections. So that's 728, which appears to be lower than the numbers in any of the previous eight quarters or any of the previous years.

Mr. Goertzen: Can he give me an update on the number of individuals on probation supervision in Manitoba? And, if I'm getting the terminologies incorrect, he'll correct me, but.

Mr. Swan: Okay, for the adult probation caseload, again, this is not a snapshot number, but the average for the fourth quarter of 2013-14 was that there was 6,931 individuals being managed in Adult Probation Services. That is about 1 per cent lower than the fourth quarter of the previous year, 2012-2013.

The youth probation caseload for the fourth quarter of 2013-14, the average was 1,485, which is down about 6 per cent from the fourth quarter of 2012-2013.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and his staff for that response.

How many individuals are supervised under court-ordered peace bonds?

Mr. Swan: I'd ask the member to give a bit more clarity of exactly what's being sought. For example,

we talked a few minutes ago about any individual being able to apply for a peace bond under section 810. If it's ordered, it's ordered by the court but it's not necessarily within the ambit of what Corrections or probation services look after.

So if we—if the member can just define that a little bit more we'll see if we can provide that this afternoon and if not we'll try to give an undertaking that will help out.

Audio system failure.

Mr. Goertzen: —corrections facility if they're still considered a danger. One of the things that can be applied for is a peace bond to ensure that they are keeping the peace, and it's one form of restriction on them. How many applications are active currently under Manitoba prosecutions?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I think what the member's asking for are details of long-term supervision orders that would be obtained under section 810 of the Criminal Code. Some of those orders would be supervised by the federal government, some of those orders would be supervised by the Province. So what we will do is try to determine how many orders are actually being supervised by the provincial government. We'll try to provide a snapshot of a recent date, whether that's the end of the fiscal year or month-end or something. I can't speak to how long it's going to take to do that but we'll use our best efforts.

Mr. Goertzen: And, if the minister can provide perhaps a few different dates, whether it's quarterly over the last year or something other than a one-date snapshot, that would be probably more instructive in terms of looking at a—comparative numbers.

Can he or his staff indicate how many intermittent sentences are currently being served, I think, otherwise called weekend sentences?

* (16:20)

Mr. Swan: Just clarifying the comments about the supervision orders, the information we'll be finding, I was able—

Audio system failure.

ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

* (15:10)

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 Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

As has been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a truly global manner, and the floor is open for questions.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Yes, I'd started into a question, and actually was smart enough to get the Hansard and see what I'd started asking, so I—what I was trying to get through my head was the—we've been told that there's the 77 people working for the east side authority, firstly, that I was trying to understand how they are paid. Like, is it out of the \$65 million that's allocated every year, their salaries for that group come off first, or where, actually, where are they funded from?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Currently, we have 77 full-time positions within the East Side Road Authority. The 2013 and '14 operating budget for the staff, the 77 people that we identified earlier when we last left off, was 1.3—\$1,386,600 and the—or the capital budget itself is a separate entity, and that amounts to about \$75 million. I know that I identified the principals, the senior management for the East Side Road Authority, when we last met here in the Estimates process, so that's basically the outline of the budget and how the East Side Road Authority works.

Mr. Briese: Yes, okay, thank you, Minister. The community benefits agreements, you said the other day that there's certain positions that are—have to be in place on those community groups that are set up to set up the community construction companies. You talked about—and I'm just trying to find it, but you talked about the liaison officers and a number of positions that are on those committees, anyhow. Are they paid positions? Are they paid out of the east side authority funding, out of the capital budget? Like, those groups would go on in those 10 communities that are signed up now, and there's three more to sign up—they would go on and on even if they didn't have any particular projects under way on the east-side road at the present time—are they paid positions? And, if so, how are they paid?

Mr. Robison: The community benefits agreements that are signed between the East Side Road Authority and the First Nations vary, but I think that on average the total budget for each of the communities, the 13 communities on the east side total about \$2.5 million. And, within that, of course, is costs and the required monies to hire certain individuals, a first

aid person—I identified some of those positions that were required when we talked about this the other day.

And the—but basically it is to ensure that the communities aren't left out and to ensure that they have every possible opportunity to attain employment and training opportunities as part of the construction project itself in the long run.

I have—I recall a community benefits agreement signing that occurred in several of the communities, and I've been to many of the communities and their signing ceremonies to proceed with the project. It has been the decision that we can't proceed on any road construction without the participation of the local communities and that they have to be a part of this at the outset, deal with the issues that are necessary, whether they're section 35 matters, whether they're issues dealing with land matters, whether it's issues dealing with burial sites, whether it's issues dealing with trapping areas.

So those areas have to all be covered, and that's within the community benefits agreements, in addition to providing employment opportunities and the training employment opportunities for the people that live in those communities.

Mr. Briese: So, if I caught that right—thank you, Mr. Minister—if I caught that right, it's about \$2.5 million a year to those community entities, and that then comes out of that overall funding that goes to the East Side Road Authority. Does it come out of the capital budget, or is that out of there is a separate line and it goes on year to year to year?

Mr. Robinson: In order to give full effect of the construction project itself, it is necessary as a starting point that we have the community benefits agreements agreed to by the communities, and that is why that is viewed to be the starting point. Without the community benefits agreements signed with the East Side Road Authority and the communities, obviously, a project cannot proceed. And that is why we have made it mandatory before these projects commence that these community benefits agreements are adhered to and agreed to by the communities to ensure that there is agreement, mutual agreement, on the areas that have to be addressed prior to any construction happening and prior to any other activities that may commence thereafter.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, my question to the minister, first one deals with the situation at Peguis where they are experiencing

another flood situation. I know the minister is well aware that there have been frequent floods there and that there is a desperate need for a long-term solution to prevent flooding on the—in the Peguis community. I'm just wondering what the minister can provide in terms of an update.

Mr. Robinson: I know that the situation with the Fisher River itself and the citizens in the Peguis community have experienced this every year to my recollection and it continues to be a lingering problem. I know that there are activities currently occurring where the minister has been—the minister and I have been—are in receipt of—the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation Department—have been advised of a project that the Peguis community has in mind, along with some other communities in the Interlake region where there is better preparation should—and the member knows that over the weekend, the water—the weather was such that the water came up at a tremendous level in a short period of time. The Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters, of course, have a responsibility over the evacuation of Peguis, and we're advised that evacuees of the First Nation are currently being lodged in Winnipeg, Fisher Branch and Scanterbury. Currently, some of the water levels in Peguis appear to have crested in the community. So that's a level of good news, I suppose, one could say.

The Fisher River Cree Nation, as of earlier today, I'm told that the river levels were observed to have dropped by approximately one foot. Nine homes have been protected with the Tiger Dams or Tiger tubes, as they're called. No other homes require flood protection at this time. And my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) has initiated his department to deliver 80 temporary dikes to the First Nation.

In that same region, next door to the Peguis First Nation, of course, Dallas-Red Rose was being monitored by EMO on a daily basis last week. But all advisory notices for this community have been currently cancelled and water—it appears that water leaves have created and never came back above the bank levels.

As members know, there's issues in western Manitoba, as was raised by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation earlier today, involving localized flooding as a result of the melt from the Duck Mountains, and we're concerned about that area as well.

But, with respect to the direct question of Fisher River, that is the only information that I have before me that I could provide to the member, and additional details will be provided, obviously, by the Minister responsible for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation.

* (15:20)

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I had hoped for more details on the long-term flood prevention, but it looks like there hasn't been a lot of progress.

Let me ask you a question about the situation with Dauphin River. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) recently made a very solid commitment about additional land for the community on high ground for the people of Dauphin River, because that's something that they're certainly short of in their community. I wonder if the minister can provide an update on where the discussions are with the community on the additional land for people at Dauphin River that would be on higher ground.

Mr. Robinson: I recall the question being raised by the member for River Heights to the First Minister last week in question period. I just want to make it very clear that the ongoing work continues with the First Nations on the east side of the flood-control structure at Fairford: Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Pinaymootang and Dauphin River. I'll just give you some of the progress that we have made in each of the communities.

In Lake St. Martin, as an example, selected land for their community on higher grounds, safe from flooding, has—and is taking place. They are working on the site to prepare for development.

Little Saskatchewan is in the process of converting land to reserve status. This land is on higher ground and safe from flooding. We are going to be providing 39 homes to the First Nations to be installed in their new flood-safe community.

With respect to Dauphin River, it's working on a development plan to repair their flood-damaged homes and replace homes that can't be repaired. About a year ago, we had the opportunity of meeting with Chief John Stagg of the Dauphin River First Nation. And, very recently, I'd say in the last two weeks, we have signed a letter of understanding on a go-forward plan with Dauphin River to proceed and carry on with the work. Because when I met with Little Saskatchewan and Dauphin River First Nations in the last several weeks, I stressed—I said, look, it's

been three years—three years come in about a week and a half—since the residents of those four communities have been evacuated from their communities. We had to make some progress. And, collectively, myself representing the provincial government and they the local government of those communities, we have to collectively take some responsibility here.

Based on that discussion that was held in this building with our officials, it was agreed that we would move forward collectively, two levels of government along with the federal government, I might say, as represented by Mr. Sid Dutchak representing the federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Mr. Harold Westdal representing the Province of Manitoba. We are making progress, and Dauphin River has signed that letter of understanding, and, currently, discussions are being taken about some land transfers being arranged and being made for the Dauphin River First Nation.

I got to say, however, moving away from Dauphin River a little bit, to Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin, that it's much more than the provincial government and the federal government. To a large degree, this is dependent on the Rural Municipality of Grahamdale, in this case, and it requires some consultation to be had with them. And once that's done, then we require the national government—the federal government—to designate these areas as reserve lands or reserve status—give them reserve status.

The community of Lake St. Martin is currently doing that. I received a call late last week from the chief of Lake St. Martin wanting to sign—or pardon me, Little Saskatchewan wanting to sign the letter of understanding. And we've done so already, a couple weeks ago, with the chief of Dauphin River on a go-forward basis because there's a certain degree of responsibility not only by the provincial government, the federal government but, indeed, by the First Nation government, that the citizens have been away from their homelands for way too long.

Coming back to Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin, it requires that these communities also have to have some unanimity with the rural municipality, and I believe that they have made good progress. So what I said previously, it's not simply sending people back home to their communities because, really, there are no communities to go back to in a couple of cases. So what we are doing is rebuilding communities in their entirety, right from

the sewage to water and to all the other services that are required.

That being the case, we require municipal services agreements with the RM of Grahamdale, so it's a complex issue. So that work commences, and I wish, you know, folks could have moved back to their homelands earlier, but in the case of Lake St. Martin, they can't go back to their community because their community is pretty much no longer there. And the same would apply to a community like Little Saskatchewan where their community has been destroyed, for the most part.

So that kind of work has to be done, and it's a matter that the—is slow sometime and—but I am happy with the progress we're making. I'm not happy about the fact that folks have to still be away from their communities, but I am happy with the progress that we are making currently, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. And so just following up in terms of Dauphin River is two questions here which maybe the minister can handle at once. One—because they're linked, actually. One has to do with the extent to which at Dauphin River there also has to be consultation with the RM of Grahamdale. I'm not sure exactly where the boundaries are.

And the second and fairly critical issue is a road access to Dauphin River because that road has been interrupted on a very regular basis because of flooding right along the Dauphin River. And, in talking with Councillor Harold Anderson, for example, there's a real desire to have a road that, you know, can be permanent and won't be flooded out and so that they're able to get permanent access to the community.

And I had asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger) about whether the Province had done any work looking into the possibility of an alternate location for that road so that it would not flood every year, and I'm just wondering what the minister can tell me about the status of that, as to whether—also the issue about whether the RM of Grahamdale extends to the area that's under consideration in terms of the community of Dauphin River.

Mr. Robinson: I'm unable to—I don't have a map with me here as to the—where the RM of Grahamdale begins and ends. I will say, however, that that question regarding Highway No. 513 is probably something that's better answered by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). He's got the primary responsibility.

With the matter concerning Dauphin River, we have signed off on a letter of understanding to proceed with the work, not only in addressing the issue of the homes that are required in that community but the land exchange that is required that'll eventually become reserve status. And we have direct responsibility over that because it's adjacent to a Northern Affairs community at Dauphin River, so we are working to ensure that that's taken care of, and Chief John Stagg has been working with our government very diligently, and we have folks that have been consulting the First Nation, as well, who have been very helpful in the dialogue that has taken place.

* (15:30)

Mr. Gerrard: There—Lake St. Martin, of course, the—essentially the whole community, as I understand it, is still essentially evacuated and there's been quite a number of homes being demolished; some, curiously, being sold instead of demolished, and the minister may have comments on that. But also, you know, I wonder if the minister has a handle on the total number of homes that will be required to be built for the community and where those homes are going to come from.

Mr. Robinson: I will simply say this, that the First Nation and P.M. Associates with—of course, we're talking about Lake St. Martin—have signed a contract for the demolition of 49 homes. That was done in April of 2013. Now, neither Emergency Measures Organization nor the Province have signed anything with anyone; however, the Province did work with P.M. and associates to have some conditions put into a contract prior to having it signed by Lake St. Martin. The main condition is the idea that the demolition funding for these 49 is coming from DFA, but it's routed through P.M. and associates and, as such, if the band chooses to fire P.M. and associates, P.M. and associates is required to return any unexpended funds back to the Province of Manitoba.

As far as I understand, to date, approximately 40 homes have been demolished, with the remaining nine having occupants. And the band is working with these occupants to identify a strategy. It's unclear to us right now if these occupants were 2011 flood evacuees or not. DFA staff have confirmed that \$706,000 is requested—is the requested amount through DFA for the demolition of the 49 homes at Lake St. Martin First Nation.

Now, Manitoba is continuing to work with Canada and Lake St. Martin on a potential housing and land agreement that'll see up to 150 homes provided for a new community near the existing Lake St. Martin reserve. Now, the remaining homes at the provincial evacuation site on Highway No. 6 have been offered to Lake St. Martin—or, pardon me, Little Saskatchewan First Nation for use on economic development lands that they envision in and around the current reserve.

Our government is also working with the federal government and will—an all-impacted Lake St. Martin First Nations. As per the signed MOUs and the tripartite framework for discussion agreements, we're committed to working with the First Nation, the City of Winnipeg and the federal government, as well, to ensure that the children of that community have a safe location for their schooling. And, as the member knows, we have been working on several fronts in that respect.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if the minister can inform members of—today what the status is of the homes which have been reported sold instead of demolished. How many homes are involved and what has happened to them?

Mr. Robinson: No, Mr. Chair, I'm unable to provide the number.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I—if the minister is not able to provide numbers, can the minister tell us what steps are being taken to investigate what's happening and to find out, you know, whether, in fact, homes which were to be demolished have been sold instead?

Mr. Robinson: I will say this much, the Lake St. Martin First Nation was completely evacuated in May 2011, and because of the flooding that occurred there, the remaining stock became uninhabitable due to the combination of heat and moisture from the—from sitting vacant for that length of time. As a result, all existing housing were condemned by the chief and council, and I'm told that about 180 homes were identified for demolition. This is information that has just been forwarded to me. The number of homes demolished to date, I'm unable to provide that number at this point in time.

With respect to how we're dealing with this issue, we are dealing with the federal government, the Province and the First Nations in trying to resolve these matters. And the federal representative, Mr. Sid Dutchak, and the provincial representative, Mr. Harold Westdal, and ourselves are continuing

our work in trying to address this issue and try to come to some resolution in the long time—in the long period of time. To date, about 40 homes have been demolished, I'm told, with the remaining nine still having occupants in them. The band is working with these occupants to identify a strategy. It's unclear if these occupants are from the evacuees list or not from 2011.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, thank you, I turn it back to my colleague from Ste. Rose.

Mr. Briese: I used to be from Ste. Rose.

Just along that same line of questioning, it occurred to me when the member for River Heights was asking those questions, and specifically about the road into those First Nations, it occurs to me that—and the minister can correct me if I'm off track on this—but if the emergency ditch that was dug there for the 2011 flood became a permanent ditch it would give a lot better water level controls on Lake St. Martin. It would give the opportunity to better control Lake St. Martin and keep it away from flooding. Then possibly you wouldn't need to upgrade the road to any specific new heights because you'd take away that ongoing flooding problem that's went on for decades. Does that make any sense to the minister?

Mr. Robinson: What I will say is that our government is continuing to work with the federal government and the four 2011 flood-impacted First Nations in the Lake St. Martin area. The priority, of course, is to get the evacuees to safe homes in their communities, or at the very least as fast—or near their communities as quickly as possible. We had hoped that, of course, the folks there would be near their traditional territories by now. But because of things that have arisen, and they've been very difficult—and I know later on this afternoon we are going to have a briefing with members of the opposition by our provincial representative because there's been some challenges that all of us should be aware of.

* (15:40)

We have accepted recommendations from the Flood Review Task Force and the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin regulation reviews. The cost implications of some of the major flood protection works could well be over \$1 billion and the investment includes, of course, a new Lake Manitoba outlet; the rehabilitation of the Portage Diversion and the Assiniboine dikes; enhanced water storage on the

Shellmouth Reservoir for increased flood protection; \$72 million for individual home, business and farm protection; \$30 million for up to 20 community dikes. Now, that is a lot of money we're talking about.

With respect to the issue at hand, our government has set aside \$100 million toward the resolution package for the four impacted First Nations communities from the 2011 flood. Now, this is roughly a 60-40 split with the federal government, the federal government kicking in the 60 per cent, of course. Negotiations are continuing to find a final resolution package with each of the four First Nations along with their chiefs and councils and Canada's chief negotiator and Manitoba's negotiator, Harold Westdal

Highway 513, I would defer that question be responded to by my colleague, the Minister responsible for Infrastructure and Transportation. He's much more aware of that particular road and I know that he'll gladly get up in the House if the question is raised with him, or I will avail to get a response, a proper response by letter to the member from Agassiz if that is the desired course of action, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Minister. It just seems to me that the Province of Manitoba spent a lot of money on that emergency channel which is sitting there blocked at both ends now when it could be helping the situation on those First Nations that are in that area by somewhat lowering the—or controlling the levels of Lake St. Martin a little better. And it—I know they talk about it being an emergency channel and not being—at this point being able to turn into a permanent channel, but I think that there's certainly some things that could be done there to improve that situation by using that channel.

Another issue that I wanted to raise, the—there's a treaty land entitlement process, and I'm not just sure of the exact stage of it, in the Lac du Bonnet area right now. And it's—there's a couple of First Nations that are looking at some property in the RM of Lac du Bonnet as part of their treaty land entitlement.

Now, I was involved with municipalities for an awful lot of years. I hate to think how many years, but I do recall that whenever First Nations acquired land in incorporated municipalities one of the requirements was that there be a treaty land and—a municipal service development agreement. And it's my understanding that there has been no development agreement entered into in the Lac du Bonnet

area yet and that some of the suggestions—either that there be a memorandum of understanding—and I want to know what stage the municipal service agreement is at because they hold some weight, the municipal service agreements. Memorandum of understanding really doesn't do much as far as being something you can go back on later and saying this hasn't occurred. So I'm just wondering if you have anything on the status of that municipal service agreement in that area.

Mr. Robinson: I know that there's been dialogue with respect to that region of our province because, I suppose, historically speaking, that could be viewed as Treaty 1 territory, and Brokenhead and Sagkeeng First Nation both fall under Treaty 1.

I understand that the dialogue has been going on for quite some time. The detailed information with respect to where they're at on discussions with the RM in that region, or RMs—I believe the RM of Alexander would be one of them. I'll avail to get the member more information on the details of the level of discussions and where we're at with the dialogue, with respect to the question that he raised.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Minister. I think it's critical that in any of these cases, a municipal service agreement be entered into because it offers protection to all parties involved on services such as roads, fire protection, any number of services. And I was always under the impression that that was kind of written in stone, that that was a necessary thing before treaty status would be considered, and it seems from the information I'm getting in this particular case, that it appears like it's being bypassed. The municipal service agreement is being bypassed in this case, and they want to proceed strictly only on the—on a memorandum of understanding, which certainly doesn't hold any of the legal teeth that a municipal service agreement would. So I would appreciate you getting me some more information on this because I know it's something that's been done in a lot of other jurisdictions and it works well.

Mr. Robinson: As I pointed out, I will try and get more details on the issue itself, but the difference here is that the land is undeveloped. It's unused currently so they feel, as far as I understand, that a municipal services agreement is not required. So—but I will try and get—so that the MOU itself that the member raises would suffice. I will, however, attempt to get more information from our staff that work in this area directly. So, Mr. Chair, I think that

that is the best way I could respond to the question raised.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Minister, another area that I'd just like to touch on, and I think you're probably aware of this situation, but there's an issue going on in the Churchill area right now dealing with a, from what I can gather, an Inuit land claim between the Churchill River—along the Churchill River, I believe. And I'm just wondering what the status of that is and what kind of negotiations are actually going on there.

Mr. Robinson: Well, this is—there are several activities occurring with the Inuit south on 60 negotiations. Just very recently I had the good fortune of being a part of the Hudson Bay roundtable which in itself is—has got some impact on the dialogue that is occurring right now.

* (15:50)

As the member knows, around Berens River and maybe a little south of there, around Poplar River, south of 53, prior to 1912, that was the only area that was known as Manitoba. North of the 53rd parallel was, of course, up until 1912, known as the North-West Territories. In fact, my late father, his birth certificate said that he was born in Norway House, North-West Territories. He was born, of course, prior to 1912.

Now, with the Inuit—and they being one of three, perhaps four indigenous groups to use the area in Churchill and the Hudson Bay lowlands down to York Factory, which was the early centre of commerce with the fur trade—it was the Cree, the Dene, the Inuit and, of course, later on the Metis people that occupied us.

With specific reference to the question, the Inuit people are simply seeking settlement of their land, harvesting rights and interests in northern Manitoba from a modern-day treaty perspective to include terms agreed to with the Manitoba Dene in the 2005 overlap accord and principles of the framework applied to in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement of 1993.

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement resolves claims by the Inuit north of 60 but does not resolve claims in Manitoba. The—in February of 2010, a committee of our government, the Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet, approved without prejudice negotiations with the—

Audio system failure

Mr. Briese:—smaller questions about it, I guess. The Inuit have no treaty claims, is my understanding, so what do they—what is the basis for this claim being made? Is it because it's simply because it's a traditional hunting ground that is traditional for them, or what is the basis of it? Because it's my understanding that it will have quite an impact to the tourism industry in the area, too, so—but not just the tourism industry. If it becomes a piece of Inuit property per se, it will impact hunting and fishing of other groups there, as well, would be my guess.

Mr. Robinson: Well, Manitoba Justice has concluded that there is a reasonable basis for asserting hunting and resource use rights by Inuit people in the area in Manitoba adjacent to Hudson Bay. And an assertion of Aboriginal title to modest-sized parcels of land, I don't—I wouldn't want to prejudice any discussions that are currently happening nor would I want to prejudice any discussions that are currently happening. Because dialogue is still happening and an agreement is yet to be finalized with respect to the main issue itself that we're talking about in the Estimates process. So it's going to take some time for that to be finalized.

Mr. Briese: It would certainly seem to me that they already have the—under Aboriginal agreements they already have the hunting and fishing rights on this property now. So I'm not looking for an answer to that, I'm just making a comment. I'll pass it over to my colleague here.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Minister, for answering some of the questions.

As I sat in, Minister, I know that the member from Agassiz had asked some questions in—related to the treaty land entitlement agreements with the Lac du Bonnet—within the Lac du Bonnet constituency and with the RM of Lac du Bonnet, and as I was listening, the minister had stated that in regards to land, when a First Nations community has selected and if it is not developed, Minister, you stated that an MOU would suffice. Is this, in fact, true?

* (16:00)

Mr. Robinson: I think that what I said is that in the view of the two First Nations that have a direct interest on the land which is in the territory of Treaty No. 1 in that area, they would view it as an MOU sufficing.

Now, obviously, there's got to be more work done, and I did earlier commit to the member from Agassiz that I would seek out more information to

get a further understanding and also to get a status report from our own officials within our government as to what kind of work is occurring with respect to the discussions with the RM in question in that region and the two First Nations, which, I assume, are Brokenhead and the Sagkeeng First Nation.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that response. I guess, so then I'm a little bit confused on that topic then. If there's two First Nations communities looking to possibly claim the same parcel of land, and you say that an MOU would suffice, how would then—or if they're going to set that land as reserve then, how, then, would the MOU be signed and would that be signed with which First Nations community?

Mr. Robinson: There are two issues here that we're talking about. First of all, we're talking about two pieces of land, I'm told, within the RM of the area where we're talking about. First of all, one is a treaty land entitlement area which is undeveloped, and that relates to Brokenhead, which is in the Treaty 1 area. The other one does not fall under the framework of TLE and it falls more under the area of land claims or a claim—a land claim, and that's Sagkeeng which is also, as the member knows, a Treaty 1 First Nation. Also, some of its members are Treaty No. 3 and also Treaty No. 5.

So I will avail myself to get more information on the status of dialogue with the RM and the two First Nations in that region.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Minister, for the answers and the dedication to getting some more information to myself and also to the member from Agassiz. And I don't profess to be an expert on this; that's why some of these questions come forward.

Just to correct—and, I mean, I could be wrong, but I believe Brokenhead First Nation is under Treaty 5 and the Lac du Bonnet—the RM of Lac du Bonnet is more so under Treaty 3 and, actually, Sagkeeng is with Treaty 3.

And so I'm just wanting to know, when there is a parcel of land that is selected and if it's under 1,000 acres, the Province may require written explanation from the First Nation basically outlining what the First Nation community or First Nations communities in this matter would—what they would like to do with the land, what the cultural or economic benefit may be. And I was just wondering if the minister has taken it upon himself to ask for that written explanation, yes or no, and why or why not?

Mr. Robinson: The issue has never been brought to my attention previously, but I would assume that the—it could be any number of things. In fact, Brokenhead is in Treaty 1 and Sagkeeng First Nation is all three, actually; on the south shore it's Treaty 1, on the north shore it's Treaty No. 3 and some are Treaty 5 number members. So it's quite complex.

As I indicated to the member for Lac du Bonnet, I will try and get additional details as to what the plans are for that area and to the degree that discussions have taken place with the RM.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for that—those responses as well. And just for my own sake, if the minister—and again forgive me for not being here a little bit earlier—but if the minister could please just state on the record who some of his table officers are with him, or the staff are with him for these Estimates processes because I don't know who they are.

Mr. Robinson: I'm with Robert Wavey, he's the director of Local Government—no—Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Angel Anderson, who's the director of finance, and we have Freda Albert, who's the director of Local Government.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, Mr. Chair, so I'm going to turn it back over to the member from Agassiz, but do we have some sort of a timeline, minister, as far as when I can get some of this information back, in regards to the Lac du Bonnet area treaty land agreements?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, if the member would give us a couple weeks to respond by letter, we'll do that.

Mr. Briese: Just—I know the minister mentioned it in his opening comments, the Communities Economic Development Fund—how—and you may have even mentioned it then, but how much funding is in that? What's the allocation per year into the Communities Economic Development Fund?

Mr. Robinson: The current budget for the Communities Economic Development Fund—which is an agency of this government—is \$1,470,000 budgeted for 2014 and '15.

Mr. Briese: I know last year you gave us a list of the loans that were given out by the Communities Economic Development Fund. Could I request that again for 2013 year?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I'll provide that information as quickly as I can.

Mr. Briese: I understand that the economic development fund does the loans to fishermen and I presume that's over the whole province. Is that the case?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, that is—that's the case, Mr. Chair.

* (16:10)

Mr. Briese: And is it only Aboriginal fishermen, or is it all fishermen anywhere in the province?

Mr. Robinson: No, it's for—it's open to all folks that are involved in the commercial fishing industry.

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Minister.

What's the default been on the—say, over the last 10 years, what's the default been on Communities Economic Development Fund loans? What's been the writeoff?

Mr. Robinson: Well, just very recently we issued the report of the CEDF—and I will try and get another report that gives an synopsis of what the CEDF does and provide it to the member as quickly as I can.

Mr. Briese: It's been a concern of mine—and I know we're talking about the Communities Economic Development Fund right now, but it's been a concern of mine that the dramatic drop in fishermen in this province—commercial fishermen. As you know, my constituency borders a fairly large chunk of the south end of Lake Manitoba, and that area has seen a dramatic decline in fishermen. But I think it's—I don't think it's an area that stands alone, I think it's all over the province. And I think we're—we've got a resource that we're not taking enough advantage of, that—simply because older fishermen are finally retiring and young ones aren't getting into it.

And I would like the minister's views on how we can possibly turn that around. For instance, Lake Manitoba's a—the quota on Lake Manitoba is a lake quota, it's not an individual fishermen's quota. And I don't think we're coming within half that quota anymore even though the fishery's there, it's simply we don't have enough fishermen that are into doing commercial fishing anymore. And is there some way we—some strategy that can help to turn this around a little?

Mr. Robinson: I don't really feel comfortable in providing my own thoughts about the commercial fishing industry. I know my dad made a living off of being a commercial fisher on Playgreen Lake and Lake Winnipeg when I was a little boy.

But certainly on the fisheries program and the Fisheries Loan Program within CEDF there's a lot of information on the harvester loans that I will provide to the member.

On the—on promoting the industry itself, it is something that perhaps it could be looked at as part of our Northern Development Strategy. I don't know if the member wants to make a recommendation on some of the work that is going on by this government with respect to the Northern Development Strategy or anything. I believe to—my experience has been—talking with people that make a living off the fisheries has been that it hasn't really paid off, you can't make a living out of it. And, for a lot of people, they have—it's almost used as a supplementary income activity as opposed to a livelihood. And I respect the people that have maintained this tradition, particularly the ones I know on Lake Manitoba and also around Molson Lake and Playgreen Lake and areas that I'm familiar with in northern Manitoba. I'm not familiar with Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Winnipeg as—or Lake Manitoba as much, but I believe that some kind of incentive would indeed be helpful.

But getting into the business or taking up the family business, if you will, is something that is very, very difficult to do. It's—it was one time a major industry. When I was a little boy, anyway, I recall that many people were involved in that industry on Lake Winnipeg, Playgreen Lake and those lakes in and around Norway House. But it's a lake—it's an industry that regrettably is needed, but we don't have incentive packages and that's something that perhaps we could take as a recommendation from the member from Agassiz.

Mr. Briese: Be glad to help out, Mr. Minister.

The—one of the—and I'm sure you've heard some of the controversy going on on the freshwater marketing board and the Metis land—but not all Metis, some of it were First Nations, too—charge on the poorer quality fish that they catch in the lakes and really not much of a market with the freshwater marketing board for that. And the one group actually went out and they got a permit and they sold, I believe it was about 600,000 pounds of the poor quality fish into the US a couple of years ago. Their permit for—was pulled on them. And I did talk to a fisherman from Lake St. Martin who told me that he usually comes home and fishes in the winter and works out somewhere else all summer, who told me—*[inaudible]*—that permit that there was close to

50 fishermen went back out fishing that year and he said they're back down to 10 or 12 again now.

So some of those things, there's so much inflexibility and maybe there's room for a little bit of movement there that would—most of that so-called poorer quality fish, there's no decent market for it, so it's thrown out on the ice and rots when they pull the nets. So that's certainly one area that could be looked at. I think there could be some more flexibility at least built into the system.

Mr. Robinson: I appreciate the member's comments, Mr. Chair. The CDF, of course, has been in the business—providing business and fish loans for over—for just about 42 years now, coming up on 42 years. It operates as a development lender, and many times people will view it as the last opportunity for loans to be had from. Since 1972 CDF has recovered 89 per cent of all the loans that has—that it has loaned out. Also, since 1972, CDF has supported 1,499 businesses and created 6,302 jobs through the business loan program itself.

The fisher loan support program is—it's a little difficult because there's no easy answers because—it does bother me too. I mean, if I'm travelling along Lake Winnipeg, as an example, and you see all that raw fish just being—going to waste after fishers get their catch, there's got to be a market for the so-called raw fish.

* (16:20)

And I believe that, as the person that my colleague from Agassiz has referenced from Lake St. Martin, there's got to be some markets for fish like mullet or whether it's white fish or one of those other species, the freshwater drum—those present opportunities that will—we will certainly encourage—this is not the first time this has been raised with us, but at the moment there's been no markets that are available—

Audio system failure.

LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

* (15:10)

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Good afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply will continue with the consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Would the minister's staff and opposition's staff please enter the Chamber.

All right, as previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I guess we can start off by answering the question that I had posed on Wednesday.

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I believe the member's question was whether or not post-secondary education was needed for someone to immigrate here as a skilled worker. And if we are recruiting overseas there is a points assessment that is done that includes things like language fluency, education and also whether there are close family members that reside here. And each of those is based—each of those points, obviously, is based on how well—or how well they score in each of those categories.

So, obviously, post-secondary education, if it's university or some of the higher academic places, obviously, those would increase the number of points that would add towards the eligibility. So I think that I would certainly say that post-secondary is something that would be valuable if you're—if we are recruiting overseas, but language requirements are also on a points system. So the whole thing is an aggregate accumulation of all of those points as to whether or not that would be a successful immigrant.

Mr. Smook: Would a person, say, for instance, with a diploma as a—in a bartending school with a—would that qualify as post-secondary education?

Ms. Braun: Okay, just to further expand on that, skilled worker immigrants can apply to the Manitoba PNP program through two avenues: an avenue for skilled workers already in Manitoba, including temporary foreign workers and international students who have graduated from a Manitoba post-secondary institution and have for six months full-time work experience and the offer of a long-term full-time employment; and the other avenue is for skilled workers who are overseas. And it's open to those applicants who have established a connection in Manitoba through family, previous work education or other social connections that have been—and have been invited, pardon me—as a part of a strategic initiative.

And I think that—let's see, assessment is based on a points system, as I had mentioned earlier. Points under this avenue are awarded to applicants based on these factors: age, points awarded to applicants between 18 and 49; employability, points awarded

for full-time work experience over the last five years; education, points awarded for academic or vocational and professional training. No points are awarded for having only—having completing only secondary education. So that beyond the high school, our equivalent of high school, points are given for anything—any training beyond the high school level; language proficiency, points are awarded for documented job-ready English language and, as I'd mentioned early, the connection to Manitoba with family connections here.

Mr. Smook: I guess what I'm getting at is somebody, say, who graduates from a post-secondary college cross—wants to immigrate to Canada and may have a degree in—or a certificate in electrical or engineering or something, would that be considered the same as somebody who, I said—who graduated from a school that they got a bartender's diploma or a waitresses type of—like, do you have a list of what is actually recognized as post-secondary education?

Ms. Braun: In response to your question about whether the bartending school certification would be recognized, I think that it's safe to say that we only recognize those qualifications which are recognized in Canada. So bartending school, I'm not sure if that would be a good example of something that might be recognized in Canada.

Mr. Smook: I thank the minister for that answer. I'd like to go back on some questions in regards to the Fire Commissioner's office.

Ms. Braun: Dave Schafer, who is the Fire Commissioner, is here in the gallery, and if we can have a few moments to bring him down, that would be great. Thank you.

Mr. Smook: As we know, in the last few years, there's been several issues and some controversy in the Fire Commissioner's office with Auditor General asking—you know, recommending some changes to the way the system is run. Can the minister provide the rules and regulations for the usage of an officer of the Fire Commissioner's vehicle from their fleet? I mean, are these fleet vehicles allowed to be used in a private manner or is it strictly for government use?

Ms. Braun: Fleet vehicles are assigned through VEMA, and VEMA looks after making sure that they take into account personal versus work use of the vehicle, and 500 kilometres per month are permitted as personal use and that there is a—it is a

taxable benefit. So what VEMA does is it looks at the usage of the work versus personal and there's a surcharge if the personal use is greater than what the work use of the vehicle is. And it is, as I say, it's a taxable benefit and you pay for that on your income tax at the end of the year.

Mr. Smook: Thank the minister for that answer. What rules are in place for employees found to be acting in a dangerous manner behind the wheel of an OFC vehicle?

Ms. Braun: Thank you for the question. There is a strict policy in place that governs the use of the vehicles. They have to be driven in a safe manner and they have to abide by The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Smook: I thank the minister for that answer. What is the process for replacing vehicles from the fleet of the Fire Commissioner's office?

* (15:20)

Ms. Braun: There are two types of vehicles that the Office of the Fire Commissioner uses: one type would be the vehicles that are owned by the Office of the Fire Commissioner; the second would be the leased vehicles through VEMA. And to—when they've run the course of their use they're taken to public auction and that is how they are dispensed. The fire trucks, usually that's about 15 to 20 years, and my understanding is that for replacement vehicles it is tendered.

Mr. Smook: Are employees from the Office of the Fire Commissioner—have special privileges to buy any of these vehicles before they go to auction?

Ms. Braun: The first answer is no. But, yes, we recognize that there were some problems with the previous fire commissioner, and action was taken against that individual and we've taken measures so it does not happen again. However, it has led to this issue being in the courts in the hopes that we may recover some of the costs.

Mr. Smook: Yes, there seems to be, like, a lot of the rules were broken. Now the minister says new rules have been put in place. Could the minister touch on as to what these rules are? I mean, when a person was allowed to purchase two vehicles for \$700, well below market value, obviously the system fell apart. And we realize that, but what rules are now in place that'll prevent this?

Ms. Braun: I think last week we talked about some of the initiatives that have taken place and, certainly, one of the things that has been done is that there is

a clearer separation between the financial and the executive leadership functions and that the Fire Commissioner cannot, on his own or on her own initiative, make those decisions. There are stronger mechanisms in place, better documented rules applying to how things should operate, stronger oversight. There is the audit committee that is in place that also oversees actions. And, certainly, the strengthened position of the comptroller is one that will make it, you know, more difficult to try to manipulate anything.

Mr. Smook: A lot of the concerns we've had from the Auditor General's report was in the untendering of different jobs or, you know, different purchases. Is the Office of the Fire Commissioner using the same standards for tendering as the rest of the minister's department?

Ms. Braun: Since 2011 tendering is by following the MIT process for tendering. If something goes forward as untendered there's a very clear process now for anything that is submitted as untendered.

Mr. Smook: I thank the minister. Does the minister feel that the Auditor General's recommendation No. 3, that the public interest disclosure or whistleblower protection act should be assessed and revised if necessary, and would that have made any difference in what had happened in the Office of the Fire Commissioner?

* (15:30)

Ms. Braun: I guess I have to say that it was our government that brought in the whistle-blower legislation, and I guess, at this point, it would sort of be asking me to speculate whether or not any amendments to this act would have made a difference in the outcome of the actions.

Mr. Smook: Madam Chair, what role does the Office of the Fire Commissioner play in the City of Winnipeg? Does the Office of the Fire Commissioner have any role as to what happens in the City of Winnipeg?

Ms. Braun: The City of Winnipeg, as all—the other large municipalities, have enforcement responsibility for the fire code and the building code, so it would be the same as the City of Brandon or the City of Thompson.

And the one thing that I can note here is that provincially owned buildings in those municipalities are inspected by the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and—but there is a partnership with

the City of Winnipeg regarding the fire Arson Task Force.

Mr. Smook: So would then the Office of the Fire Commissioner play any role in, say, investigation of the fire and explosion at the Speedway International incident?

Ms. Braun: The officer—pardon me, the Office of the Fire Commissioner investigates—goes—hmm, okay—the Office of the Fire Commissioner helps in the investigation of the fire cause. The City of Winnipeg investigation is to see if there was an infraction of the bylaws. And the Office of the Fire Commissioner works in—together with the City the Winnipeg, especially on very complex fires that require their assistance. So it depends on the complexity of the fire.

Mr. Smook: One last question for the Office of the Fire Commissioner. I know with Bill 10 coming up there'll be administrative penalties being brought forward. Now, does the commissioner feel that there may be hiring of new inspectors to join the Office of the Fire Commissioner to look after these new administrative—to assess them, or is it still going to stay in the hands of the municipalities?

* (15:40)

Ms. Braun: There are a number of vacancies which will be filled, the fire inspectors. So currently what—through the Civil Service Commission those positions will be filled. The penalties are going to assist the Office of the Fire Commissioner, but also the local municipalities in—with enforcement. However, one thing to note is that if any local fire chief or any municipality requires additional assistance, the Office of the Fire Commissioner is always there to provide support and assistance to them.

Mr. Smook: In speaking with a number of different fire departments, I know that a lot of them are interested in training. The money that's going to come from those administrative penalties, it's presently scheduled to go straight into general revenue. Will any of that money be available for training? Because this is probably going to be a fairly steep undertaking, and if it's going to be put on the shoulders of the municipalities, some of them who may want to continue that may be looking for some funding for training.

Ms. Braun: It is my understanding that the training that is offered in Manitoba is extraordinary and

exceeds many of our neighbouring provinces. Training is provided free, and there's also financial incentives for municipalities to assist in that. The fire inspection training is online, so it is accessible to individuals by going online. And just to indicate that the penalties are not there to generate revenue, but rather to encourage compliance.

Mr. Smook: I thank the minister for her comments, and I would also like to thank the Fire Commissioner, Mr. Schafer, for answering the questions. I know he wasn't around here when all those irregularities took place, and in no way am I asking questions, you know, insinuating that you were involved in any of that. I just, I thank you very much for answering the questions because there—I'm new to this position, to this portfolio, and there's questions and I need to have answered. So I thank you very much for coming here today, and I think we'll continue on with some immigration questions.

But I believe one of my members here may have a question for the—

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Ms. Braun: I would like to thank my critic for those comments, and I, too, want to acknowledge the fine work that our Fire Commissioner is doing.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I, too, just want to make a couple comments, not only as the MLA but also in my previous capacity as a volunteer firefighter.

And, clearly, departments around the province do rely on the work the Fire Commissioner's office does undertake, and I think those relationships that the Office of the Fire Commissioner has with those departments is very important. Certainly, from the training aspect and from the various situations that I know, the local departments call on the advice and expertise of the office of the fire commission and that's very important as well. And certainly from the, you know, post-fire situations where the Office of the Fire Commissioner's called in to try to ascertain the cause of fires, that's very important as well, and clearly you have to work very closely with the local fire departments and fire chiefs in that regard.

So I just want to say it's certainly encouraging to see the positive relationship that the Fire Commissioner office does have with departments across the province. I certainly hope that those positive relationships will continue to be fostered. And I do want to acknowledge the staff within the

department in the Fire Commissioner's office that—the good work that they do with those various departments.

I know the—I do want to thank, too, the current Fire Commissioner who's been very helpful in a number of situations that I've had over the last while, while he's been in office, and I do appreciate his being very straightforward with his responses. And I'm hoping that the minister will make the Fire Commissioner available to us as members when situations arise, and I think that's very important that we can pick up the phone and talk to the Fire Commissioner directly and he can direct us where we would—should be going for answers or vice versa, where he is able to provide answers to us. So, hoping the minister will make the Fire Commissioner available to us for situations that arise in our communities as well.

Ms. Braun: I thank the member for the question. And, absolutely, the Fire Commissioner is available to answer questions and we will continue that.

Mr. Smook: I guess I jumped the gun here. My colleague from Emerson has one question yet for the Office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Madam Chair, yes, my question is for the Fire Commissioner—or for the minister. When a building inspector gives the okay for a project to be done and the project is built and someone complains, I guess, and then the Fire Commissioner sends a letter that says there's laws prohibiting from—the individual from doing that, why would the building inspector not know that?

Ms. Braun: I think that we probably require some additional information so that we can have a clear understanding of exactly what the circumstances were. My understanding is that it's the municipal officials who will be the building inspectors and within that group there's probably a variety of experience and knowledge within that group. And so I think we—you know, if you would care to, at some point, share with us some of the specifics related to this, then we can be some of assistance to you. Would that be fine?

* (15:50)

Mr. Graydon: Sure, that would be great if we could sit down and discuss this. It's—this is fairly large, substantial amount of money, and we're talking about shutting down a business. So, yes, there's—I in my mind, the building inspector must know what the codes are, should know what the codes are, and if he

doesn't, then does he have a responsibility, then, to check with those that would know?

Ms. Braun: Well, I think, to our member, the short answer is, yes, that they should be in communication, but we would be more than happy to sit down and share information based on the specifics that you can share with us as well.

Mr. Graydon: On a different topic, when a product is manufactured outside of the country of Canada but has a CSA approval sticker on it, is that automatically recognized, then, in Manitoba?

Ms. Braun: Okay, it's my understanding if it's a valid CSA or ULC sticker, then it would be recognized.

Mr. Graydon: And when you say if it's a valid ULC sticker, in order to put that CSA sticker on there, are they not all valid?

Ms. Braun: I'd like to ask the member whether he's referencing grain dryers.

Mr. Graydon: And I'd like to ask the minister if it makes a difference.

Ms. Braun: Yes, it would, because in 2013 CSA revoked the standard for grain dryers.

Mr. Graydon: And could the minister give me the reason for that?

Ms. Braun: It's under—my understanding that CSA was having difficulty getting consensus between the technical experts and the industry and so they revoked the old standard. And it's my understanding that they're working towards finding a new standard that would be applicable.

Currently, what is happening, though, is that there are special acceptance inspections that we are doing and this is in order to keep the industry going and the Office of the Fire Commissioner offers to be of any assistance that might be needed in this circumstance.

Mr. Graydon: So then in—the minister is saying that there are no grain dryers from 2013 on that are CSA approved in any jurisdictions in Canada?

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Braun: Yes, that is true and that's why we've begun this special acceptance inspection, to assist the industry.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Chair, so does the department, then, have enough staff to inspect every dryer that comes in, from every manufacturer?

* (16:00)

Ms. Braun: We are working closely with KAP on this issue and we are doing what we can with what we have, and we're in the process of recruiting three more inspectors that we hope that they can begin their work as quickly as possible. We don't want to hold up the industry and we're allowing farmers to start up their grain dryers and with the hope that we'll be there within two weeks to inspect. And we don't want to have farmers waiting for this process and we're allowing them to start up the dryers and then we will be there within two weeks.

Mr. Graydon: I guess I'm having some difficulty that you had some technical issues and that's why the CSA approval has been pulled and you're working out a scientific solution to that. I would suggest that we're doing that collaboratively with other provinces, and yet we have the technical service available today to do it in two weeks. Why did the issue of not being able to come to a conclusion that's satisfactory throughout Canada when them same dryers are being used in United States and in other jurisdictions and successfully, without issues? Why are we reinventing the wheel?

Ms. Braun: We can appreciate the frustration that you're experiencing, but this is something that is involving all the provinces. We're all in the same boat. It's a CSA issue and it's well beyond anything that individually, as a Province, we can do. We're hoping that down the road that we'll resolve this. Obviously, they're working nationally to come to some consensus in terms of what is appropriate in terms of the certification. So, at this point, we're doing the best we can with the resources at hand.

Mr. Graydon: Is this only for grain dryers that there's a CSA approval that has been pulled? Is that the only thing, that?

Ms. Braun: That's the only one that we're aware of.

Mr. Graydon: One last question. If I'm moving a grain dryer from one yard to another, whether it's my yard or it's my brother's yard, why is it that I have to have it inspected?

Ms. Braun: It's my understanding it's the gas connection that is the issue, and it's an inspection of the installation, not of the grain dryer.

Mr. Graydon: So then, in fact, what the minister is saying, I just have to have it inspected at the connection, the gas connection; I don't have to change any valves that have been working perfect before. I don't have to change any of the these, don't have to update. It's a just a matter of whether I know how to hook the gas up to it, and if I have a licensed gas fitter, that shouldn't be a problem.

Ms. Braun: As long as it's certified, but it still requires an application for an installation permit, and the inspection includes checking all the safety devices, and so long as there are no defects with any of those safety devices, then it's fine.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the minister for that and I'll turn it back over to my colleague.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My first question to the minister deals with the time-off-for-injury numbers. Time-lost-for-injury Manitoba numbers, as the minister well knows, are very high compared with other provinces, and I'm just trying to get a better understanding of why this should be.

I gather that, for example, the health care seem to have a fairly time-loss-for-injury rate, and I would ask the minister why that is. Is that physical injuries or mental illness or what? And, you know, what's being done about that?

* (16:10)

Ms. Braun: In response to the question, there is no statistical validity in comparing injury across provinces because basically it depends on how the provinces are collecting their data. The—in counting Workers Compensation time-loss claims, it depends on how stringent each province is in accepting claims. And an example would be New Brunswick where they have a two-day waiting period, which certainly would reduce the time-loss—[interjection]—rate. Thank you. It also depends on how broad the WCB coverage is and that if you're looking at a broader range of coverage, then that would reduce time loss as well. And if there are more low-hazard workplaces that are included in Workers Compensation Board, that would also reduce the time lost.

So each province is somewhat different, so you can't really compare each province to the other provinces.

Mr. Gerrard: I have—over the last 14 years, had heard a mile, two miles, 50 kilometres, 100 kilometres, 1,000 kilometres of excuses for poor

performance. I'm sad that the minister didn't even tackle at all the issue of safety in health care and the work loss in health care which I asked about, and, you know, disappointed.

I'm going to move on to something else, and that is immigration. The—what was the cap last year and what will the cap be this year in terms of immigration, and what impact will those caps have on the number of new immigrants coming into Manitoba?

Ms. Braun: In answer to the member opposite, our number is at 5,000 for this year, as well as 5,000 for next year. And that means that we will have a plateau of immigration at around 13,000 because, obviously, the 5,000 that we'll be welcoming to Manitoba includes their families—their extended—their immediate families. Unless we can find some new programs or opportunities with the federal, I'm not sure we'll be able to expand that. So that's our goal—is to see what other opportunities we have working with the federal government.

Mr. Gerrard: What sort of immigration, I would ask the minister, is possible? Say, it's 13,000. Could we be up to 20,000, or what would be possible?

And, second, although it's a relatively small program, one of the programs which has been there, which is the opportunity for immigrants who are starting businesses, and I note that there have been a number of years where we're—we haven't filled that program. Maybe the minister could tell us, you know, how we did last year in terms of that, you know, business investor program as well.

Ms. Braun: The 5,000 includes both the skilled workers as well as the business stream, and we don't have a cap or a quota on the business. We nominate the best individuals as we can, and in 2013 we nominated over 200.

The other thing that we are also waiting to see how that will work itself out is the federal government's Expression of Interest model. And that's something that we are hoping will, you know, produce some additional folks coming to Manitoba. But the—there's—we're still waiting to see how that will play out.

Mr. Gerrard: Since there is no cap on the business stream, it would be clearly an opportunity for expanding immigration, and, I mean, obviously it has to be done with the appropriate approaches. But, you know, that would seem to be one opportunity to bring in more people.

Anyway, that is my questions. I will hand it back to the critic.

Mr. Smook: Is the minister ready for a question?

Mr. Chairperson: Does the honourable minister have any final remarks to the member for River Heights, or is she ready for a question from the member for La Verendrye?

Ms. Braun: Well, we were still talking about the question from the member from River Heights. And, just to indicate, that the 5,000 is what we get, and that includes business as well as the skilled worker. So there really isn't the opportunity for any growth within that, because that's the number that we have.

* (16:20)

Mr. Smook: Yes, since we're speaking on—while we're talking on the subject of expression of interest, applicants on Internet were—the applications were open from November 4th, 2013, to February 20th, 2014.

Could the minister provide me the number of applications that were received?

Ms. Braun: The number of applications received was 348.

Mr. Smook: This time period that that expression of interest was open was for 90 days. Is there any specific reason that it was only open for 90 days?

Ms. Braun: To have a 90-day window in which people could apply—it was to encourage serious responses so that, oh, if we had extended it over a larger period of time, then we would have been holding spaces for others. By having a set time frame for people to apply, that would indicate that it would encourage people who really were quite serious at establishing themselves here. It also makes it very workable for us to deal with the number of applicants that we received, rather than having a huge number that would make it far more difficult to process.

Mr. Smook: Are there—is there anybody on the waiting list for this program that's, like, previous to November the 4th—were there applications sitting in queue that hadn't been?

Ms. Braun: That would be 669 individuals.

Mr. Smook: So that's basically a whole year's—like this year, you had 300-and-some applications, I believe, and then from—so 600-and-some. Does the minister have an idea of how long it'll take before all these applications are—been gone through?

Ms. Braun: Through the EOI, we're inviting the strongest applicants to apply. So, in going through the list of applicants, we are looking at the strongest ones that we would encourage to apply. And it takes about six months, so we're not looking at opening this opportunity again in—probably until early next year.

Mr. Smook: How many applicants are still in queue from last year?

Ms. Braun: Okay, it's my understanding that it is a two-stage program, that the 669 that are on the list are invited to come for an exploratory visit. And if that visit is successful, then we will invite them to apply. So there really isn't a backlog. These are the 669 that will be invited to come for a visit as time permits.

Mr. Smook: So what you're saying, then, it's a two-year process basically for this?

Ms. Braun: Two stages, so that they are invited to come for an exploratory visit, and if the trip—if the visit becomes successful in terms of their interest and our interest, then they are invited to apply. And so the process, in order to go through, is six months for the application part.

Mr. Smook: What is our cap on PNP business for the amount of applicants per year?

Ms. Braun: The business applicants, it's part and parcel of the 5,000. So the skilled worker as well as the business stream are all counted in the 5,000.

* (16:30)

Mr. Smook: So it could be that there would be 3,000 business applications if need be, it would still, it would—it just takes longer to process them?

Ms. Braun: Thank you for the question.

We do our due diligence in terms of investigating the applicants on—in the business stream, and there's a lot of work that goes into verifying that they are actually in a position to start a business. So there's a lot of work that goes in at the front end to make sure that the applicants in the business stream will be successful and have a—and are 'legitimant,' and that means that between 200 and 300 applications can be processed a year. So it—because of the amount of work that goes into investigating and doing the work we need to do beforehand, it's—it limits the number of applicants that we can actually process.

Mr. Smook: Can the minister provide me with the numbers of actual applications received, like, over the last, say, four years, and how many of them have gotten processed?

Mr. Ted Marcelino, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Braun: We'll take that and get back to you on that. We'll find the information for you.

Mr. Smook: Could the minister provide me with a list of the last five-year—or, broken down by the last five years, how many dollars were provided to the different organizations providing settlement services in Manitoba?

Ms. Braun: That's some information we will have to get back to you on that as well.

Mr. Smook: Could the minister provide me, also for that same time period, how many dollars were received from the federal government to administer these settlement services programs?

Ms. Braun: We will do that for you as well.

Mr. Smook: The Manitoba Development Corporation holds funds on behalf of, I guess, the Department of Immigration for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for Business, and that seems to be a fairly large dollar value. Now, how much of that is money that is actually in trust that could possibly be given back to business who are—who don't successfully meet the program?

Ms. Braun: In response to that question, it's actually hard to indicate exactly how much we are giving back because part of the process is it's a two-year process of working with the individuals to help them establish their business and one of the things that the department does is that if they see at the end of the two years that the individual is making progress, isn't quite there, then the period of time in which they have to successfully establish their business can be extended for another amount of time. So it's really hard sometimes to indicate exactly how much within that year is returned because it's an ongoing process with those individuals. So it's really hard to give a definitive number on how much money is in a year returned to the business owners.

The Acting Chairperson (Ted Marcelino): The honourable minister, continuing.

Ms. Braun: Yes, thank you, what we can do is we can give you a global amount of how much has been returned, but it doesn't break down into how many individuals that would apply to.

Mr. Smook: Is all the money in that account being held in trust that could possibly go back to nominees or is some of that money in there that the government has kept?

Ms. Braun: It is my understanding the global account includes deposits from those folks who were not successful, and that we retained, as well as those who we expect that they will get their deposits back because the—their business will get off the ground. So the global includes both.

Mr. Smook: So the excess money that's in that account that has been forfeited by people, has there—is there a plan what to do with that money?

* (16:40)

Ms. Braun: The retained deposits are maintained through the Manitoba Development Corporation, and the surplus is used to fund Growing Through Immigration and economic development projects.

Mr. Smook: Can the minister provide for me, over the last three years, the numbers of nominees that have been approved in the last three years, by year?

Ms. Braun: Would the member please clarify if that was business or skilled worker?

Mr. Smook: Total nominees.

Ms. Braun: Five thousand in each of the years because those were the ones that was approved by the federal government.

Mr. Smook: So we had a full slate of 5,000 nominees every year?

Ms. Braun: Yes. But the total numbers would also be their family members that they bring. So, when we talk about, you know, 13,000 people arriving in Manitoba, those would be the family members along with the 5,000 individuals.

Mr. Smook: Going back to the Department of Labour, would the minister be able to provide me—I know that the administrative penalties are meant to try to persuade people to run a safer operation, but could the minister provide me with the amount of money that's been collected in administrative penalties in the last—well, since the inception of the program?

Ms. Braun: In 2013, we had 10 administrative penalties, and in 2014, to date, 17. And they range between \$1,000 to \$2,500. If you want more detail on that, we'd be prepared to get that to you.

Mr. Smook: Yes. If the minister could provide me with that, that would be excellent.

Ms. Braun: Just to remind me, how far back did you wish that to go?

Mr. Smook: These administrative penalties for the health and–workplace health and safety have been around for how many years now?

Ms. Braun: About 10 years.

Mr. Smook: Five would be sufficient.

Ms. Braun: Thank you.

Mr. Smook: Well, I thank the minister for her answers, and at this time I don't really have any more questions for her. So we're ready for the line by line.

The Acting Chairperson (Ted Marcelino): Resolution 11.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,126,000 for Labour and Immigration, Immigration and Economic Opportunities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,596,000 for Labour and Immigration, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$334,000 for Labour and Immigration, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is—I'll do that again.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 11.1.(a) the minister's salary contained in resolution 11.1.

The floor is open for questions. Hearing none—

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$371,000 for Labour and Immigration, Executive, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Labour and Immigration.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Family Services.

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

And we are on recess.

The committee recessed at 4:49 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:53 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Order, please. We welcome the Minister of Family Services and we ask if she has an opening statement.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): It is my pleasure to represent the Department of Family Services throughout the Estimates process. You will see within our documents are the value that we put on quality service and ensuring that we're protecting front-line services, whether it is within Family Services, whether it's within community living, or whether it's in our Early Learning and Child Care branch.

We are ensuring that Manitobans across the province have access to good quality service. In saying that, you will also note that in the budget this year that there has been a 4.1 per cent increase which equals \$44 million. And there is a number of initiatives that are being maintained and some are being expanded, and I'm just going to highlight just a very few of them.

The—in the Community Service Delivery, we have included the hiring of two additional autism early intervention specialists that will be in the Parkland Region as well Eastman, as well as have provided funding to the St. Amant Centre to provide parenting support to parents with children that have been diagnosed with autism.

In the community living division, you will see an increase of 8.2 per cent. That increase will ensure that we are providing a good quality service to Manitobans across the province.

You also will note that within the community living division that we are presently working on redevelopment. We are working on the residential funding model review with all of our community stakeholders. The purpose of that funding model review is to look at how do we create a system that is sustainable, that is equitable and is fair. We also are working on alternative services and housing models with our partners, our not-for-profit organizations across the province, but as well as with Manitoba Housing. We are currently doing a Day Services review—and, again, that is to look at what is the best practice within Manitoba and also to create some consistencies for our clients that are participating in the service.

In Early Learning and Child Care, you will see that there's an increase of the budget of approximately \$5.5 million; that is going to allow us to provide operating grants—increased operating grants for our child-care centres. It's going to ensure that we are able to provide more spaces, as well increasing nursery school spaces, and we also will be enhancing home-based child care. There will be training supports that will be provided, as well as an innovative idea with our community partners has been announced and that is to work with stakeholders and do a review of child-care services across the province. There hasn't been any significant systematic changes for a number of years, a few decades, and it's time that we do an evaluation and come up with a plan with all of our partners.

In Child and Family Services, we'll be continuing to work with all of our agencies and authorities over the next year. And, in this budget, there will be funding that will be available to advance our commitment to better technology. There also will be supports that will be put in place and continue to be provided for the agencies and authorities so they can continue to provide good quality services to the families of Manitobans.

I think in my opening remarks I would be remiss if I did not refer to the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and the time and the energy and the importance of us working together with our community stakeholders and evaluating our plan forward as we look at how do we—there were 62 recommendations that were presented; 31 of those recommendations are either already implemented or in progress.

There are 31 other recommendations that are being evaluated with the lead AMR consulting in cooperation with the agencies and the authorities, as well as community members across the province about how do we proceed. And some examples of that is how do we proceed with the Children's Advocate office, how do we proceed with the social work professional act and the importance of prevention programs. Commissioner Hughes spends a lot of time in his report talking about the value of prevention and making sure that we are providing children and families with the best start possible.

So, with those few remarks, I'm extremely proud to represent the Province of Manitoba as the Minister of Family Services. I want to take this opportunity and acknowledge all the hard work of the front-line workers in Manitoba and also the work of the Department of Family Services. Because of their commitment and their dedication, they're going to be able to make a difference across the province.

I think that the Hughes inquiry will present us with an opportunity to strengthen and enhance the already existing programs that we have within Family Services. And I am very excited about working with all members to ensure that we are able to accomplish those goals.

It is, as I've said publicly on a number of occasions—and I've had the privilege of working as a front-line worker in Saskatchewan as a Child Protection worker, and I take this responsibility as the Minister of Family Services very seriously. The small-town girl from Saskatchewan never imagined that she would have this opportunity to work across 'jurisdict'—jurisdictions with all the members and all the stakeholders and truly make a difference for all Manitoba families.

I think that this opportunity will—

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 28, 2014

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Immigration Agreement Resolution Pallister; Howard	2279
Bill 63–The Advanced Education Administration Amendment and Council on Post-Secondary Education Repeal Act Allum	2271	Income Tax Rates Friesen; Howard	2281
Bill 65–The Workers Compensation Amendment Act Braun	2271	Child and Family Services Wishart; Irvin-Ross	2282
Petitions		ER Services (Arthur-Virden) Piwniuk; Selby	2283
Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Effects on Manitoba Economy Cullen	2271	Vita & District Health Centre Smook; Selby	2284
Eichler	2272	Time-Loss-to-Injury Rates Gerrard; Braun	2284
Beausejour District Hospital–Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability Ewasko	2272	Highways and Roads (Brandon) Caldwell; Ashton	2285
Tabling of Reports		Highways and Roads Helwer; Ashton	2286
Multiculturalism and Literacy, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2014-2015, Departmental Expenditure Estimates F. Marcelino	2273	Manitoba Hydro Eichler; Struthers	2286
Ministerial Statements		Members' Statements	
Holocaust Memorial Day F. Marcelino	2273	Connie Rapko Graydon	2286
Stefanson	2273	Swan River Valley Health Auxiliary Kostyshyn	2287
Gerrard	2274	Kalena Green Briese	2288
National Day of Mourning Braun	2274	Western Canada Cup Struthers	2288
Smook	2275	Major Road Improvements in Westman Caldwell	2289
Gerrard	2275		
Flooding Update Ashton	2275	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Helwer	2276	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Gerrard	2277	Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)	
Oral Questions		Justice	2289
Manitoba Jockey Club Lawsuit Pallister; Howard	2277	Aboriginal and Northern Affairs	2297
		Labour and Immigration	2306
		Family Services	2314

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>