

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 2, 2011

*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, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 27—The Manitoba Ukrainian Canadian Heritage Day Act

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 27, The Manitoba Ukrainian Canadian Heritage Day Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian of Ukrainian descent I'm very pleased to introduce this bill that proclaims the last Saturday of July of every year as Manitoba Ukrainian Canadian Heritage Day.

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

### PETITIONS

#### PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure

and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by J. Blahitka, K. Hermiston, K. Smith and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

#### Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

This is the background—the background for this petition is as follows:

On December 11th of 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by C. Patzer, L. Decker, I. Friesen and thousands of other Manitobans.

#### **Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is involved—if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by G. Currie, K. Currie, A. Currie and many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background for this—to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this is signed by A. Sager, M. Bergman, L. Andrew and many, many others.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2011-12 Supplementary Information for the Manitoba Civil Service Commission.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Minister of Conservation):** It's my pleasure to introduce the—and table—the 2011-2012 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Conservation and the 2011-2012 Estimates for the Manitoba Sustainable Development Innovation Fund.

\* (13:40)

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

##### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Today, May 2nd, we join with people all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Memorial Day.

On May 1st, 2000, Manitoba's Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Bill 19, The Holocaust Memorial Day Act, which recognizes Holocaust Memorial Day in Manitoba in honour of the millions of people who perished under Nazi persecution.

Although the Holocaust took place decades ago in another part of the world, Manitobans are directly connected to this atrocity. The names that are honoured on the monument here on the Legislative grounds are evidence of that vital link.

Last fall, I had the privilege of attending the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg's annual mission to Israel. There, we toured the Yad Vashem, which heartbreakingly chronicles and humanizes this horrific crime against all of humanity. It is hard to comprehend that six million women, men and children were killed for no other reason than hatred. When you see the pictures of some of the actual people whose lives were destroyed, it becomes all too real.

Today, on Yom Hashoah, as we remember this world-changing event, remember the victims who perished. We remember their families and friends and we renew our commitment to vigilance against

this idea of senseless cruelty. Let us continue to work together to ensure this tragic history is never repeated.

Commemorating Yom Hashoah keeps us conscious of the inhumanity and injustices the world has witnessed in the past, challenging us to bring an end to the many injustices that still occur today. These international events are not only an opportunity to reflect on the past, they also give us the opportunity to discuss the progress we have made in the human rights arena, as well as the challenges that lie before us. As members of the international community, we must continue to ensure that this tragic part of human history is never repeated and never forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, following statements by my colleagues, I ask that all members observe a moment of silence in memory of those who suffered and died in the Holocaust.

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** And I want to support the Premier's request for a moment of silence today to acknowledge Yom Hashoah.

This is the day of remembrance of the terrible atrocities of the Holocaust which took place less than a century ago in the continent of Europe. Mr. Speaker, the systematic and planned murder of millions of people is something that continues to shock the conscience of all people regardless of background, and it is important for all generations to continue to remind ourselves of the capacity of humans to commit such terrible acts when they are at their worst.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with the Premier, the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak), Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), Mel and Karyn Lazareck, Marty Morantz and other members of Winnipeg's Jewish community all had the privilege in October of visiting Israel and, of course, touring Yad Vashem, which the Premier has referred to. It was a jarring reminder of the horrible acts that took place, the incredible suffering of those many millions of people who were singled out for no reason other than their cultural and religious identities.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of these memorials is to not only remind ourselves of these terrible actions from the past but to pass along to the next generation the facts about what has happened throughout history, to remind all citizens of the fact that the world today continues to be a place where horrific

acts are committed against innocent people and to ensure that the memory of these events is not lost and to ensure that the next generation is reminded of the need to fight always for the dignity of all people, for the values of freedom, democracy and respect for those who may be different from ourselves, respect for different religious and cultural traditions, respect for difference, however that difference may manifest itself.

And, so, Mr. Speaker, I was honoured today, and also saddened, to be part of the process this morning at the reading of the names and also the attendance at the Holocaust Memorial on the grounds of this building to both remember and participate in the events of today.

So I want to support the Premier's call for a moment of silence, thank everybody who was involved in organizing today's Yom Hashoah, including those great choirs and singers and performers who were part of these events.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I join with other members of the Legislature in recognizing Yom Hashoah, the holy Holocaust Memorial Day, and as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has had an opportunity to visit the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel, so have I, and, indeed, the one in Washington, as well, and they are very moving tributes, memorials to the most unfortunate and sad, sorrowful events that happened in the Second World War during the Holocaust.

This morning, as with others, I participated in to—in the memorial. Unto Every Person There is a Name. I think it is an incredible way of personalizing this tragedy, and it was very moving to listen to Barbara Goszer, as she described the murders of her relatives and recollected about some of these events.

Certainly, it is an opportunity for us to remember not only the genocide that happened in the Second World War but that which happened in the Ukraine in the 1930s and more recently has happened in places like Rwanda, and it's also an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to ending such genocides and, indeed, to fighting the racism and the hate that breeds such genocide.

And we need to be thankful we have a democracy in Canada and that we are exercising that democratic right today, and we have discovered and use peaceful ways to solve our differences and to try to build a better country and a better society. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for a moment of silence. *[Agreed]*

*A moment of silence was observed.*

\* (13:50)

#### **Flooding and Ice Jams Update**

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I would like to provide an update on the current flood situation on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). The storm that hit the prairies over the weekend brought significant snow and rainfall across much of the province and served as a stark reminder of how quickly things can change when you are dealing with the forces of nature.

This serious storm tragically claimed the lives of five people: two soldiers from CFB Shilo and three from the Hamiota area. Our sincere condolences go out to the family and friends, and we wish the other individuals involved in these accidents full recoveries.

The precipitation from this storm is expected to prolong the duration and volume of the flood but will not add to crests. The majority of flood protection systems across the province held despite precipitation and extreme winds that caused waves several feet high along some dikes. The storm also resulted in many road closures and the precautionary evacuation of 13 homes in St-Lazare outside of the community dike due to the loss of road access.

Water levels in Brandon are now the second highest recorded in history. They have surpassed the 1923 peak water levels only. Flood protection dikes in the area are well above the upper range of the forecasted peak, which is expected around May the 12th.

Work to reinforce dikes along the Assiniboine River is continuing in the RMs of Cartier, St. François Xavier and Headingley as a precautionary measure to handle additional flows being released down the Assiniboine River. These flows will

contribute to the crest at James Avenue in Winnipeg, which is expected around Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note our collective success in saving homes and communities. This year is a direct testament to the many Manitobans who are working hard and flood fighting with determination and creativity. This storm reminds us all that while we have been very lucky with the weather we've had, things can certainly change. We remain vigilant and will continue to work to provide the best possible protection for Manitoba families.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update. I note that May 1st to 7th is Emergency Preparedness Week in Canada, and events of the past few weeks have certainly driven home the importance of being ready in the event of a natural disaster or other potential calamity.

This weekend's major snowstorm and rains were not a welcome development for those on the front lines of the flood fight. Power outages and the loss of telephone services in some communities undoubtedly added to the challenges of those trying to deal with the flooding. As the minister has pointed out, additional moisture will only extend the duration of the flood and the negative impacts it is having.

We cannot state often enough how much we appreciate the efforts of those working so tirelessly to try and reduce the impact of the flood on their fellow Manitobans. Many have worked for weeks without a day off and we salute their ongoing dedication.

I would also like to extend our condolences to the families of those who lost loved ones during the weekend storm, of motor vehicle accidents and a snowmobile accident. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I join with others in recognizing the impact of the weekend storm. I want to thank the minister for her update. Certainly there has been ongoing and continuing concern over people—for people in communities like St-Lazare and Brandon and a number of others around Manitoba. It is going to extend the period that we are going to have to be watchful. And we thank—I thank, in particular, those who are working so hard and recognize all the emergency preparedness workers in

this particular week, which is to honour and recognize them.

I think it's also pretty important, as we're now into May, that we look at the situation for farmers and make sure that there is a plan and approach that will be optimum for supporting farmers who are now starting to try and think about at least getting their crops in the ground, and this may be delayed in part because of the long high water in certain areas. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the minister.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Mensheds, Manitoba, we have Loris Barsanti, Doug Bradie, David Friesen, Bill Heron, Doug Mackie, Herb McMullin, Ed Walker and Alan Wolfe. These are the—who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Hazelridge School, we have 21 grade 4 and 5 students under the direction of Ms. Amanda Crampton. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Gillis School, we have 14 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Semonick. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Flooding and Ice Jams

#### Mitigation and Dike Maintenance Strategies

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, with the storm that hit the western part of Manitoba over the weekend, in particular around the communities of Dauphin and Roblin, as has been indicated already by the minister, it has added a significant amount of water to the western part of the province. The indication is that while it may not result in higher levels along the major tributaries, it may contribute to prolonged high water levels which can take its toll both on dikes in the area and shorelines.

And I wonder if the Premier can just provide an indication as to what steps are being taken by the

government to ensure that those dikes are being maintained and that steps are being taken to protect individuals who may be impacted by significant shoreline erosion.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member might know that we've spent in the order of \$20 million on putting additional diking in place and reinforcing existing diking in the Assiniboine Valley. This has already paid enormous benefits. There are many, many producers out there and farmers who have been protected.

The first major threat was when the ice broke up this spring. It backed up the water behind it to within inches of the top of the new dikes that we put in place and the higher dikes that we put in place, and when that threat passed, our officials were out there literally walking down the river step-by-step, as the ice moved down the river, to ensure that there was no breaching in the dikes. And then after that ice threat passed, they went back and reinforced the dikes. There were some sand seams that needed reinforcement. There was some additional compacting that needed to be done, and, of course, they've got 24/7 patrols that are out there on a regular basis looking at them.

On shoreline erosion, there is a new technology being put in place at Victoria Beach in the water—into the waterway that will provide some additional protection, and there are many very specific projects on diking on the west side, in the Gimli area.

**Mr. McFadyen:** I want to thank the Premier for his response and acknowledge that officials from different levels of government and volunteers in many communities are doing a superb job, have done a superb job to date. We know that the risk, with the passage of time, is that with high waters and high winds, that there is erosion, obviously the potential for these many terrific workers to become fatigued and volunteers to become burned out.

I wonder if the Premier can just provide assurances that in the areas where the dikes may face prolonged high water levels and winds, that resources are going to be available to ensure that there aren't any problems or issues that arise as we get further toward summer.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member knows that we have developed a very strong emergency response system in Manitoba. Each municipality puts in place what they call an emergency operations committee. These are

composed of officials from the municipality as well as volunteers. They are trained to respond to the conditions in their area.

They are supported by the Manitoba Emergency Measures office which operates a major co-ordination centre on the top floor of the Woodsworth Building. Recently, we've expanded that centre to have up to 60 people working there from all levels of government and the non-profit sector as well as the military. They work in that centre on a regular basis every single day, co-ordinating information, providing resources where it's needed, moving resources very rapidly to an area that requires a more intense response. If, for example, a dike looks at risk of breaching, they can move resources there very carefully.

In addition, we have located around Manitoba mobile units that have Aqua Dams and Tiger Dams that are available, as well as Hesco barriers, and those mobile units can move very quickly if they see the need to provide additional protection in the community.

And, of course, we have, for the second time only, the STARS helicopter program to do emergency evacuations as required.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. McFadyen:** I want to, again, thank the Premier for the response and for the action taken to date.

Mr. Speaker, just with the indication that second crests are looking likely in communities like Melita, Souris and others along the Souris River as well as communities along the Pembina River, along the Assiniboine River and, obviously, the potential for prolonged erosion and impact along Lake Winnipeg as well as Lake Manitoba, can the Premier just assure the House that steps are being taken—and I'll use one particular example in Souris of one family that was absolutely exhausted and feeling very emotional even as of a week ago—with the potential for a second crest coming through that community, that steps are being taken just to ensure that everybody involved is in a position to be able to manage a second high-water event, particularly given some of the weakening that will have occurred as a result of the first crest.

**Mr. Selinger:** Just over a week ago, I visited both Melita and Souris and talked with the local officials there and their emergency operations committee.

In the case of Souris, they had done some additional sandbagging around some of the homes that were the most exposed to the waterway there. They had, in addition, put very extensive diking around to protect their water protection and sewage treatment plants there. The mayor of the town was right on top of the situation. We were working closely with him to provide him additional resources as required.

Similarly in Melita, they had a primary dike that we had built there in 2009 after the events of that year, but because it was put up very rapidly, it needed some reinforcement as well, including a secondary dike just in behind it in case there was any breach of the primary dike, and since my visit I know they put additional effort in place to strengthen those dikes.

But there is no question, with the high water and with the extent of the water staying high for a longer duration of time, this will put additional pressure on these diking systems, which is why we're stepping up our monitoring procedures with local emergency operations committees and are poised to move very quickly if any additional stresses are indicated that require an immediate response.

#### **Shoal Lakes Flooding Effect on Livestock Producers**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly warned this government about the severity of the Shoal lakes flooding in the Interlake. This past weekend, water levels rose very quickly. As a result, now producers cannot access feed or pens where their livestock are located.

One such operation, the Vestfold Ranch, with 500 head of bison, they'll be out of feed by Wednesday. Access roads are closed. This government had every opportunity to be proactive on this file but did nothing. This is the 11th hour. These animals are going to be out of feed because it's NDP government mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister outline what action this government is willing to take to face this serious situation facing our livestock producers?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Well, I'm really very pleased that my friends opposite don't go over the top on these kind of issues, because these are very important issues for producers that he references, his constituents.



He's not correct in saying that nothing's been done. Department officials have been working with the very bison ranch that he references in his question plus some others in the area who have been up against the wall, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to dealing with this high-water event. People in the department have been in touch with these folks—from other departments have worked with these various people that the member puts on the record here today, and we're going to continue to do that because we know we have to get producers to their animals or their animals somewhere where they can be fed.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, the Vestfold Ranch is not the only operation having problems in the Shoal Lake area. Producers like Patrick Grosse, Darwin Fleury, Jim Dyck, Hugh Crockatt, Jim Crockatt, Stewart Tataryn and a whole host of others need action now.

We, along with other affected producers, are repeatedly asked about this issue and raised it with the government, but they haven't moved on it. Just last Thursday, I asked the Premier when his government would act, with his comments that were that they were looking at it. It's too late. We have producers not knowing where to turn. This NDP government has failed and let them down.

Mr. Speaker, what is it going to take for this government to take immediate action for those livestock producers and farms surrounding the Shoal lakes area?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's not too late and we have to continue to work with farmers as we've been doing.

What we don't need are people going over the top on an issue that we've been working together with producers on, we've been working with municipalities on, as well, Mr. Speaker. As we speak, there are people from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives meeting with these farmers, yet again, this morning and this afternoon.

They're looking at ways in which we can help the producer and help the producer to take care of the livestock, Mr. Speaker. That's our goal. That's what we've been working with, and we do that together with farmers in the area and with the municipalities.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, nine rural municipalities have agreed to a plan of action with the Wagon Creek Drain, just out of Oak Point, to drain off water from the Shoal lakes. Five hundred head of bison

could be unable to access feed by this Wednesday. Numerous cattle producers are struggling to tend their stock. Access roads are closed. Families cannot get essential services, never mind emergency services. A 12-year-old boy is now separated from his family because the school bus can't even get to their farm.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: What else has to happen before this government will treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** The member raised these questions in Estimates last week, and I indicated to him that we'd moved rapidly on a recommendation from the local reeves to open up and further expand the hatchery drain which provides some immediate relief.

MAFRI, the agricultural people, are part of the emergency operations committee which reports every day to all the folks about what's going on. They are monitoring the situation, and if they see the need for moving any livestock and—or providing them additional support, they're ready to do that on a moment's notice. This is part of the ongoing emergency planning process.

We look to protect people, property and, of course, livestock as well, and this is—and the member has indicated the request for future resources to do some long-term changes there. I indicated to him that those will, obviously, be seriously considered and will look at the best technical solution to provide relief in that area.

But I can assure him that MAFRI is very much a part of the daily process of monitoring conditions in Manitoba.

### **Shellmouth Dam Spillway Levels**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend's heavy snow and rain have heightened the concerns for residents in western Manitoba and the Parkland region who are dealing with spring flooding.

On Friday, I observed the water flowing over the Shellmouth spillway. Yesterday's flood bulletin indicated four feet of overflow, around 10,000 cubic feet per second, Mr. Speaker, which is twice the controlled flow only 10 days ago with higher levels coming.

Mr. Speaker, with these higher levels and a similar heightened flow from the Qu'Appelle River,

can the minister advise citizens in St-Lazare and that area what they can expect for a second crest and what plans will be needed to shore up their protective systems.

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're monitoring very closely waters that are coming overtop of the spillway. In the Shellmouth Dam we're also monitoring very carefully what is coming out through the conduit flows. We're making sure that we're balancing both of those off so that the folks downstream will experience the least disruption as possible.

We're monitoring the situation on a 24/7 basis. We're monitoring 24/7 for river levels. We're monitoring what is happening coming into the Shellmouth Dam and we're adjusting as appropriate, Mr. Speaker. We're also working with the local EMOs and particularly in areas that will be acutely—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that it's going over. I just stated that it's going over at 10,000 cubic feet per second. The conduit flows are open, but once it goes over the spillway it's uncontrollable, and so I ask the minister what conditions she's going to have; what can she tell the people in that area?

And my question was in regards to the second crest: When can they expect it and has she had a level provided to her as to what that level could be, because with the combined flows of the Qu'Appelle and the Assiniboine in St-Lazare, there's an obvious concern of the people in that region.

\* (14:10)

**Ms. Melnick:** Mr. Speaker, the flows coming over the spillway of the Shellmouth Dam are not out of control. We are monitoring that flow with what we're releasing from the conduit. *[interjection]* Members opposite think this is a funny situation; we don't.

We are watching the flows as they come into the Shellmouth Dam. We are dealing with areas that will be acutely affected, such as St-Lazare, all the areas along Assiniboine River, which is why we built 70 kilometres of diking this spring, Mr. Speaker, which is why we've made sandbagging machines—which members opposite made fun of—available to all the communities in western Manitoba, which is why we made sure that Hesco dams were available, super sandbags were available.

There is continual communication between local EMOs and the Province, Mr Speaker. We're working with the community.

#### **Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Dike Maintenance and Road Closures**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't looking for a—I was looking for a serious answer, not a—not some sarcasm.

Mr. Speaker, once the conduit is flowing at its maximum capacity, which it is, then when it goes over the spillway, it's not in control, and so the citizens at St-Lazare, those in the Miniota area, farmers in the Assiniboine River Valley are not the only ones concerned about the impact of this weekend's storm. There've already been some evacuations in the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, and Highway 21 is closed due to the flood conditions in that area.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate how the work on the dikes at the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation—Dakota Nation is proceeding and how long she expects No. 21 Highway to remain closed.

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Mr. Speaker, we've been in contact with Sioux Valley. We know that their diking system was very well prepared, that their local EMO did a fine job to protect that community. We know there have been, I believe, five precautionary evacuations. We're monitoring the situation on a 24/7 basis.

We're looking again—I think it's the member opposite who doesn't understand that when water is coming over the spillway, it does not mean that it is not being controlled, that there is the ability to what is called peak shave to make sure that what is coming over the spillway and what is coming out of the conduit does not exceed 10,000 cfs.

We're watching that. We're monitoring. I think members opposite have to understand two and a half times the normal inflow will be coming into Shellmouth Dam this year. We are balancing for the folks upstream in the Shellmouth area as well as the folks downstream through Portage all the way along the Assiniboine and right up into Lake Winnipeg.

#### **Ambulance Services Availability and Wait Times**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, the president of the paramedics' union said that on Friday there were no ambulances available

for three critically ill patients, including one that was shot.

I'm sure the minister has had a briefing on this now, and I would like to ask her if she could tell us why there were no ambulances available for these three critically ill patients as stated by the president of the paramedics' union.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Certainly, I believe the member well knows that there are—there is a fleet of ambulances and paramedics working on those fleets. There is a central dispatch that does triage and we work very hard to ensure that we have ample pre-hospital care for individuals that are needing it.

We also know that we're making investments in our emergency rooms and in our primary care to deal with issues of crowding and overcrowding, and we're working very hard to continue to build our EMS system, Mr. Speaker, and we rely on our medical professionals to do triage, to send out EMS personnel and to ensure that Manitobans are getting the care that they need when they need it.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I had assumed that the minister would be more fully briefed on that issue and that her answer would be more than just rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us if the shooting victim had to be taken to the hospital by his friends because an ambulance was not available?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that any particular case that is raised by the member and any alleged facts that are brought forward are done in a way when she knows that I cannot comment on personal health information of individuals. It's a mug's game that she plays; no one's entertained by it.

I can certainly tell the members of this House that our paramedic personnel are the finest in the nation. We know that triage is done through central dispatch and, indeed, through the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre for rural Manitoba. We know that we have built and rebuilt our system, restoring the entire fleet of ambulances, building our personnel to be more credentialed than they ever have been before in Manitoba.

Members opposite have voted against every one of those investments; seems like crocodile tears to me, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very serious situation. The paramedics have indicated time and again to this government that there is a lack of ambulances in the city. Now we have heard, on Friday night three critically ill people did not have an ambulance come to them.

I want to ask the minister: Did those three critically ill people ever get an ambulance, and how long did it take those three people to get an ambulance, and was the care of these people compromised because of the slowness at which the ambulances came?

This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and I think they—Manitobans would like an answer from this minister.

**Ms. Oswald:** Emergency medical services is a very serious issue, which is why we've committed from day one to making investments in a system that was absolutely crumbling when it came into our hands. We know that for many years, during the time that the members opposite had their hands on the wheel, the budget for paramedic education was pitiful, at less than half a million dollars. We know that we invested in the new primary care education program to bring more very well-trained paramedics to our front lines. We know that our medical personnel do triage and send out ambulances as necessary.

We know that this happens every day in Manitoba, and, in any individual case, where the shoot time was not as was appropriate, we do appropriate investigations and make sure that our fleet is in full complement, unlike the dark days of the '90s when they were cutting and slashing everywhere.

### **Diabetes Increase Prevention Strategy**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Diabetes is a growing epidemic in Manitoba. There are nearly 94,000 diagnosed cases of diabetes in our province. This is a devastating number and one that is projected to get much worse. According to a recent warning by the Canadian Diabetes Association, the number of cases is expected to increase by 48 per cent by the end of this decade. In fact, Manitoba has the highest rate of diabetes on the prairies.

Mr. Speaker, today I ask the Minister of Healthy Living: When will he realize that Manitobans want proactive programs that actively provide better health care, not empty PR or press release promises?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors):** I'm pleased to bring all the members' attention to the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative. This is a five-year trial project that we worked with with the federal government. I'm pleased to see that we enhanced it by almost a million dollars this year when the federal government pulled out their funding. I'm pleased it's in all regions. It's talking about food; it's talking about activity; it's talking about moving proactively in health. And, Mr. Speaker, we introduced it and you didn't vote for it.

And so I think that we have to talk about actions, and I think we have to talk about concrete plans and programs that we put in place and that we're moving forward. Thank you.

**Mrs. Rowat:** But the fact is the diabetes costs in our province are \$498 million per year. Without prompt action and intervention, this cost is expected to rise to \$639 million annually. Unfortunately, despite more than a decade in power, this tired NDP government has done little to stem the tide of this devastating disease.

Mr. Speaker, it appears this NDP government is more interested in photo ops than action. Can the Minister of Healthy Living explain to the House why he continues to fail to address the diabetic epidemic in Manitoba?

**Mr. Rondeau:** I'd like to bring all members' attention to some of the programs that we implemented in the last few years: first, 750 community gardens across northern Manitoba; second, an in motion program that is first in the country as far as getting a 10 per cent increase in activity in this province in the last five years; the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, which touches all people as far as smoking, as far as diet, as far as activity, through the health-care system and through multiple—83 community partners; and, finally, Mr. Speaker, we want to work proactively across jurisdictions.

So we not only work just in the city of Winnipeg or rural Manitoba, we walk—we work in First Nations to bring health, message and action to the forefront, and that didn't happen in the '90s.

\* (14:20)

**Mrs. Rowat:** This is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that there is no comprehensive provincial strategy prevent—for preventing or managing diabetes. The numbers are going up. The cost to Manitoba is going up. Until

these issues are addressed, more Manitobans will be diagnosed and the economic burden of the disease will continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for Healthy Living initiatives please indicate when Manitobans can see a detailed, comprehensive prevention and support strategy for this growing epidemic in Manitoba.

**Mr. Rondeau:** I refer the member to the Healthy Living website where we talk about activity; we talk about diet; we talk about gardens; we're talking about the food—the Farm to School fundraiser; we're talking about the changing behaviours in schools with a proactive policy on food nutrition.

And, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the member's rhetoric, they are on the record about eliminating the Department of Healthy Living, eliminating the whole proactive prevention agenda. We believe in prevention. We believe in moving forward on proactive health message. Let their actions speak 'loudler' than their words, because we do actually do it and they just talk about it.

#### **PTH 5 Bridge Project Status**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, in August 2010, a set of traffic lights were erected at the bridge over the Turtle River on Provincial Trunk Highway No. 5, and traffic has been reduced to one lane over that bridge.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton): What are the government's plans for this bridge?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** I thank the member for the question.

We're very, very proud of our record on—with regard to infrastructure in the province of Manitoba and throughout the province, whether it's in the north or the west or the east or the southern part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased with all the action we've taken, not only on bridge renovations, but a lot of asphalt, a lot of highways have been addressed with regard to our 10-year plan.

And I'll just tell the member to stay tuned. There'd be—the second part of our 10-year plan is going to be coming forward very shortly.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, that closure was nine months ago. Repairs are not even started. Provincial Trunk Highway No. 5 is a major north-south highway. Traffic is slowed by the lights and the fact that only one vehicle can cross at a time.

I understand the Letellier bridge has been under the same restriction for a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is this part of his double-due-diligence program on the provincial highway bridges, or are one-lane bridges the NDP's new standard for provincial trunk highways?

**Mr. Lemieux:** You know, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2011 named and certainly talked about a lot of infrastructure projects we're going to be talking about in the future, and the tendering of a lot of projects are going to be coming forward.

You know, the members opposite when they were government, looking back, Mr. Speaker—and we don't want to look back in the rear-view mirror too far, but you don't have to look that far. When they were government and the Leader of the Opposition was the great architect at the time, they increased the gas tax, they cut the budget on transportation, and a lot of the infrastructure crumbled and started falling apart.

We're working with municipalities and leaders around the province to address the situation, Mr. Speaker, and thereby putting billions of dollars in infrastructure in the province of Manitoba.

And the members opposite know very well that MIT staff have been working diligently to do inspection on bridges. We've increased inspections and also infrastructure to improve those bridges, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Briese:** I would remind the minister that we had two-lane bridges back in those days.

The minister stated recently that the NDP government were doing double due diligence with highway bridges. I'm not familiar with that standard, but if it is the standard being used on PTH 5, it certainly is a low one.

The travelling public is faced with a stop light in the middle of nowhere. Farmers are being forced to make long detours with their machinery at seeding time. Mr. Speaker, will the minister at least tell the public what the timelines are on this bridge?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, our government has always taken safety very, very seriously, whether it

be on our highways or whether it's in other aspects of the province, and members opposite know that the engineers in the Department of MIT take their job very, very seriously, and when they recognize something needs to be addressed, they do it.

You know, the members opposite are continually complaining about bridges in their area and how they need to be addressed. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's happening; it's happening as a result of our budget, and yet Budget 2011, what did we see them do? Once again they strut into all the coffee shops in southern Manitoba and throughout Manitoba talking about how—what they would do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that half-a-billion-dollar cut they were going to do would have wiped out the department and all the challenges that they have and are facing with regard to infrastructure, so shame on the member opposite for voting against the budget.

And members opposite in rural Manitoba, when they go strutting around the province, make sure they tell people they were going to cut a half a billion dollars out of the Infrastructure budget.

#### **International Students Health-Care Benefits Availability**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I met with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Students last week, and they're very concerned that the NDP government refuses to extend health benefits to international students. International students wishing to see a doctor must endure the stresses of an American-style, insure-yourself or pay-for-it-yourself health-care system under this NDP government.

After graduation, we'd like these students to make a home in Manitoba, and, as such, they should be afforded access to the universal health care like any other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, if international students get sick, why won't the NDP minister of post-secondary education provide the same health-care coverage afforded to the rest of Manitoba?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, we have met with the students, as well, at the local level, who have made a very important case about the funding of health care for international students, and, in partnership with my colleagues, we're very pleased that in the coming days that we will be doing this funding.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education are finally going to see the light. I think that it is important that we make sure that international students are well looked after, and I think that we want to make sure that this is going to happen.

Can the ministers provide a date when this is going to happen, or is this some, you know, potential time sometime into the future?

**Ms. Oswald:** I can confirm it will be in the future. We are working across several departments to ensure that this is done as seamlessly as possible, Mr. Speaker, and it will be in the coming days.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of announcements from this NDP government about things which are going to happen in the future, and many of those which were announced nine years ago, eight years ago, seven years ago have still not happened.

So there is not the credibility until there is actual—an announcement. The government has stalled on this file for a long time. Why don't the ministers give us a date when it's actually going to happen instead of saying, oh, maybe 10 or 20 years from now it might happen.

**Ms. Oswald:** I can say to the member, as I would to all members of this House, that we work every single day to build our capacity in the health-care system, net increase of 405 doctors, net increase of over 2,500 nurses. We have renovated, rebuilt or built from the ground new over 100 health facilities. We've added new programs for children, for mothers, for fathers, for families.

And I can say to the member opposite that our decision wasn't like his to cut the health transfer payments when he had his hands on the wheel in the federal Cabinet. We're going to invest every single day, including in international students, Mr. Speaker.

\*(14:30)

#### **University College of the North Thompson Campus Expansion**

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, since our government created the University College of the North in 2004, this institution has been providing quality education in campus communities and regional centres across Manitoba, ensuring that residents of the north can access training without leaving home.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education advise the House of the latest exciting developments at the Thompson UCN campus?

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** I thank the member for the question.

Yes, this government is committed to bringing education to the entire province, and that is why our government, along with community leaders, were in Thompson on Friday for a sod-turning for an \$82-million expansion of the University College of the North.

Mr. Speaker, this project will include a teaching facility, 24 student/family housing units, and this campus will also increase capacity from 342 students to 510 students. This, of course, will ensure that UCN can expand and provide education, a quality education, to people of the north, and that will ensure and empower the people of the north and their communities. This is just another example.

One more example, of course, Mr. Speaker, would be the mining academy that is now under construction in Flin Flon, because this government is committed to all members of this province.

#### **Road 39 North Bridge Project Status**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) has a bridge that only has one lane in the RM of Hanover on road No. 39 north. There is a bridge that's been burnt out for several years, and this government hasn't gotten it repaired. That means that farmers and residents in the area have to go several miles around to access their land or their residences.

This bridge has been burnt out for several years already. The officials in the RM of Hanover are quite frustrated, as are many of the residents in the area. They have a lot of patience but they've basically run out of their patience already, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the minister responsible when this burnt-out bridge is actually going to get rebuilt.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Again, I just want to make sure that the record is clear that our government is very proud of our record since we've come into government, quite frankly, with the investments we've made, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member from Transcona and the MLA for Selkirk, the Vision 2020 committee that traveled throughout Manitoba consulting with the public and

municipalities as to the need on infrastructure and the kind of changes that needed to be made.

We took their advice and we took the advice of many Manitobans at what needed to be addressed. We looked at highways, Mr. Speaker. We took a look at bridges. We took a look at infrastructure on our system, and we've come a long way.

We're not perfect, Mr. Speaker, and there's a lot more to do, but it's certainly not helpful when members opposite vote against budgets that are truly proactive, addressing the infrastructure needs of our province.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I voted against the budget because the bridge has been burnt out for several years now, and it hasn't been fixed. You know, we'd almost be happy just with the one lane if we could even get one lane over the bridge.

That bridge has been burnt out for several years. Residents are getting frustrated. Farmers can't access their land in the way that they should. Residents can't get to their homes in the way that they should.

The government's known about it. The RM of Hanover has been petitioning this government for several years now. The bridge has been burnt out for several years and they just can't seem to get it fixed.

Why should we wait and wait and wait for this bridge to be rebuilt? Is it simply because it's in an area where the government doesn't think it can get enough votes, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Lemieux:** We're working very hard to make sure Manitoba's bridges are safe, and that's a priority for the department, and that—we've increased our investments in bridge inspections and renewals since we've been government, Mr. Speaker. Our yearly spending commitment on bridges is six times what it was when members opposite were in government. It's made a huge difference.

As I said before, we're certainly not perfect, Mr. Speaker, but we're heading down the right track as opposed to what members opposite—we're taking a look at what they wanted to do, and when we take a look at what their examples are, when they take a look at—when we look at their budget cuts, they wanted to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget.

How is that going to help bridges in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and infrastructure in Manitoba? It's not, and that's the fact of it. And when we asked them to point out exactly where those cuts would be made,

they hummed and hawed and they didn't know exactly where.

They wanted to showboat, saying they're going to be balancing budgets and they had no way to do it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Let me point out exactly where the burnt-out bridge is. It's on road No. 39 north. It's not that far from where the minister lives or where he represents his constituents, and the bridge has been burnt out for several years. RM officials have been going to the government and saying this is important; the bridge can't be accessed; there's a road closed sign. For several years it's been burnt out and the government has said, well, maybe next year, maybe next year, maybe next year; it's just not a priority.

Maybe it's not a priority because they don't think that the people there are voting the right way. Is that why they haven't got this bridge built?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Steinbach, Mr. partisan politics—and always tries to raise something in this Legislature not to be helpful—not to be helpful, not to give construction—constructive suggestions but always trying to raise issues that are absolutely bogus.

Our track record shows that we've invested in northern Manitoba and each corner of this province, Mr. Speaker, and our track record speaks for itself, not like the members opposite. They make an announcement the last election; they were going to cut all the spending and funding out of northern Manitoba to put in southern Manitoba. Shame, Mr. Speaker.

Standing in Virden with the critic for highways at the time, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) announces, oh, we'll fix the highways in the south; we'll just take the money out of the north and put it in the south.

Shame, Mr. Speaker. We stand up for all Manitobans and we'll continue to do that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I want to remind members when addressing other members, it's by their constituencies, ministers by the portfolios, and to keep it from being personalized, all questions and answers should come through the Speaker.

#### **RM of Roland Bridge Replacement Timeline**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** And while we're on the subject of bridges, one-lane bridges, burnt-out

bridges, in the RM of Roland, just southeast of Roland, we have a bridge that was destroyed by a grass fire a year ago, May 2010, and it is a serious subject matter because local traffic, including school buses and emergency vehicles, are forced now to take a six-mile detour.

The RM has asked the department to at least be able to put in a temporary crossing at their expense—not even at the department's expense—and they were turned down flatly. What plan does the department have to replace this bridge for access for school buses and emergency vehicles and local traffic?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, the department has increased its inspections by adding about \$2 million more to the budget, and members opposite actually cut inspections on bridges. And, you know, Manitobans don't realize this, but I just want to clarify the record that members opposite cut inspections on bridges.

We're putting more money into bridge inspections, so members opposite should talk to some of their colleagues that were on the Cabinet benches of those days and the kind of cuts they made, not only to inspections on bridges but also to drainage and so on. So that's their record.

Our record is building Manitoba and we're building bridges, Mr. Speaker, with many, many different segments in Manitoba, in different communities in Manitoba. Our government's about building bridges, building communities and moving forward. Members opposite want to go backwards.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Mensheds Manitoba

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, men often grow up in cultures that do not encourage talking about feelings and emotions. This means that even when men need help they may not feel comfortable asking for it. Mensheds Manitoba is a new organization in Winnipeg which is designed to give men a space to work on projects together, learn new skills and, most of all, to share their life experiences in an atmosphere of friendship.

The Mensheds movement began in Australia. It is meant to be an updated version of the shed in the backyard. Men get together to work on anything from crafts to woodworking to repairing bicycles.

Doug Mackie founded Mensheds Manitoba about a year and a half ago. Doug recognized that many men in his community had time on their hands. Men have a greater tendency to suffer from isolation, loneliness and depression than women, especially after they retire. However, being productive and contributing to your community are key steps to good health.

Mensheds Manitoba is run out of the Woodhaven Community Club and meets Tuesdays and Wednesdays for coffee and camaraderie. Their current major project is converting a seldom-used garage behind the community club into a woodworking shop. Mensheds will soon be starting a cooking club on Wednesday mornings. It sold wren houses and obelisks at the Friends of the Conservatory gardening sale and Mensheds also hopes to have a Woodhaven-Sturgeon Creek fishing derby in June.

Mensheds is a bottom-up pure-run organization which compliments its grassroots values of building relationships. In a time when we are becoming more and more aware of the importance of mental health, Mensheds is a straightforward way of connecting with others and learning creative skills.

Thank you to Doug Mackie, to the Mensheds president, Dave Friesen, and to all the Mensheds members who are here in the gallery today. I hope your organization continues to grow and take root in our community. Thank you.

\*(14:40)

#### Holocaust Memorial Day

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Today, I stand with people all over the world to observe Yom Hashoah in order to perpetuate the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the privilege to visit Israel last fall with a delegation put together by the Canada-Israel Committee, and I also visited Yad Vashem, and believe me, Mr. Speaker, it was a true eye-opener to the horrific massacre that took place, killing more than six million men, women and children of Jewish descent.

Mr. Speaker, through public recitation of their names in the Unto Every Person There is a Name that we participated in this morning, we personalized the individual tragedy of those who died and those who survived.

And I want to thank the Jewish Federation and B'nai Brith Canada for organizing the events at the



Manitoba Legislature today. I want to thank all those who participated in today's events at the Manitoba Legislature. In particular, I want to thank all of the Holocaust survivors who came out to read the names of their families who perished during this horrific event, especially Barbara Goszer, Carla Divinsky and Arnold Frieman. They showed—they shared their stories and reminded us all of how important it is that we never forget those who lost their lives for no other reason than because they were Jewish.

Mr. Speaker, for the past 11 years, I have read some of the names of those who lost their lives in concentration camps. In honour of those who lost their lives, I want to read a poem today so we, too, never forget:

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 his 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 the 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. / Unto every person there is a name.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Amber Trails New School Facility**

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, people from all over the world are choosing to make Manitoba their home, often to give their children the best education possible. Schools bring children from diverse families together and give them the tools to grow and succeed. This is why I am proud to mark the announcement of a new school which will serve families in the Maples.

On April 4, 2011, our Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced a \$94-million investment in public schools, which will fund an early learning up to grade 8 elementary school in Amber Trails for the Seven Oaks School Division. We aim to open this new school by September 2013, and it will also have a daycare attached. Adding child care into elementary schools increases the number of spaces and also encourages learning and development right from the children's earliest years.

Neighbourhoods like the Maples in northwest Winnipeg, we have been growing, and this new school will help make sure we are giving our children excellent education. Manitoba is also investing in schools to improve air quality, the roofing and gyms. We are also improving access for people with disabilities, to make our school a meeting place for all families, no matter their physical differences.

New schools embody our commitment to children and youth. Our government believes that good quality education is essential for healthy, active and successful children. I am looking forward to watching the new school in Amber Trails develop and I know there will be many proud families joining me to see our children off on its opening day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Winnipeg Thrashers**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I rise today as a proud Winnipegger to congratulate the Winnipeg Thrashers on their amazing Telus Cup win.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 24th, 2011, the Winnipeg Thrashers played a remarkable game to win the National AAA Midget Championship. The Thrashers took the national crown with a 3 to 1 victory over the London Junior Knights at the Mile One Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland. This was the 33rd Canadian National Midget Hockey Championship.

Thrasher's goaltender, Teagan Sacher, gave an amazing performance making 31 saves during the game. Although the London Junior Knights outshot the Thrashers 32-18, the Thrasher's goalie held on letting only one shot through.

Thrasher's Justin Derlago and Corey Petrash each scored a goal during the second period, and Connor Lockhart scored the Thrasher's third goal during the third period. For his outstanding performance, Connor was named the player of the game.

I would like to commend Coach Dan Eliasson, the Thrasher's head coach, and all the coaching staff on a stellar season and a well-deserved national title.

The Thrashers are now the first Winnipeg team to win the National AAA Midget Championship and Telus Cup and only the second Manitoban team to win the title.

Again, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Winnipeg Thrashers. You have made this city and this province very proud.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask leave of the House to include in *Hansard* the names of the players and coaches of the Winnipeg Thrashers 2011 Telus Cup Champions. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for the names of the coaches and players to be added into *Hansard*?  
[Agreed]

*Winnipeg Thrashers 2010-2011*

*Player Roster: Alex Henry, Ian Humphreys, Tanner Quinn, Cody Danylchuk, Ryan Leaf, Riley Kuryk, Tyler Kauk, Adam Henry, Regan Stire, Rory Court, Morgan Winchar, Corey Petrash, Justin Derlago, Brendyn Illchuk, Lyrik Friesen, Dylan Kuczek, Tyrenn Bauer, Sean Collins, Teagan Sacher, Connor Lockhart.*

*Coaching Staff: Dan Eliasson, Head Coach; Royce Manary, Assistant Coach; Anthony Knapp, Assistant Coach; Dan Ferguson, Goaltender Coach; Marty Gagné, Manager; Amanda Dennison, Trainer.*

#### **Brandon Recreational Facilities Funding**

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, every community knows the value and importance of having safe well-maintained recreational facilities where families can go and spend time together having fun. This is why the recent funding announcements by the provincial government to invest in some of Brandon's key recreational facilities are so vital to the families in Brandon and the Westman region.

The most significant funding announcement, in partnership with the City of Brandon, was a \$500,000 provincial investment to refurbish the Canada Games Sportsplex Pool. This money represents half of the estimated cost required to make much needed mechanical, safety and technical improvements to the facility. This investment will help ensure that the sportsplex can continue to offer a range of programs such as swim lessons, aquafit programs and competitive swim training for the Brandon Bluefins Swim Club.

There was also the recent announcement of an \$18,000 grant from the Community Places program to help enhance the lighting at the Kristopher Campbell Memorial Skate Plaza. The lighting will consist of high-efficiency LED lighting along the perimeter and inside the skate bowl. This will help

kids use the skate park well into the evening hour. It will also provide an extra measure of safety, as everyone will now be able to better see the activities at the skate park once it gets dark outside. This brings our total overall investment in the Skate Plaza to \$350,000.

We have also partnered with the federal government through the Canada-Manitoba Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund to provide half of the \$6.9 million in funding required to build a family-friendly YMCA centre in downtown Brandon. The provincial government contributed a further \$1.7 million for this project through the Building Manitoba Fund. When open, the new downtown Brandon YMCA will offer amenities and programs that will be available to Brandon and Westman residents of all ages.

Taken together, along with ongoing investment in children's playgrounds, community gardens, expanded daycare spaces and the new healthy living centre being developed at Brandon University, these announcements represent a long-term provincial commitment to the health and well-being of everyone in the city of Brandon and the Westman region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS House Business**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to move into the Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, the business of the House will be Committee of Supply. In the Chamber will be Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and room 255 will be Justice; room 254 will be Finance.

Would the respective Chairs please go to the rooms that they will be chairing, please.

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

#### **FINANCE**

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran):** Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Finance.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** And, indeed, it is my pleasure to make—oh, I always speak too far away from it. I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments on the Department of Finance, and I would like to begin by speaking about the Budget 2011 that was the second budget I had the opportunity to present.

When you look at the budget, it very much followed our last year's plan, and that is to invest in front-line services, promote economic growth, manage government spending, restore balance and maintain affordability. And I can say to committee members that the plan is working and it is—our Budget 2011 builds on the momentum and focus on family priorities.

And I have to say to the members of the committee that, when we were making this decision, we did not make the decision to implement a deficit lightly. This was a very serious consideration. But we had a choice, and we chose not to slash services or cut—sell assets; we chose to support the economy and improve infrastructure. We invested \$7 billion in infrastructure over the last two years, \$1.8 billion in the budget 2011-12. This investment in infrastructure has a replacement valued—valued tangible—a capital asset value of \$37 billion.

On our debt, our debt-to-GDP ratio that—the measure of the affordability of our debt compared to our economy remains significantly lower than it was in 1999. Budget 2011 projects 26.2 per cent by the fiscal year-end or 6.7 per cent lower than it was in 1999, when it was 32.9 per cent.

When we look at debt-servicing costs, they are—our debt-servicing costs are at 6 cents on the dollar, and this is less than half of what it was in 1999, when it was 13 cents for every dollar earned.

Our plan has helped Manitobans escape the worst of the global economic recession. We are experiencing steady growth in the economy and in jobs. Other provinces have not been as lucky as Manitoba. Our plan has worked well. Our financial results are heading in the right direction are—and—are on track to return to surplus by the end of our plan, 2014-15.

I'm very proud that Manitoba remains in the top three most affordable provinces in which to live and work in 19—in 2011. Manitoba is ranked in the top two most affordable provinces, by Saskatchewan, in their budget 2011.

Budget 2011 introduces new and enhanced tax credits or exemptions for personal income tax, homeowners and tenants, seniors, families with children under 16, for geothermal heating system, for farmers, for small banks, for book printers and publishers and many other areas. Budget 2011 extends tax credits for companies and investors in areas such as manufacturing for equipment, community enterprise and mineral exploration, for people who hire co-op students, graduates and journeypersons and apprentices, and—or—and there's a tax credit for people who buy odour-control equipment.

Manitoba's economy is growing at a steady pace—2.7 per cent this year. Despite the global recession in 2009 and because our—of our strategic investment in infrastructure stimulus, we have what *Maclean's* magazine refers to as the Manitoba miracle of a strong, steady economy.

In 2010, Manitoba was the first province to permanently eliminate its small business income tax rate and this year eliminate the general capital tax. In 1999, Manitoba had the highest corporate income tax rate. In 2011, only five other provinces have a lower income—a corporate income tax rate than we do. Since 1999, personal, property and business tax savings are almost \$1.3 billion—will be almost \$1.3 billion by 2014. There is a \$539-million reduction in personal income tax, \$336-million reduction in property tax and \$424-million reductions in business tax.

We are here today to discuss the Department of Finance's Estimates for 2011-12. The Department of Finance expenditures have decreased. Total expenditures are estimated at \$344.4 million for 2011-12. This is a 2.7 per cent—this is 2.7 per cent less than '10-11. In total, \$44 million for salaries and operating expenditures for the 10 appropriations in Finance. There is \$3.1 million for capital asset expenses, \$42.6 million is for tax credit payments and \$257.8 million for core government debt expenditures. This is government's portion of the total—of the summary debt expenditures of \$800.6 million.

A decrease in the department budget from the Administration and Finance Division is down by

4.5 per cent to \$2.6 million. Costs related to capital assets are down 3.4 per cent. Net tax credit payments are down 3.3 per cent, and public debt expenses are down by 3 per cent.

That's an overview of some of the items in the Department of Finance, and I would be very pleased to take any questions that committee members might have as we review the Department of Finance Estimates.

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Chair, and just a few opening comments in response to the minister's opening comments, and I thank the minister for her opening remarks.

I, first off, want to thank the department and the employees of the department for all the hard work that they put into putting the budget together, based on the direction, of course, given by the NDP government, and I know it's, you know, I certainly appreciate—we do on all sides of the House—all the work done by those in the departments, and I also especially want to thank you for enduring these Estimates process. I know it's not always the most exciting time, so thanks so much for all of you for being here.

I just want to respond to a few things with respect to the minister's comments and the direction that this government has been taking for the last 12 years since they came into office in 1999. The NDP, we believe, is moving in the wrong direction with their five-year plan. I'm sure that's no shock to the minister here today, but I think it's important to point out a few reasons as to why.

Over the last 12 years, we've seen an unprecedented increase in transfer payments from the federal government at times over those past 12 years when there were very difficult times, and I know the member likes to—and the minister likes to go back to the 1990s quite often. But that's when there were significant cuts to transfer payments from the federal government, and that's where there were some significant decisions that needed to be made, some very tough decisions that needed to be made. But I'll remind the minister that during their time in government that there has not been any decreases in federal transfer payments to the Province. As a

matter of fact, there've been record increases if we go back several years.

So there were times when the government had the opportunity to set some money aside for what could potentially be a downturn in the economy in Manitoba, but, unfortunately, they chose not to. They chose instead to spend beyond their means, and so, for that reason, I believe that this five-year plan is going in the wrong direction.

I also want to remind the minister that while the rest of Canada actually had some significant declines across our country, although Canada did not weather as poorly as our neighbours to the south of us, our country did relatively well compared to United States. But there were other provinces across the country that did—that had significant downturns in their economy, and Manitoba was not one of them, and I think it's important to point out, from a revenue standpoint. And I know members opposite love to get up and cheer every time I say this, because they like to take credit on one side for increases in revenues to the Province, but then they also want to say: But we have to run all these deficits because it's tough economic times in Manitoba.

So they can't really talk out of both sides of their mouth, and that's what we're finding here is that they are speaking out of both sides of their mouth. And, you know, really the only thing that was realized over the last number of years, and I believe it was in 2009 where there was one year where the economy was flat, and I remember the Premier at that point saying the flat is the new up; this is good for Manitoba. You know, he has recognized that there has not been overall a decline in the economy in Manitoba. So I would suggest from that, that what I would say and caution the minister on is not to talk out of both sides of her mouth when we're coming to the debate of various issues in Manitoba.

I also want to take us back to 1999 where we—where the NDP government came into power and the budget at the time was around \$6 billion. The budget now has almost doubled, and yet, despite the doubling of that and the doubling of our debt in the province—almost the doubling of our debt in the province—I think we need to look at the services because I think the NDP sometimes lose sight of the fact that, as a government, they are here to deliver services to the best of their ability to Manitobans.

And I think if we look at some of the major government departments, one being Justice, there continues to be the revolving door in our criminal

justice system. It's, again, yes, more money has been put into the system, but the problem is that the revolving door continues. And so what is not emphasized by this government is what are the actual outputs. What are we getting for the money that we're spending? And the government loves to talk about all the money that's going into government programs, but they neglect to talk about the outcomes and to what we are getting for those services.

And so what I would say, Mr. Chair, is that it's unfortunate because the revolving door of our criminal justice system remains and has, in many ways in many areas, gotten worse as gang activity skyrockets, and—I know at one point we're the murder capital of Canada and there was all sorts of other things that we were, unfortunately, on the top of the list in Canada, which are not very good things for our province.

I think if we looked at wealth—at—sorry, at health care, wait-lists continue to rise in health care. If you look at, you know, children continue to fall through the cracks in our child welfare system. We have the lowest graduation rate in the country. We have the highest taxes outside of Québec. The debt has almost doubled, as I had mentioned earlier, since the NDP came to office in 1999, and Manitoba is now—which is really unfortunate—back running significant deficits in our province, and deficits over the next number of years, that, we believe, had the government properly managed over the last 12 years, that we would not have been put into the—we would not have had to be in the position—the deficit positions that we are in today in Manitoba and moving forward for the next four years.

And so I—those would be my opening comments, Mr. Chair, and I welcome the opportunity to ask several questions around policy, and around, you know, going through our Estimates books. Thank you very much.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 7.1.(a) contained in resolution 7.1.

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

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce my Deputy Minister, Mr. Hugh Eliasson, and Erroll Kavanagh, who is the executive financial officer.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Mrs. Stefanson:** In recognizing that we don't necessarily want to have all staff here all the time, I'm prepared to maybe indicate—I probably have more general questions for the—today and maybe going forward, but we'll recognize the fact that we don't want everyone to be here all the time and the staff's time—so, in a global manner, I guess, is the bottom line, if we could.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you. It is agreed then that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner, with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And my first list of questions are the usual questions that we ask at the beginning, and many of them you may not have right here on hand—it's staffing questions, that kind of thing, and so if the minister wants to endeavour to get back to me with various lists that I ask for, then that would be great, but we'll just go through it maybe in chronological order. It shouldn't take too much time.

*Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I wonder if the minister could provide for the committee a list of all current, I guess, Treasury Board ministers.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Treasury Board ministers at this time are the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiative, Minister—Mr.—oh, I can use their names, Mr. Struthers, Ms. Irvin-Ross, Mr. Mackintosh, Mr. Swan—I have to use their constituencies. Okay, the MLA for Dauphin, the MLA, St. Johns, MLA for Louis Riel, MLA for Minto, and Fort Garry.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I wonder if the minister could also provide us with a list of all of her political staff in her office, including their name, position and whether or not they are a full-time or part-time employee.

\* (15:10)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I have Ms. Carolina Stecher, who works in my office here in Winnipeg, and Mr. Ken Munro, who works in my office in Swan River.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And just because you mention Ms. Stecher, I also noticed that the—is she the—is she your special assistant?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes, she is.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I notice that she's listed as an analyst with ETT. I'm just wondering what her actual position is.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That was the job she had before I became Minister of Finance. When I became Minister of Finance, she came to my office and is now my special assistant.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Thank you for clarifying that.

Is there a specific list of all staff in the minister's and the deputy minister's offices? I guess both political and your side, I guess, and we've already done that, but.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** In my office, we have Kristine McCallum, who's my secretary; I had indicated Ken Munro; Stephanie Bugera, who is an administrative assistant; Elizabeth Babaian, who is an administrative assistant. And in the deputy's office we have Miriam Jezik.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is it possible to get the number of staff currently employed in the department?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The department has 452.2 full-time equivalents in the—this year.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And could the minister indicate the number of staff that resigned this year, or were terminated or transferred to other positions, and where they may have gone?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We have—in this year we had 14 retirements, and there have been some people have—that have moved to different jobs, different departments. And I believe one person has left the department and moved to a—moved outside of government.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So for those that transferred to other positions, could I have their names and where they were transferred to, what other department they were transferred to?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We can get that for you.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** That's fine. And for those that resigned, could we get the list of names for those that resigned as well?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I mentioned the ones had—who had retired. Is that the ones? If you're looking for the ones that retired, yes, we can give you those as well.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, I believe you said there were 14 that retired, so for the names of those, and then you mentioned there was one that resigned and left for outside of government.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I can get those—that list for the member.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is there—I'm not sure if this would apply to the Department of Finance or not, sometimes positions are reclassified. Has there—have there been any positions that have been reclassified anywhere in the department?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes, I believe there was a few.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I guess, if the minister could indicate the description of any position that has been reclassified and what—yes, what those positions are.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There were 20 classifications reviewed for positions in the department, and this includes the Manitoba Securities Commission; two initial reviews that established a position clarification; 12 classification reviews that resulted in no change in the position classification; and six classification reviews that resulted in the position classification going up.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Can the minister indicate if all the staff years are currently filled and if not, what the current vacancy rate is?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There are 52 vacant positions as of March 31st, 2011.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is it possible to get a listing of all the vacant positions?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I can tell you that in Admin and Finance, there is one position; in the Treasury division, there is one position; in the Comptroller's office, 13; Taxation, 23.5; Federal-Provincial Relations and research, five; and Treasury Board Secretariat, 8.5.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Are these positions that are to remain vacant permanently or is this temporary?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** All of these are temporary vacancies.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is there an indication of a time frame for when those positions will be filled?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** You know, the department reviews them. Some are vacant longer; it depends on which position it is. Some—they could be vacant a long—for a longer period. Some could be filled quicker.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Have there been any impacts on the department as a result of the vacancy rate?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It is the view of the department that they can continue to do the work of the department with these vacancies.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So there haven't—have there been any projects that have been delayed as a result of the vacancy rate?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There's always a bit of a vacancy rate and departments adjust to that. For example, last year there was 46 vacancies, and some of those were filled. Now there is—there are some additional vacancies, but jobs are posted, positions are filled and—but I would say that, no, there are not projects that are—that have fallen behind because of this.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is this a vacancy rate that has—historically is roughly the same as it has been from a year-to-year basis?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** On the average it would be about the same. As we looked at the numbers, we see that there are people that sometimes—that we had a number of retirements this year and it takes time to fill those positions. So this would be an average number of what vacancies would be.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I think I recall asking this question last year and we had to maybe put a dollar value to a minimum of it, but I believe in the Department of Finance, there, you are—there are contracts that go out to tender. And I'm wondering if there are—if the minister can indicate how many and what type of contracts are being awarded directly—maybe over the \$25,000 range?

\* (15:20)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I'd like to begin—I neglected to introduce Tannis Mindell, who is the treasury—secretary to Treasury Board, who has joined us at the table.

Of the—there were 78 contracts that were untendered. There was 49 that were in the range of \$1,000 to \$4,999; between the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000, there was 24; and from \$25,000 and over, there was five; for a total value of \$2.11 million.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, I thank the minister for that.

Ministerial travel. I wonder if the minister can indicate how many out-of-province trips she has taken in the past year and provide pertinent details of the trips, such as the purpose, the dates, who from her staff went and what the costs were.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** In 2010-11, there was three out-of-province trips.

So there was—the first trip was to—in December—or one of the trips, December 19th and 20th, to a ministerial conference. There was a trip to a meeting in Nunavut with the Premier in August. There was a meeting in September with investors and financial institutes, and there was a—in May, there was a meeting of financial institutes and investors. In June, there was a ministers' meeting. In February, there was a—first, 2010, there was a joint Cabinet meeting with Saskatchewan. In February, there was a provincial-territorial council meeting as well. And all of—I can tell the member that all of these are listed—they can all be found online. In November—so there was some travel related to the Finance ministers' meetings. There was a couple of trips with—to meet with investors and banks, and then there was the meetings with the—interprovincial meetings with—one with the joint Cabinet meeting with Saskatchewan and one meeting to—in Nunavut to—meeting with the government of Nunavut.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just the meetings with investors and financial institutions, I assume, is that in Toronto or New York? Where were those meetings?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There was one meeting that was in New York and another meeting that was in—another one that—there was one meeting in Toronto. There was a meeting in London, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just wondering how many of the government department typically—and just, I mean, again, I'm just sort of asking this out of curiosity, because I just—I'm just wondering how many of the department and who, typically, would go with you to those—the meetings with the financial institutions.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** When I went on these trips, I travelled with my deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister of the Treasury Board—Treasury.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** In June you mentioned a ministerial meeting. Where was that?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That was in Prince Edward Island.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Sorry, again, just to clear this up. In February there was a provincial territory–provincial and territory Cabinet meeting you mentioned. Where was that?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** In February the meeting was with the security regulators, and that was held in Edmonton.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Were there any—or where there ever any political staff that travelled with you on these—on any of these trips?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** My special assistant went with me to the Finance ministers' meeting in Alberta.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And that was the only one that you had any political staff on?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That's right.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Was there ever any travel that was paid for—any travel by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) that was paid for by the Department of Finance—out of your department?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We'd have to check that. I'm not sure about the one to Nunavut.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Were there ever—were there any other Cabinet ministers that travelled with you to—on any of these trips, that was paid for by the Department of Finance?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The only one there was—could have been somebody with was on the trip to Nunavut, but the policy is that if it—a minister's going from a different department, it's paid for from that department.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I thank the minister very much. That's all I have with those sort of housekeeping-type questions at the beginning.

Just to jump into more of a—maybe start off with a policy question for the minister. And I know we've talked about this in the past, but I just thought I might get an update from the minister. In 2005 Saskatchewan struck the business tax review committee, and it was as a result of a—the process, I guess, followed as a result of the 1999 review on personal income taxes.

The Saskatchewan personal income tax review committee—the recommendations were implemented and, you know, Saskatchewan's economy has done quite well since then. And I just wanted to ask the minister if there is any kind of consideration at all in

striking a tax review committee, similar to that of Saskatchewan, or maybe not similar, and perhaps going another direction.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Acting Chairperson, we work very closely with a wide variety of groups as we establish our policies, and certainly Business Council of—Business Council is one that we—has—is very thoughtful and puts a lot of ideas out.

\* (15:30)

We talk to people when our—when we do our budget consultation and so our discussions are with a broad range of people on a regular basis. And so, if we are—the member is looking whether we're setting up a committee to review this for us. No, that's not our plan. We would much prefer to work with the various groups who know the province and have—and offer a lot of advice.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, I just—I wonder if there's any kind of a plan, and maybe it's part of her five-year plan to establish some sort of a review of the—of taxation in Manitoba, whether it be from personal income tax or business tax or we've got the payroll tax. There's a number of different taxes in Manitoba, and I know the Business Council came out with their report and I know the minister made some comments on that review. And I know there's various submissions through the budget consultation, but in moving forward, I mean, nothing has really seemed to move in the direction of an overall lowering of taxes in our province and sort of getting that under control, especially in the area of income taxes.

I mean there's many examples of us being the highest taxed outside of Québec, highest taxed west of Québec. We still have the payroll tax, last province to have that type of a tax, which doesn't make us competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada. I'm wondering, in her five-year plan, what is the plan to make us more competitive and attractive as a province, especially with our neighbours like Saskatchewan, if she can indicate what her plan is for the next five years to make us more competitive in Manitoba.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** And if the member opposite would look at the budget and look at what other people have said about Manitoba, Manitoba is very competitive. And when you look at our cost of living and if you look at where we are in our taxation, and when you compare all of those things, we certainly are competitive. And I was very pleased that



Saskatchewan, in their budget, even recognizes how competitive Manitoba is.

But you know, when—I think when you talk about business, we have to—I would remind the member that Manitoba is the first province to eliminate its small-business income tax rate, and this year we're eliminating a general capital tax. When you look at where we were with taxation in 1999 for corporations, the corporate income tax rate in 1999, we had the highest one. Now there are other—we are much lower than where we were in 1999.

If you look our personal—each one of—we have—every budget we've been bringing forward, we've been able to decrease some taxes, and if you look at the total impact since 1999, personal property and business tax savings are almost \$1.3 billion. This does keep us competitive. Our personal income—we have personal income tax reductions. We have listened to Manitobans. We've made changes in a variety of programs that help seniors with their tax credits. We've reduced—extended tax credits to companies as they make investments in this province, and those have been certainly significant tax credits when it comes to manufacturing equipment, community enterprises, and in the mining sector.

So when you look at all of the changes that we have made both in income tax and various tax credits—and yes, we do favour making changes with tax credits because you then support a wider group of people—but if you look at all of these things, whether it be in business taxes, whether it be in tax credits for companies and investors, all of those areas that you look at, our personal tax and our business tax measures have been quite positive and has helped us achieve the point where we—*Maclean's* magazine talks about us being the Manitoba miracle. And when you look at the various steps that we have taken, our personal income tax savings are certainly benefiting Manitobans, and I look at all of these changes, and Manitoba is very competitive.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, I guess the one concern I have moving forward, and despite what the minister wants to talk about, and that's fine, and she can indicate all of these things, but the fact of the matter is that we're still projected to run deficits in our province over the next number of years, and so the competitive—her plan in the past for the past 12 years has not put us in a competitive position today. When we're still running deficits, other provinces are getting out of deficits more quickly, and it's just, you

know, from a taxation standpoint, I know when you look at—from a personal income tax standpoint, you look at a two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year, we're still—someone in Manitoba is earning \$2,317 less because of the income tax structure under this Manitoba government. And I know it's—you know, we're still the highest taxed outside of Québec, and I don't see how that makes us more competitive with other provinces across the country when it comes to a taxation standpoint.

There is no plan to reduce or eliminate the payroll tax, and, you know, that's something that, I think, in Manitoba, you know, if the minister had listened to some of the budget consultations, and I received copies of some of them as well, that was a significant theme in there, in terms of something that the Business Council would like some direction on with this government, and other organizations, the Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, there were other organizations that really want the government to move in that direction.

I wonder if the minister can indicate what the plan is with respect to the payroll tax.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The health and education levy has been in place in Manitoba for many, many years, and it is in place to help with—to—with health-care costs. Other jurisdictions have health-care premiums. Other—and we do not have a health-care premium, and the—so we have the health and education tax that is in place to help with—raise revenue in those areas.

We have chosen to look at other areas and we have—we're—talked—Business Council and made some suggestions. We have looked at how we can help small business. Small business is indeed a very important part of the economy of this province, and we have taken steps to make reductions in various areas and also to put tax credits in place to help those people who are making investments continue to make investments.

So the business community has made many suggestions, but the business community has also recognized the importance of doing things like the Research and Development Tax Credit. Those are things that help us grow this province.

The farming community is a very important business sector in this province, and that's why we've raised the Farmland School Tax Rebate from 75 per cent to 80 per cent, and we have taken various steps to reduce property taxes by increasing the education

property tax credit. We—when we look at how we've—we talked about one question in the House today about people being healthier, that's why we have the tax credit for activities. And now we have a new tax credit for children in the arts and culture—for arts and cultural activity, tax credits for people who look after—who are caregivers at home.

So you look at all of those various areas and some of them are tax credits that directly benefit business; the others are directly a benefit to families. And you have to find a balance between those, and that's why we've made the decision to take the steps that we have so that we increase the tax exemptions for people, and, in fact, those—we are able—by doing those things, we're able to protect those front-line services that Manitoba families depend on and, at the same time, have those tax credits and investments that help the business community.

\*(15:40)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So I just—I know—and, again, I'll just ask quickly again, because the question was about the payroll tax and I'm just wondering if the minister can indicate, is there a plan? I know the Business Council has asked for some sort of a phase-out of it. What is the minister's response to—in her budget consultations with the Business Council with respect to the payroll tax?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, the Business Council made other suggestions too. The Business Council suggested that we increase payroll—we introduce the PST by 1 per cent, and we definitely said we are not raising that PST by 1 per cent. We didn't accept that recommendation, but the Business Council has made other recommendations, and a business council is there to represent small business as well, and some of the changes that we have made in taxation is—benefits small business. There are the whole—the issue of research and innovation, investment in bank—in mining tax credits. All of those reflect on business.

So we listened to some of their recommendations and were able to implement them, but we're not able to implement all of the recommendations. And I certainly, very quickly, said that we were not interested in raising sales tax by 1 per cent, because that would have had a very negative impact on Manitoba families. And we are just coming through a downturn in the economy, and putting that additional tax on people would not be a positive step.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** What is the equivalent of one point of the provincial sales tax? [*interjection*] Or 1 per cent, sorry, 1 per cent, yes.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** One per cent sales—increase in sales tax would raise about \$239 million.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Thank the minister for that. And just talking about the sales tax, I know we had lunch—a luncheon meeting with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities last week, and this, of course, was an issue that came up at the meeting. And I know that they have met with the government as well. And I don't think what they're asking for is, you know, a new—any new taxes out there, but they are asking for, perhaps, an existing, perhaps, percentage of the—and I think it was one percentage point or something of the sales tax or the equivalent of. And I know in this year's budget, it was indicated and sort of in the budget speech that there was one percentage point that was given to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Is that over and above any transfers or any monies given to them prior to this out of the operating budget? Or is the—whatever was already ongoing in terms of transfers to them, was that included in the 1 per cent?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** What we did in this budget for municipalities is change the formula and how they were funded, and this guarantees them a growth revenue, because as the economy grows they will be guaranteed one percentage point of the growth in revenues. And, as Manitoba's economy grows, and our economy is growing quickly, there will be more revenues. So this guarantees and spells out to the municipalities the amount that they will receive.

There is new money in this, and we certainly—we—there—this is a 53 per cent increase since 2005-06. That's a significant increase. And so there is some of the existing money that's in there, but there is also new money, and the formula is in place so that, as the economy grows, they will be—they know what their growth revenue will be.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** How much in the way of new money?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It's a 5 per cent overall increase this year.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So that's 5 per cent over and above what they were receiving last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** They—this money includes—there's more money for municipal infrastructure and transit,

and it's 5 per cent—a 5 per cent overall increase this year.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So what did they receive last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I don't have that exact number here, but I can get it for the member next year.

But I can say to the—

**An Honourable Member:** Next year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Next—I can provide her with the information. But I can tell you that since 2005 we've more than doubled our funding to the City of Winnipeg for their roads and bridges. It grew from \$14.1 million in 2005 to \$32.6 million in 2009. And this—so if you look at the various municipalities, you can see that there is a significant increase and that it is a guaranteed formula. It changes the formula, it's guaranteed and, as the economy grows, so will their funding.

So—and—there—when the budget came out there was endorsements of people who supported it. In fact, Doug Dobrowolski, who is the AMM president, said on CJOB, right after the budget, he said: finally, we've got some predictable funding going forward. It's something we've been asking for for a long time. It's a recognition of growth revenues to help with the infrastructure deficit.

Dave Angus said: I do appreciate the support of a one percentage point of PST going to municipalities for infrastructure.

And the dean of Business and Economics at the University of Winnipeg said: I think that's one of the most innovative parts of this budget.

So there is, when we brought this model out, there was—people were appreciative of it. The municipalities had said—has been asking for a long time for some predictability, some way that they could be part of the growing economy. This formula gives that to them.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just wondering if the minister has the answer to the question as to what the municipalities received last year.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I can give the member some numbers, but for detailed questions we should probably work—wait till we get to the Department of Local Government. But for 2010 municipalities got \$100.7 million, and in 2011 it's \$105.6 million, a 5—a 4.9—a 5 per cent overall increase.

When you look at the City of Winnipeg, the City of Winnipeg, in 2010, got \$225.3 million; in 2011 it's \$236.7 million. So you could see that there is—again, it's an overall increase of 5 per cent for the City of Winnipeg.

So the formula is changed. It's predictable, and this year it meant a 5 per cent increase for everyone.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Did the minister not indicate that what was going to the municipalities was equivalent to 1 per cent of the sales tax?

\*(15:50)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If you look at the total growth of municipal infrastructure and transit grants, in 2005-06, it was \$155 million. In 2011-12, it's \$239 million. That's equal to one percentage point of PST.

If you look at today, one percentage point—if you look at the growth that's projected, there is additional—there is also additional money that goes for the operating and support grants to municipalities over and above that.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, so the \$239 million that you've just quoted me, you said, back in 2005-2006 was \$155 million; 2011-12 you're estimating \$235 million, which is equivalent of one percentage point of the sales tax. What was that figure last year, the \$239 million?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would have to get the member the number but I—there is—what they are getting now, what is—they're getting in 2011-12 is equivalent to 1 per cent of PST. And the amount that they were getting last year is something that I'll have to get back to the member with, or if she can ask that question in Local Government.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, was it less 5 per cent of the \$239 million that they received last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** You know, I would encourage the member to ask this question in Local Government. It's a complicated formula. This deals with their infrastructure and transit. There are other funds that go there that are included in—that are over and above this formula. So there—I would encourage her to ask this particular question in more detail when she will get to the other department.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, the minister indicated a number that was back in 2005-2006. There was \$155 million and then she skipped a whole bunch of years and goes up to 2011-2012. I mean, are there

not a bunch of, you know, numbers in between there that we could fill in the blanks here? I just—I'm not sure why she can't—she won't answer the question.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I won't answer the question because I don't have that information here. I have the information from 2005-06 and I have the information of 2011-12. And 2011-12, of \$239 million equates to 1 per cent of—one percentage point of PST. Those are the numbers I have here.

If the member would like the—each of the incremental numbers from '05-06 all the way up to '11-12, I would—I could provide them for her, but a better place to get those numbers would be when we get to the Department of Local Government and they will have the numbers broken down year by year.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Who collects the sales tax revenues?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Taxation division, Department of Finance.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So if sales tax revenues are collected by the Department of Finance, and this was clearly billed in the budget speech and address as one percentage point of the PST, which is—falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Finance, I believe it's entirely appropriate to ask for what this figure is in the Department of Finance. If it is \$239 million for this year, I think it's entirely appropriate because it was billed as this, as being a certain percentage of the sales tax, that we should be able to find out from the Department of Finance what it was for last year.

Why can we not find that out at this—you know, we're happy to ask in other government departments as well, but I think it's entirely appropriate, given how this has been packaged by this government in their five-year plan this year, it's entirely appropriate to be asking for it in these Estimates.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would say to the member that this is a new model that we're using. Last year, the funding to the municipalities was not based on one point of the 7 per cent PST. It was a different formula. But the member is asking about how much money municipalities got last year, and what I'm explaining is that we have introduced a new model and we are investing in our municipal infrastructure and transit something that's equivalent to one point of PST, which is \$239 million.

What was the budget last year for those municipalities does not have anything to do with the PST collected because it was—the funding last year

did not relate to 1 per cent—one point of the PST. This is something municipalities had asked for. They were asking for more predictability, and we've worked out a way to give them more predictability by tying their funding to the growth in revenues. This is going to be in legislation. My friend will have to bring in new legislation and change the formula for funding. But I cannot say what the amount was last year because it was not funded according to the PST formula.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So is the amount that the municipalities is receiving, is that tied to the rate of growth or is it tied to one percentage point of the sales tax?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It's tied to one point of the—per cent of the PST. But as our economy grows, we know that the revenues will grow in this province, and this formula, this new model, will share that growth. As the economy grows there will be a higher level of PST, and in the formula, they will be able to predict exactly what that growth is.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** But the PST could grow at a higher rate than economic growth in the province. So does that mean that the municipalities will receive a higher percentage of increase or will it just be tied to the rate of growth?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The—it will be tied to be equal to one point of the 7 per cent PST; that's what it'll be tied to.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And if there is a decline for some reason, will then it decline or what—or will it just stay what it was the previous year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Well, I have no doubt that our economy is going to continue to grow, so I think that's a hypothetical question and I don't—I do not believe that that is something that we have to worry about. With the way the population in this province is going, the way investments are growing in this province, I anticipate that we will see more revenues, and, through this formula, we are prepared to share them with municipalities as they have asked us for.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, if I go back to—and I just—I'll wrap this up here. We will ask the questions in the other government department. I still think I should be able to get those answers here and I would hope that the minister would get me those answers, if she can, with respect to what the municipalities received last year. But I assume it's 5 per cent less of—you know, that \$239 million represents a 5 per cent increase over last year. If it was a 5 per cent increase over last

year, then it's not the equivalent of a 1 per cent increase in, you know, of a 1 per cent increase in the PST. And that's where the municipalities are having problems with this, because it's only a slight increase over last year as opposed to it actually being tied with a 1 per cent of the PST in new monies, and I think that that's what they have a problem with. Does the minister want to comment on that?

\* (16:00)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I did not say it was a 1 per cent increase, that they were—the whole amount was an increase. I said that it was growing—it would grow gradually. It's equivalent to a 5 per cent increase overall. But, when you look at the total amount that is going into Infrastructure and Transportation this year, it's equivalent to 1 per cent of PST, and will be every year. It will continue to grow as the economy grows; it will be 1 per cent.

So if—as our economy grows, and if you look at the chart that—right now, it's about \$239 million. If you look at it for next year, we anticipate that it will be roughly—it looks like it could be about 250 next year. And, then, as you—as we look out—in five years, it will be around \$300 million. I'm—just—and I'm looking at the chart roughly. But you could see the kind of growth that's projected and from this—and that's the growth that's anticipated in PST.

And I trust the financial analysts and the projections that are made, not only by the department here in Manitoba, but projections that are made from very reliable sources in Canada. As they make these projections of how our economy will grow, this formula will be in place and municipalities will share it. For this year, it is about a 5 per cent overall increase.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So the 5 per cent increase that you were referring to earlier, was that this year over last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes, that's right.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So is—that's not a 5 per cent increase. Like, \$239 million is not representing the 5 per cent increase then? So what is the actual 5 per cent increase then from? Like, it's—what are the numbers that you're deriving the 5 per cent increase from?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** For the City of Winnipeg, last year, they got \$225.3 million. This year, they're going to get \$236.7 million. That's a 5 per cent increase. For the—other municipalities, last year, they got

\$100.7 million. This year, they will get \$105.6 million, and that's a 5 per cent increase in the—in their budgets for transit and for infrastructure,—and operating, sorry.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, so what is the—yes, again, it goes—what is the \$239-million number, then? What does that include?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The \$239 million, which is equivalent to 1 per cent PST, is our—the municipal—the funding for infrastructure and transit grants.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, so, what's not included in there is the operations. Is that right?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** What's not included in there is the policing and other supports that we have—operating.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, well, again, I think what, I guess, the problem that the way it was packaged is that municipalities have been asking for a one percentage of the sales tax, of the provincial sales tax, over and above what they're already receiving from the government. And, I guess, when this came through it was a—more of a, kind of, a PR campaign then, on the minister's part, to try and, kind of, confuse the public into—to thinking that they're doing a lot more for municipalities and doing what's needed considering the infrastructure deficit, when, really, that's not exactly what has taken place.

And I think it's unfortunate because I see, all too often, with this government, they're obsessed with PR campaigns and sending out press releases, and all this, kind of, stuff, that makes people think that they are doing great things for this province, when, in actual fact, they're not really taking much in the way of action. And I think it's unfortunate that they're so obsessed with trying to spin things in their direction to make them look better when nothing, in fact, is really taking place. And when we can't—when they can't indicate what the numbers—the \$239-million equivalent would have been from last year and how much that would've increased and what those numbers were last year, I think it's unfortunate that they have to pass the buck and say, you know what? Go to another government department; we don't have those answers here.

When the minister has clearly tied this to a sales tax, she should have these numbers, and I guess I'd ask the minister if she will endeavour to get me the numbers for 2010 and 2011.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If the member opposite wants, I can read into the record again the numbers. I have given the member the numbers for the funding for other municipalities and funding for the City of Winnipeg. If there are more specific questions that are related to the formula that—then I would suggest she goes—the—that she have more detailed questions answered when she gets the opportunity to ask the questions in Local Government.

But I have to just—I want to share with the member. She talks about spin and she doesn't like the—that 1 per cent is enough. I'm going to—I'd like to read a quote. It says: During the last election, Hugh McFadyen said he would only give municipalities half a point of the PST—

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff):** Order. Madam Minister, you can't refer to members by their name, only by their constituencies.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I am sorry. I got so carried away. I apologize.

During the last election, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said he would give municipalities half a point of the PST, and they would have to choose between investing in policing, roads, recreation and other infrastructure. Imagine that, half a per cent, and now we have put in place 1 per cent of the PST and the member opposite says that's spinning.

I quite—find that quite interesting, when on the day of the budget, Doug Dobrowolski, AMM president, said: Finally, we've got some predictable funding going forward. It's something we've been asking for for a long time. It's a recognition of the growth revenues to help with the infrastructure deficit.

Did the municipalities want more? I would imagine that they would want more. Did they ask us to raise sales tax by 1 per cent? I do not believe municipalities asked for that, but the Business Council did.

Municipalities have told us they don't want PST raised; what they want is a sharing formula, and we have developed the sharing formula. It will be in legislation. It will be tied to whoever is in government, whoever is the minister. And into the future, municipalities can count on having one percentage point of PST, and as our economy grows—and this province is growing, no matter what the member opposite may want to say for doom and

gloom—this province is growing and there will be more revenues to share with municipalities.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Now the province is booming. Here we go. It's boom day for the government. Before, we're in a recession and we're running deficits since we've got a five-year deficit plan and all this sort of stuff. Anyway, here we go again with the minister, and I'll remind her that she makes promises every day and the problem is that many of them she doesn't keep.

And one of those promises that she made back in the 2007 budget was that she would reduce the first bracket rate of income taxes to 10.5 per cent, and it's still sitting at 10.8 per cent. And I'm wondering if the minister can indicate why she hasn't lived up to her promise.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If the member will recall, in 2007, that commitment was made subject to balanced budget legislation. Since that time, we've been in a recession. Since that time, we have put in place a five-year plan and we have indicated in our announcements that those steps would be deferred until such time as we came back into balance.

But I will also say to the member that we did make changes to personal exemptions this year, and my department analyzed those very closely and, in fact, there is a bigger benefit for municipalities—for individuals under the tax exemption that we are putting in place versus the commitment that was put in place in 2007.

When we come back into balance, that commitment stands.

\* (16:10)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, in listening to the minister from one answer to the next, it seems to be—it reminds me of that book I read many, many years ago. One minute we're booming, one minute we're busting, and then we've got an echo from the minister: boom, bust, boom, bust. It's just unbelievable, so back and forth, but here we go. This is the unfortunate part about these Estimates processes, that we don't always get the answers that we want or that we need and I—and that I think that Manitobans believe that they need.

So I guess I'll ask the minister—I mean a commitment was made, back in 2007 and she said she hasn't made it—she hasn't fulfilled that commitment yet, in terms of the first bracket rate. And she also said that at the same time the entire

middle tax bracket, or bracket, will be moved up to the range between 35,000 and 70,000. And right now I believe it's 31 to 67,000, and I'm wondering if the minister can indicate at what point in time in her five-point plan she plans to live up to the commitments she's made in the past.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Acting Chairman, those commitments were subject to balanced budget—budgets being balanced. We have had some challenging times, as have people in other parts of the world. We've come through this downturn reasonably, but we've come through it reasonably because we've chosen to make some investments. We've chosen to make investments—the it—the stimulus in building our infrastructure. We've made investments in front-line services because we want to keep people working, and those are the investments we have made.

And when we come back into balance—and we're ahead of schedule on our balance—then we will be able to address those issues that she refers to, such as bracket creep and commitments that were made in 2007.

The member opposite may not think that Manitoba—that there has been a downturn in the economy. She's one of the few. People around the world recognize that we have faced some challenging times and when we faced that challenging time we put together a five-year plan.

And I say to the member, if she looked at the report that was tabled, we have come out ahead of our five-year plan. There was improvements of \$78 million in the first year. In the second year we are anticipating a ten-being—an improvement of \$10 million, and in each one of those years, as the economy grows, I hope that we can continue to make those investments in front-line services, those investments in infrastructure that are so important to Manitobans, keep this economy going, keep people working and come back into balance, then we can address those other issues that she refers to.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Can the minister indicate what year in the last five years there's been a decline in the economy?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** We—in '09 we anticipated a decline in the economy. It ended up that we remained just at zero but certainly we did not have the projected growth that we had anticipated that we would have in this province prior to the economic downturn.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So just to be clear, there's been no realized declines in the economy in Manitoba over the last five years?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** As I indicated our—although it was projected that we would see a real decline, we ended up with the economy being flat.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, normally, when we discuss recessions, it doesn't mean that the economy is flat. It doesn't mean—yes, there was some significant issues around the world at that time, absolutely, but those declines were not realized by our province, and I would only expect that declines—that we would be running deficits if we were realizing those declines in our economy.

And so—but I'll move on from there because that's just a debate we'll go back and forth with the NDP on, because one day it's booming, the other day there's a recession but the economy's flat; oh it's, we're on the rise. I mean, all over the map here. So we'll leave those—that line of questioning

And—but I would like to go back to something that the minister made—the—a comment the minister made before when I was asking about promises made in past budgets. So, in 2007, there was a promise made to decrease the tax bracket to—the low tax bracket to 10.5 per cent, and it's still at 10.8 per cent, so that's essentially a promise that has been broken to Manitobans. And the minister's reasoning behind breaking her promise is because she changed the legislation.

And, you see, this is a problem that Manitobans have is that here's a government—and they have with all politicians—because, you know, you give us all a bad name when you do this. You know, it's—*[interjection]*—you do. You do. Absolutely, because when you make promises and Manitobans vote on you based on those promises in a 2007 budget, and then you come forward and you say, oh, no, but, you know what, that was only based on us adhering to balanced budget legislation so we're going to change the legislation in order so now we don't have to adhere to those promises that we made.

And, you know, it's a credibility problem with this government. So I'm—I guess I would just ask the minister: What legislation will change in order so that, you know, so that Manitobans don't have to—in order that this government does not have to adhere to the promises that they've made in the past? What pieces of legislation is she bringing forward to try

and get out of the promises that she's made in the past?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The member refers to a commitment in 2007 and that—the commitment was a plan to reduce personal income tax rates and increase bracket thresholds subject to balanced budget legislation. That had nothing to do with the changes we had to make when we had a downturn in the economy and we had to put in place our five-year plan. That—when that commitment was made, it was made subject to balanced budget legislation.

So at the time, it was—we anticipated that we would be able to move in those areas. Since that time, the economy has changed, and we have put in place our five-year plan so that we can continue to make investments in infrastructure and stimulus. We can keep those front-line services in place.

I do a lot of discussion with people, budget consultations with the business community. The majority of people said what they wanted was to see their front-line services protected, their teachers in the classroom, the nurse and the doctor in the hospital, the police on the street. That's what people wanted. That's the decision that we made, but I again say to the member, there was nothing that had to change with the commitment that was made in 2007 because the commitment that was made said, subject to balanced budget legislation that existed on that day.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, so why did the minister balance—or why did she change the balanced budget legislation then? Was it so that she didn't have to make—she didn't have to meet the commitments that she made in past budgets?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Every jurisdiction in Canada was facing the same challenges of the recession. The federal government put forward a plan to stimulate the economy and in order to participate in that stimulus program, all jurisdictions recognized that they could not balance in one year as the members opposite wanted us to do. They wanted us to remove \$500 million out of the budget and balance in one year. If that would have happened, we would not have been able to participate in the stimulus. We would not have been able to weather the storm.

\* (16:20)

If you look at Canada—and we can all be quite proud of the way Canada and the provinces have worked together to ride this through. It was right across political parties. Every type of party, whether

it's Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Bloc, whatever they were, all jurisdictions said and agreed that they would invest in stimulus, and in order to invest in stimulus, we had to make the changes that we did to the balanced budget legislation and we made the commitment that we—they—we would do this until 2000—and come back into balance '13-14.

We are no different than every other jurisdiction, and I'm very pleased that we've been able to do that because, in the end, when you look at the amount of money that has been spent on infrastructure, it has made a difference in the quality of life in Manitoba. Whether it's roads, whether it's parks, whether it's infrastructure, whether it's housing, or new programs to support business innovation, all of those things are growing the economy of Manitoba. It's keeping Manitobans working, and we will have a better economy.

So we made a decision to run a deficit so that we could take part in that stimulus and then come back into balance in 2014-15, and then, when we're back in balance, we can look at those commitments that were made, that are subject to balanced budget legislation.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, where to begin, Mr. Acting Chair. I—you know, the problem here is that Manitoba didn't realize the declines that other provinces did across the country and that the federal government realized. And so—and the minister has admitted to that already, and yet she says that, you know, during the tough recessionary times, then we—we've got to run deficits. The problem with that is that these are, and the minister has admitted this so much in her own words, that she is running deficits of choice. The fact of the matter is, No. 1, she could have chosen during the unprecedented increases and transfers from the federal government, from the increases in revenues to our province in the good times in the last 12 years, she could have set money aside so she wouldn't have to run deficits.

But, No. 2, she doesn't have to run a deficit, because we didn't realize the declines and, again, she's already indicated that that's the clay—that that's the case.

So these are deficits of choice, and by running deficits over the next number of years, what the government is doing and what this Minister of Finance is doing is adding to the debt of our province. Now, we already know that the debt under the NDP in the last 12 years has almost doubled. And, also, what's happened is with more debt, so is



the rising cost to service that debt. And with the rising cost of servicing that debt, Madam Minister and Mr. Acting Chair, is a lot of money that could be going towards front-line services—to pay for those front-line services for health care.

The problem here, and the minister will go back and she'll talk about, oh, you know, 6 cents on the dollar, '13—you know, interest rates were a lot higher in the 1990s, Madam Minister. It's very different from the situation that you're in today. And the problem is that you didn't control your spending habits, you know, since your government came into power, and that's the real problem here, is that you've decided through the good times to increase the debt of our province, which, I mean, as interest rates rise, we know that there's the cost to service that debt is going to go up. With the rising cost to service the debt, Mr. Acting Chair—because I know, sorry, I should be going through the Chair—so, you know, with the rising cost to service the debt, that's money that could be going towards paying for increases in front-line services in health care, which—and education, in justice, in family services, to support the social programs that Manitobans want, need and deserve.

But what the minister is doing and she's saying is that, no, no, no, we're just going to borrow the money to increase expenditures in—or to increase revenues for the areas of health care and all of this. But what she should have done over the past 12 years is to pay down the debt, so that the cost to service that debt would go down and therefore would free up more money for front-line services.

Will she just admit today that because of the fiscal policy of this government and their refusal to pay down debt in the good times in this province, that—and of the last 12 years, 11 of those have had increases to the economy in Manitoba, and only one of those years, as indicated by the minister in the past—or in—a few minutes ago, was flat. And so, during all of those years, normally what would happen is that people, and I know the minister expects to—that people, in their own households manage their own budgets and ensure and tries to encourage them not to spend beyond their means. And I know the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) at one point was on—or—and the minister of consumer and corporate affairs, same person, was on the record as saying that it's important for us to spend within our means.

Well, the problem with this government is that they're not spending within their means. And we've got significant increases in expenditures over the years, and they're just adding to the debt, trying to hide behind the fact that they're—or trying to hide behind, you know, putting more money towards social services, which actually could have been done had they just dealt with the debt situation.

So I'm just wondering if the minister has any comments as to—does she not understand, and will she not admit that not addressing the issue with the debt and by doubling the debt in our province, that she is jeopardizing front-line services in Manitoba.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That was a very long speech, and I'll try to cover all of the things that were in that.

But one of the first things the member said, she talked about the unprecedented amount of money that was coming to the Province from the federal government. I would remind the member that those were stimulus dollars. Those were infrastructure dollars. If we did—if the increases we had—if we did not use—put money in place to take advantage of those dollars, we would not have gotten that infrastructure money.

So, if the member opposite had had her way and was—would balance in one year, as they suggested we should do, and take out the \$500 million—then we wouldn't have had that infrastructure money.

You know, the investments we have made have shielded Manitobans from the worst of the recession. Whether it is investments in infrastructure to keep Manitobans working, whether it's investment in education, whether it's investments in health care, all of those things have made a difference.

Now the member opposite talks about not putting money away and not managing the debt. Well, I would remind the member that if you—if she will recall, if you look at the—how we've managed the debt, the government has contributed almost a billion dollars to debt retirement accounts since 1999 for general purpose debt and for pension obligation. We have looked at where—there have been things that should have been addressed a long time ago, things like pensions, that when this government came into power we made the decision to address those unfunded pension liabilities. We've made the decision to share the current service pension entitlements for all employees. It's the first time that's been happening since 1961. We've made significant capital investments, and these

investments are amortized. So—and all related costs are fully reflected in the annual appropriations for core government.

So we have—yes, we have a different philosophy. The members opposite, their philosophy is: balance the budget no matter what. If you have to lay off people, if you have to fire nurses, if you have to close hospitals or reduce the number of doctors that you're going to train, if that's what you have to do, the members opposite—or they might sell off a Crown corporation like the Manitoba Telephone System. That's the views of the members opposite.

Our view—and it's a different view that we have. Our view is that you make investments in people, you make investments in front-line services, you keep people working, and you invest in infrastructure, but you have a plan in place. You have a plan in place about how you're going to amortize those costs for that infrastructure in the different departments. You have a plan in place on how you're going to deal with pension liabilities. You deal with all of those things, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

\*(16:30)

Mr. Acting Chairperson, and as much as the member opposite would like to deny that the cost of serving the debt is more—was more in the 1990s than it is now, she cannot deny that. It is a fact. This government has made changes. Yes, there have been some lower interest rates, but we've managed those. And, as well, when you look at the net debt-to-GDP, our province right now, we have a net—jet—debt-to-GDP is expected to be 26.2 per cent of our GDP. In the—in 1990, it was 32.9 per cent.

So, the—we have made very sound investments. We've built our economy and, Mr.—we have during different—when we had positive—we put more money away in the stabilization fund than the members opposite did, never had to sell a Crown corporation to do that. But we built the stabilization fund, and the stabilization fund is helping us through this downturn in the economy and will help us get back to balance by '14-15.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, I think we've both had our rants there, and I think that the department staff has better things to do than to sit us argue—sit and listen to us argue about our different political philosophies when it comes to finances of our province.

So I would like to move on and ask a question. Go back to the payroll tax—again, just staying on

taxation here probably for the rest of the day. So I don't know if there's any staff at this point in time that you'd like to let go for the day or—*[interjection]* No, and I mean just for the day, back to their departments, let them leave for the day so they don't need to listen to this.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I'm joined at the table by Richard Groen, who is the director of the Taxation division, and Jim Hrichishen, who is the acting assistant deputy minister of Taxation.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** My question has to do with the organizations that pay the payroll tax. Can the minister indicate what the breakdown is by public versus private sector who pay the payroll taxes?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It's about 45 per cent by the private sector and about 55 per cent by government and government agencies.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** How much does the federal government pay in payroll taxes?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That's confidential information. I'm sorry I can't share that with the member.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay. Is that—

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That would be the same as you're to ask me about some individual's taxes. I—you know, they're taxpayers and we can't share that information.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Are they included in the 55 per cent?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is the amount of payroll tax—I don't think it is, but I'll just ask the question—is the amount included in the federal transfer amount?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, it is not.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The forecast payroll tax revenue increased by nearly \$18 million from Budget 2010 to Budget 2011, and I'm just wondering if the minister—again, we've got an increase in revenues from taxation in Manitoba, which, I think, is indicative of more jobs and the economy doing quite well. If that's the case, then where, I mean—are we on a boom day or a bust day? Sorry, now we're back into—*[interjection]*

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There are—our population is growing. There are more investments, and there are more people working in Manitoba than ever before. Wages have increased and, of course, as wages increase, there will be an increase in taxes that are paid as individuals. But, as—there will also be an

increase in the payroll tax—or the health and education levy.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is there any indication of how many full-time employees—how many more there are this year over last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** If you have another question, we can get that answer for you in a minute.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And, you know, again, probably, maybe for the Department of Labour and Immigration, I'm not sure, but I know, I mean, Manitoba has realized a growth in population, and of those, I think, is it roughly 10,000 or—over last year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I think it's a little higher than that, but rather than put a number on the record, I would rather—I'll get the exact number for the member.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, and, I guess, of those I'm just wondering how many are full—like working full-time in Manitoba now. If we could—you could probably find that out, too.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Yes, we can find that out, but there is also a—in some cases, there's a certain amount of training that has to go on, and that's why the—some of the investments that we make in training and settlements to help these individuals is very important. But the objective—the goal is to get the full-time people.

People want to work. They come here; they want to raise their families here; they want to contribute to the economy. And, so, their goal is—their goal, as with other Manitobans, is to find employment and have a better life. But specifically, we can get some of those numbers.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** You know, I'll just leave those questions for now until they—yes, until they come back, and just maybe if I could move to just a couple of quick questions on education property tax and how it's accounted for in the Province's financial statements.

Is the—like, according to—I believe it's page 47 of the Public Accounts, Volume 1, for the year ending March 31st, 2010—I believe that's the right page. But the revenue is shown as \$668 million.

Can the minister indicate if this is—is this number net of tax credits—the education tax credits?

Yes, it's of the—sorry, it's of Public Accounts, Volume 1, for the year ending March 31st, 2010, under revenue by source and education property tax. For the actuals received 2009-10, it was

\$668 million. I'm just wondering if the minister could indicate whether or not that is net of the tax—the education tax credit.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** That's the property tax that school division—that's the money that school divisions receive off the property tax, that amount there.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Sorry, does that flow through your government department, then?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It doesn't flow through the department, but it's a summary number because we're on summary budget.

\* (16:40)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay, so if that number—I mean, how are education taxes accounted for in the budget? You've got the education taxes that you receive off the provincial levy and then you've got an education tax credit that you give back to people. How is it accounted for in the Finance books?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The Education Property Tax Credit that the member is referring to will be an expenditure line in the Department of Education.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So where—so it's a separate line from the revenues received from the education support levy?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Property tax are collected by the school division, and then they're reported here under summary budget. We have to show the whole amount of it. But then—so the school divisions collect it, then government gives a rebate on education tax, and that shows up as an expense line in the Department of Education.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just wondering if the minister would like to revert back to the other questions.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** With regard to full-time employment, March 2011 versus March 2010, there was an increase of 2.3 per cent of full time, and that equals—equates to 11,300 more full-time jobs in Manitoba. Year-to-date, this year from January to March, full-time employment is up by 2.1 per cent.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is that a regular sort of increases or does it fluctuate year to year and how is that reported? Is it reported monthly or annually?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The numbers are—there's a measurement monthly, and these are collected by Stats Canada through their labour market studies. But it's reported on an annual basis because you

could have quite a fluctuation from one month to another. So there's an annual number. But, as I indicated to you earlier, we have some numbers—annual number for—from '11 to '12 was 2.3 per cent; early indications of this year is that we're at about 2.1 per cent. But, you know, that can change.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So are those full-time employees? Would those come from—some of those may have been part-time employees; some of those may be new citizens to the province; some of them may be off of unemployment. Is it a combination of all those? Is there any kind of indication or do they keep track of what percentage come from each of those categories?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** No, I don't think it's broken down in that kind of detail. It's just a record of the number of people that are working full time. But, of course, there will be people that are moving off. There are people that will be moving off EI as jobs come about. There could be people who are in school, have taken some extra training, may have been part time, they could all be included and—but what's counted is the full-time employment.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Is there—just out of curiosity, in terms of new immigrants to Manitoba, is there any indication as to—and I think this is where the question originally came from, not so much how—what the percentage increase is in full-time employees, but is there any kind of tracking on whether or not they're going into full-time jobs, part-time jobs, further education, that sort of thing?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There was about, roughly, 13,500 people that came to Manitoba this year—in the last year, I should say.

About 5,000 of those came under the Provincial Nominee Program, and if they come under the Provincial Nominee Program, that means they have skills that are in demand and they would be going to work very quickly. The—when they come, they usually come as a family. So you can see that if there's 5,000 workers and then if there's spouses and children, they make up a large portion of those new immigrants.

There's a study done by the University of Winnipeg. The University of Winnipeg is—has been doing a study monitoring the people that come and the study shows that most of the people that come to Manitoba, come here to work and they stay in the province.

So that's a pretty significant growth in the population, when you can bring—when people with those kind of skills come and want to raise their families here.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Are there projections for numbers for next year?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The projection is and the goal—our goal is, to try to grow that number every year. Our goal is to raise it to—if we can get it to 20,000 per year, we would like to see that. But—so, we want to see it—it's up—it was at 10,000; it's now over 13,000. Our objective is to continue to see that number grow.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I'm just wondering, is there an indication of the 5,000 full-time employees, what kind of a tax bracket, on average, would they be in? Is there a breakdown of that in terms of the average earning, I guess?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The people that come, come with a wide range of skills. Generally, they have skills that are—well, they do have skills because they're finding work. But it's a wide range and to say specifically what tax bracket or what wage level they are at, is—we don't have that information. It varies from—with employers, it depends on what kind of work they've got, where they fit in—so, specifically—we know that the majority of them are—have skills and I would expect that many of them would be in the trades.

\* (16:50)

So you could figure out where they would average out but we don't have—we don't track the individuals as to which tax bracket they would fall into. But what is tracked through Labour and Immigration is whether they continue to work in this province, whether they—or stay in this province; that is more of what is tracked. There is—there are people that work—there's a settlement program to help people establishing themselves in the communities.

And the other thing is that communities are very good. I've talked to some people in some of the communities where these immigrants have landed, and communities are very welcoming, and that also helps them settle into those communities.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So is there any move to sort of—I mean, I know the federal government does a census, and is there any kind of indication to—you know, or any kind of movement towards, just in order for our own curiosity, where—to what trades they might be going into, to try and track that somehow and to find

out, you know, where the majority, what kind of tax brackets they are falling into or earnings—like, what the average family earning would be in most of the people who are moving here?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** You know, there is probably some tracking, but that would be work that Labour and Immigration would do; it wouldn't be work that this department is doing.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, and I recognize I was probably going a fine line there with respect to these questions, but I appreciate the minister getting back to me, because it does sort of give us an indication about potential future growth and revenues for the province in the way of taxation and that kind of thing. So it's relevant, but I appreciate you, the minister, answering some of these questions.

I will move on to—when it comes to personal income taxes, and I have had a dialogue back and forth with the minister on this before, but I do have particular concern with—particularly, I mean, if we're looking at a two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year, and again, page C28-C29 of the budget books, if you look at someone in Manitoba earning—or they pay \$3,042 in income taxes, compared to pretty much every other province with the exception of Québec. We seem to be, you know, those people, those two-earner family of four earning \$60,000 a year seem to be paying more than every other province across Canada with the exception of Québec. And I know the minister has indicated in the past—and they've wanted to even strive towards being the middle of the pack, but we seem to be falling behind here.

I wonder if the minister can indicate what the plan is to ensure that she gets back on track and at least puts us in the middle of the pack with respect to the taxes that these hard-working Manitobans are paying in our province.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** When you—the member talked about the family of four—\$60,000, and when you look at that family of four, you have to look at—you have to take into consideration everything. You have to look at their property tax credits, their property taxes, their provincial sales tax—all of the things that are listed in that, and then you have to get to the bottom of the line—bottom line, and when you get to the bottom line, Manitoba is in the top three.

So, no, I don't want to get to the middle of the pack; I want to keep Manitoba in the top three by looking at all of the things. You have to look at the

cost of living in this province, the cost of your utilities, your costs of your insurance. If you take all of those things into consideration, Manitoba, in almost every category, comes out in the top three.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I guess when it comes down to it, what concerns me is just the level of taxation that they are paying relative to other provinces, and often when people are deciding where to relocate or to locate if they're moving across the country—and I believe we have net interprovincial out-migration right now; I'm not sure exactly what the numbers are and I won't ask here because I'm sure that's probably the Department of Labour as well—but I would think that we'd want to be concerned about why people are—why we have a movement, a net provincial—interprovincial out-migration from Manitoba, which means more people are leaving for provinces outside Manitoba than are coming to Manitoba from other provinces.

And so, when I look at those numbers and I look at this, I mean, I think people sort of look at the taxation, the levels of taxation and—I'm just not sure, is the—property taxes is here; provincial sales tax, okay—but when it comes down to it, in terms of the earnings, you know, I'm sort of wondering why, you know, why do we have a net interprovincial out-migration in our province. Why does the minister think that that's happening?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** You know, you can't just pick out one part of it and talk about out-migration.

You—the-Manitoba's population is growing faster than any other jurisdiction. When you look at people that are coming to this country, Manitoba is the destination of choice. Our out-migration is probably the lowest it has been in years. So as the economy grows, or if there's jobs, people come here.

But people will move. People may decide that when they retire they want to go to Victoria where it's warmer. Somebody may decide—I just met a couple who had been in BC with one of their children for many years; they've decided to come back to Manitoba to be closer to some other grandchildren. Our society is mobile, but our out-migration is not at a higher level than it has been. Our population is growing. Our unemployment rate is low, and—but, you know, some people may want to move. There may be a certain education that you have that maybe there's only one particular place where you can go for that kind of career.

But, on the whole, I'm quite pleased at our population growth and that so many people are choosing to live in Manitoba and that our out-migration interprovincially is at one of its lowest levels.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Sorry, I just thought of it now and I—just in the comparison of personal costs and taxes—maybe I'm just not seeing it here—is the land transfer tax included in this as well? I don't see it here. Is it somewhere included in there?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The assumption is, in these numbers, that they already own their house. That's the assumptions that are made and—

**Mrs. Stefanson:** So if someone's—I guess—yes, I'll get into talking, maybe leave these numbers then and just to talk a little bit. I know we're perhaps running out of time today, but a quick question about the land transfer tax. Is this something—is there a land transfer tax in other provinces across Canada, and if so, which ones?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** There are taxes and fees in every province.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And how do they compare with Manitoba?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Nevakshonoff):** The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

## JUSTICE

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** The Committee of Supply will now please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume considerations of the Estimates for the fine Department of Justice.

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

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Just to follow up on some of the questions asked by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and his colleague from Portage la Prairie, we've been able to pull together some answers to questions. There may be some other things yet to provide; they may give rise to some questions, but three things:

First of all, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) had asked a number of questions just in the last minutes of Estimates on Friday.

He had asked about the resources for Crown attorneys in Portage. I can advise that there are some planned resource additions for Portage. The intention is to add one additional Crown for the Portage la Prairie court centre, expanding the number of lawyers from four to five, for the fiscal year 2011-2012.

Secondly, in terms of operations of the court, the number of cases carried by the Crown attorneys in Portage has been reduced, as one of the circuit points that Portage used to cover, namely Stonewall, was moved from Portage to be handled by Winnipeg Crowns. So both of those moves will assist in Portage.

And it's impossible to compare averages given the different makeup of cases, but we did recognize that additional resources were needed, and the increased funding for Crowns—the additional Crown positions—will include additional resources to the Portage office to fairly balance the workload, not just for Portage, but in all regions of the province.

The member for Portage la Prairie had also asked about the provincial court facility in Portage. We know there are some challenges in that facility, specifically in the holding area, and we don't have any immediate plans to be able to resolve that. We'll continue requiring the good work of sheriffs and Corrections and courts to manage those situations in Portage.

Now, one of the things the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) had asked was an analysis of hotel costs. So my staff has gone back through to try to analyze hotel costs for the last complete year, and I'll just go through and I'll try as best as I can to give a general explanation of why hotels were used.

Best Western Charterhouse, the amount was \$32,209. I'm told that's the hotel generally used for witnesses when they come to Winnipeg to testify. It's quite close to the downtown courthouse.

At the Delta, there was a charge of \$19,824. That is generally a hotel used for Crown conferences when we bring together Crowns from across the province.

The Fort Garry Hotel, \$21,464. Generally, that is a hotel used by the judiciary, by our judges for conferences and also some events here in Winnipeg.

The Hampton Inn charges, \$23,478. I understand that's used for Crown conferences, for training of regional court staff and for training of JJPs, judicial justices of the peace.

The Humphrey Inn, \$9,873. I'm told that was used for interviews and for staff training.

Place Louis Riel, \$25,239, used for Aboriginal court worker and community justice training.

So that total for Winnipeg was \$132,087.

Three other components of the hotel costs, staff training for custody and probation staff totalled \$187,150; hotels for the witness program, \$86,275; and the largest single item is for the circuit court and general travel, that's \$222,268.

The member for Steinbach also asked a number of questions from the Public Accounts, and I can go through and I'll put on the record the particular item and a brief explanation. I appreciate the member for Steinbach might have some follow-up questions that we'll try to provide.

Acme Sport and Promotion, \$27,628. That was for Corrections sweatshirts and T-shirts for inmates. There's some clothing that's made within correctional facilities. There's some that is sourced outside.

Alberta Health Services, \$16,200. That was some Corrections training, Train the Trainer modules. Circle of Courage communications, \$15,922. That was for training at Agassiz Youth Centre at the Manitoba Youth Centre.

EXCO Ventures, \$51,882, that was for Corrections for the CCTV security equipment and maintenance.

The Fat Boy restaurant in The Pas, \$29,345, that was incurred by The Pas Correctional Centre, prisoner meals. I am told that was bag lunches for inmates being transported between the northern communities like The Pas and Thompson.

\*(15:00)

Globalstar Canada Satellite, \$6,099, incurred by Corrections in courts, satellite phones for use in those remote areas where cell phones and BlackBerrys do not work.

The very interestingly named Gollamudi Krishna Mountain View, \$28,812, that is actually an

information system to software licence for Wakesoft software, and I'm told that is part of the software that is going to be required for the new computer system for the Maintenance Enforcement Program that we—I appreciate we might be discussing today or tomorrow.

International Personnel Management, \$25,136, incurred by Corrections, the purchase of written tests regarding the hiring of correctional officers.

MD Charlton, \$36,486, for Corrections in courts. These were restraints, being handcuff and leg irons, and security apparel such as masks, duty belts and flashlights.

Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations BC, \$234,838, incurred by prosecutions. That was salary recovery for the outside prosecutor that was brought in for the Stobbe trial.

Panasonic Canada, \$17,352, that was photocopies and—photocopier and fax rental.

Reclaiming Youth International, \$50,922, training for Agassiz Youth Centre and Manitoba Youth Centre.

Servo Electronics, \$54,150, incurred by Corrections for security system repair and maintenance.

One that we've looked at carefully, it comes up as Sir Hugh John Macdonald Memorial Hospital, that is actually for Macdonald Youth Services, as best as we can tell, the total cost was \$206,365. We're told that was incurred by Corrections—\$23,742 of that is attributable to the Fine Option program, \$182,623 was for grants.

Supremex Incorporated, \$32,288. I'm told that was victim assistance for envelopes.

Supreme Basics in Regina, \$20,731, for courts' office supplies, file folders, binders, glue sticks and pens.

There may be a couple of other items that I haven't been able to provide information for, and I'll try to get that to the member as soon as possible.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I thank the minister for putting those facts onto the record, and for his staff for spending some time in gathering them. I wasn't expecting everybody to be spending their weekend doing that work, but whatever time it took, I appreciate the effort it took to get that forward.

There were, I think, a couple of questions, sort of, left at the last minute on Friday morning, one regarding recidivism and the most recent recidivism stats that the department has. Can the minister provide those?

**Mr. Swan:** The department has been able to pull together recidivism figures. They've got rates as of March 31, 2011, and we've been looking across the country to recidivism rates and also how recidivism is calculated. In Manitoba, the recidivism rate is determined by the number of people who've come out of serving a particular sentence being charged with an offence within the last two years. There really isn't any uniform reporting across Canada. For example, the federal corrections services, as I understand it, defines recidivism as people being convicted and returned to their facilities, which is a very different—yes, returned to their own facilities.

So there's no common way to do this across Canada. So, having said that, for Manitoba, recidivism rates as of March 31, 2010, uses—sorry, 2011, uses people with the base year of 2008-2009 for whom we have a two-year history. There's seven different categories of sentences. First is those serving adult conditional sentences; their recidivism rate, defined the fairly aggressive way we define that in Manitoba, was 33 per cent. Second category is adults on probation or serving probation-type sentences; their recidivism rate was 38 per cent. The third is youth who have probation; their recidivism rate, 55 per cent. Youth in deferred custody—and we had a little discussion about this the other day: deferred custody is actually code for conditional sentence for youths, which is something which exists under the Youth Criminal Justice Act; that recidivism rate, 77 per cent. For adult custody in provincial facilities, the recidivism rate is 71 per cent. For youth in open custody, recidivism rate, 88 per cent, and for youth in secure custody, 90 per cent have been charged with another offence within the first two years after coming out of custody.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister and the staff for that response. We'll return to questions around recidivism yet.

I'd also asked about conditional sentences and the number of people serving conditional sentences in the province. Do they have the statistics on those?

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Swan:** Okay, for 2010-2011, the last full year, I've been told the total number of individuals who've

been given a conditional sentence: for male adults, a total 664; for female adults, 166. For a number which doesn't quite add up, so I'll confirm that. The total I have is 831. It should be 830, but if there's anything material on that I'll let you know.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Does he have the statistics for the year prior on conditional sentences as well?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I do. For 2009-2010, the total number of males who received a conditional sentence, 636. For adult females it was slightly higher, 168, for a total of 804.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I thank the minister and staff for that.

I don't follow federal politics sometimes as closely as some people accuse me of doing it. But, you know, the changes that were done federally, in terms of the restrictions on conditional sentences, have they sort of worked their way through the system so that we'd see a change in the numbers? I don't remember exactly when the law was enacted, and what change you might see in Manitoba as a result of that.

**Mr. Swan:** I think the member is right. The impact of the changes to which sentences can attract conditional sentences are still working their way through the system. I'm told that the way that it works is that it's the date of the offence that determines whether an accused is still eligible for a conditional sentence, not the day the charge was laid, not the day the sentence is made.

So I think there'll still be some more progress as we go forward. When we get to talking about the two-for-one credit, which I expect we will, I think you'll see the same kind of result, that it's taking some time to get the kind of results that we want.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is there a sense from the department of when we might be able to get far enough downstream where we'll start to see those numbers come down, or is there an expectation that the numbers will come down? Has that analysis sort of been done?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, certainly, it is a challenge for Corrections to try and determine that. It—I suppose it depends what charges wind up coming before the courts and what happens with those cases. So we're not really forecasting a major change either up or down in the number of conditional sentences, but, of course, we'll keep reviewing it each year and see where we're going.



**Mr. Goertzen:** So is the minister suggesting that he wouldn't expect to see much of a change any time soon because of the fact that it's delayed and people are—have to be charged under the new law, or is he just not really ever expecting much of a change as a result of the federal changes in Ottawa?

**Mr. Swan:** You know, we're—because of the difficulty in all the different factors that go into it, and we're certainly expecting there is a chance the number will trend downward, conditional sentences won't disappear. Of course, they've been taken away as a possible outcome in some cases; they continue to be available for others. So I think I agree with the member for Steinbach that we should see some decline, but it's going to be probably fairly modest in the next year or two.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister take some time in providing what the current—both the rated capacities for the different provincial correctional centres are in Manitoba and then the current number who are in those facilities and any planned expansions that are happening and the number of beds that'll add to each facility as we go forward. I know that might take a bit of time and that's fine.

\*(15:20)

**Mr. Swan:** I'll start by going through the institutional rated capacity and the amount of people in there as of April 29, and then I'll talk about the Corrections capacity at current and future. So there are four places where youth are being held: two major ones and two smaller ones that are connected with other institutions.

There's the Agassiz Youth Centre out in Portage: rated beds at 148, and as of April 29th, there were 113 youth in custody. Manitoba Youth Centre here in Winnipeg: rated beds, 150; as of the 29th, 136 in custody. Of those in custody, 105 were males, 45 were females. Out in Agassiz, it's only males out there.

There's also The Pas youth unit in which there are four rated beds. There were two individuals in custody there. Then Brandon youth unit: six rated beds, one youth in custody there.

Then for the adult centres, there are seven. The Brandon Correctional Centre rated beds: 248. Right now, population 308, consisting of 294 males and eight females. Dauphin Correctional Centre rated beds: 61; in-house population, 87, being 83 males and four females. The Headingley Correctional Centre rated beds: 485; in-house population, 767, all

males. Milner Ridge Correctional Centre at rated beds: 300; in-house population, 344, all males. Portage Correctional Centre rated beds: 35; in-house population, 65, of course, all women. The Pas Correctional Centre rated beds: 74; in-house population, 164, being 152 males and 12 females. And the Winnipeg Remand Centre, rated beds, 289; in-house population, 384, consisting of 292 males and 92 females.

Now, you had asked about capacity, current and future. I guess I had read through all of those, those bed capacities. In the past year we've been able to open 84 more beds out at the Brandon Correctional Centre. And at the Agassiz Youth Centre, in the past year, we've added 48 beds out there. Ongoing, we have the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre. There's a 64-bed expansion under way, with the hope of it being operational this summer. There is also a further 150-unit expansion, which is well into the planning stages.

Construction is well under way at The Pas Correctional Centre, which would add another 40 beds to capacity. And, as well, there is the new women's correctional centre, which is being built in Headingley. That facility will have 195 beds; it will replace the current 35 bed—beds available in Portage. It will also take off some of the pressure. As you'll note, when I was reading out the figures, there's a certain number of women being held at the Remand Centre here in Winnipeg, and the hope is that we'll also relieve some of the pressure on that facility.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Just in terms of the population numbers, and I appreciate the fact that they're provided here by the minister through his staff, or by the staff through his minister. In the past we've asked for the numbers and usually on a bimonthly or quarterly basis, and received them from the department fairly quickly. More recently, we've seemed to have had to have been doing FIPPAs and go through that process. There have been some—a commitment by a previous minister that, you know, when we needed the numbers we could simply call and get them because they were compiled on a regular basis by department staff. Is that something that the minister will afford us when we ask for them on an infrequent basis?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I think what we'll continue with the current practice. That way, instead of being accused of it sitting on the minister's desk or sitting in some bureaucrat's office, you got some certainty with the way it's being done right now.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I don't know that I've ever accused—well, not in terms of population numbers or something—sitting on the minister's desk. I wouldn't want—I can't remember accusing him another time of something else sitting on his desk, or I may have, so I don't want to go that far.

But, certainly, in terms of—the staff seem to think maybe I have, so I'll withdraw that portion of it. But certainly in terms of the population numbers, I don't know that I have. And I think it's one of those—it's the same reason, I think, that MLAs are afforded the opportunity to go through institutions and to see what's happening is—it's just because it's a significant thing to have somebody in a facility, and I think it's helpful for the public to have that information on a more timely basis than on a FIPPA way of giving.

If I give the minister my assurance that I won't accuse him or a bureaucrat of having it sitting on his desk, would he be more amenable to having that information provided when we request it?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, for now we'll follow the existing practice, but I will take the member's comments under consideration.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In terms of the population, can the minister indicate what the breakdown is, sentence versus remand? Obviously, those in the Remand Centre are on remand, but I know there are others that are off at Headingley. Is there a—used to be like a 60-40 split, or something in that range. Can you give an indication what it is today?

\*(15:30)

**Mr. Swan:** Actually, the remand numbers that the member was just talking about were actually tipping over 70 per cent at some points. This is where, perhaps, the ending the two-for-one credit will provide some relief, as well as a lot of the work that's being done to move along trials, especially for those individuals in custody. But what I'll do is I'll give you the numbers. You can refer back to the numbers that I gave for each facility. I can give you the number of individuals that are there as sentenced individuals and remand individuals. I have handy the percentage numbers for both the youth and the adult population. If you want to get into any additional breakdown of that, you'll have to use your calculator as we figure it out.

At the Agassiz Youth Centre, there's 72 in-house sentenced and 41 in-house on remand. You'll recall the other day I said it was primarily a sentenced facility, but there are some individuals on remand

there. The one individual who's at the Brandon youth unit is on remand; at the Manitoba Youth Centre, 15 sentenced, 121 on remand; The Pas youth unit, one sentenced, one on remand. So we have, total in the youth system, 88 individuals sentenced, 165 remand. It's a breakdown of 35 per cent sentenced, 65 per cent on remand.

At the adult correction facilities: Brandon, sentenced 137, remand 171; at Dauphin, sentenced 63, remand 24; for Headingley, 287 sentenced, 480 remand; at Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, 154 sentenced, 190 remand; at the Portage Correctional Centre, 43 sentenced, 22 on remand; The Pas Correctional Centre, 50 sentenced, 114 on remand; and at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, 56 sentenced, 328 on remand. So, for the adult correctional centres, 790 sentenced, 1,329 on remand breaks down to approximately 37 per cent sentenced, 63 per cent on remand, which is, frankly, a little lower than we've experienced in the past couple of years.

**Mr. Goertzen:** What's the nature of the offenders who are at the Remand Centre who are sentenced but at the Remand Centre?

**Mr. Swan:** The numbers I've given are really a snapshot of the population on a given day. So I'm—I understand there would be three main reasons why there could be a sentenced individual at the Remand Centre. Number 1, there could be individuals who are sort of dual status; they've been sentenced on one charge, but they may still have outstanding charges on others. There may be some individuals at the Remand Centre who are being assessed, and after that assessment is complete, they'll be sent out to a correctional centre elsewhere in Manitoba to serve out their sentence. They may also be what are called inmate trustees; those are some individuals who may work in areas such as laundry or food services to—because as much as possible, there's inmates that are used to fulfil their functions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And now, the minister was suggesting we'd get to the discussion about the two-for-one legislation. I think we've arrived at that point.

What's the expectation from the department as we move forward in the new legislation in Ottawa? Is there any sort of analysis in terms of what they might expect on the breakdown between remand and sentence population in Manitoba?

**Mr. Swan:** All right. Well, you know, it's not an easy question to answer for a number of reasons. I

mean, first of all, as with the last issue we were discussing, the new legislation still does not apply for a number of individuals who are making their way through the system because of the date of their offence.

It stands to reason that the ending of the two-for-one credit should change the population to some extent. We believe that it's quite possible that it will lead to a change in certain practices in the way that lawyers advise their clients. We believe that it may move some individuals to dispose of their charges more quickly than it did before, which is a positive thing, for our numbers. We think that, as more cases work their way through the system, there will be more sentences in excess of two years ordered, which will mean more people moving from provincial correctional centres to federal correctional centres. That would reduce the pressure on provincial institutions. At the same time, as there are more individuals sentenced, some of them will be sentenced to longer periods of time and yet still be within the provincial correctional centres.

So there's a number of different factors that come into play, so I can't point to a specific analysis or some formula or calculation that I can give with any assurance. We think it's a positive step, as I think the member for Steinbach does too, but it's really too early to make any real conclusions.

Again, I do note that the percentage on remand is now down to 63 per cent. That is lower than it's been in some time. Is the ending of the two-for-one credit a part of it? It very well might be. Are the rules in conditional sentences—does that play a part of it? It might, but, that would likely be a small impact. It's simply too early at this point to be able to give a more complete answer.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister and his staff.

I do certainly support the changes that were made federally. If anybody's still undecided of how they'd want to vote in this room, that might be something they'd want to consider. I think it was a positive change that the federal government brought forward and we'll see if it has more of an impact.

I know the minister's predecessor, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), was more adamant that that was the reason the remand numbers were high in Manitoba, and, as time will tell, if it will have the impact that he predicted that it might.

Just on the issue of remand, there was an order-in-council signed by the minister, I believe it

was March 23rd of this year, to the estate of Morris—sorry, the estate of Christopher Holoka, who, I believe, died at the Remand Centre some time ago, probably four or five years ago. Can the minister indicate, was that a payout as a result of a wrongful death claim?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Swan:** It was indeed the settlement of a claim against the Province of Manitoba. I'm going to have to get some advice from my department as to what I can actually say about the particulars, but if I can do that by tomorrow at the same time, I'll try and put something on the record. If not, I'll provide that to the member.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I believe that there was an inquest into the gentleman's death conducted by the Chief Medical Examiner, which is, under our current Estimates, under review.

There were probably recommendations coming forward from that inquest. Does the minister or his staff know if those recommendations were all followed through on and adhered to?

**Mr. Swan:** I'll try to find the member that information and see what I can give him tomorrow.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that. I'm glad I was able to stump the staff on one question today. It's a rare accomplishment for me when I'm able to do that.

I wonder if the minister could indicate the costs of incarceration for adults and youth per day in the Manitoba corrections system.

**Mr. Swan:** The most recent numbers that I can provide are from 2009-2010. I'm told that the daily inmate cost per diem for salary and operating for adult custody is \$165, and the daily inmate cost per diem for salary and operating for youth custody is \$333.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister and his staff for that response. In terms of the things that happen within our prison system, our corrections system, is there a listing the member—or the minister can provide today or in the days ahead of the different programs that inmates, both in the adult and the youth side, are able to access? That would obviously include recreational activities, drug rehab programs and any sort of programs, education programs, any sort of programs that inmates both on the youth or in the adult side are eligible to apply for or to participate in.

**Mr. Swan:** I could take a shot at it this afternoon, but I think I'd feel more comfortable letting my staff put together a complete list that I can put onto the record tomorrow afternoon.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I'd appreciate that, and maybe just in which facilities those programs are offered. In terms of drug treatment programs within the prison system, does the minister have any idea what percentage of the population—and we'll just maybe use the adult male population in the province—what percentage would actually participate in the drug programs that are offered within the adult male facilities?

**Mr. Swan:** Okay, I'm afraid I'm not really able to provide an answer for that this afternoon. There may be some challenges in providing that number within the department, but when we come back and we explain the different kinds of programs out there, that may move us along and it may allow the member to ask some more focused questions once he's got that in hand.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I take the comments by the minister to heart. I know sometimes I lose focus, and if I do, I'll rely on him to provide that focus back for me.

In terms of other things that are happening in prison, I know Saskatchewan—it was a year or two ago—announced they'd be charging prisoners for the use of the telephone, for telephone privileges. Is that the sort of thing that happens in Manitoba already or how do telephone privileges work in our correctional institutions here?

\*(15:50)

**Mr. Swan:** All right, well, it's yet another example where Saskatchewan is following Manitoba's lead. In Manitoba the cost of telephone services is effectively paid by inmates. That's done in two ways. First of all, there is a general inmate trust account which is set up in each facility, each adult facility, and that money is raised by the sale of items in the canteen. So if inmates have—if they purchase something, all the profits from that go into that fund which pays for telephone. As well, inmates can have their own trust accounts which families may sometimes make a deposit to, to assist them with buying things at the canteen.

So I understand that's the case at each facility. If there are any facilities which for some reason aren't sustainable, I'll try to provide more details on that. But, generally speaking, it's the profits from the canteen that pay for the telephones.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that response. Glad to see Saskatchewan's following us, and, hopefully, that happens in football this year as well. The—that's not in the Estimates and now I'm getting called by the Clerk if I keep going down that line of questioning any further.

The other issue in Saskatchewan I believe, related to that, and I think they actually brought it in in legislation—I stand to be corrected—was that they were allowing greater access, or greater ability to monitor the phone calls that inmates were making. Is that something that already happens in Manitoba or was that done by legislation or is that regulation or is it just practice?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I can tell the member that we do have the legislative power to monitor inmate telephone calls. We've been doing that for many, many years and, again, it's an example where our friends in Saskatchewan have, in this case, actually come to Manitoba to discuss that issue and that's resulted in a change next door.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In our experience with that legislation, has that resulted in good intelligence? Has it prevented possible escapes, drug issues, any issues on the outside? I guess there's a whole list of things it could prevent, but has it had that sort of impact?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I can tell the member that, indeed, the information that's obtained from those phone calls is of great interest to Corrections and, also, in many cases to police.

It's part of what I would call an overall robust intelligence capacity at Manitoba Corrections. As a matter of fact, at the last meeting of the western attorneys general, I was very proud to have a few members from my department coming and presenting to the other attorneys general and solicitors general on the capacity we have here in Manitoba.

So I—certainly we do use that information that's obtained and, again, not just for Corrections, but if there's something that can be helpful to police, Manitoba Corrections is quite happy to turn that over and to share the information.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I'm glad your staff was able to make a presentation at the last meeting. I also often speak highly of the staff in the Department of Justice here in the province, and I'm glad the minister obviously shares those views, and I'm sure there are others, as well, who do.

In terms of—I think I had asked sort of at the end of the Estimates process last time about television privileges in prison. This is one that I often get asked by people, and I'm not sure if it's a misconception or what it is and probably just because people, you know, don't have the opportunity to go to prison—in the general public—very often, which is a good thing.

What sort of television privileges to inmates have? What kind of package are they accessible in terms of the channels that they can access?

**Mr. Swan:** I know—probably the member shares with me, if we had a dollar for every Manitoban who believes and has told us that inmates have their own TVs, the member and I could probably afford to buy better suits. I can—it's an equal comment for both the member for Steinbach and myself.

\* (16:00)

Of course, as the member knows, inmates don't have individual televisions. There are televisions provided at each of the facilities, and for the adult facilities TVs are provided, but the actual cost of the television service, the channels, are, again, paid from the inmate trust accounts, which is the money that's reached as a profit from the sale of items in the canteen.

So I'm told that Brandon, the contractor—the cable or satellite's provided by Westman Communications. At each of Dauphin, Portage, The Pas and the Winnipeg Remand Centre, it's Shaw. At Headingley, it's Shaw Direct satellite; and MRCC, there's satellite service. I don't have with me which one, but that all comes out of money raised from inmates.

And I should also add that that generally means there would be one TV for each range or for each pod. On average that means about 40 inmates with one television, which, especially this time of year, means that if you're not a hockey fan, you're probably going to be out of luck.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm going to refrain from comment on the suit issue.

And with a question I had from a constituent, actually, who has a relative that's unfortunately gone through some legal issues and has gone through the prison system or the jail system here in Manitoba—he was indicating—and this goes back a couple years, but he wanted me to ask the question about clearance when you're visiting somebody in prison.

I think the individual, his son had been remanded at BCC and at HCC, and he indicated that he had to sort of go through a clearance process each time, that each facility had its own sort of clearance process for who could visit the facilities. And he thought that it'd be more efficient to—sort of a central system where you got cleared once and then you were able to visit at the other facilities as opposed to having to get cleared each time, because I guess there's a—I've not gone through the process, but I guess there's a time issue in terms of getting cleared to go and visit somebody.

Now, this did go back a couple of years, so he thought maybe the issue had been resolved but he wanted me to ask in terms of whether or not you still had to get cleared individually at each provincial facility to visit somebody, even if it's the same person they've just moved from facility to facility.

**Mr. Swan:** I can say that there is no central clearance process. Each facility runs its own system.

Now, if the member has more details on what the challenge of this were, I'd be happy to hear that. My understanding is that it's a fairly basic yet important system which requires any prospective visitor to provide their photo ID and to register.

My department tells me that, even if they could have a central system, they likely wouldn't move to one. Each correctional facility believes it's important to have that—sort of that personal contact to make sure the person who is coming to visit is actually who they say they are so that they can carefully monitor visitors. Although, obviously, many visitors to correctional centres are simply family members who want to spend time with a loved one, unfortunately, there are also some visitors who have very different ideas when they come to the correctional centre. So it is—each facility maintains control over the visiting system.

Again, if there's specific concerns about what steps needed to be done, I'd be happy to do that formally or informally for the member.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I appreciate that. I will pass that on to my constituent. Actually, I think it was a constituent of the member for La Verendrye's (Mr. Lemieux), but I'll pass that on. And, if he wants to follow up on that and the difficulties he had, maybe he can do that through me or through his MLA. But he wanted me to raise that and get a bit of a perspective in terms if that's still the case in Manitoba.

On the issue of accidental releases, can the minister indicate, over the last year, if there have been any accidental releases; if they have, on the dates that they occurred?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, the question of accidental releases is certainly a challenge for Manitoba Corrections, as it is for other jurisdictions across Canada. I don't have the specifics on dates of when release has occurred.

I understand from my department that in 2010 there were nine incidents where individuals were released when they should not have been. Each one of those incidents results in, obviously, a meeting to try and decide what the problem is, whether there is something which can be done to make sure it doesn't happen again. One of the things that came back, because we are concerned about this, was that it's no one particular issue or no one particular error that can be pointed to. As in other provinces, there seems to be a systemic challenge with dealing with this.

So there's a couple of things which have been done to deal with accidental releases. First of all, courts have implemented an additional stage of review by a senior court staff person. After court documents have been processed by a unit called C4, especially those files where charges include both Queen's Bench and provincial courts matters, because there always is the possibility that the two levels of court—the information doesn't always come over at the same time or in the same way. That's one thing that's been identified as a challenge by staff.

We've given direction to all members of that unit, the C4 unit, to ensure they thoroughly review all court documentation on an accused while processing the paperwork on an accused person.

Thirdly, we've ensured that all remand warrants are forwarded from the correctional institutions to the courts daily. The reason for doing that is to ensure paperwork isn't missed, lost or duplicated, which I understand has been the cause of some of the accidental releases.

Fourthly, we're also going through to hire a director of training to focus more on making sure that employees have the tools they need for these things not to happen. I understand the position's already been written and submitted for expedited classification with Compensation Services. The idea is then to second or appoint a candidate on an acting basis while that works its way through the system.

Fifthly, we've also implemented further outreach and additional training of correctional staff, because sometimes information may not be processed correctly, which can result in challenges.

And finally, we're continually reviewing and analyzing the C4 unit to make sure that the staffing makes sense and the appropriate classified and designated staff comprise the units.

We've talked to a bunch of other Canadian jurisdictions, including BC, Saskatchewan, Québec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Alberta. They have also had challenges with accidental releases, and all those jurisdictions are offering solutions and recommendations that we and the other provinces are considering and reviewing.

\*(16:10)

Having said that, I don't think that the number of accidental releases that have happened is acceptable. In each case where there's public safety involved, the police are immediately notified, and in most of those cases, people are returned to custody quite quickly, but I don't think it is acceptable. People do have questions when there is—when there are accidental releases, and I have directed my department to conduct an external review. You want to have somebody come in from outside with a fresh set of eyes to take a look at how we do things in Manitoba. The terms of reference for that review are now being conducted, and the intention is that on top of the steps already being taken, that will result in some recommendations to keep doing whatever we can in Manitoba to make sure that releases don't occur.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for his response.

Who's been contracted to do the external review?

**Mr. Swan:** The terms of reference are being developed, so nobody has been contracted as yet. But we will be making sure it's an appropriate senior person from another jurisdiction who can come to Manitoba and give us some ideas on anything that could be done more effectively to try and prevent these unfortunate releases from happening.

**Mr. Goertzen:** When would the minister expect that the selection of a person to do that review would take place?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, the intention is to have somebody under contract soon. We just have to make sure that all the appropriate processes for contracting are followed, but we certainly want to have somebody in

the near future to start looking at our system, providing the wisdom they may have from their own jurisdiction on top of the work that's already been done to share information with other provinces.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister indicated that there was nine accidental releases in 2010. Can he inform me how many there have been in 2011, if any, to date, to May 1st?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes. I can advise the latest number I have is that there's been five incidents so far in 2011, which frankly was the reason why I've directed an external review to be conducted.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can he indicate where the accidental releases happened this year? Would they be at the correctional facilities or is it in the courts that it's happening or transportation in-between?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I don't have with me a breakdown, so to speak, of where these are occurring. I think it's important to realize that because of the nature of the communication between Corrections and Courts, even though the release may happen from a correctional centre, it may be based on a failure to properly communicate the information from Courts from the C4 unit or from an individual court.

One of the challenges is that many individuals have several charges against them, some which suggest they should be in custody and others that don't. They may go to court on a given day. They may clear up some of the charges but not others, and ultimately it's a—I would say a failure of communication to make sure that the correct information is provided.

So, even though I expect, if we counted it, the majority of accidental releases would be from correctional facilities, I don't want to leave the impression that it's the fault of the correctional facilities. I do believe it's the way the information is presented, the way it's analyzed and the way it's then passed on.

So that will form certainly a portion of what we would like an outside consultant to take a look at.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister inform the committee if there are any of the individuals who were accidentally released who are not back into custody?

**Mr. Swan:** I understand that each of these individuals has been taken back into custody either voluntarily or the police being able to pick them up. All of them are back in custody except for the last

situation which came to the attention of Courts and Corrections on April 18 of this year, so he remains out in the community.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister and his staff for providing that information.

In relation to the individual who was accidentally released on April 18th, was there a public notification by the police on that accidental release?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, you know, whenever one of these unfortunate incidents come to light, we notify the police and then the police decide whether they believe it's appropriate to make a public notification. There's various factors that go into their decision, and we don't tell them what decision they should make.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Goertzen:** So what, then, is the protocol? I mean, obviously public safety would be—I would assume to be the most dominant protocol for police, but do you get to that point where it's just been such a length of time, I would think that maybe some of the people who were accidentally released would realize themselves they were accidentally released and bring themselves back in, and then there's others who have to be apprehended after a couple of weeks. I mean, is there some point where there would be public notification that this person hasn't come back? Is there not a protocol in place that would have that as a factor?

**Mr. Swan:** What I can say is that it's the protocol every time one of these unfortunate incidents happen that we notify the police. The police then make their decision. And the member is right. In some cases, individuals make contact with the system themselves and deal with it. Other times I understand that a call is made to the lawyer that acted for the individual or who still is acting for the individual, which is sometimes a way to get compliance. Sometimes the police may have to take other measures to try and bring the person back into custody.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate when he ordered the external review within his—or asked his department to go ahead and have an external review conducted, and was there a—bad term of words, but a trigger point that, with a particular release, that got the minister's attention? And we've got five this year, a number that isn't a good number. There were nine last year, and so one might—and they're both not acceptable—one might just think that we're on the

same sort of track as last year in some ways, but what was it that caused the minister to order the external review?

**Mr. Swan:** Every time there's an accidental release, the department takes it very seriously. Last July, I understand that the department really put together this action plan to try to prevent as much as possible this from occurring, but when I did learn of the most recent accidental release and I was told that there'd been five of them so far in 2011, I thought it was necessary to enhance the work that the department's been doing and to get an external review done to see if there's other steps that should be taken to improve the way that communication occurs and to try and prevent accidental releases from happening in the first place.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So the minister is indicating there was nothing specific about the individual or the circumstances around the accidental release on the 18th that triggered the external review. It's simply the cumulative number?

**Mr. Swan:** I think that's fair to say, and in reviewing the accidental releases, the information that I've been given, been told by the department, is that, again, there's not one problem that anybody could point to, to say ah, there it is. All we need to do is change the way this is done or to add another position there. There are probably as many different case studies or as many different circumstances as there's been accidental releases since the start of 2010. So, when I learned of the number, I determined that we simply needed to have an extra set of eyes from outside the province come in and review what we're doing and see if there are some steps that could be taken to improve our results here.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I turn back for a second to the issue of recidivism, and the minister and his staff provided the most recent statistics. Youth recidivism for custody was 90 per cent; adult custody, 71 per cent. And I appreciate the fact the minister talks about the different ways of recording recidivism between Manitoba and other provinces, and it's probably making the case that it's not comparing apples to apples, but regardless of how the measurement is taking place, and I know that Manitoba is—if somebody is recharged within two years after release from a facility, it's still a shocking number. Has the minister ever concerned—considered an external review or some other kind of review in terms of

recidivism and how to reduce recidivism in the province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, the—you know, I guess we could spend a lot of time talking about recidivism and what can be done to try and prevent crime from occurring and working with individuals. As you know, I read the recidivism rates into the record, and, again, Manitoba has one of the more inclusive, you could say, or aggressive policies on what constitutes recidivism. Of course, it includes any further charges against the person in two years. Charges, of course, could include a breach of probation, for example, if someone is out in the community. That breach is a new Criminal Code offence and would be included in the figures. So it may not be a new individual crime; it may be a failure to follow orders. People should follow orders, and Corrections—Probation in particular—work to bring individuals into compliance with their orders. But, if they don't hesitate to move ahead, we're more concerned about getting people into compliance than in what the numbers look like.

I think what has to be remembered is that each of the categories I read out contain, generally, individuals with some very different characteristics. So, for example, the youth numbers, the youth who are sentenced to custody, the recidivism rates are fairly—well, they're very high; at the same time, these are individuals who, if they've been convicted under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, likely have not just committed something which is violent or dangerous, they likely have some major issues in their lives which have been a part of why they happened to be there, and, unfortunately, when they return to their community, to their neighbourhoods, to their families, there's often a number of other factors that impact. I mean, the—I suppose, you know, if we could take it to illogical extremes, we would say that conditional sentences are the most successful measure of corrections practice. The member—neither the member nor I would agree with that. The fact is, though, those individuals who receive conditional sentences are also the ones who are generally the least hardened and who, perhaps, have the least other issues, which would cause them to reoffend.

\* (16:30)

So the numbers are high, but the numbers, at least in Manitoba, are very honest. As I say, we're very open about the criteria we use. It's far different from some other provinces, and it's far different from what the federal government uses. And, again, there's



no national consensus on how to work through those numbers.

So what does—what do the numbers really mean? Well, it—in my view, it displays some of the major problems that there are in dealing with youth who are out of control, youth who may have various issues, both in their own lives and also back in their own communities, that make breaching or make reoffending something that unfortunately happens too often.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I appreciate the minister's defence of the numbers. I—and I do have—appreciate the fact that those numbers are public and that they're there for debate.

But the numbers are the numbers, and whether it's 90 per cent of youth who are reoffending and being charged—and that's just the ones who get caught; I mean, the other 10 per cent just may not have been caught—but the 90 per cent for youth or the 71 per cent for adults is—and it's not so—because the number's not much better for adults; it's not just simply a function of the YCJA. There's problems throughout the system.

I mean, has there been any sort of analysis within the department about how to get this under control, what strategies they have, because it hasn't really improved in the last number of years that we've been getting the statistics? It's sort of stayed at the high rate that it's been at.

And I think one thing we could probably all agree on that what's happening now isn't working. And what is it that the minister would propose that would work, since we continue to have this extraordinarily high reoffence rate?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I mean, this is certainly a challenge, not just in Manitoba but in all jurisdictions across Canada. And in many times it's not so much a function of what goes on or doesn't go on in a correctional facility when somebody's incarcerated there. The real question is: What's available to the person when they return to their community? What support can be given to their families, to their neighbourhoods? What measures are there to integrate, especially with youth offenders returning to school, because many times, of course—well, every time there's a sentence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, there is a requirement that at least some portion of that sentence be spent in the community. There's challenges of young people doing what they're supposed to do in terms of going to school, in

terms of living where they're supposed to live, not associating with people who they're not supposed to associate with.

So the youth numbers, which are the highest, really require, in my view, the broadest approach by all levels of government, and this government has led the way on finding ways to assist young people.

Justice is one of the departments which forms part of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, which brings together nine different portfolios to work on ways, first of all, to turn youth away from being involved in crime in the first place, and that's done through education, that's done through providing more supports to family—really, from birth onward—as well as more targeted supports for at-risk youth.

Within Justice, of course, we know we can turn people away from crime in some ways by things like the Lighthouses program, keeping young people active and busy. For the under-12s who, of course, cannot be charged under Canadian law, we have the Turnabout program, which encourages families to work with under-12s in their family to try and find out the reason for the problem and to get the right services to make sure it doesn't happen again.

It is a challenge for people, though, being released from custody into poverty, perhaps into families where there's not a lot of confidence that they will be attending at school, there's not a lot of confidence that they will be continuing to do the things we want them to do, to avoid negative influences.

That is not a problem only in Manitoba. I can tell the member that when I speak to my colleagues across the country, challenges for youth are huge, and Manitoba is doing as much or, frankly, more than other provinces at trying to get at the heart of these issues.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate what the total amount of outstanding fines are in the province?

*Ms. Sharon Blady, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Swan:** I'm afraid I can't give the kind of clear answer I'd like to this afternoon, so I'm going to ask my staff to pull together some more clear numbers and we can start off on that on—well, tomorrow afternoon.

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

Can you indicate how many registered sex offenders we have in the province of Manitoba?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, it's a national registry created under federal legislation so Manitoba Justice doesn't actually keep those figures or that data so I'm not able to answer the question.

**Mr. Goertzen:** There was a *Maclean's* article in 2008 in January that listed there that the registered number of sex offenders we had in Manitoba was 696, indicating that the registry was maintained by the Province's Integrated High Risk Sex Offenders Unit joint task force, comprised of the RCMP and the Winnipeg police. Is *Maclean's* wrong in indicating that? Not that they're—I wouldn't want to say that *Maclean's* is wrong, but people make mistakes, though.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, I'll have to get back to the member tomorrow with some more information. Again, it's a national registry under federal legislation. Justice doesn't maintain it but I'll see what I can find. I've been reminded that Manitoba, of course, demanded that the federal government move ahead and do this and we were pleased when they did. It was only after Manitoba had threatened to set up its own registry system that we got there. But I will take that question under advisement and see if we can provide a better answer tomorrow.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Appreciate that. Also, in that same *Maclean's* article in the magazine which was January 14th, 2008, if that's helpful, it indicated a non-compliant factor and at that point, there was 83 offenders were non-compliant, I guess, in keeping their registry up to date, which I think is an annual requirement or if somebody moves. So 83 out of what *Maclean's* listed as 696 registered sex offenders—so 12 per cent were non-compliant, and it did indicate that it was the Province's High Risk Sex Offender Unit, the integrated unit that was maintaining that. So, if there's some misunderstanding there, that would be fine. But if the minister can indicate tomorrow, then, what numbers he might have, that would be helpful.

In terms of the mandatory gunshot and stabbing legislation introduced, does he have any indication of how that's working in terms of the number of incidents that have been reported to police, and does the department itself collect that information?

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Swan:** Well, there isn't data collection of that maintained by Justice. The act requires hospitals, nursing stations and similar facilities to report those incidents to police. I can tell you my department, anecdotally, says that the police do confirm that, yes, they do receive that information from health facilities in Manitoba. But we don't have a—we don't have any data on how many times that a report's been made.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I wonder, and we supported the legislation, thought it was a good way to go. I think, actually, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) may have brought forward similar legislation or at least talked about it anyway.

But we have had contact with the WRHA and with Winnipeg Police Service, and nobody seems to be collecting the data. And it seems like something of a lost opportunity in terms of just tracking the number of incidents that happen. If Justice isn't keeping any sort of data, and the police aren't keeping the data, and the health officials aren't keeping the data, does that not sort of diminish, in the minister's mind, some of the value of the legislation?

**Mr. Swan:** The legislation was intended to be clear direction to health-care facilities in Manitoba. They need to be reporting certain kinds of incidents or certain kinds of injuries to police. I can't speak for the health authorities, but we expect that that legislation is being followed and that the police are receiving the kind of information they need.

**Mr. Goertzen:** But, in terms of the minister's job as the Minister of Justice, I mean, would he not find it helpful to have, not a listing by listing of each incident, but perhaps just the total number, so they can determine, you know, how things are going in terms of different sorts of things that are happening in the hospitals, or is it—would he consider it redundant information, maybe?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes, you know, I mean there's no registry that's set up as a result of this. It's a direction that's given to health authorities across Manitoba. I mean, really, the intention is to make sure that in individual cases where someone presents with a gunshot or a stab wound that a report is made to the police. I have not heard, through my department or directly, of any concerns that people have that these kinds of injuries aren't properly being reported to the police. If I heard concerns like that, I would certainly be in contact with my colleague, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), and make sure more clear direction is given. But it's not intended to be a

registry that has numbers. The purpose of the law is to have health-care facilities reporting these kinds of incidents, and there isn't any evidence that would lead me to believe that that's not happening. If the member has any information he wants to bring forward here or any other time, I'd be welcome to receive it.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think the issue was that it just simply wasn't being collected and kept in terms of the total numbers that were coming in.

Moving on to another topic: the issue of deleted warrants or purged warrants is something that arose from—the Winnipeg Police Association, I believe, raised concerns about warrants being deleted.

Can the minister indicate how many warrants were deleted in—I believe that it was 2009 and 2010 when this process was under way?

**Mr. Swan:** As of today, I don't have a reliable number. I mean, cancelling warrants has—something that always happens in the justice system. It occurs for a variety of reasons: if the criminal charges of the accused person have been concluded; if information comes available the accused person has died; or if the main or substantive criminal charges, to which the warrant relates, have been stayed, as they weren't of a serious nature and had been outstanding for such a long time, it'd be difficult to effectively prosecute if the accused person could even be located; if it's no longer in the public interest to proceed with these charges.

There was a review that was undertaken of outstanding warrants in 2009 and 2010. This review, I understand, was conducted under the direction and management of a senior Crown attorney. In 2009, I understand that the exercise was to cancel warrants for charges—or warrants that stemmed from before 1989. I understand the process that was begun in 2010 dealt with warrants that arose from before 1999.

I'm told that the only matters which were cancelled met three established criteria. The first one, which was any charges that involved seriously bodily harm of any nature were excluded, meaning that none of those warrants were cancelled. Secondly, the criteria was that the person could not have been reinvolved in any criminal activity in Manitoba in the intervening period of time. So if, for example, the process that was undertaken in 2009, if anybody had any other criminal activity, any other charges against

them, other warrants from after 1989, their warrants would not be cancelled. For 2010, a similar process, although it would only be those activities that arose after 1999 that would exclude somebody from having their warrants cancelled. The charges and warrants had to be dated 1999 or earlier. Matters after 1999 weren't included in the review, and the challenges, really, are that extremely dated cases are very difficult, if not impossible, to prove, because witnesses had moved, they've been—they've died, information has been lost, or, quite frankly, the victim may have lost interest in the matter through the passage of time.

So, if the system was to become aware of an individual who committed an offence, there is still some ability to restore or to revive charges, at least for indictable offences or hybrid offences, after they've been removed from the system. We're still having some ongoing discussions about whether that should be done on a case-by-case basis or whether prosecutions should take some other approach. But we're still considering what would give Manitobans the most confidence, given that, unfortunately, because of the passage of time, the prospect of actually succeeding in having anybody convicted of an offence that was committed before 1999 is not great.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister indicates that he doesn't have any, sort of, reliable information with him today or that he has confidence in the number of deleted warrants. Is that not something that was kept track of when the deletions were happening, or is it something he can collate and bring together for tomorrow?

**Mr. Swan:** I don't believe there was any record kept. I don't believe it would be something I could provide to the member tomorrow.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And, you know, the minister talks about confidence for the public and I think that that's—it's important—it's an important point he makes. It's something, I think, that many Manitobans—you know, we talk about the justice system. It's not just simply, you know, the four squares of the operation of the system; it's ensuring that people do have that confidence.

Does he not feel that some of that confidence is eroded if he can't even tell Manitobans how many warrants were deleted?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, certainly, public safety is of the utmost importance, and that's why our focus has been

on dealing with individuals who actually pose a risk to Manitobans. That's why, of course, we continued to add police officers across the province each year, which gives the police more resources to go out and act on outstanding warrants. That's why in the budget we've announced the creation of a warrant enforcement squad that'll work shoulder-to-shoulder with police in Manitoba.

And I can tell you, even if these older warrants were in existence, we would not want that warrant enforcement squad to be out there enforcing outstanding warrants for noise bylaw infractions from 1969, which was still on our books. We want police and we want our warrant enforcement squad to be out there dealing with individuals who have outstanding charges, who have outstanding warrants, who pose a substantial and real risk to Manitobans. We think that's the most important thing to do.

Having said that, we'll continue to be discussing the issue of these cancelled warrants and seeing if there's other measures that need to be taken.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And those words would ring surer if it wasn't the police themselves who are raising this concern. I know the minister uses the police as a shield for a decision to do this, but it was the police who raised this as a concern. It wasn't even my—I've sort of fallen in with the police and their concern, but they're the ones who brought this forward and said that this was a problem.

The minister also indicated that victims may not—or may have lost interest in the crimes that were against them related to these warrants. How many victims, then, were contacted in relation to the warrants that were deleted, since he's indicating that one of the rationale was that victims may have lost interest?

**Mr. Swan:** As I've indicated, any charges which involved serious bodily harm were excluded; there were no warrants of that type that were cancelled. As well, anybody who, first of all, from 1989, and secondly, from 1999, who was involved in other criminal matters of any type, they also were not eligible to have their warrants cancelled.

So the decision was taken under the direction and management of a senior Crown attorney to cancel these warrants. Those were the criteria that were used in doing so.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Did the minister know in 2009 and 2010 that this process was under way, or did he learn

about it in the newspaper from one of the concerns that were raised by the Winnipeg Police Association?

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I wasn't the minister in 2009, but I was not aware.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Regrettably, I don't control time, but our time together is over.

And the hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

## ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

\* (14:50)

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening comment?

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** I'm pleased to discuss some of the important activities of the department that I have responsibility for.

As Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs along as—along with my responsibilities as Minister responsible for Sport and the East Side Road Authority, Aboriginal education and the Communities Economic Development Fund, we have a wide range of duties beyond the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs itself. Progress on all these issues is occurring, but I don't have to tell members that great challenges continue to exist for all of us.

Couple of weeks ago, I attended an important meeting of the provincial and territorial Aboriginal Affairs ministers in Canada along with leaders of the national Aboriginal organizations of this country. Major concerns were identified. Among them were, of course, the need for graduation rates for Aboriginal students to improve, supporting increased economic development in Aboriginal communities, and ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

Regardless of the result of the federal election today, it's our hope that this new government will take these issues seriously. The graduation rate for Aboriginal youth have produced—or have profound implications for the future economic growth of this province and across the country. Our government

will work with whomever forms the next government on these common priorities.

And probably the largest project occurring in this province right now is the east-side road project, which is a joint partnership with the individual First Nations on the east side itself, a project that will not only result in an all-weather road from Norway House east, serving the Island Lake communities and communities north of them, and a second southern all-weather road from Poplar River south, serving the communities of Poplar River, Berens River, Bloodvein, Little Grand Rapids, and Pauingassi. This has never been done in Canada before and our government has budgeted \$75 million annually for this project and has individual community benefits agreements with each First Nation. While we wait for federal support, we're working with the First Nations to get the projects moving forward, creating job opportunities, and training opportunities immediately.

The concerns of the 10,000 Island Lake residents wanting basic, safe drinking water has become a national issue and one that I've raised with the federal minister. The distribution of slop pails earlier this month was deeply disturbing and I don't believe, as Manitobans, that we are very proud of the move by the federal government with regard to that.

I have proposed a retrofit training project in partnership with the Island Lake chiefs and the Department of Indian Affairs, and we hope to see that started in the very near future. I want to say that the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) and I, and our respective departments, have been in dialog with the Department of Indian Affairs, along with the four First Nations in the Island Lake region, to ensure that that project will commence.

Allow me to briefly go over some of the initiatives of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. First of all, on treaty land entitlement, the department continues to focus on the implementation of the treaty land entitlement, some 383,000 acres have been transferred by Manitoba to Canada, and Canada has set apart 565,536 of these acres as reserve.

Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro continue to work with the Cross Lake First Nation on implementing the Northern Flood Agreement through the action plan programs worth approximately \$5.6 million each year. These include debris cleanup, community and gathering site maintenance, archeology, safe ice

trails, commercial fishing and trapping, domestic fishing, hot lunch at the schools, and alternative foods, and gardening in the community.

Another issue that is very prominent in the minds of Canadians currently, and I want to thank all members of this Legislature who have supported us in this initiative, and that is the issue of Aboriginal women and the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The provincial government hosted four Aboriginal women's regional gatherings through the federal, provincial, and territorial and Aboriginal Affairs working group.

Manitoba is working with other Aboriginal Affairs ministers to help address the issue of violence against Aboriginal women in areas of the root causes of violence, data collection, evidence-based practices, support for NAWS three, which stands for the National Aboriginal Women's work that is going on currently, and increased collaboration with other jurisdictional partners.

\*(15:00)

Building on the work of the Manitoba action group on missing and murdered Aboriginal women, such as the Wiping Away of the Tears family conference and Christmas memorial event, we were able to deliver several initiatives, including a public awareness campaign. And I'm sure that members have seen some of the transit buses in the city of Winnipeg entitled "She could be your daughter." Also, a REDress event at the Legislature is being planned and a provincial summit that'll be held this spring.

On August 4, 2010, premiers met with the Aboriginal organizations in Churchill. At this meeting, premiers and the national Aboriginal organizations' leaders provided their support for the recommended actions and in all priority areas and called on the federal government to convene a first ministers' meeting on Aboriginal education.

In addition, they called for the establishment of a federal-provincial-territorial Aboriginal task force on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Manitoba has assumed the role of co-lead for implementing the education and the violence against Aboriginal women and girls priorities.

To date, we've also concentrated on the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund. To date, the fund has approved 178 loans, approved over seven million, six hundred and fifty-nine dollars funding and leveraged nearly \$20 million. Some 55 support

applications have been approved and another 20-plus are pending or are on hold. These are some of the initiatives that we're working on.

Let me touch on the Métis economic development strategy: will change to foster strong economic Métis business enterprises. This strategy contains a vision, strategic framework and a portfolio of 14 initiatives. Manitoba identified four initiatives for implementation with the creation of the Métis Economic Development Fund as the first priority.

The Métis Economic Development Fund: it's a \$10-million Métis economic development fund, MEDF. It was incorporated last month and will be operational by June. INAC has contributed \$3 million to this initiative.

With respect to a Métis policy, the provincial Métis policy was a key recommendation in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Implementation Commission. An event to recognize the contributions of Métis people was held here on November 15th. The members of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, the provisional government that ratified The Manitoba Act, had been identified and their history told for the first time. Three-quarters of that Assembly were Métis; their portrait now hangs across the members' gallery on the ground floor to recognize the important role they played in the creation of our province.

The Métis policy of the Province's strategic policy context to both close the gap and the quality of life and to promote the excellence for more than the—for more than 70,000 Manitoba Métis people. It'll build on the cultural distinctiveness of the Métis as a defining feature of Manitoba's social fabric and the knowledge that enhancing Métis goals and prosperity strengthens the Manitoba social and economic vibrancy.

On the Winnipeg regeneration strategy, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs is working with local government on initiatives under the Aboriginal capacity building component that the Winnipeg regional regeneration strategy—Canada and Winnipeg are also partners. Last July a five-year memorandum of collaboration defining mandates, roles and objectives was signed.

So those are some of the initiatives that the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has been able to strive towards achieving, Madam Chairperson, and I'll gladly engage in dialogue with the critic on some of the issues that we feel are

important to the province's Aboriginal citizens and the people that live in northern Manitoba.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

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

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Very briefly, Madam Chairperson, I do want to thank the minister for his opening remarks, and I know I have a number of questions. A general question, of course, I want to talk about the land transfers; I'd like to talk about the East Side Road Authority and, of course, the floodway act, also Manitoba Hydro, mining and other issues. I'm very much interested in the violence against Aboriginal women, of course, the Métis program and that of local government.

I do know there's a number of things I want to try and get through in a very short time. Unfortunately, because of the time allocated to this particular department, I'm going to have to really stay focused on my questions, so that we can get through as much as we can during this short time that we've been allocated.

So, with that, may we move forward and move into the questions.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the critic for those comments.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 19.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber and once they are seated we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

The honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs could introduce his staff now.

**Mr. Robinson:** Today we have with us the deputy minister of the department, Harvey Bostrom. Seated to his left is the executive director of Local Government for the Northern Region, Freda Albert. And we also have, in front of her, Dave Hicks, the acting executive director for the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, and to my right in front of me is Justin Nedd, the director of Finance and Administration, and I would ask my colleague from Lakeside to be

mindful that this gentleman is fairly new in the position, so I would ask my colleague from Lakeside to take it easy on a relative newcomer to the department.

**Madam Chairperson:** Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Eichler:** Global would be my preference, Madam Chairperson.

**Madam Chairperson:** Acceptable to have a global discussion is agreed.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Minister, I can assure you I'll be going fairly easy on all of you. It's a new portfolio to me as well. I just assumed this the first of last month, so it's a new project for me, and I'm looking forward to learning more about the role and the process of which we go through to deal with this particular department. So I'm looking forward to it and looking forward to the dialogue back and forth.

I do want to start of with the standard list of questions, of course, and that's the list of political staff, including the name and the position, whether they're full time or part time.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, I want to congratulate the member for Lakeside, too, for assuming the role of critic for this very important department.

In terms of our political staff, we have Jean-Marc Prévost, who is the special assistant in the minister's office; Jackie Joss, who is the executive assistant to the minister's office as well. And I will also list the names of the people that work in the minister's office. The appointment secretary is Barb Robson. The administrative staff include Pat Chapko and Marilyn Ringland, who act in a capacity of administrative secretaries.

**Mr. Eichler:** The total number of staff that is currently employed by the department.

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, the total staff complement that the department has currently is 92.

**Mr. Eichler:** The next question would be the names of the staff that have been hired in 2010-2011, and whether or not they were hired through a competition, or were they appointments?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes. The staff were done—the staff were hired through the regular process of notice—notice being extended. I will avail to provide the member with the list of the staff that were hired in the current year; 2010-2011, I believe, was the question and, to date, I will provide those in a written response to the member.

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for that and it does help us an awful lot in getting through more questions. Also, if he would provide us the staff that resigned or terminated or transferred to other positions.

**Mr. Robinson:** Again, I will avail myself to getting that information to the member by providing that information along with the previous question in the form of a letter.

**Mr. Eichler:** Again, just to follow-up on the same line of questioning, the—if there was any position that has been reclassified over the past 2010-2011 year, as well.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, allow us to double-check that. I'm just not quite sure off the top of my head, and I wouldn't want to give an answer that's incorrect. Certainly, we'll look through the information that's available to us and also provide that in the same letter.

**Mr. Eichler:** The letter getting a little longer, but that's fine with me; no problem with that. The staff years currently filled, current vacancy rate and what positions are vacant at this point in time.

**Mr. Robinson:** The member is right; the letter is going to be getting lengthier now. I will provide that information when I respond to him by letter.

**Mr. Eichler:** I did notice going through the Estimate books, and I want to thank the minister for providing those to us, especially in a timely manner, give me all weekend basically to go over it, but the vacancy rate, how long does the minister expect these to remain vacant at this point in time?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, it's one of those evolving matters with the department, being that this is not a large department but the needs being great, particularly with respect to the immense challenges faced by Aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba. It's an ongoing challenge, and as positions become vacant, we try to fill them and accommodate the needs of the department. So it's something that—we're already understaffed in a lot of areas, the department is, and we try to keep up with

the demands that are made upon the department, but, at the current time, I believe that the numbers are quite steady, and we—there's—it's a changing thing, and we can't really say that we're over hiring.

I believe that every person that's employed—92 is the number right now—and when you're responsible for 80 per cent of the land mass of the province of Manitoba, that number really becomes small with the challenges that remain out there. And, with the number of community councils that we have responsibility for, to ensure that they get adequate services that other Canadians enjoy, it is very difficult to make sure that it's accommodated.

But I would say that if there's any fluctuation, we try to make sure that these positions are filled as quickly as possible to avoid any service that may be not being delivered to the communities that we serve.

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for that response. In regards to the vacancy rate, I think that you indicated there hasn't been significant impact, but, certainly, those vacancies does mean the workload does transfer over to other individuals that are within your department. And has there been any major delays as a result of that vacancy rate?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, I understand the question, Madam Chairperson. No, there hasn't been—we haven't had a problem in that regard. The services have been delivered—perhaps not quite as quickly in some cases as we'd like them delivered, but, for the most part, I believe that the services required have been accommodated according to the wishes of the community that we serve, which is the Manitoba community.

**Mr. Eichler:** In regards to the positions and relocation—and I know that the—it's got to be very difficult as a minister with the transportation needs and relocation of workers to meet the needs around the province. Has there been any relocations made from northern Manitoba to Winnipeg or Winnipeg back within his department, from one department to the other, or within the same department?

**Mr. Robinson:** I can report to the member that we've had no changes in this past fiscal year.

**Mr. Eichler:** In the opening comments, the minister had referred to the violence against Aboriginal women. There's a new project that was—he's very proud of and one I certainly know there's some need to be brought forward on this particular initiative. Is there any other initiatives that he wanted to update the House on in regards to initiatives in his

department as regards to either press releases or other programs that may be as a result of changes within his department?

**Mr. Robinson:** Well, one of the most serious issues that we're faced with, obviously, is the lack of drinking water in the Island Lake communities. And the member and I would agree that all Canadians ought to be treated the same, but I think the delivery of the slop pails, I don't think—I'm one not to place the blame on a government, but rather I think it was more the bureaucracy of the federal government that sent 999 slop pails to the Island Lake communities. And I regret that because that was an action that was taken by officials and a decision that was made within the bureaucracy, and I find that to be regrettable.

\*(15:20)

Certainly, in our dealings with the Island Lake communities, we have said that, indeed, the federal government has the primary responsibility based on the treaties that were signed with the federal government, and the communities of Island Lake, Red Sucker Lake, Wasagamack, St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill are within the Treaty 5 realm, and we believe that we have to be insistent to the federal government that they cannot ignore their responsibility under treaties to work with Aboriginal people in catching up with the rest of the world.

And I know that these four communities have been stressed in terms of the issues that they've had to deal with, and the dialogue with the First Nations and the regional Department of Indian Affairs, the regional office of Indian Affairs, along with our officials, Mr. Bostrom, the Deputy Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and also the staff from Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade have initiated a plan that we presented to the federal Indian Affairs minister prior to the election being called. And that calls for an apprenticeship training program where it would hire and train local people from the four communities in a pilot project-type basis that would begin addressing the issue that's been long-standing. The issue—many of these homes in Island Lake, for example, and not only Island Lake but in other reserves and communities in the province of Manitoba and probably elsewhere in the country of Canada, were not built to have the—equipped running water and toilets, even.

So what we want to do is develop this retrofit initiative for these communities with the federal



government and, by and large, for the interim, it's been a project that's been done by the Province of Manitoba. And we're probably one of the only provinces in Canada that refuses to play the jurisdictional game of placing responsibility to the federal government. We believe that a Manitoban is a Manitoban, and we have gone ahead and started putting the building blocks towards the apprenticeship training project which is really a retrofit project that will train local community people in that trade. And also, at the end of the day, in our dialogue with the colleges and the Mennonite Central Committee would give these trainees the Red Seal ticket that they need so that they can make a career out of this in a time ahead. And we're proceeding with that end of it. It's not been announced formally, but, certainly, we've alluded to it that we're very proud of it.

The other one that—the other initiative that we're very proud of is the issue that the member from Lakeside just alluded to, and that is on the missing and murdered Aboriginal women. This is something that is quite troubling because we have, across Canada, 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women, a lot of them in the lower mainland of British Columbia, many of them on—along the highways of tears they regard, as they call Highway No. 16 between Edmonton and Prince Rupert at the end of Highway 16, the Yellowhead. There's been a number of women and girls that have disappeared. In the province of Saskatchewan, we have a good number as well. But right here in the province of Manitoba, we have roughly 75 women missing; women and girls. And we felt that this has to be addressed. We therefore asked the Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP and—to become engaged and what they did is they developed an integrated police task force which is going quite well. At the same time, we have created an action group here in the province of Manitoba, co-chaired by the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and myself, along with representatives from the community, the Métis Women of Manitoba, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the North End women's transition centre and others in the community. And what this does is works with the victims and families directly and, hopefully, at the same time, we will create a level of communication that is acceptable to victims' families so that there is a two-way communication so that they will be made aware of the—as to the level of investigations that some of their—some of these cases are in right now.

So we have two groups: We have the integrated police task force and then we have the Manitoba Action Group, which the Manitoba government is a part of. Further, if I might add, Madam Chairperson, we've asked the federal government to become engaged in a similar initiative at the national level, because this is not only a Manitoba issue, it's not a Saskatchewan issue, it's not a British Columbia issue, but, indeed, it's an issue that has national proportions. It has national implications.

And our Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister prior to the election being called, in fact, some months ago. And we recommended a task force be created at the national level, comprised of the Prime Minister's office, or a designate from Cabinet, preferably the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, along with a senator. And we identified the senator that we thought would serve in this capacity well, and that being Mr. Gerry St. Germain, along with the Assembly of First Nations and the Native Women's Association of Canada ought to be a part of this, and with the RCMP. So we created that we—at least we made that recommendation to the Prime Minister that that ought to be a national initiative.

Regrettably, when the announcement finally came down, it didn't contain any recommendations that the Province of Manitoba, through the Premier, made to the national government. So we are working with our fellow provinces and territories on this issue, and it's become a national agenda item, and I'm very proud of the accomplishments we have made in that regard.

But there's still a lot of work to be done in ensuring that families of these women and girls that have gone missing or have been murdered, are given some appropriate answers. And sometimes all it takes is a phone call from the investigative bodies, the RCMP, the Winnipeg Police Service, to give people some assurance that their missing daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers, whatever the case may be, is not gone unforgotten, and is being addressed by these police services.

In addition, we as a province, as elected people, have to become engaged in this. We can't be afraid to get our fingernails dirty and get down to working with the community people. And that's what we have done with the Manitoba action group, and I'm very proud of the efforts of the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and the other members of the Manitoba action group. And recently we've also hired a person by the name of Nahanni Fontaine, who reports to the

government and recommends to the committee some of the activities. And she is the person that is responsible for maintaining dialogue with the police services and the Manitoba action group.

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for those comments. I wholeheartedly agree that it is a federal-provincial responsibility and whenever we can work with other provinces and the federal government for the safety of all women out there, that whatever steps we can take to ensure the safety of those that are out there have every bit of protection that they certainly can. And I know, having a daughter myself, I'm very passionate about the fact that we all want our children safe. So whatever we can do to move forward on that certainly would be supportive of those initiatives.

And this obviously must take some travel. Has there been any delegations led by the First Minister or you and outside the province of Manitoba, in regards to those initiatives or other initiatives that incurred some cost to—through your department?

**Mr. Robinson:** Most of the travel has been part of the existing structure that we have. The regular meetings of the federal-provincial territorial ministers, and we've raised those issues at every opportunity. We also made mention of these issues when the Council of the Federations met in Churchill, but it's an issue that we've been on for a couple of years now, and I'm very proud of the progress we have made thus far. And I believe that we're making some inroads, and having people take the issue more seriously than they have in the past.

Extraordinary travel out of this has not occurred. We have expended some dollars in terms of the media relations campaign, which has been the transit bus billboards and the billboard initiative: "What if this was your daughter" campaign. So certainly we have expended money there, I believe, to the tune of \$40,000 total to date. And we will be expending a few more dollars in terms of the REDress campaign that will be here at the Manitoba Legislature. And this is an issue that, obviously, is very important to the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

\* (15:30)

And it's not only Aboriginal; it goes beyond that. We have many missing women and girls, not only here in the province of Manitoba, but nationwide. And I concur with the member for Lakeside. I don't think I'd like to see my daughter be one of these

statistics. And I certainly want to continue doing, to the best of our ability—and this is one issue I believe that all of us in this Legislature agree on to be a very important issue, and we are doing our best to address it in the manner that we're pursuing right now.

**Mr. Eichler:** Before we do leave the violence on—against Aboriginal women—and you spent roughly around \$40,000 on an advertising campaign. What is the percentage and how much money is involved in regards to the program? What has been dedicated to that specific program?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, we've not identified a set amount of money. There is going to be some more expenditures in terms of bringing the families together.

There are two major events coming up in the next few months. One of them is a one-day summit for front-line workers on identifying some of the priorities on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. At the same time, we're going to be having a forum called Wiping Away the Tears, Part II. The first part occurred last June at St. Benedict's just north of Winnipeg. And this one coming up is also going to involve the families so that they have an outlet to talk about some of the hurts and some of the challenges that they have in their own everyday lives about how they get answers for maybe their daughters or their granddaughters or for their loved ones that have been missing.

And I can't imagine the feeling of, for example, a 15-year-old case that may exist without getting answers about what happened to their loved one, and this is the reality for some of these families. And what we're trying to do is build a closer link so that they have a sounding board and they have someone to talk to about these challenges that they face each and every day.

I know that I attended the first Wiping Away of the Tears gathering at St. Benedict's last year, and some of the things that I heard was really something hard to listen to because of the hurt that went along with it. And I want to just say that this is something that I don't think, unless you've experienced it, I don't think anybody can really relate. We hear about it on the news. We hear every now and again—we see a picture that flashes up on the TV screen or appears in a local newspaper about a missing woman and how long she's been missing, or a girl. And that's really hurtful, and we're doing our best to try and make sure that that doesn't happen again.

**Mr. Eichler:** In the essence of time, I need to move on. I would like to talk about this a lot more, but we maybe have to set another time and date for that.

I want to go along to the land transfers and the number of acres that's been transferred to Canada, the Crown corporation, over the last four years.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Madam Chairperson, under the treaty land entitlement, the federal Indian Affairs Minister, who was Mr. Strahl at the time, announced in August 2006 a commitment supported by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, the late Oscar Lathlin, to create 150,000 acres of reserve land each year for four years in Manitoba in the four-year period ending August 22nd, 2010. A total of 409,112 acres were set apart as a reserve.

To date, under all TLE agreements in Manitoba, a total of 583,046 acres have been transferred by Manitoba to Canada with 551,841 acres set apart as reserve. Manitoba continues to work in partnership with the Government of Canada and the EFNs, the entitlement First Nations, to complete the transfer of TLE Crown land selections and acquisitions.

The four-year federal commitment to create 150,000 acres of reserve land in Manitoba over a four-year period has resulted in a significant increase of land being set apart as reserve, totalling 409,112 acres. This effort reflects the co-operative sustained efforts of all parties: Manitoba, Canada and the entitlement First Nations, and Manitoba continues its best efforts in filling-in fulfilling its treaty land entitlement obligations.

**Mr. Eichler:** Now, with the growth of population within the Aboriginal community, obviously we need more lands in order for the reserves to keep their balance.

Would it be possible for the minister to provide us a copy of the locations and the details of those transfers?

**Mr. Robinson:** That's a fair question, and I certainly will provide the information unless there is some sensitivity around some of those issues. For example, some communities may be negotiating at the current time, so I certainly want to—I wouldn't want to prejudice some of those cases. But the information that we have within our department, I'll gladly share with the member.

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for that. I certainly don't want any information that would jeopardize any negotiation process or status of a particular transfer

that would—might put it in jeopardy. So I respect the minister's decision for that and let him be decision—let him have the full decision on what information he wants to pass on to us.

I do want to talk about the East Side Road Authority, of course, and I was wondering if we can get an update on the status of the construction on that particular project.

**Mr. Robinson:** This is one of the biggest projects to ever come to our province, and it's a largely ignored area for a lot of reasons in terms of transportation. We have seen, year after year, the failure of the winter road system, and for a long time now, we've been able to work with the east-side First Nations communities, and they have said—and I know where we're going to go with this conversation, we're going to wind up talking about the bipole transmission line—but what they have said to us, and particularly in the community meetings that we had with the First Nations on the east side, is that they did not want a transmission line, and that still remains to this day. There are a few that obviously want it, who see some benefit, but there are others, the land users, particularly the trappers, the fishers and others like that that use the land that gives life as a means of making their livelihood and want to preserve that in the generations ahead.

What we have done is made an initial investment of \$93 million to the east-side road development and we've committed \$75 million for 15 years to continue with the project. And we believe that this will finally connect the communities that live on the east side.

Now let me be very clear on this: The first leg—well, there's two legs—the first part is the community of Hollow Water and an all-weather road system to Poplar River, and that would be to Bloodvein, and then, of course, the Berens River and then, ultimately, Poplar River, and we'd like to also begin now—we've begun plans on the spurs to Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids. That's one road.

\* (15:40)

The second road is moving from the east to the west, connecting up the Island Lake communities of Wasagamack, St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake and the north-central communities of God's Lake Narrows, Manto Sipi, or otherwise known as God's River, and Oxford House, and connecting them up to Norway House because Norway House has always been traditionally the

transportation hub of northern Manitoba during the fur trade. And I remember the elders—growing up—talking about how important Norway House played—how pivotal of a role they played in terms of being the transportation hub of northern Manitoba when goods and services were being—going back and forth to York Factory which was, at that time, the transportation centre of exports being made to European countries from York Factory. And, of course, the fur trade commenced in earnest and the first Hudson Bay Company establishment was located in York Factory.

So the first leg is the north-south link, Hollow Water to Poplar River; 80 per cent will be following existing winter roads and the east-west link to Island Lake will be following 90 per cent of existing winter road right-of-ways. So there's some misunderstanding, I understand, about that, but that is how we want to proceed with this.

The road could be built a lot quicker, too, with the engagement of the federal government if we would get their buy in in this initiative. Right now, these are provincial dollars that are being used, but, at the same time, they're giving benefits to the communities because people are getting training, people are getting employment and, for the first time in our history in the province of Manitoba, these people are being given attention in these communities, and I believe in the long run it will bring down the cost of living; it will bring down the cost of food. It's outrageous, currently, when you go to some of these northern communities and you see a four-litre jug of milk being sold for \$28, as I saw in one community.

So it's totally outrageous, and we have to address those issues. It's been a long-standing issue and our government has finally moved to begin addressing that problem. It's not going to be an overnight activity, but, indeed, we believe that in time the all-weather road will provide not only the cost of living to come down, but provide more incentive for people to go see this wonderful, natural beauty that we have here in the province of Manitoba, and that being that the land we refer to in the Aboriginal languages of this province as being the land that gives life.

**Mr. Eichler:** The minister had talked about the first leg and the second leg. Has the route been finalized in its entirety then?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, through a lot of consultation, through a lot of dialog with the First Nations. We

spoke with the communities and, in consultation with them, we felt that we have to get the project going, so the first portion was the identification of the southern route, and that was between Hollow Water and Poplar River. The second was the identification of the east-west link, which is connecting the Island Lake communities with Norway House, and that was done in consultation and it was done with the concurrence of the chiefs and the leadership of those four Island Lake communities and the north-central communities of Oxford House, Manto Sipi and God's Lake Narrows as well.

**Mr. Eichler:** The minister'd referred to in his comments about the federal government not being at the table in regards to construction costs. Could he update us on where those negotiations are at, or is there any update on that? Also, along the same line, about the environmental licensing, where that's at as well.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, the dialog with the federal government is ongoing. We have made several attempts to engage the federal government who have, up till now, told us that this federal government is not in the business of building roads. We would beg to differ that, indeed, we need some stimulus money to work with the Province of Manitoba in building—in the building of this all-weather road. We also have to take into consideration some of the items that the member has raised in terms of environmental licensing in some areas, and when we get to that, the dialog with the federal government will be required. We have to deal with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as one example of the federal government, in terms of being able to build river access bridges or accessing bridges for—to cross rivers and creeks in some areas. And that work is also going along as the project progresses.

**Mr. Eichler:** Because of the location of the road, I'm sure you certainly run into lots of challenges and, of course, you know, through the muskeg, and, of course, bridges need to be built, and that type of thing.

How many new miles will this establish that haven't been on the northern route through transportation on the winter road system?

**Mr. Robinson:** In fact, I think this reduces the mileage that has to be used under the winter road system because of the way it's been mapped out and, as I said, a good percentage. For example, the southern leg will follow 80 per cent of the existing winter roads, and the northern part, which is the

east-west link between Island Lake and the community of Norway House, 90 per cent will follow existing winter road right-of-ways.

So, I am told by the experts, the engineers at the East Side Road Authority, that, in fact, the distance would be shortened by some amount. I can't give you a precise number in terms of kilometres or miles, but it'll definitely shorten the distance with the planned routes that are currently being focused on right now.

**Mr. Eichler:** Since we're using the winter road system, is there any estimation about how many trees will be cut down to build the road the way it is now?

**Mr. Robinson:** I can say that, no doubt, there'll be some trees cut, but I think it'll be minimal from what I am told by the experts. So I think that the people that will take advantage of this are people that use wood stoves, so it, you know, it all works out in the long run, and I think that we're doing it as responsibly as possible and we're taking every precaution to maintain the integrity of the beautiful forest that's such a jewel in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Eichler:** The reason I ask that, you know, because, I guess, yes, it leads to the next question, and that's in regards to the environment and the lawsuits that have been talked about if there is a Bipole III go down through there.

So, obviously, you know, is there any environmental lawsuits that have been talked about with building this east-side road?

**Mr. Robinson:** Not on the East Side Road Authority. Certainly, there's been speculation, though, if there is a transmission line built, that, no doubt, litigation procedures will begin because of the infringement upon the treaty and Aboriginal rights—people that live in those communities; that has been told to us. But because of the east-side road having widespread support in these communities and people knowing that they need a way of communicating and also getting transportation systems in place, there's been no mention of any lawsuits or any litigation procedures in that regard. We know that there are section 35 considerations, something that didn't exist some years ago, but, because of Supreme Court rulings that have come to fruition and now have become law, those have to be taken into consideration.

\*(15:50)

So, prior to anything being done, the section 35 considerations have to be first and foremost in the minds of the people of the East Side Road Authority and definitely by the Province of Manitoba. We have to talk with the people whose traditional lands we're coming on, and it's only with their support and with their authority that we're proceeding on the east-side road. And certainly what we have to keep in mind is that very—and there's also consideration for trap lines, consideration for traditional land uses in many of the areas on the east side. So those are being dealt with as we go along, and certainly if there's any infringement on a treaty or an Aboriginal right, those have to be addressed immediately, and they have to be worked out through processes that the East Side Road Authority has taken into consideration.

**Mr. Eichler:** What was the rationale between the floodway authority over the east-side road project? What was the rationale for having them oversee the project?

**Mr. Robinson:** We felt that because of the experience that the floodway authority had that it was only natural that we would ask them that the East Side Road Authority fall under their authority, and it's worked out quite well. We have certain accountability considerations to keep in mind in terms of not overrunning the costs. And it's certainly not—we—you just can't mess around with the public dollars that we have at the—as our responsibility to administer in the Province of Manitoba. And the floodway authority, having that experience and also having a proven track record in getting results done, we felt it was most appropriate that we ask them.

And it was a government decision that the East Side Road Authority fall under the auspices of the floodway authority, and that's where the decision finally wound up, and that is being done by Mr. Gilroy as the CEO of the floodway. They did a tremendous job in that project, and we feel that they're doing an equally sound job in ensuring that the East Side Road Authority is on track and also doesn't fall off the rail, so to speak, and we're quite satisfied with the work that they have done.

**Mr. Eichler:** Of course, we have to enter into a number of agreements. One is the project management agreements related to the east-side project, of course, community benefit agreements as well. How much money is expected to be committed as a part of this process?

**Mr. Robinson:** We have signed a total of 12 community benefits agreements with the east-side

communities. One is pending and that's God's Lake Narrows, and we hope to sign that next week.

*Mr. Gerard Jennissen, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

These agreements provide jobs, training and other economic development activities totalling \$44.75 million. The—one of—the community benefits agreements are simply that, that we don't want the community to feel that they're left out, and we certainly don't want to leave them out. They're a part of this; they're in this together with the Province of Manitoba and other Manitobans.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, \$11.25 million has been expended—or has been allocated to the Berens River First Nation; \$7.75 million with Bloodvein and the Hollow Water First Nations; \$2.2 million each with St. Theresa Point, Red Sucker Lake, Manto Sipi, Pauingassi, Bunibonabee, otherwise known as Oxford House; Poplar River and Garden Hill, and almost \$5 million of these community benefits agreements are under way. With provincial environmental approval received from Provincial Road 303 to Berens River on August 26th, 2010, more work and training is happening and 56 people have received training.

So this is part of the Aboriginal benefits and tendering strategy that'll see approximately 35 per cent of construction related direct cost into local communities. We want the people from these communities to be able to benefit directly with the road that's being built. And that just gives you a snapshot of what's happening with respect to the initiative and to the east-side road project that's currently under way.

**Mr. Eichler:** I do have a couple more questions in regards to the east side. If I turn it over to the member from Minnedosa, my colleague has a few questions to ask, and that's on the—with the flood authority running the project.

Do we have any idea what the budget was for the floodway expansion project and how much was spent, to date, on that particular project? Was there overruns on that project? I know the minister had talked earlier about a great job he felt they had done. Does he have those numbers available to us?

**Mr. Robinson:** That's a question that probably should be raised with the minister responsible for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. He has responsibility for that, and I'm sure he'd be more than happy to provide the information to the member.

Certainly on the East Side Road Authority part, if there's any issues that relate to that I'll be gladly—I'll gladly provide any additional information that the member may require.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Good afternoon, Minister. It's a—I'm pleased to be able to put some questions forward. I missed the opportunity to do so over the last few years. I enjoyed the role of critic for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and I do know that there are a number of great things that are happening in communities in northern Manitoba. And I want to just put on the record that I follow with interest the workings of the department as well as how the communities are progressing as we go forward.

I have a few questions that I want to put on the record and ask for feedback from the minister. One of them is actually a tie in to a constituent of mine; Mr. Barry Andrews works with Team Contracting, and then he is working with the community of Berens and—Barrows, sorry—working with the community of Barrows, and what I would like to know is if the minister could indicate to me how that project is moving forward, if he has anything that he could provide as an update. His staff person, Jean-Marc, was good enough to give me a preliminary update last week, but I'm wanting to know if there's been any further developments on that situation this week.

**Mr. Robinson:** The lagoon construction project, I believe, is what the member is referring to and the contractor was in touch with the community. The community and the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, in fact, met last week and, in fact, dealt with some issues that were still lingering.

\* (16:00)

As of this date, 65 per cent of the construction has been completed. Desludging and the construction of two secondary cells remain. The contractor, Team contractors, were a part of that meeting—at the insistence of the community of Barrows—last week with my department officials, and even though there is some outstanding issues, I believe that matters are well in hand and we expect that the remainder of the work that has to be done will be completed.

Part of the problem, I believe, was that some deadlines passed and completion was not met for some of these obligations on the part of the contractor. I hope that these issues are going to be resolved, and I'm assured that Team was given time to respond to a letter of concern. A satisfactory

response was received and the construction began. Some difficulties were experienced by the project manager and some disagreements occurred. This is natural in these kind of situations. However, there was some factors to be considered, including the weather. I'm advised that the project will proceed, and we want to see the Barrows lagoon completed and we want all parties to be satisfied, particularly the community, the department and, of course, the contractors. We want them to feel sense of accomplishment in the project that they've undertaken.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the update on that situation.

I guess the point that is most critical is that the lagoon is at a critical level and so we're wanting to ensure for the community's sake that work moves forward on that.

Can the minister indicate to me if the lagoon is being—if it is at a critical level, is there now an option of pumping out the lagoon, and if so, where will that waste be distributed?

**Mr. Robinson:** I can indicate to the member that the work is carrying on. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs staff will attend to wholesome negotiations between the contractor and other parties to work towards a mutual agreement so the construction can resume, with all the precautions so that the waste will be in a location where it will not bring harm to the community of Barrows is being considered.

And our department has been working with other government departments that have a vested interest in this and have a direct interest, and we'll be continuing to work. Currently, we're waiting for approval from environment—or Conservation to pump out the lagoon. And the Barrows community will also be a part of overseeing that all safety precautions are met, including particularly for the citizens of that community.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Can the minister then indicate to me where the waste will be distributed, if, as he's saying, the cell is being, or the lagoon is being, pumped? Can you indicate to me where the wastes are going to be distributed?

**Mr. Robinson:** As in all matters relating to this kind of thing, it will be done in a safe way and I can't give you—I can't give the member a location as to where this will be disposed of, but, certainly, all environmental regulations will be followed and we're going to take careful consideration as to where and

when that's going to occur. And I assured the member that I would keep her up to speed on the developments on what's going on there, and I plan on doing that to make sure that she is aware of the project as it moves along.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Thank you to the minister for assuring me that he will keep me up to speed on the community's lagoon project and the work that's being done in that community.

I have a quick question with 'regut'—with regard to the Community Economic Development Fund. At some point, a few years back, the hotel in Flin Flon received funding from the Community Economic Development Fund, and I do believe that that hotel is still not working as a hotel. I believe it's still closed, and that would be a significant number of years.

So I'm just wanting to know if the minister can let me know what the status is of the relationship with the Flin Flon hotel and CEDF and whether that has been written off as a bad debt or if the project is moving forward. I would—that—been asked—I have been asked by the community to get an update on that site.

**Mr. Robinson:** I'll have to assemble the information with respect to that question, Mr. Acting Chairperson, and I'll get back to the member by letter. And I know that I've worked with the member for quite a long time now and she knows that I will respond to her as quickly as I can, as soon as I am able to obtain that information she requests.

**Mrs. Rowat:** And, you know, as a side note, that site of the Flin Flon hotel is a prime site, and if that—and the community would very much like to see some activity occur with that hotel. If they've received funding from CEDF, and I believe there's also been some federal funding, you would want to see that project move forward or move to another owner. So I appreciate the update on that.

One final area that I have a question of the minister, and this is an area that I know that the minister has taken a leadership role and I have taken a keen interest in, and that is with regard to youth suicide and with regard to a strategy.

I was pleased to see from 2005 the numbers reduce over a period of time from 25 down to 14, 13. What I am not pleased to see is the numbers for 2009 go up to 18.

And looking at the Children's Advocate's report, annual report, it indicates that suicides—and this is

what's most disturbing and concerning—is suicides with regard to the manner of death for Manitoba children in '09-10, 10 per cent of it was by suicide. And suicide was prevalent of—in 13 of those young teens, and I'm saying young teens; they were 13 to 15 years of age, and that is very concerning. It appears there's a trend towards younger children taking their lives, and that's extremely tragic.

So I'm asking the minister if he would be able to indicate to me what his thoughts are on the increase of youth suicides in—from '08-09 by five, from 13 to 18? And if he would also confirm for me that the numbers for 2010 are 16, which is a concern. So can the minister just give me some background on what is being done, if he would confirm that these numbers are accurate? And I know that he obviously is concerned about this issue. I just want to know what the status is on this file.

**Mr. Robinson:** I'll have to refer to notes that are not with me today, Mr. Acting Chairperson. I'm going to take a portion of that under notice.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

We have had some proactive measures, including the Shamattawa arena, which was not used. We expended \$200,000 and, for the first time, for the first time, Madam Chairperson, we have had that arena being utilized this past winter, and we're very proud of that. We also have the summer camps. The Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Circle has done a lot of work in that regard. The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative is something else.

But I think that what is bringing about a sense of pride at this current time—and I want to—I don't want to associate the two, necessarily, but I believe that bringing a sense of pride to the people that live in these remote communities and giving them an opportunity to be gainfully employed is helping bring down the numbers as well. One suicide is too many, I'll agree. And we believe that we have made some inroads in a lot of areas. There's a long way to go.

\* (16:10)

I'm going to read the context of the question posed to me by the member for Minnedosa and respond to her by letter on some of these more finer details of the broad question that she has expressed here in this committee, and I will respond to her in—at the earliest opportunity to talk about in greater detail of some of the initiatives that we have

undertaken to address the whole issue of suicides, which are, regrettably, still a reality.

But we must take in mind that there are youth-focused initiatives that are currently under way that the Province of Manitoba is a part of in terms of funding or being partners in, including the Cadet program in Cross Lake. We're very proud of the work that they have done. Martial arts instruction, outdoor education, the Aboriginal youth initiative challenge, the ICT challenge, which delivers in information and communication technology to northern students, the student commuter challenge, supporting training and job experience, music and language and also drama. So these are some of the initiatives that we have currently under way and we're very proud of the progress that we've been able to do. With specific reference to the numbers that the member asks, I'm going to have to dig deeper into the information that we have and respond to her by letter as well.

**Mrs. Rowat:** If the minister would be so kind also to provide for me, if he knows the breakdown of the youth that—because he speaks about projects that are being done on reserve and off reserve—so I would like to know if he could break down the numbers of—from 2009 of the 18 children who committed suicide. If he could indicate to me how many were from the reserve communities and how many were children in care, and also if he could also confirm for me that the 2010 numbers are actually 16 children who have taken their lives, and I do appreciate the work that he has done in this area. But I do know that there's, obviously, more work to do, and, if numbers are increasing, we're wanting to know why. Thank you.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, I just want to assure the member that I will try and provide that information as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** As the minister well knows, since the fall of 2005, I have been working hard advocating to get Jordan's Principle fully adopted in its application in Manitoba, and I wonder if the minister could tell me two things. One is, you know, what his role is in this process, and (b) what the status is right now of the implementation.

**Mr. Robinson:** Well, let me say this, I probably agree with the member for River Heights more on the broad issue of Jordan's Principle more than I don't. The lead department on this is Family Services, and I'm sure that the minister will gladly point out some of the—the level of—the level as to



where the dialogue is at with that issue with the federal government. A lot of it, of course, is dependent on the dialogue that occurs there, and I know that the minister, the lead minister on this file, will gladly respond to the member from River Heights.

In fact, one of our staff here, Freda Albert, and I come from the same community as where Jordan Anderson was from where the name is derived from, where we know the family, having grown up with the family members of Jordan Anderson, and Ms. Albert and I are quite familiar with that. We're quite familiar with the young person in question that this is named after, and we believe that it's an issue that we can't leave alone, and the member is quite right. He's been a champion for this, and I commend him for his efforts. And we want to see a responsible agreement—result with the federal government and the Province of Manitoba in ensuring that this issue doesn't go away and it's not forgotten about in the long run. But we are certainly supportive of the minister's efforts and, together with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and with the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) and myself, we are trying to find a credible method as to how we move forward on Jordan's Principle.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister, and I will certainly be asking the Minister of Family Services some questions on this. And, you know, I'm still hearing considerable issues which are not being treated in the spirit of Jordan's Principle, so there is still a considerable way to go, from what I am hearing.

The second question has to do with the process for consultation with Aboriginal people. Can the minister explain his role in the consultation process? That—there was some discussion about having a more formal process where this is, whether there's a—each individual department working on this, or whether there's a significant additional role for the department of Aboriginal affairs. Just to get some clarity on what's happening in this file.

**Mr. Robison:** This is a complex issue; complex to the degree that there are many initiatives that are currently under way. We have an Aboriginal consultation unit that's contained within the Aboriginal affairs department—Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Department, and they're working on ensuring that Aboriginal people—now, these are section 35 considerations we're talking about.

The other part of this, and we do have—it's a new reality in this day and age, that Aboriginal people have to be communicated with, and on any potential development that may occur with respect to the forestry or mining or any other project, hydro development or whatever the case may be. Back in June of last year, I hosted, with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, a round table on consultation to deal with this issue and, at that time, the Chiefs Committee on Consultation wanted to begin a dialogue with the Province of Manitoba. Since that time, we have had two meetings, most recently two weeks ago with the two co-chairs of the Chiefs Committee on Consultation, Chief Derek Nepinak, Pine Creek, and Chief Arlen Dumas of Mathias Colomb First Nation.

And we are trying to put the building blocks together on how we start communicating with the Province of Manitoba and the Chiefs Committee on Consultation on how we have a better level of communication and what's existed in the past. So we are moving on that front. At the same time, across government, through the consultation unit, they meet regularly. They have an organized structure where they meet regularly to ensure that there is a level of communication between departments, that there are certain considerations that have to be made.

Long gone are the days where we issue a licence for exploration, for example, on mining, to a certain company, because that has to be done in consultation with the First Nation. It's a whole different story, obviously, if we make a major find of whatever mineral we're—that's being looked for in a certain region of the province of Manitoba, whether it be gold or nickel or something else. So, at that point in time, obviously, First Nations have to be considered to be a partner in all of this.

\* (16:20)

On the—let me back up a little bit. On the issue of an interim policy, we do have an interim policy on the issue of consultation, and we have issued that to the First Nations of the province of Manitoba and we're still receiving feedback. And, as I said, the process—it's cumbersome, but we're quite confident that we will come up with an agreement with the Chiefs Committee on Consultation. This is done aside from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs at the insistence of the chiefs that are part of the Chiefs Committee on Consultation. And as myself and the Minister responsible for Mines we have been meeting them regularly recently to set about a

framework on how we move on this forward so that the practices of the past will not repeat themselves where Aboriginal people are the afterthought on any project that may occur in the time to come. So, to sum up my response to the member, I just want to say that we're taking every measure possible to ensure that the accountability and the honour of the Crown is upheld so that First Nations are also consulted on any and all development, potential activities that may occur in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move on to a third area, and that is the east-side road, which, I think, is the minister's responsibility. Could the minister indicate when the expected date that the road would reach Bloodvein would be?

**Mr. Robinson:** As I pointed out to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) earlier on in this section of the Estimates, Madam Chairperson, it's a long-term process. I certainly would like to be around in maybe 15 years from now when the road is open and allowed—and the traffic is allowed to travel through it. It's a long process. We're using provincial dollars on this, and as I chaired with the member for Lakeside, it's a project that requires the participation of the federal government to date. That support has not been there. It's an initiative largely undertaken by the Province of Manitoba and we have made the initial investment, as I said earlier, of \$93 million to date, with the community benefits agreements being made with First Nations that they are a significant player in this on the rock crushing part and the pre-construction phase of the project. \$75 million has been the commitment for the next 15 years, bringing the total to about \$1.2 billion in today's dollars. We don't know what will happen in 15 years from now, whether or not that's going to suffice. So that is why it's so critically important that we join together to ask the federal government to become a part of this initiative to ensure that this road is done in the shorter time frame than what we have laid out. But within our capacity as a Province of Manitoba, that's the amount of time that we've designated for us to complete the east-side road.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister. I—just so that I make sure I've got that right—that the minister's indicating the commitment of \$168 million; that's \$93 million to date and \$75 million over the next 15 years, and that the expectation would be that the road to Bloodvein would be completed in 15 years.

**Mr. Robinson:** I said the initial investment has been \$93 million; \$75 million per year times 15 years bringing the total to \$1.2 billion roughly over the life of the project, which is 15 years. With the engagement of the federal government we believe we can do it in half that time with their investment, and we look forward to that, and I think that's something that we can agree on in this Legislature, that we certainly want to proceed with that, and that's something that we're committed to doing. And, because it's engaging the local communities, it's also a no-brainer in terms of accessibility to cheaper food, supplies and economic opportunities by opening it up, because we have seen repeatedly the failure of the winter-road system here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The \$1.2-billion estimate in the 15 years would provide for access to which communities? Is that the road coming from the south and the road in the north going across to Oxford House and other communities? Does that include a road that would go all the way up the east side or just connect from the south to communities like Berens and Poplar River and Pauingassi into the north, to communities like Oxford House and Garden Hill?

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Chairperson, I'll repeat what I said earlier. I don't know if the member was in the Chamber at the time I was saying it.

There are, in fact, two roads; there's not one road. There is the portion between Hollow Water and Poplar River which, of course, takes in Bloodvein as you go north, and then Berens River and then Poplar River, ultimately. And then, of course, we're going to have the spurs to Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids, and I know that the member is quite familiar with that area.

And then we have the second part, the part two of the road, which connects up the Island Lake communities and the north-central communities of Bunibonibee, Gods River, otherwise known as Manto Sipi, and God's Lake Narrows going east to west and connecting up to Norway House. So that is the two phases of the east-side road.

There is not one road that is going to go directly north. In fact, the current winter road that we have that goes north to south from Little Grand Rapids onwards to St. Theresa Point will be decommissioned after this year.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister. That's my questions. I'll hand it back to the MLA—member for Lakeside.

**Mr. Eichler:** In the essence of time, Madam Chair, I've agreed with my colleagues that we would wrap up by 4:30, so we're prepared to go through the closing points at this time.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is the House ready for the resolutions? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$36,866,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$112,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 19.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

**Mr. Eichler:** Madam Chair, I just want to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their diligence in the information they shared with us. I certainly appreciate that as a critic.

\* (16:30)

**Madam Chairperson:** The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, we'll move to resolution 19.1.

Resolution 19.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,073,000, for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Executive, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This concludes the Estimates for this department.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates for Family Services and Consumer Affairs.

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

*The committee recessed at 4:31 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 4:33 p.m.*

**FAMILY SERVICES AND  
CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

**Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs):** Families continue to be the focus of Budget 2011, creating more options for Manitoba children, families and individuals by improving programs and services in support of the Province's five-year economic plan.

Given the difficult economic times and limited resources for all programs funded by government I'm pleased that we've been able to maintain and even to commit to some additional supports that allow low-income families and individuals to live independently and with dignity.

This year's budget provides over \$1.388 billion for the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. It represents an increase of \$78.9 million or 6 per cent over the 2010-11 adjusted vote. Families have told us that they need high quality, accessible and affordable care for their children. The budget recognizes the importance of early learning and child care by allowing Manitobans to go to work and help children get a strong start.

Our government is actively listening to families and has responded by investing an extra-in an extra 25 child-care sites, raising our five-year commitment under Family Choices to 54 new centres and 2,100 newly funded spaces with a greater focus on infant spaces, and 400 more enhanced nursery school spaces.

With Budget 2011, the government will have increased the number of funded spaces by more than 80 per cent since 1999. The child-care budget has

increased by 157 per cent during that same period, and we know this increased funding has helped to stabilize and grow Manitoba's system.

Budget 2011 also includes a new two-year, 2 per cent incentive for child-care workers in Manitoba to join the child-care pension plan as part of our workforce stability strategy.

In addition, so that families have straightforward help in looking for early learning and child care, the Manitoba online child-care registry will be rolled out province-wide. The registry will allow families to find licensed child care more efficiently and allow facilities to more effectively manage their wait-lists.

The construction, expansion and revitalization of child-care centres in Manitoba will continue over the next two years with 46 more projects, including the 25 centres receiving funding through the Family Choices Building Fund and 21 others to be revitalized.

Assistance to offset operating costs, including minimum wage adjustments, will also be made available.

We also recognize that many children continue to be in need of protection. The department strives to provide a safe and nurturing environment for vulnerable children and youth who are often at risk when they do not have a caring and supportive environment available. Our budget responds to this challenge by providing an additional \$31.8 million in funding for child protection. These funds will help meet the needs of children in care and will support our commitments under the Changes for Children initiative, designed to keep children safe using prevention and early intervention programs and focusing on family enhancement.

This budget also increases community-based programming to protect and assist sexually exploited youth with the Tracia's Trust initiative, as well as domestic violence prevention and intervention funding.

Services for persons with disabilities remain at the forefront of our priorities in '11-12. We know that we can build strong communities by ensuring that all Manitobans can participate fully in the life of their community.

We've continued to implement initiatives that seek to foster the full participation of persons with disabilities in all segments of society. Budget 2011

supports adults and children with disabilities as well as the families who care for them.

We also remain committed to the ongoing development of innovative programs that promote increased self-sufficiency, independence and community inclusion for adults and children living with a disability. We'll continue to examine policies and programs to identify ways we can eliminate the barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Our government will continue to focus on long-term solutions by creating the economic conditions for all people to flourish. Initiatives under our Rewarding Work program continue to bridge the gap for people who leave income assistance for work, ensuring they're always better off by choosing to work. We believe that we are on the right track and must continue to co-ordinate the way we tackle the roots of poverty for the good of all Manitobans. ALL Aboard, Manitoba's poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, was launched in May of '09. ALL Aboard celebrates over a decade of reducing poverty in our province, bringing together under one plan all of the many successful initiatives that work to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion, as well as creating new initiatives that build on past investments and successes.

Manitoba has taken a significant step forward in reducing poverty in the province. In 2008, using Statistics Canada's market-basket measure, which has recently been improved, there were 30,000 fewer Manitobans living in low income than in 2000. Among these were 19,000 fewer children living in poverty. Over the same period, the low-income rate for single parents dropped by more than two-thirds.

Madam Chairperson, 2011-12 will see a continued commitment to ALL Aboard. New initiatives, as well as enhancement to existing programs, will support the work that has been done since the introduction of the strategy in '09.

Manitoba's committing just over \$1 billion to fight poverty and promote social inclusion with priorities on education and training, access to child care, improved access to healthy foods and enhanced support for communities.

We are introducing a suite of measures in 2011 to gauge the progress of ALL Aboard. The measures are based on advice from our stakeholder consultations and will form the basis of our first annual report to the public.

\* (16:40)

While our government continues to make progress in our strategy against poverty, it will continue to provide support to low-income Manitobans in ways that enable them to live independently.

All Manitobans are consumers and deserve protection and fairness in the marketplace. The Consumer and Corporate Affairs division has been actively moving forward on a number of important measures to support Manitoba families. Last May we announced, Let's Make a Better Deal, with Manitoba's own Monty Hall kindly lending his name and image to this endeavour, designed to increase awareness of the importance of consumer protection and what's available.

The Better Deal plan is premised on the notion that better consumer protection means better business. To have a healthy economy, consumers need confidence that they will be treated fairly and honestly, and they need information to assist in decision making.

Businesses need confidence that the rules that regulate their operations are reasonable, don't stand in the way of innovation, and enable a level playing field. The five-year Better Deal plan contains over 40 significant policy initiatives. I'm happy to say that we've made great progress already, including legislation banning negative option marketing, credit alert legislation to protect against identity theft, increased fines for consumer protection breaches, a review of limits on fees for cashing government cheques, money smarts in the education curriculum, a new tenant adviser office opened to assist renters, more user-friendly forms for tenants and landlords, protections for grieving families with a code of ethics for funeral directors, and payday lending limits.

Bringing in tough, new payday lending rules to protect Manitobans from high interest rates, unfair business practices and from falling into a financially crippling cycle of debt has been a key element of the plan. The Financial Literacy Fund is the newest step, as we help people who use payday loans understand their options so they make informed financial decision.

We recently concluded a consultation with consumers on cellphone contracts, with an overwhelming response from citizens on the need for clearer, understandable and fairer contracts, and we'll be working towards introducing legislation to address these concerns.

Stakeholder consultations on motor vehicle information disclosure are also under way. We believe that Manitobans should have the ability to decide on what car they can afford, knowing that the advertised price is the actual price, not the price based on a trade-in or the price before a series of fees and costs are added on. Consumers also need to be provided with reasonable information about a vehicle's history. We are working diligently, and we'll soon be announcing new efforts on travel fairness, consumer protection in motor vehicle repair and new home warranties.

We are also working to enhance services in a number of areas. We've entered into agreements with the Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada, which will soon provide new parents of the option of applying for a social insurance number and universal and income-based child benefits when they register their child's birth.

For businesses, the Companies Office is working towards making the business registration process simpler. The Property Registry has initiated a five-year client service improvement project.

The budget clearly demonstrates, in conclusion, that we are listening to the needs of Manitobans, the families, the children, and we are reinforcing our commitment to the provision of high quality services to our families. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for River East, do you have an opening statement?

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Yes, I want to thank the minister for his opening statement and indicate at the outset that I know that the task is difficult when you're in charge of the kinds of programs that the Minister of Family Services has on his plate.

And I know, from first-hand experience, that it's not an easy task trying to balance and ensure that the proper services are in place to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. And I have, in the past, given credit where credit is due to this minister and his government for some of the initiatives that have been undertaken. And I know the first area that the minister talked about in his opening statement was child care, and I certainly do applaud the number of increased spaces that have been created and funded within the child-care system.

But one of the emerging concerns, and I think something that we're going to have to spend a little

bit of time on during the Estimates process, is the concerns that many of the funded facilities are raising with me and with the parents that they support, is the lack of increases to operating grants that they are receiving. And, although it's a laudable goal to increase the number of spaces within the system, if the spaces aren't adequately funded and there's no room for centres to do the kinds of things that the minister's talked about, and that is increase salaries to retain early childhood educators in the child-care system. There's, you know, increased requirements on a regular basis for child-care centres, and they're finding it very hard to make ends meet when there's no room to move. There's no increase in operating grants. Parent fees have remained stable. So child-care centres are caught between a rock and a hard place. Where do they find the increased resources that are—that need to be available to increase salaries and to do all of the extra things that the department requires them to do?

And I know that the one thing that caused great concern, and I was glad to see that the minister backed down a little bit last year, was on the whole safety issue. With no consultation with the Department of Education or with child-care centres, he mandated a locked-door policy. And after some significant questioning last year, the minister softened his approach a little bit and attempted to work with facilities. But he must recognize and realize that all of those initiatives take time and energy and effort away from the work that early childhood educators and the administrative staff in centres need to do to work with children. It takes them away from the child-focused approach that they have, to doing the kinds of things that the department and the minister requires. And so there's an added workload and no additional resources available to centres to perform those tasks.

So I've heard from several daycares right across the province that there is a concern when more spaces, which are welcomed, are created but when there's no increase in the operating grants and they don't have the ability to pay their staff, to retain their staff, and to do the additional things that are required of them.

Child and Family Services, of course, is an ongoing issue with the child deaths, the homicides in the Child and Family Services system. And the chaos that was indicated to us through the Child Advocate when the report was leaked, before we had the opportunity to sit down and talk to the Child Advocate at committee last year, a report that

indicated that the system is in chaos and we see increasing numbers that are very disturbing, of children coming into care.

And I know that the minister talks a lot about prevention, and he talks about new programs that have been implemented to try to keep children out of care and to keep families whole and healthy. Well, Madam Chair, it's obviously not working because we're seeing more and more children in care today, and that's a very disturbing trend. And we need to get to the bottom of what is causing that and we also need to get to the bottom of what is happening to children once they're in care.

And you know, the minister, I know, stands in question period and indicates that, you know, we're not interested in family reunification or keeping families together and nothing could be further from the truth. But I guess he has a stage and a forum in question period where he believes that he can say anything and get away with it. And foster families that have been recruited and open their homes to children really do want to see those children reunited with a strong, healthy family, and many, many of them have indicated that to me.

\* (16:50)

But they don't want to see the kind of process that is happening today when there are no case plans, when there is no information shared with foster families about what the reunification plan is. And, overnight, children are moved after being in a foster home for two or three years without the proper preparation and without the support of a case plan and a proper reunification plan. And it's happening in disturbing numbers, Madam Chair, and I'm hearing from more and more foster families.

And I share that information with the minister; it's not something that I go public with. They're real issues around real children that are regressing as a result of the plans that are being implemented. And, you know, I've brought these issues to the minister. He wrings his hand and he talks about how concerned he is, but we go month after month after month with no resolution. The minister talks about investigating; he talks about fixing the problem; and yet we continue to see children in these circumstances that are taken without the proper plan, without the proper communication between the agency and the foster family that wants to see these children reunited, that want to see these children thrive and grow, and have significant worry about

how they're being—the plan is being implemented. And the minister knows this.

And I have great difficulty in understanding sometimes when he hears the stories that I hear and when I share those stories with him or a foster family share those stories directly, how he can sleep at night without looking at what needs to be done to fix the system. And I wonder if he hasn't given away his authority and his responsibility and says: It's not my problem now. We've devolved the system. We have agencies and authorities that are responsible for it, and I no longer have to be responsible or accountable.

Well, we'll get into some detail around some of those issues in the Estimates process. And I hope that the minister will take responsibility and will answer for some of the horrendous stories that we're hearing from families within the system.

And I know, Madam Chairperson, that my time is getting short, that I only have a few minutes—or I have only one minute left. There were other areas that I wanted to go into around supports for people with disabilities and also my concerns around the increasing number of social assistance of EIA caseloads, when the minister talks about all of the great programs that are in place, that are moving people off of welfare and into the workforce, when we're seeing increasing numbers and increasing expenditures there.

So we'll have the opportunity to discuss in detail as we go through the Estimates process some of the issues that I've raised and others that I haven't had the opportunity to do in my opening comments. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber and, once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Charlene Paquin is here; she's the newly appointed assistant deputy minister of Income Assistance, Disability Programs and child care. And Aurel Tess is here, the head of Finance and Administration, ADM; Carolyn Loepky, ADM of

Child Protection; and Alexandra Morton, the ADM of Consumer and Corporate Affairs division.

**Madam Chairperson:** Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** If we could go globally, I think we have in the past. I'll try to make sure that I don't have to have all staff here at all times, and we can maybe have that discussion as each day goes by. Can I indicate that I won't be dealing as the critic with Consumer and Corporate Affairs? We'll be dealing with Child and Family Services, and I think House leaders have had some discussion, if I'm not mistaken, around—oh, okay, and so we'll be dealing with Child and Family Services, well, today, tomorrow, Tuesday, Wednesday, and probably into Thursday. So I just didn't want staff from Consumer Affairs to feel that they needed to be on standby or here in the building for a few days anyway. And I'm sorry, but I had chatted with my House leader and I'm sure you'll have the opportunity to discuss that, just so that you're not spending your time needlessly being here. And if we could go globally, that would be great.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Just to clarify, are there to be any questions anticipated to Consumer and Corporate Affairs during the course of Estimates?

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Yes, but not in the next few days.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable minister, going globally is acceptable? And it's acceptable.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can I ask where the minister's deputy is?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, he feels really bad about this, but he had been invited and funded by the federal government to the OECD meeting on provision of supports for families in overseas, in Paris, and he's expected to be back Thursday. He felt really bad because of the way the timing all worked, but I thought that the opportunity was really important and that Manitoba be there. And, as well, for us to receive some ideas on best practices elsewhere as well as contribute to the thinking on progress that's being made internationally on supports for families.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I would agree with the minister that it would be important for him to be there and unfortunate, although I think he may not—he may

enjoy his time over there more than he would sitting in this Chamber having to answer questions and I know he would be a good support to the minister.

Is there anyone at the table—we have—I'm sorry, I missed the name of our new ADM for—

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Charlene Paquin.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Yes, and that's responsibility for Employment and Income Assistance, Child Care and Disabilities too? And I've got everything? And the gentleman at the table. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Aurel Tess is the assistant deputy minister of Administration and Finance. Aurel's been with us for about a year and I recalled Aurel from Justice. He was in that capacity over there, so he's relatively new to the department.

**Madam Chairperson:** One short question. The honourable member for River East.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Is—can the minister—we probably don't have time for a—maybe the minister could just indicate to me who the office staff is in his office.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable Minister for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, short answer.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Bev Nagamori is my appointments and everything person and too, she came from Justice with me and had served in Justice under the former administration as well. Gloria Mathes, although I regret to advise is going to be retiring; it will be a real loss. Kelly Davidson is on the front lines as well, and Christine Shachtay, who is very much on the front lines. Felix Meza is my policy adviser and, I think, known to all members opposite. Fiona Shiells is the special assistant. We have a student, a STEP student, a clerical support, April Koropatnick.

**Madam Chairperson:** Order. The honourable—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, May 2, 2011

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