

Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 37—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Accident Reporting Requirements)**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Labour and Immigration, that Bill 37, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Accident Reporting Requirements); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (exigences en matière de rapports d'accident), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill would result in motorists no longer being required to report collisions involving property damage only to the police. Manitoba drivers would only be required to report to police if the collision involves a fatality, serious injury, unlicensed drivers or vehicles, unidentified vehicles or the suspected use of drugs or alcohol.

This change has been recommended by the Manitoba association of police chiefs to reduce time spent by police officers on routine accident reports. Reporting of damage claims would continue to be made to Manitoba Public Insurance.

I thank police for their advice and co-operation on this bill.

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

PETITIONS

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition to—a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened, and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in local and provincial economies.

And to request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multiseason recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

And this petition is signed by G. Bonin, D. Sawatsky, M. Thibert 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.

The background to 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 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 M. Olah, S. Power, H. Wancsyk and thousands of other Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, 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 convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by C. Lucier, J. Lucier, R. Dirks and many, many more fine Manitobans.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, we're in the midst of an unprecedented natural disaster in our province's history.

Preliminary information indicates that this is a one-in-300-year flood in Brandon. We're calling upon every resource at our disposal, including the military, to push our diversion system and river dike capacity well beyond their design limits to help handle these record flows. However, the water flow is equivalent to half the flow of Niagara Falls flowing across the prairie. When faced with this challenge, the Province was faced with the difficult decision of risking a large uncontrolled breach or allowing a much smaller controlled release of water.

As we speak, hundreds of Canadian Forces personnel, provincial and municipal staff and volunteers are working to enhance the capacity of our river dikes and the diversion channel to minimize the amount of water in a controlled spill. However, there is still rain in the forecast that could add to the projected water levels and further challenge the system's ability to handle water.

I want to state definitively two things: one, the residences, farms and communities that will be affected by the controlled release are also in the area at risk for an uncontrolled breach. In that situation, this would potentially see upwards of five times as much water without any notice or control. The Province has requested the assistance of 300 additional Canadian Forces personnel who will be dedicated to helping protect properties in the controlled spill area; second, the people who will be affected by the controlled release are, without question, playing a key role in our fight to contain the unprecedented flows of the Assiniboine River. They are doing so by storing water on their lands on very little notice. This is an extremely unique situation and the Province will be developing a special program to deal with impacts for families and producers similar to the model that was developed in 1997 to deal with that unprecedented flood event on the Red River.

Finally, I want to reiterate that protecting the safety of people and property is our paramount concern. The situation continues to evolve extremely quickly. We will continue to make every effort to achieve this objective, keep the House and all

Manitobans up to date on the latest information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update to the House and also for a briefing we had earlier in the day.

I would also like to extend thanks on behalf of our leader and caucus for the information provided to us on the latest flood developments.

As the minister has outlined, there's been a major development in flood fight as the Province prepares to undertake a controlled release from the Assiniboine dikes in order to prevent an uncontrolled breach. This is a substantial development that is going to have a significant impact on a number of Manitobans. Resources are being assembled to help protect homes and properties that could potentially be affected by flooding related to the release of this water.

This is occurring in a very short period of time, and we recognize the various levels of government, the Armed Forces, the volunteers and those affected have much work to do in advance of the release. We appreciate their effort to minimize the impact of the event on persons and property.

In addition to emerging situations, the flood fight continues in many regions of the province. As always, we are appreciative of the many, many individuals who are working so diligently to help others battle this spring's significant flood event. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, 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 want to begin by thanking all the officials and the volunteers and the many others who are working, often around the clock, to try and do the best they can to protect as many people as possible and as many homes as possible, as many businesses as possible under these very difficult circumstances.

I thank the minister for his statement and certainly recognize the severity of the conditions that we're facing out there with a one-in-300-year flood in Brandon with very difficult potential conditions between Portage and Winnipeg, with the very high

levels to be coming on Lake Manitoba, with the extraordinary high levels in places like Lake St. Martin and the devastation that is happening in communities and people and the impact that this creates a really high level of tension and concern and anxiety.

And, I thank minister and others for all they are doing for Manitobans, and we just hope and pray for the best. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Red River College Language Training Centre, we have 13 adult English as an Additional Language students under the direction of Ms. Flo Robinson, and this school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Labour and Immigration.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Assiniboine River Flooding Information for Residents

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join other members in thanking Manitobans who are rising to the challenge of assisting their neighbours from various parts of the province in response to the very significant rising waters that we now see along the Assiniboine River. We had the chance this morning to see many of those people putting up sandbags around Headingley. We know from the media reports about the great work being done throughout the province by volunteers, by officials and also by the Canadian Armed Forces who responded very, very rapidly—in less than 24 hours—to the request by the Premier for assistance here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of Manitobans from Brandon to Headingley and in communities north and south of the river who are very understandably worried and concerned about what is taking place. I wonder if the Premier can provide a clear indication to these residents as to what can be expected over the coming hours and days.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, there's at least 52,000 cubic feet per second coming to the Assiniboine River at the Portage Diversion, and that is an unprecedented amount of water ever

seen in the history of Manitoba. This is a natural disaster that is equivalent to 1997 and even beyond that in terms of its impact in this specific area of Manitoba.

So what we are seeing is extraordinary efforts to increase the capacity of the diversion to handle more water, the diking projects that were first identified to take the Assiniboine River downstream of the diversion to 1976 levels. The \$25 million in diking there is being further reinforced to add additional capacity, and, in addition, a controlled release is planned as a last resort to ensure that if there's additional water that needs to be taken out of the dikes, that it can flow in a controlled way from the place in the river where there's the best opportunity to manage it and minimize damage to people, families and homes.

Controlled Dike Breaches Notifications

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the reports of a planned, controlled breach of the dikes are obviously significant. It is an extraordinary measure for a government to have to take to deliberately breach a dike and flood homes and property in order to prevent other damage.

I just want to ask the Premier: Given that that has not yet happened, who is responsible for making that decision and what is the criteria that they will use when that decision is made?

Mr. Selinger: That decision—we have received advice and a recommendation from our senior flood-fighting officials. The government has accepted their advice that a controlled release of water is necessary. It could be from 2,000 to 6,000 cubic feet a second. They have identified a location for that controlled release that will allow for maximum management of it, for equipment to have access to it, to put in place the proper resources to allow that controlled release to be managed in the best interests of the primary objective of all the flood fighting in Manitoba, to reduce harm to families, individuals and property.

And that's the objective, is to ensure that any measure we take is going to be the maximum measure to reduce the amount of harm that occurs from this unprecedented natural disaster occurring in the Assiniboine River Valley.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier indicate whether all of the property owners, families and individuals who will be impacted by the controlled

breach have, as of now, been notified as to what to expect and the communications protocol that is in place to ensure that every effort can be made to allow those individuals to take what steps are required to protect their property and, of course, to protect themselves and their families.

Mr. Selinger: Our Emergency Measures people are working very closely with the local municipality and their emergency operations committee who are reaching out to contact people. It's important to note that with an uncontrolled breach of the Assiniboine River this area would be very negatively impacted, five times worse than the controlled measures that are being planned. There would be up to 15,000 cubic feet a second that would flow into the entire region around there, affecting many communities.

This controlled release is intended to go no more than 6,000 cubic feet a second. Conditions are changing very rapidly. Information is being provided to people. They've been notified of the necessity they may have to evacuate their homes. Resources are being brought in to provide supports in terms of protection for the homes and the property. An additional 300 military personnel have been requested to come to Manitoba to work in this area.

So all measures are being taken to provide as much support and relief as possible to people affected by this controlled release.

Flooding Information for Residents

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

Mr. McFadyen: Part of what is creating concern and anxiety throughout the province is the fact that the information coming from government seems to be changing from day to day, if not from hour to hour, in terms of predictions, in terms of expected impacts and in terms of the steps that are going to be required in order to manage this situation.

Can the Premier just provide some level of reassurance that the impacts of the controlled breach, that the forecasts for the coming days are reasonably accurate and paint a true picture of what's going to be required so that people can feel some sense of reassurance, which has been shaken somewhat, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the inaccurate information being provided even as of a couple of days ago.

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: The personnel working on managing this flood disaster are among the best floodfighters in North America. They are widely regarded and they are widely studied for the measures that are taken here. They operate on the information that they get. They provide that information and advice to us. That information is part of an ongoing learning process.

We have had what we might even call a perfect storm of conditions come together in the last couple of weeks. We knew for a long time that the soil was extremely saturated. Saturated soil means that if additional moisture or precipitation comes, it has nowhere to go but to run off into the Assiniboine River, in this case, and its tributaries. On April 29th to May 3rd, we had a blizzard which put up to 20 centimetres of snow into western Manitoba. We know that the weather forecast for this week is forecasting somewhere between 20 and 50 millimetres of precipitation here. These two weather events, combined with the saturated soil, are creating extraordinary challenges at this time when the crest is coming to this very area.

So it's all coming together at an unfortunate time for the people in that area.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the concern that people are expressing to us throughout the province—those thousands of people from Brandon to Headingley and north and south—the concern is that even after the snowfall last weekend that ended on the 3rd of May, even after that snowfall, the Premier and his government were continuing to convey to people that everything was under control within the Assiniboine Valley. Even as of last Monday, after the snowfall, the message coming out of the Premier and government was that everything was under control.

It's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case as we stand here today, and I just want the Premier to provide some level of reassurance to Manitobans that the incorrect information being provided after the saturation of the ground and after the—*[interjection]* I understand the anxiety of members opposite, but their anxiety is nothing compared to the anxiety of Winnipeggers and people west of the province of Manitoba.

I ask them: Instead of chirping from their seats, will they provide accurate information to Manitobans.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as our staff assess the information, they provide it to us, and that information continues to evolve. People continue to learn from this experience.

The last—the flood of record in the Assiniboine River was 1976. Planning was put in place to have dikes built up and resources in place to handle the flood record—the flood of a—the flood event of record in Manitoba, and that was 1976. That's why the additional resources of \$25 million were put into strengthening and raising those dikes in the Assiniboine Valley. As the weather information has changed, it has been taken into account by our forecasters, provided to our officials, and they have brought recommendations forward to us.

That continues to be a learning experience. New information is coming forward all the time. The saturated soil creates the rapid runoff conditions. The weather events, the blizzard of April 29th to May 3rd, has brought unprecedented moisture into western Manitoba. The weather forecast for this week has forecasted very serious rainfall in the area as well.

All of that information is compiled and brought together on a daily basis, and it's combined with the expected crest times, which have varied as well, to look at what needs to be done.

Mr. McFadyen: The concern that people are expressing relates to the fact that the soil has been saturated since October, Mr. Speaker, now for about seven months, and other issues that have been part of this, contributing to this situation have been involving—have been evolving over a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that this is not an exact science. We acknowledge that there are going to be matters that are beyond the power of anybody to predict. However, there needs to be, in the government's communications with Manitobans, some clarity about what it is that they know and what it is that they don't know to the extent that they aren't certain or that they have a reasonable amount of doubt. It's important for them to be candid with Manitobans about that.

I just want to ask the Premier to provide whatever assurance he can and candour with Manitobans about the likely outcome of the events in the coming days and that all necessary steps are being taken by his government, that all necessary information is being communicated to Manitobans to

minimize the amount of damage ultimately done to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct; we are in uncharted territory here. Once we exceeded the 1976 flood record of historical event in Manitoba, we knew that we were into new and uncharted territory. We have always maintained that we have to be extremely vigilant and that we cannot relax our vigilance and our efforts to continue to prepare and respond to conditions as they unfold.

That's why we started extremely early with the soil saturation conditions and brought the \$25 million of additional diking work into place along the Assiniboine River between Portage la Prairie and Baie St. Paul. Really, all that distance, there's been 70 kilometres of dikes that have been strengthened. That's why, currently, they're strengthening the Portage Diversion to add additional capacity there.

So those measures are intended to respond to the perfect storm of weather conditions that we've seen. The crest is moving into this area. The crest has changed depending on the conditions to the west of us. We've also seen that we've had this blizzard from April 29th to May 3rd, and then the serious weather events that are in front of us right now.

These things have come together to create additional challenges of flows through the Assiniboine River which are about half the Niagara Falls flows.

Assiniboine River Resources for Affected Communities

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the controlled breach of the dikes on the Assiniboine just east of Portage la Prairie set for as early as tomorrow could have a significant impact on the communities of Elie, Starbuck and Sanford.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: What assistance, both short term and long term, has been and will be given to the town of Elie as people struggle with the knowledge that they might be flooded?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, first of all, I think it's important to note the sequencing of what's been happening over the last 48 hours, and I certainly appreciate the member opposite and other members opposite were part of a briefing that we held just—earlier today.

But we are dealing with unprecedented flooding. We are dealing with some significant challenges, and we have, over the last 48 hours, identified ways of maximizing the flow through the Portage Diversion, taking it from its rate of capacity of 25,000 cfs up to in the range of 32 or possibly even higher. We've already been putting, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) indicated, significant investments into the Assiniboine dikes. We have also with the help of the military now a target at keeping a flow of 20,000 cfs through those dikes, and the controlled breach really came down to two decisions: either a potential for an uncontrolled breakout of up to 15,000 cfs that would've inundated both north and south of the river or a much more controlled situation—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the controlled breach of the Assiniboine River dikes could see water reach Elie within about eight days and then it will work its way towards Starbuck.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: What assistance, both short term and long term, has been and will be given to the community of Starbuck as those people there struggle with the knowledge that they might be flooded?

Mr. Ashton: I want to indicate, between the two choices, the one that was a breakout would impact upwards of 800 homes, including the homes that will be impacted by the controlled release. I also want to indicate that we've mapped out the anticipated impact. It is in the La Salle area. The majority of the homes that are impacted are in the RM of Portage la Prairie. There are some homes in Cartier, and we are—we have informed municipalities and the municipalities are enacting their emergency plan.

I also want to put on the record, too, as I did in my ministerial statement, we're recognizing the unique circumstance that are impacting on homes in that area. We're also going to be bringing in a special program that will ensure that we have comprehensive coverage and compensation for individuals affected.

We're also, as I speak with the military, trying to save as many homes as we—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: I know that the minister earlier said that there would be a release of about 2,000 cfs of flow into the La Salle River, but the Premier (Mr. Selinger) earlier stated there could be up to 6,000 cfs released. So that is three times as much water going

down the La Salle River, which is going to have an impact on the communities of Elie, Starbuck and Sanford.

So I'd like to just ask the minister again: Once this controlled breach does happen on the Assiniboine River dikes, what assistance, both short term and long term, has been and will be provided to the people of Sanford who may see some flooding in that area?

* (14:00)

Mr. Ashton: I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that what we've identified here is a range. Again, the 2,000 would be the initial release that we would be looking at. It could range up to 6,000. The primary impact of that will really be the speed at which flooding will take place.

I want to indicate, by the way, that this really parallels the natural flood that occurred in 1955 with the La Salle watershed. It would not occur instantaneously throughout the entire area. It could take a number of days to go forward.

And it's no different than what we see elsewhere in the province. We see in the Red River Valley there's a bit of a waffle effect, as it's described by our technical staff. Roads act as a dike.

But what I want to say is a number of things. With the assistance of the military, we're making best efforts to save those homes. They are being trained as we speak with Aqua Dams and Tiger Dam usage. We'll be mobilizing sandbags. Mr. Speaker, we're not giving up on those homes in that area.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Morris, on a new question.

Mrs. Taillieu: On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the controlled breach of the dikes on the Assiniboine River can have a devastating effect on about 150 homes, we're told. People need to know what effect this is going to have on homes downstream.

So I'd like to ask the minister to clarify whether there will be less water downstream or still more water, and can the minister assure us if there's appropriate deployment of resources to the areas that are most in need?

Mr. Ashton: First of all, we did reach this decision late yesterday. We immediately informed the two municipalities that are impacted.

And I want to again indicate the particular challenges facing the RM of Portage la Prairie, because there's also the situation—the member for Portage I know is more than aware of—with the Portage Diversion itself.

I can't say enough, by the way, of how much the Portage Diversion is helping us in this particular case manage a historic flood, a one-in-300-year flood. That's the current estimate in Brandon.

I want to stress a couple of other things. We immediately have dispatched the Armed Forces to deal with the Assiniboine dike, but as of this morning, I met with the ranking brigadier general for western Canada. He offered 300 additional staff and I immediately took to request that. I have talked to Vic Toews, my counterpart federally, and they will be in—and they will be out, No. 1 job, those additional reinforcements—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, some of the communities in my constituency that I have been referring to, some have sandbags and some don't. Some have volunteers and some don't, and some are facing a more devastation—devastating impact than others.

So I'd like to ask the minister again to assure us that there is and there will be appropriate deployment of resources to the areas that are most in need.

Mr. Ashton: I want to indicate particularly, and I want to emphasize the military response. They were on-site within hours of the approval that was given by the Prime Minister following the request from the Premier (Mr. Selinger).

As of this morning, 300 additional Armed Forces personnel have made available, mostly stationed in Edmonton. And I want to stress, by the way, that many of the soldiers that are now fighting the floods for Manitoba are from Manitoba, including those stationed in Shilo, and reservists.

I want to indicate, as well, that if we need additional resources, the brigadier general assured me and Minister Vic Toews assured me, as well, that we would have that ability. They would access troops in other areas. So we're mobilizing that.

We're mobilizing every last rapid deployment system we have in the province, and we've extensively purchased those rapid deployment systems. We're moving, Mr. Speaker. We know time is of the essence and, as I speak, we're training

and mobilizing. We're going to do our best to put those—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the town of Elie has issued a flood evacuation notice to all residents and they have been told they have eight days to prepare.

The nearby Hutterite colonies are struggling to build dikes, as they need to protect their animals. They have in the past been a very valuable volunteer resource for the community, but the people are very worried about what could happen.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to calling a meeting for Elie and area residents to provide information and support to the people and the officials of the Rural Municipality of Cartier as they prepare for this most serious situation.

Mr. Ashton: Well, certainly we welcome—and I do want to put on the record, by the way, the particular contribution over the last number of years of many Hutterite colonies. I will never forget 2009, seeing Hutterite colonies' residents from a considerable distance away from the flood-affected area coming in and helping out. I do want to stress—and I want to put that on the record.

I do want to stress that one of the challenges over the next number of days and one of the reasons we called the Armed Forces in and one of the reasons we've asked the Armed Forces to particularly deploy and protect homes in the controlled area as well as to do the work that's needed on the dike is they have training in what would be very difficult conditions, very wet conditions.

And they are trained to manage risk. They're trained to deal with those type of situations. They have the equipment and we have expanded the role. In fact, Vic Toews, Minister Vic Toews, indicated there will be no problem with the additional 300 troops. We want to make sure they get in and do that work to protect as many homes as possible.

And I want to put on the record again how much we appreciate here in Manitoba, they were there for us then—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Consultations

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): I view with skepticism the controlled release of Assiniboine

River flood waters. All one has to do is look at the news reports of the Army Corps of Engineers on the controlled release of Mississippi flood waters.

Mr. Speaker, the planned breach of both the Assiniboine River Diversion channel and the Assiniboine River dikes is at the top of everyone's mind in the affected area and that of the rural municipal of Portage la Prairie officials.

Will the minister responsible please indicate with whom the department consulted in the affected region as they planned for this very significant measure?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): We have communicated—we had discussions even as early as this morning with the reeve in the area. We reached the decision, essentially, yesterday. We have also, by the way—I mean, I should put on the record that Candace Hoepfner, MP for the area—and I spoke to her yesterday, and she identified a number of concerns that we did respond to this morning.

The key issue here, Mr. Speaker, is we had to move quickly. We have made every effort to make sure that the RM of Portage la Prairie is—has been informed as developments progress. We are dealing with a lot of the concerns. They are the primary impacted municipality. Cartier is also impacted, but right now it's the RM of Portage la Prairie, and we are aware of that, and we will be responding to many of the concerns that I know the member has raised already about some of the issues in that area.

Mr. Faurchou: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed, the Portage la Prairie rural municipal council was briefed yesterday afternoon as to the Province's decision, but neither the Portage la Prairie municipal officials nor any one of the residents who grew up alongside the Assiniboine River were allowed to have any significant opportunity to assist in developing the plan to a controlled release of Assiniboine flood waters.

Mr. Speaker, why would the minister not allow the invaluable knowledge to be shared with his department personnel before they moved in this significant direction?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we did not have time to do anything other than assemble the best expertise, some of the best hydraulic engineering expertise probably in North America, if not the world. That is one thing about Manitoba, whether it's our consulting

engineers, our provincial staff, some of the retired staff.

We were working on scenarios well into the night, Sunday night and into Monday. I consider it a huge achievement that we're looking at going from this graded capacity of 25,000 cfs up to in the range of 32,000 and possibly even 34,000 cfs.

We recognize how important that is and some of the impacts in the area, and we have been communicating with the municipalities, et cetera, but, quite frankly, if we don't move—we're talking about a controlled release as early as tomorrow. Even a delay of a day could end up with a potential for a significant uncontrolled breach, and the consequences of that would be nothing less than catastrophic.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, the impact on the residents in and around the controlled release area cannot be overstated. It is a catastrophic event.

I would like to ask the minister why he did not consult with anyone as to any other considerations as to whether this controlled release of flood waters from the Assiniboine could be—potentially have an alternative option.

* (14:10)

Mr. Ashton: I would note, Mr. Speaker, that no less authorities than J. Doering from the civil engineering faculty at the University of Manitoba—many of the staff that we brought in looked at this, and I want to stress, by the way, that one of the reasons we did look at the Portage Diversion and our capacity in the Assiniboine dikes is because of the fact that we wanted to avoid, if possible, and minimize, if necessary, the controlled release.

I want to stress that the impact of an uncontrolled breakout of water volumes and flows of this significance—15,000 cfs—would have an impact all across the RM of Portage la Prairie. It would have impacts both north and south of the Assiniboine River. We have mapped that out; we identified that up to 800 homes.

It was not an easy decision, but time was of the essence, and I want to indicate we're doing our best, as well, to try and save those homes, and we will be there in terms of compensation—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Cattle Producers Relocation of Herds

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I'd like to open by thanking the Minister of Agriculture for the opportunity to tour the Shoal lakes flooding area last week.

This spring's flood is having a heavy impact on Manitoba's agricultural sector. Of immediate urgency is the need to address the effects of flooding on the livestock industry. It has been reported today that it may be necessary to evacuate 100,000 head of cattle.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture explain how the department arrived at these figures and identify the regions from which these cattle will need to be relocated?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): And, indeed, I do appreciate the advice that I received last week on that trip from the member from Emerson and to the member from Lakeside.

Mr. Speaker, our staff has been working very hard, very diligently with the Manitoba beef producers, in particular the Keystone Agricultural Producers, other commodity groups, to identify farmers, ranchers who are up against the wall in terms of dealing with this unprecedented amount of water. The numbers that we work from are numbers that we obtain through our contacts with farmers and ranchers in every region of this province.

And I do want to remind the member for Emerson how widespread this problem is. There are some hot spots in this province that we have to pay particular attention to, but it is a really general flood right across, and we'll be there for those farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, there will be significant logistical challenges in moving up to 100,000 head of cattle. The conditions of the roads will affect how many cattle and calves can be loaded on a truck and trailer. Spring roads restrictions may also be taken into consideration. We have done some calculating and conservatively estimated that to move 100,000 head of cattle it will be equivalent to 3,500 loads of livestock.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture explain how the department will arrange for trucks, trailers to move the livestock? Will producers be expected to make their own arrangements to move

animals or will the department be providing assistance?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to point out that we have very good co-operation from—between officials from our Department of Agriculture and other departments in terms of permits and rules and regulations that normally govern what moves on our highways and our byways.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking to make it as easy as possible for farmers to move cattle, for farmers to move feed to cattle if that makes more sense. We don't want those kind of things to get in the way of farmers and ranchers providing protection for what essentially is their livelihood.

We're going to make that as easy as possible and we're going to work in co-operation, not just within departments, but from governments to governments, whether it be municipal or federal, to make sure that that job gets done.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the other major challenge we're facing will be finding places for the 100,000 head of livestock to go for an unknown period of time. Many community pastures are already filling up as they had cattle previously committed to them. Some community pastures may not be available if they're too impacted by flooding.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain where the department anticipates producers will be able to send their cattle? Will they be sent to community pastures, other Crown lands, to land to be rented from producers or possibly even to be land held by third parties such as the Nature Conservancy, as has taken place in 2004?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as the member for Emerson saw on our tour last week, department officials have been working very creatively with ranchers themselves to make sure that we either get feed to cattle or cattle out of wet conditions to feed. I think he will admit, too, that that kind of work has been happening with our officials.

I want him to know that we will leave no option unexplored in terms of where the cattle can go. We've had—I was reminded we have examples from the past where cattle have been moved great distances, outside of the province in some cases, and we've done the same for other provinces.

I also want to make it very clear that we will leave no program unexplored in terms of

compensation and working with farmers to make sure that they're compensated very swiftly and they're compensated very fairly for storing this water on their land, you know, taking—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Consultations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to provide a thank you to all those who are working so hard and tirelessly to protect us from the flood, the provincial, municipal and federal officials, the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces and the many volunteers.

And I want to also add that while we may not always agree with the methodology of the government, that the Minister of Infrastructure and the First Minister we know are working very hard in the service of our product—province to protect Manitoba. Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Infrastructure to tell us when he first realized that there had to be drastic action taken and to describe the process that was taken in order to reach the decision to have controlled flooding of the region south and west of Portage la Prairie.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): And I also want to thank the member. I did have the opportunity to brief him on Sunday and, of course, he used to live in that area and does have very significant knowledge, and one of the things that was very useful was the perspective of the '55 flood. We have actually talked to people that have experience with that, and that is a—it's our closest benchmark in terms of this particular flooding.

I can indicate, in a general sense, that we—and that's our flood response team—became aware of the specific challenges essentially over the weekend. The key new information was of the weather situation, very significant rainfall. What we then identified as the gap in the capacity—and I've outlined that; I won't get into the details again—we then identified what we could do and I'll answer perhaps in more detail—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response. I understand that there are at least 150 homes, an uncertain number of businesses and the livelihoods of many workers who could be at risk with the decision for the controlled flooding event.

And I ask the minister, knowing that there could be as many as a 150 homes, many businesses and many workers impacted by the controlled flood event, did the minister exhaust all other options before making the decision to cut a channel in the dike so that the water would flow out from the Assiniboine River south and west of—south and east of Portage la Prairie?

Mr. Ashton: I want to stress, again, this decision was not reached lightly. It was also based on full analysis by the staff. We brought together some of the best expertise, both within government and outside of government.

We did indeed look at what we can maximize through the Portage Diversion. When I say maximize through the Portage Diversion, also recognizing that you have limits there as well. You have to have control over what happens. We did a lot of work, for example, on the hydraulic capabilities, maintaining that as well as increasing the flow, as we've done that in terms of the dikes, and I mentioned that.

It really came down to the two scenarios. The one was an uncontrolled breakout. The second was a controlled release of that water. So we went through a sequential process, and the clear recommendation yesterday afternoon which we immediately communicated with the public was the option that we have proceeded with.

Compensation for Flood Victims

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the minister for his response and for all the hard work of his department, government officials and volunteers and many others.

Mr. Speaker, I finally ask the minister: Will there be an appropriate level of compensation available to the homeowners of the area who would be maybe losing their property, to the businesses in the area who will be, in some cases, very severely adversely affected and to the workers who will lose their jobs as a result of the impact of this controlled flooding of businesses in the area?

* (14:20)

Mr. Ashton: And I do want to echo the words of the member because there's been a lot of work going on right now, and I really want to put on the record, by the way, that everyone, including the forecasters who have probably the most difficult challenge you could ever imagine, a one-in-300-year flood,

unprecedented in this province, they've been working 24-7 along with the survey crews. We've gone from two to 13 crews throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

So we've done a lot of work collectively, and we've—it's a very difficult situation, but we will—and I think the member asked a very good question—we will make sure that there is special compensation programs specifically for those impacted by the controlled release that will be special and it will be comprehensive.

We'll make sure that we not only try and protect those homes but we also cover any of the kind of damages that may occur as well. We will have a special program, and that announcement is effective as of today.

Shoal Lakes Flooding Compensation and Mitigation Strategy

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture for visiting the Shoal lakes area last week to see the first-hand devastation effect of a flood going there. I know farmers and rural municipalities appreciate being able to provide him with direct feedback on this very serious situation.

I recognize that government is very busy right now in many regions dealing with this spring flood. Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture that he will develop an assistance plan for those producers affected.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for his assurance of the supports, the prompt delivery of such a plan to help those producers be done by this Friday, as suggested by the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, I'll begin by thanking the member for Lakeside for the advice that he gave me as we met with many of his constituents who are, indeed, under stressful conditions right now. We all know how important it is for farm families to feed their livestock and contribute to the provincial economy that way.

Mr. Speaker, we saw some very graphic examples of how farm families are working to feed their cattle. We saw some very, I thought, some heartwarming examples of farmers getting together to solve the problem, and I'll reference—I think a constituent of the member for Lakeside, a

Mr. Tataryn, whose neighbours got together and helped him in lending him—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we know that short-term strategies are imperative when it comes to producers hit hard by the Shoal Lake area flooding. The impact is also being felt by many other stakeholders in the area, including other residents, businesses and local municipalities.

A long-term strategy is also needed. Stakeholders are hoping that a plan can be finalized so work can commence as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) commit today to having a long-term strategy identified over the next few weeks to address the very serious situation in the Shoal Lake area?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we all know that there's been a lot of discussion, a lot of consultation that's taken place in terms of a long-term approach to this part of our province. We know that the Shoal lakes continues to grow, and part of the problem is that they don't recede, and that's what puts farmers in a tough bind in terms of trying to eke out a living in this part of our province.

My first and foremost focus as Agriculture Minister was to make sure that we work with farmers to get feed to their cattle or cattle to the—to some place high and dry. We visited a bison ranch along the way and saw the same kind of problems there.

Mr. Speaker, my other goal as Agriculture Minister is to make sure that these farmers receive support until that time when there is a long-term strategy put in place and the long-term action that is undertaken.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to members' statements, I'd like to draw attention to honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the Interlake Mennonite Fellowship School, we have 19 grade 8 to 12 students under the direction of Anton Penner. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff).

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Asian Heritage Month

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Each year during the month of May, we observe Asian Heritage Month. For the past 18 years, Canada has recognized this special celebration of cultures and traditions. All across Canada, many cities have events planned throughout May to celebrate the proud Asian heritage of thousands of Canadians.

In our own province, the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba has organized numerous activities to celebrate this month and to share Asian culture with Manitobans from other backgrounds. The Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba was formed with the mandate of bringing together members of the Asian Canadian communities in Manitoba to develop events to celebrate Asian Heritage Month. They also aim to foster cultural identity among youth and to share Asian culture and traditions with Manitobans.

The Manitoba Asian Heritage Society is made up of representatives from the Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Indo-Chinese, Korean and Filipino communities. This society hosted an official opening ceremony on May 7th at the Indo-Canadian Arts and Cultural Centre. Over the past few days in the coming weeks, events have been planned that showcase arts, culture, cuisine and traditions of Asian culture.

There are other groups getting into the spirit of Asian Heritage Month as well. The Charleswood Senior Centre held a Japanese tea yesterday with special guest Art Miki. There was traditional green tea and sushi for attendees to sample, as well as Japanese dance and flower-arranging demonstrations.

On Sunday, May 22nd, and Monday, May 23rd, The Forks will host the Asian Canadian Festival. The festival will include traditional dance, music, martial arts, drumming and a fireworks display.

Manitoba's Asian population has made significant contributions to our society. While there are many well-established Asian communities throughout the province, we continue to welcome thousands of new immigrants from this part of the world each year.

Asian Heritage Month provides the opportunity to celebrate the culture, traditions, cuisine and arts of these communities. I encourage Manitobans to take part in the cultural celebrations during Asian

Heritage Month, and congratulations to all the organizers for making this year's celebrations a success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ken Henderson

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a local artist, Ken Henderson, who is an undeniable source of energy and inspiration in the OCN and The Pas community.

Ken started playing music when he was only 11 years old. Since then, he has made music a central part of his life and has used it to change the lives of others. Ken and his all-Aboriginal band from OCN, Chrome 204, have not only had great success but have been a driving force behind many great projects with the youth in the area.

Ken recalls looking up on the stage as a young boy and deciding that music was what he wanted to do. It was that goal that kept him moving forward through his youth. Now, years later, Ken is mentoring kids that are in the same situation as he was. Ken and his bandmates were instrumental in creating the Northern Roots Music Festival. Their vision was to inspire local youth to consider music as a healthy life path and to use it as something to look forward to. The festival did exactly that. Through music workshops, they left kids inspired and aware of what music can do.

Travelling around the north and seeing different communities is what inspired Ken to use music to help people. He's a natural leader. He sees the kids looked up to him and is unafraid to act as a role model for them.

Chrome 204 has released a new hit single "Meant to Be," which can be heard on radio stations across the country. They have gained even more momentum this year as the band made it to No. 10 spot on the National Aboriginal Top 40 Countdown. Even among very well-known acts from across Canada, this small band from OCN is making its way to the top. I'm happy that a group such as—with such an encouraging message is seeing this success.

The band is currently finishing their first album and has their sights set on the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards. Good luck to you, and thank you for being such a great influence in our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Move 'N Groove-a-Thon 2011

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And today I rise to recognize a very special event that took place

on Saturday, April the 9th, 2001. Mr. Speaker, it was the Movement Centre of Manitoba's lively Move 'N Groove-a-Thon.

* (14:30)

The Move 'N Groove-a-Thon is a celebration of individuals in our community who live with physical disability. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness about disability and to increase functional independence through conductive education.

Mr. Speaker, participants had a great time dancing from noon till midnight to some of Winnipeg's fine musical talent. The Move 'N Groove-a-Thon featured some awesome bands, including Winnipeg's own rising star, Savannah Rae Boyko.

It was a very successful event with 440 dancers making up the 34 teams that participated. I was pleased to be a part of one of the teams that participated in this event.

In total, the 34 teams helped raise \$123,000, Mr. Speaker, and that was \$23,000 over the Movement Centre's goal, and it just speaks to the generosity of Manitobans. The funds were raised—the funds that were raised will help the Movement Centre work to increase awareness of conductive education programs for those with physical disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Movement Centre's a non-profit rehabilitation organization that is dedicated to working with children and adults with mobility challenges, including cerebral palsy, head injury, stroke, MS and Parkinson's disease. These diseases can leave individuals feeling vulnerable, but with the help of conductive education programs, the Movement Centre helps people with neurological conditions gain or regain physical mobility, increase confidence and functional independence.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all of the 440 participants for their hard work in the 2011 Move 'N Groove-a-Thon. It was the first event of its kind, and I'm sure it will be repeated again in years to come. As well, I want to commend the Movement Centre for their invaluable contribution to individuals with physical disabilities in our province. A big thanks to all the volunteers and all of those people that were involved this year, and we wish the movement much—the Movement Centre much success in the years ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gloria Whitford and Dolores Samatte

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, some of the strongest voices in northern Manitoba are the voices of women. Today, I would like to honour two Métis women, both from Cranberry Portage, and both essential leaders of our community: Gloria Whitford and Dolores Samatte.

Gloria was raised in Moose Lake. She worked out of Cranberry Portage for much of her life. This past year, Gloria was honoured with a Frontier Achievement Award for a lifetime of dedicated service. For years, she has been an active leader in the Frontier School Division. When Gloria sees a need in the community, she always responds.

Gloria has supported many great initiatives in Cranberry Portage over the years. One example is starting the nutritious snack program at the elementary school. Gloria recruited volunteer bakers and gives freely of her time and supplies to ensure the kids have healthy muffins once a week. She also serves on the in motion committee, trying to keep the community healthy and active. Of course, this is just a small sample of the many great things that have come from this strong, kind and compassionate woman. I add my voice to the many friends and colleagues who have nothing but praise for her.

The second woman I would like to commend is Dolores Samatte, who has recently—who was recently honoured by the circle of Aboriginal educators with the trailblazer lifetime achievement award. Each year, these awards recognize people that have made outstanding contributions to Aboriginal education. Dolores truly deserved this award.

Dolores grew up in Crane River, where getting an education proved difficult; however, she persevered. After completing high school in Ste. Rose du Lac and getting her teacher's certificate, Dolores spent many years working in the Frontier School Division. It comes as no surprise that Dolores was selected for this honour because of all her years in education, whether it was in teaching, administration, curriculum development or other community initiatives. Dolores—or other community initiatives. Dolores was the first co-ordinator of the Brandon University Northern Teachers Education Program in Cranberry Portage. She's also an essential part of the local church. She has also served on the Council on Post-Secondary Education. It is not only

her dedication to education, but her care, compassion and good nature that shines through in her work.

These two women have done much to strengthen life in the north. The work they do improves our quality of life today and safeguards what is most important for the next generation. Thank you Gloria and Dolores for all that you have done for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Canadian Masters Curling Championship

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): As the MLA for the Minnedosa constituency, I would like to take this opportunity today to congratulate a wonderful team of four women from Westman: Cheryl Orr of Minnedosa, Karen Dunbar of Souris, Linda Van Daele of Brandon teamed up under skip Joyce McDougall of Nesbitt to compete at the 2011 Canadian Masters Curling Championships in Winnipeg. The McDougall rink that competed out of the Brandon Curling Club represented Manitoba in the 10-team women's draw. While representing our province, they also landed victory, winning the national women's title with a perfect record of 8-0.

Mr. Speaker, the team experienced an exciting and challenging tournament. In the final match, McDougall played against BC and had to work hard for the win. McDougall was up by four, then, in the fifth end, BC was back in the game scoring four. It was a tie game heading into the sixth end when Linda Van Daele made a clutch shot to turn the tables back into Manitoba's favour. The Manitoba ladies continued to apply pressure and in the seventh end sealed an 8-11 win.

For the McDougall rink it was more than just a personal triumph, as the ladies—or the women are now the first Manitoba Masters women to win a national title.

On a side note, Cheryl Orr and her husband Ray Orr of Minnedosa can now both claim to be Canadian Masters Curling Championship winners in Manitoba, a first, I believe, in Manitoba for both a husband and wife team.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to, again, congratulate the McDougall rink on a successful season and well-played championship. We are so happy and proud to have you represent Westman and Manitoba and we wish you all the best as you can take time to celebrate your achievements and a successful season, and I'm sure there are many more seasons to come very similar to the one they experienced this year. Way to go.

ORDERS OF THE DAY*(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Pursuant to rule 31(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). The title of the resolution is Health in the North.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one that will be put forward by the honourable member for The Pas, and the title of the resolution is Health in the North.

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on further House business.

Would you please canvass the House to see if there's agreement to change the Estimates sequence such that the Estimates for Sport will be considered today in Room 255. They'll be followed by Employee Pensions and Other Costs, although I'm informed that only Sport will be considered today.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to change the Estimates sequence such that the Estimates for Sport will be considered today in Room 255, to be followed by Employee Pensions and Other Costs? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to announce for members that it's the intention for the House to consider Estimates on Friday, even though condolences are to be considered on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it's also been announced that on Friday we will continue on with Estimates, even though on Thursday we will be dealing with condolences, but on Friday we will be dealing with Estimates. Okay, that's the information for all members of the House.

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Would you please resolve us into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will now resolve into Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber will be Innovation, Energy and Mines, and room 255, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, and room 254 is Health.

Okay, so would the respective Chairs go to the rooms that they will be chairing, please.

Correction for the House, in room 255 will be Estimates of Sport, not Employee Pensions and Other Costs. It will be Estimates for Sport. That's the information for the House.

We'll resume Committee of Supply.

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

* (14:40)

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

Yesterday in this section of the Committee of Supply, a resolution for the Department of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors was passed without mention of the resolution number. For the record, I would like to clarify that the following resolution was passed yesterday in this section:

Resolution 34.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$19,399,000 for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012. Thank you.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health. As had been previously agreed, questions for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): When we closed yesterday, I was just getting to a point, and, of course, it was in a discussion concerning political staff, and we were, I suppose, having a debate on it, differences in approaches to staffing offices and so forth.

And I was on the brink of saying that, for our purposes in this committee, for reasons that are understandable, to distinguish department staff from political staff from, you know, administrative staff and so forth, we do give them these labels, but I think it's fair to say that because they have that label "political staff" doesn't mean that they are perpetually engaged in really aggressive political or partisan work all of the time. They certainly do function to help prepare me for events and making remarks in different places and question period, and the like. But they do lots and lots of work with Manitobans, with groups that want to come to meet, everyone from, you know, patients, their families, First Nations groups, municipalities, community groups, advocacy organizations, you know, like Heart and Stroke, or the Cancer Society, you name it.

And they're very committed individuals, and I would say it's not unlike, you know, if I can put on the record, Ms. Cook. I'm not sure if she's still working with the member opposite, I think her name was Kathleen, who, I saw, you know, day in, day out, working at the side of the member for Charleswood. And, you know, frankly, I wished she hadn't worked that hard at times, but she did a very good job in preparing and assisting the member and she had many conversations with staff in my office. And it was my impression, from my own observations, and certainly from the remarks from staff in my office, that she was someone that really cared about people, and when they called opposition members with concerns about their loved ones, she really wanted to work together to get to the bottom of an issue and try to resolve it.

And I would say that staff in my office are really not different in that regard. They are appointed as political staff, that is a fact, but they really do work to help Manitobans resolve their issues and help some of their ideas come to fruition.

And so, again, while we may agree to disagree on staffing complement or layout, I'm reasonably sure that we can agree that these, you know, for the young people, are quite committed to making Manitoba a better place to be, and I really want that to be on the record.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): And I thank the minister for her comments on that.

And I just want to point out that I do not doubt the value of the staff and the work that they do, and I imagine the long hours they put in and the

commitment that they have to their job. I'm—that wasn't the genesis of my question at all.

And I have to admit, also, that a number of them have been very helpful when Kathleen Cook has called. We don't make all of our issues political. Sometimes we look at seriousness of the case and just take it to some of the staff in the minister's office and just try to resolve an issue and we have been able to do that on a number of occasions. So, you know, I'm grateful to the amount of work that, you know, and support her political staff have given to some issues.

My question, and the genesis of it was more around how many she had, considering that back in 1999, the NDP made a very, very big fuss about the number of staff in the minister's office and within the executive support and administrative components of Manitoba Health. And, in fact, that was one of their big headlines in one of their election promises was: Less bureaucracy, more front-line staff. And all I'm pointing out is while they were disparaging of an ever-growing bureaucracy at that time, what they've actually done, in this instance, is double up political staff in the minister's office. And I also note that they've doubled up on assistant—or associate deputy ministers and gone from—I believe we had three in the '90s, and now there's six.

Can the minister indicate why there is the need for six ADMs when, in fact, supposedly, the intent of regionalization was to decrease the number of, you know, people at that level? That was the intent. In fact, the intent was to decrease the size of Manitoba Health, and I will be asking her shortly for whether or not those numbers are going up or down.

* (14:50)

But, considering the, you know, the loud noise that was made by the NDP in the '90s about all of this, and the fact that regionalization was to have seen a decreasing size in Manitoba Health, can the minister justify why her department felt they had to double up on the number of ADMs?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, I do recall having a conversation about this last year and acknowledging that there again are different views on how staffing complements may be developed within a department. We do have six ADMs. We know a number of provinces have more than that. We have—I think, B.C., nine; Alberta, seven; Ontario, 12; Québec, seven; but we know that there has been a lot of work done over the course of the last decade in areas of

Health human resource recruitment, and of course that is an area which is under the purview of one of those ADMs.

We know that we have expanded programs across Manitoba within the context of our regions and that's an area of responsibility for one of the ADMs, you know. We have seen additional programs be developed like the Protection for Persons in Care, critical incident monitoring and review, personal care home standards inspections, so the increase in responsibility, in my view, warrants having leadership, making sure that there is good stewardship of the programs that we put into place.

And so, again, I believe the member is asking or is imminently going to ask on the subject of positions within Manitoba Health. I'm informed there are 224 fewer positions in Manitoba Health than there were in 1999. According to the '98-99 Estimates schedule, we saw 1,416 full-time positions in the department. This year we see the number at Manitoba Health at 1,210. I would note that this is up from last year from 1,192. We saw an increase of 18 positions at Selkirk Mental Health Centre and these positions are all security related, I might add.

So, again, we have seen a significant increase in the kinds of programs and opportunities available to Manitobans, in my view, and accordingly, we have leadership in place to shepherd these initiatives forward.

We know that the Manitoba Health numbers also include hundreds of staff that do work directly with patients and families or support front-line care. I think that's important to note. Four hundred and eighty-seven of those staff are at Selkirk Mental Health Centre. That is an increase from '99 of some 78 positions. We see 95 positions at Cadham lab, which is an increase of five from '99. Twenty staff are working at northern nursing stations.

So, you know, overall we do believe that we have some of the finest individuals in the province that are really dedicated to seeing these initiatives come forward including new ones, fulfilling our commitment of every Manitoban having a family doctor by 2015, assisting with the development of capital infrastructure, helping more and more families become part of the Pharmacare program, assisting people with provincial health coverage and out-of-province health-care coverage questions. They're a busy group and I commend them for the work that they do.

Mrs. Driedger: And as I indicated as well in my opening comments, I do value the work of the people within the department, and certainly the genesis of my questions is not related to that, but more in line with what the government is doing in terms of increasing numbers.

Now, a question that has come up in looking at the civil service growth compared to growth of the Department of Health, 1999. One of my staff had been looking at these numbers and they said that the Manitoba—that Manitoba Health has grown by nearly 10 per cent since 1999, and it was looking at the growth of Manitoba Health staff relative to the overall civil service numbers.

Is that a number that the minister is familiar with in terms of the 10 per cent growth?

Ms. Oswald: The number that the member cites in relation to employment in the civil service, that 10 per cent number, is not one with which I'm intimately familiar—it's not at my fingertips. If there was something specific about it, that, you know, the member would like me to do some homework upon and then get back to her, I'm very pleased to do that.

We know that expenditure in department—in the Department of Health for health has increased over time. It is a significant percentage of the overall provincial budget; that's, you know, undeniably true. And the oversight that needs to go into the, you know, the accounting and the spending and the appropriate resourcing, you know, with those funds, you know, does require the leadership that we do have in place.

And, you know, not to repeat what I said before, when we see increases in staffing in the Department of Health and how the—who is captured within the context of the Department of Health, much of this does pertain to direct front-line service and support services on the front line.

So I wouldn't want, once again, that to get lost in the context, but on the specific 10 per cent number related to civil service that the member is referencing, you know, perhaps she could expand on that a little bit and maybe direct me on some homework she might like me to do on that.

Mrs. Driedger: I would also indicate that when my staff were looking at these overall civil service numbers that if you included Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, that, in fact, the numbers increase to 18 per cent. So it looked like there was some

significant civil service growth compared, you know, in the Department of Health since 1999.

So it's something if the minister has some interest in further exploring herself, I'm sure she could, but in looking at that particular chart, that was certainly what was—has been drawn to my attention.

The minister indicated other provinces that had larger numbers of ADMs, and certainly I would expect Alberta, BC, Ontario, Québec to have higher numbers there, because they have a higher population. I would note, though, and I do believe Saskatchewan only has three ADMs, or maybe they were looking at going to a fourth, but certainly not six like Manitoba.

So, you know, can the minister tell us why, you know, as comparing to just Saskatchewan, who also happen to be in a regionalized structure, why Manitoba tends to want to have a much bigger government than the Saskatchewan Party-run Health Department in Saskatchewan?

* (15:00)

Ms. Oswald: Well, yes, again, I would reiterate that in Manitoba, there has been substantial building and rebuilding of the system over the last 10 years, you know, from literal capital development in of, you know, all corners of the province to the building of human resources. I think, if I recall—and I would want to double-check this—but I think the way that things are structured in the neighbouring Saskatchewan, there are a number of—I think they might be called special advisers or people in direct relation to the deputy minister, I believe. And so it may be a case of, you know, what's in a name, in terms of who's doing the work, who's being paid for the work, and how—you know, what they're being paid and how they're being labelled.

I do think that we're pretty close to Saskatchewan. I do know that, you know, each province, regardless of their complements of deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers, do have their challenges that they have to meet. I know Saskatchewan is no different in that regard in, you know, whether or not they would benefit from additional leadership at the top to deal with ongoing issues is certainly for them to decide.

It's our belief in Manitoba that we have the complement right now that is required for the initiatives that have happened over the decade and that are in flight right now.

So, again, you know, I hear what the member is saying and, again, I would reiterate that I, too, understand that she's not speaking personally about the competence of any of these individuals; she's speaking about the—just the existence of their position. And it's a subject, I think we had quite a bit of debate last year on it, and we, I suppose, can have it again. I would just reiterate that position for position we know that we're down 224 today than in 1999 in Manitoba Health overall, and that's not an insignificant thing when you consider the initiatives that are being pursued and the work that's being done.

Mrs. Driedger: In the category of executive support, it indicates that there are 15 staff, or 15 FTEs employed. Can the minister indicate who all of those 15 are and what their roles would be?

Ms. Oswald: I was already to go with my political staff names, but I don't—right at my fingertips—have those right in front of me, but I can commit to the member to forward that information to her.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, are those 15 just the people within her office as the Minister of Health or does it also encompass the office of the deputy minister?

Ms. Oswald: It does capture the deputy's office as well, otherwise, I'm pretty sure I'd know them by heart.

Mrs. Driedger: With the concern rising over the flood, can the minister indicate the role of her department in dealing with this flood?

Ms. Oswald: And I thank the member for the question.

As I said in my opening remarks yesterday, we really do commend the people in the Department of Health for the role that they are playing in preparing for the flood and circumstances that result from flooded facilities or roads, or the like.

And I, first of all, want to extend my deep-seated gratitude to the two staff that are at the table. The deputy minister and the chief financial officer have had to be very nimble in working with our regional health authorities and with our team, which is centred out of what is known as the Office of Disaster Management, or ODM, for expediency's sake, to ensure that we are working in partnership with the overarching government incident command structure to make sure that Health has a seat at the table and can be as prepared and proactive as

possible in concert with overall emergency measures operations.

And the Office of Disaster Management has been working with all of our partners, RHAs and First Nations since December on spring flood preparedness. I would argue, frankly, they've been working since the flood of 2009, which I know the member will remember. They finished up with that and began to fold up their tent at about noon one day, and it was about 1 o'clock that word came that the pandemic was coming. And so the tent went right back up, and they never got a break.

So, really, they have been preparing all along but, specifically in relation to this flood experience, they've been working since December. We know that they have prepared, as they always do, for worst-case scenarios, which, you know, involve contemplating the, you know, mass evacuation of patients, and have been doing exercises and planning with a variety of levels within government for that kind of extreme situation.

We know three health facilities have been evacuated as of today, and I'm very happy to report that I'm informed that there have been no adverse events associated with any of these facility evacuations, which is a very good thing. Patients—eight patients, I believe, were evacuated from Gladstone; 21 patients from Wawanesa PCH; there were evacuations of the PCH in St. Adolphe; and, of course, a number of those people have now been returned safely, which is a good thing.

We know that one of the main jobs of the Office of Disaster Management in working with the flood is working with each RHA on the issue of continuity of care. When residents, of course, are evacuated, the RHA that receives the evacuated residents wants to ensure that there are arrangements made for public health nurses to meet with each evacuee and assess their health needs, and this would include everything from helping to get evacuees to dialysis appointments. The Office of Disaster Management matches the list of evacuees against the list of evacuees assessed by the RHA to make sure that everybody that has been evacuated is being seen, so there's cross-referencing going on to work to ensure nobody gets lost, nobody with health needs is unaccounted for.

Also, of course, Public Health and the Office of Drinking Water are very actively involved in monitoring water quality and, of course, issue boil water advisories as needed. Patients and families

have also received letters from their care providers in the RHAs, from CancerCare, for example, about flood hazards and what preparedness they need to be considering. This work, of course, has intensified in the current rather extreme scenario that's being—or that is unfolding before us.

Of course, the Office of Disaster Management has been very actively involved with the STARS organization, and we've learned a lot from them from 2009 and we're learning a lot from this experience as well. We know that up to the recent events that are unfolding that there were already, you know, some, you know, over 2,700 kilometres of road that had been closed in Manitoba and this is going to increase significantly with the current events, and response times for EMS have been maintained and within benchmark, which we're very pleased to report.

* (15:10)

There's, of course, analysis going on digitally of postings for our EMS vehicles—geo-posting, that is, and they're intimately connected to STARS and to MTCC to be able to monitor and maintain those response times, and, to date, we have been able to maintain those.

I believe this note is up to date. I stand to be corrected, but I believe STARS has transported 22 patients so far. They've flown more missions than that, but actual transports have been 22. Not every one of those has been directly related to people stranded by flood. They've been responding to traumas outside of that as well. These have included cardiac, other trauma, stroke and serious cases requiring rapid specialist care. Pediatric cases have been involved. And some of these have, you know, quite literally been between life and death, and in a number of cases I'm very happy to report that the result was life.

I could go on with that, but I think I've given the member a flavour for how ODM has been involved and how Health has been involved, but she may have questions so I'll just stop there for now.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether any personal care homes or hospitals are currently vulnerable now to the oncoming water?

Ms. Oswald: The optimistic answer is that it does not appear that there will be directly affected facilities as a result of the controlled release of water. But the Office of Disaster Management is really working to have a far-reaching preventative plan in place in the event that, you know, the unthinkable

should happen and the controlled turns to uncontrolled. And that would start to develop into a scenario that, you know, would be really, really serious for, you know, any number of environments, including health facilities.

We know reasonably far downstream there is the St. Norbert PCH, and the Office of Disaster Management has performed risk assessment on the PCH. It has, to date, determined that it will not be indirectly affected either, but we are keeping a very close eye on that.

The controlled release of the Assiniboine has an important benefit, one would argue, if there is benefit to be found in these dire times, that it will allow much better planning for the EMS network and the pre-positioning of our ambulances in areas where we'll have a better sense of where there will be road closures and not will be a critically important piece. We know that we have also pre-positioned medical personnel to be in close proximity to the military personnel that are working at, you know, arguably, pretty risky situations, and we're prepared for that as well.

But if there's one thing that the deputy minister and the head of the Office of Disaster Management say to me every single day, we have a plan, we're planning for the worst, but in these situations we have to continue to expect the unexpected. So I would say that, within the context of our plan, we are not feeling that we're in imminent danger of losing facilities, but we are preparing just in case.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate where patients would go if they are removed from a personal care home or a hospital? Like, what contingency is in place, because most PCHs sound like they're full up? I imagine a lot of hospitals are pretty busy but maybe have some ability to accept patients.

So is there a plan in place for any number, anywhere along the river, for patients—you know, if there was flooding anywhere, is there a plan in place for these patients to be taken to certain other facilities?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, there is, and part of the work of the Office of Disaster Management has been mapping beds and mapping capacity and mapping contingencies and, as was the case during the pandemic, if need be, in some of the more extreme scenarios that are being contemplated, there would be, in urban centres, the option of standing down on

elective surgeries to make sure that beds were freed up. We hope we don't need to do that, but that is certainly part of the plan.

There is also practice and work that has been done with a mobile hospital, the national stockpile. It's not pretty, but it works, and those exercises have happened, indeed, to make available additional capacity in that respect. In fact, a test was done quite recently and it went very smoothly. So I don't have in front of me the ODM's map of if X patients in Souris need to be moved, they will be transferred to Y, but if the member is interested, you know, to have further information, I would be very pleased to make available a briefing for her about potential contingencies with the understanding that if, you know, ODM is in flight moving people, we would have to modify how that briefing went.

But, yes, those plans and those maps and those contingencies do exist, and they are ready to be triggered at literally a moment's notice. What we've tried to do in a situation where there was more time, is to ensure that the evacuation of vulnerable elderly patients happened well in advance of a potential evacuation of a community so that we could mitigate stress. Obviously, in situations like we're seeing today with the controlled breach, we won't have as much luxury of time, but I know that every care will be taken to manage and mitigate stress wherever possible, and we do have complements of nurses and social workers on hand to be receiving people and really watching, not just their individual health status but stress level as well, which we know full well can be half of the battle in these situations.

Mrs. Driedger: I appreciate the update from the minister, and I certainly don't need or feel in need of any, you know, further hard data at this point in time, and, hopefully, situations like we've just talked about may not come to be and this will resolve as good as it possibly can.

Has the minister had any thoughts as to whether or not we might need a second STARS ambulance here during the flood, and is that an option?

Ms. Oswald: Given the measuring of the current flight volumes of the helicopter, it's—it isn't at present looking like it's something that we will need to pursue. We know that STARS, as an organization, has been exceedingly accommodating. I'm not sure that they have a number of ambulances—helicopters lying around, but it certainly has been the case across jurisdictions that in situations and circumstances of intense need, there have been resources that have

been shared and we would not be hesitating to speak with Alberta about any potential options on that. It's not looking like that's going to be something we're going to need, but, again, I'm not inclined to tempt Mother Nature by saying we won't need additional resources.

We do, of course, have Lifeflight, which we continue to use where we can. And, again, the pre-positioning of our land ambulances in concert with the one helicopter seems to be doing a very good job right now, but, again, it will be ongoing monitoring to be sure.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister give us a time frame in which she thinks we might possess our own air ambulance, or is she going to leave that for a big election photo op?

Ms. Oswald: Well, I never get sick of having my picture taken beside those fellows and that helicopter. I'm not going to dispute that. But I can say that we are in very active discussions on a couple of fronts in the department and have been since the time that we announced that we would go forward with a helicopter program. Really, it does come down to two paths that we might choose to take. You know, grow our own system here in Manitoba, which other jurisdictions have looked at doing and, indeed, have done. You know, certainly, in the case of Ontario, we've seen their orange flight or ambulance program develop in that way.

Another choice we have is to look at expanding our relationship with STARS and looking very closely at their model. We know that our relationship has been excellent with them, and they have been very open and very generous—I think I'm not using too strong a word—in the sharing of their expertise. I know that we had staff travelling last week to meet with STARS in Alberta. In fact, the deputy was on that trip—it was a good trip—and we see a real opportunity, I think, for a mutually beneficial relationship.

We know that the staff and, indeed, the CEO from STARS has been very actively involved in looking at MTCC as a potential model to take back to Alberta, and we're very proud of that. They do things one way there and see a lot of opportunity for augmenting their system with how things are working at our MTCC. So the synergies are really building; I will say that. It's, you know, premature for me to say we've signed on the dotted line. There

are still some issues that need to be worked out and in the contemplation of which path to take.

We're really hoping that, quite frankly, we'll be able to continue, even in a phased-in way, potentially with STARS until our own program is in place, which means one could argue that, you know, our program has already started. So it's too early for me to say that we have landed that particular decision, but I believe we're very, very close to being able to inform Manitobans about which path we're going to take going forward, and the selection of which path will then determine when we'll be able to say our helicopter program will start in earnest in Manitoba, and I just—I can't yet say today, but we're close.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister explain how this STARS program would work with the provinces? I don't want to make assumptions, but I guess I'm assuming that the Province of Alberta has some kind of a relationship with STARS. I understand maybe Saskatchewan has committed to two ambulances through STARS or at least one for sure. I know there was talk of a second one. But how does that relationship work? I'm—from the sounds of it, it sounds like, you know, the government utilizes the services of a company that has the helicopters and the pilots and whatever else, and then they work here. Or do they fly here and spend time here and go back to Alberta? Like, how does it actually work in practice?

Ms. Oswald: So the STARS organization is, of course, a not-for-profit organization; the member is quite right. They have a board of directors, they have a foundation that is connected to them and, yes, indeed, they have a contract with Alberta Health Services and, from what I understand, in Saskatchewan, in speaking with Minister McMorris and others, it appears that Regina—or that Saskatchewan will follow a similar path in having the structure, the not-for-profit organization come in with a foundation and contract with Saskatchewan health providers.

I believe, in Alberta, they have three helicopters stationed, and Saskatchewan, I believe, has said that they will contemplate two, but phase in. They'll start with one and then move to another. I think they'll start in Regina and then contemplate another in Saskatoon, if I'm not mistaken.

And we, in our discussions with them, are looking very closely at a similar model, and have had some preliminary discussions with the government of Saskatchewan about what synergies might exist if

we, for the purpose of air-helicopter, eliminated that border and worked together in sharing resources.

Now, it is my understanding that STARS does provide staff. That's what they're doing for us right now, their staff that has been trained, their helicopter pilots that have been trained. But, certainly, our vision, in discussions with our front-line providers and our medical experts would be to have Manitobans engage in the training and, over time, integrate into that workforce. I know that we have a number of paramedics that are keenly interested in developing further training. In fact, some of them want to learn how to fly helicopters which, you know, I support. So we would really have a view to moving forward with integrating into the STARS staff and, you know, ultimately, having a Manitoba workforce in the future.

So, it is a contract. When I spoke to Dr. Powell, the CEO and founder of STARS, he really emphasized that they, while being separate from the health system, have to be intimately integrated into the health structure. In our case, it would be the Regional Health Authority, and with MTCC. And he has some good ideas on how to maintain themselves as a separate organization, but be, you know, very intimately interwoven into the provincial system. And we'll certainly be taking his advice.

We also have had some preliminary discussions about Manitoba representation on their board if we were to engage with them, and they're very open to that. I think that's probably the case for Saskatchewan too, but I can't say that as the absolute gospel.

So that's a rough overview of how STARS works and, you know, their success is really undisputed, I think, and it's a very, very attractive model for us to continue to pursue. That is a fact.

Mrs. Driedger: Would there be any nursing staff involved in working on these helicopters, or is it just strictly paramedics?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, to nurses. Sorry for omitting them on National Nursing Week. Sorry.

Mrs. Driedger: So, just to be clear, you could have nurses and paramedics working together, or would it normally be one or the other, or a combination of?

* (15:30)

Ms. Oswald: I believe it's combinations. Actually, I would want to confirm that for the member, but based on my discussions with the front-line providers

and with our own Dr. Robertson, who has been on a number of these missions, actually, and provided extraordinary, you know, ICU-equivalent care, you know, right on the scene and in the helicopter, that as part of the triage process, I think they make some decisions about who goes up and who doesn't.

But, again, I would want to confirm that for the member about what the routine complement that flies in Alberta is. I'm just not a hundred per cent sure about that nurse-paramedic complement.

Mrs. Driedger: Is there some contemplation as to putting a helipad at the Health Sciences Centre, and if so, how long would that take?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, there is, and the timeline is something we're really looking at closely, amending, perhaps, an existing capital plan into a slightly different capital plan. And if we are able to fulfill our dream to just have STARS stay with us, we want that to be happening as swiftly as possible, but there's a lot of work that's going on right now to determine how swiftly and safely that could happen.

Mrs. Driedger: And would that capital plan that she's talking about be a facility that now has to be built for the children's MRI that has been reannounced about four or five times, and does that now need a new building with the prospect of a rooftop helipad? People are talking in the system, so there is some available information out there.

Ms. Oswald: I would say it would be part of the discussion that's going on, and in all seriousness, there has not been a final landing on that as of yet, but the prospect of making a planned building taller is actively under discussion, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: Why wouldn't the government just buy their own helicopter and staff it and own it and run it?

Ms. Oswald: Well, as I said earlier, that is really the other choice, right? Build our own, buy our own, build our own, run our own, which has a lot of merit, actually, and certainly there are people within the department and within Manitoba that would support that kind of plan.

As we have worked now for a second time with STARS, the expertise that they bring to bear and the experience that they bring to bear is undeniable and it is compelling.

And looking at the landscape across the west, developing in such a way that there could be a synergy of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba also

has an element of attractiveness to it as well. I understood, quite frankly, that BC was engaged for awhile, may have disengaged. Not a hundred per cent sure about that, but building on being able to share resources and expertise with a common organization has an attractive element to it as well.

It won't be the deciding factor. We, you know, we don't want to be viewed as the spoilers if we should choose the other path, the one that the member raises in her question: buy our own, build our own, staff our own. But it has been the subject of a lot of study and analysis from, I think, some of the best people Manitoba have to offer—the deputy minister included in that—and certainly we are going to be making these decisions in the coming days and we'll be able to do that with a view to doing the best possible job for Manitobans.

But, again, I can't undervalue the systems, the training, the resources, the expertise and the opportunities that STARS brings to the table. It's certainly nothing to be trifled with, which is why we're looking at it so closely.

Mrs. Driedger: It would be much more expensive to buy, own, maintain, run one's own ambulance, would it not, versus getting into this deal with STARS?

Ms. Oswald: I think that could be argued. Yes, I think the initial investments on either side will not be insignificant. And, to be frank, I don't think that an organization like STARS would engage with any province without having some assurances about ongoing support. And so it's—neither of them are coming for free, that's for sure.

But, of course, you know, with a view to being as responsible as we can with taxpayers' money, this is a very key part of our analysis, what will be the upfront cost and what in the long term is manageable for Manitobans. And so we've got people like Ms. Herd working like crazy on this very fact.

Mrs. Driedger: So this is, in effect, a public-private partnership, is it not?

Ms. Oswald: I think, you know, our view of the arrangement as we go forward is really not different than the relationship that we have with many not-for-profit organizations, you know, the PCH arrangements that we have, Concordia Hospital, you know, any number of entities that exist.

Certainly, we have due diligence to complete. There's no question about that. There have been, you

know, across the country, relationships that have been developed with the best of intentions over time that, you know, have not evolved into the promises that they said that they would. And so we are very guarded about how we're going to invest public money.

But our discussions with STARS and our negotiations, if you will, have really just taken the same path that we would see with these existing relationships with not-for-profits. So I think that's really how I would look at it.

Mrs. Driedger: And the patients that STARS ambulance is now picking up in different places, do those people have to pay for any of their air ambulance ride?

Ms. Oswald: No, they are not at present.

Mrs. Driedger: Would that change once we're past the flood and you actually have an air ambulance as we—now, you know, people have to take an ambulance in the city, for instance, and you get a bill for \$500 the next day. Will we see an air ambulance bill, then, that the patient has to pay?

* (15:40)

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, those discussions are ongoing. We're looking at what models are being contemplated or have been contemplated and enacted in other jurisdictions.

You're quite right that in this emergency situation these fees are not being administered to people in the same way that land ambulance would be. Triage decisions are being made about when to send the 'copter and when not to send the copter by medical professionals. It's very possible that it would be parallel to how Lifelight works in Manitoba where no fees are assigned, but as we go through the modelling of different financial costings of the programs, this very item is something that is under consideration right now, and a decision really hasn't been made on it. But, no, there haven't been charges to date.

I realize this could evoke the potential debate about, you know, don't send an ambulance; send a helicopter; it's cheaper. And, of course, that does, I suppose in a classroom setting, evoke an interesting debate and discussion, but operationally we know that we'll continue to count on the medical professionals to decide when the helicopter has to go, and how we determine any potential fee or non-fee with that is still under discussion.

There wouldn't ever be a fee contemplated that would cover the cost of what it would cost to run a helicopter. People would beg not to have the helicopter in that case, but these are all things that are still under discussion.

Mrs. Driedger: So the minister sounds like she has no problem with a private business providing public health care, and it's not interfering with any of the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Ms. Oswald: Well, we know that we already in Manitoba have contracts with private facilities. We publicly fund them. We have an arrangement, as the member well knows, with Maples Surgical Centre, with Western, and these arrangements are well established. They have been adding value to the system, and we don't dispute that, and, so, again, while there's a temptation, I think, to view us as ideologues, not by the member but perhaps her friends, we are not against looking at innovations in health care and looking at ways that we can make it work for Manitobans in the best way possible.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, I wasn't going to get into this discussion at this point, but we've sort of ended up here, so can the minister indicate how broadly her government uses these private clinics at Western and Maples?

Are they significant contracts and what type of care are they providing and what type of services do they provide there?

Ms. Oswald: And I would certainly not call these arrangements with Western Surgical Centre or with the Maples insignificant. They're, you know, they're doing good work and they're receiving good money for the work that they're doing. Of course, Western has been in existence, you know, since—I guess, they themselves have been in existence since 1985. They're—a contract commenced with them on the first of January in '99, and there has been work done in, you know, the areas: surgical procedures, cataract, vasectomy, plastics and the necessary anesthesia that goes with that. Again, it's not a small amount of money. We know that we monitor carefully the outcomes and the, you know, the numbers of surgeries that are being completed, you know, as are being contracted for—that was a bad sentence, but you know what I mean.

And the Maples Surgical Centre, of course, is providing a variety of surgeries as well. They engaged in a contract with us that had certain principles within it, not the least of which had to do

with no poaching of staff from the public system, which has been a very important element.

They've also worked into this framework the fact that they will be keenly involved in reducing wait-lists and times. They're, of course, required to follow patient safety standards and accountability mechanisms, and they agreed to the notion of being cost effective, financially accountable, transparent. And, you know, we also know that our relationships with the number of private PCHs and labs exist and they're not secret.

We have physician services provided, you know, predominately in the north with Amdocs. And, you know, while, unquestionably, our focus is on providing health care for Manitobans not based on their ability to pay but based on their need, we recognize that there are innovations that we can look at and we can test and we can measure and we can evaluate for value for money. And, to date, we have seen reasonably good performance across these areas and, in many cases, excellent performance. And so, you know, we have continued in these relationships.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what types of surgeries her government contracts with the Maples for?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I know that we have been in some recent discussions with the Maples, looking at surgeries that they're performing and with a view to expanding some of the services that they may be contracted to perform. So, with the member's permission, you know, we have pediatric and adult surgeries going on there. I can commit to come back tomorrow with the most up-to-date list of what has been captured in that contract. I don't—I have skimpier notes here than I'd like.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Driedger: I would appreciate if the minister would bring that back tomorrow for The Maples, and then for Western, in terms of surgeries that might be done there as well, if she could provide a full list of the types of surgeries that are done there as well.

Ms. Oswald: I don't think that will be an issue to bring back to the table tomorrow and I'll endeavour to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister has been actually quite complimentary and sounds open-minded to the fact that there has been some advantages to utilizing the services of private clinics. That is a very big step away from a few years back, and I don't want to beat

a dead horse but if those feelings are there, then why did the government feel they needed to buy the Pan Am Clinic and then pay for all the bricks and mortar there when obviously now they have been able to demonstrate and feel that with a good contract, with the right, you know, elements built into that contract, you can actually achieve a lot of efficiencies by utilizing private clinics?

Ms. Oswald: And, yes, I'm not going to dispute that within the context of the kind of cases that the private clinics take, they, you know, they're doing a good job, you know, for the most part, and that's not something that we can dispute. The issue of Pan Am, of course, was that there was a lot of work done, an analysis and a business case developed, and that business case said it was the right idea to buy the clinic. And so we—it was unique approach and, you know, it shows that we've always been open to the idea but not, you know, for holus-bolus privatization. And it isn't always terrific. I mean there are still profit margins that need to be paid that don't need to be paid in a publicly funded system.

You know, we've seen what can happen when there is unfettered development of private clinics. The worst of which, of course, is the creation of two lines for medically necessary procedures, and my view on that has never wavered. I believe that you should get your medical service in Canada based on how much you need the service, not because of the privilege of your birth.

We've seen, you know, studies that have been done in the past where—I think even by the Conservative government—that found that, you know, letting doctors work in a private system and in a public system actually drove some wait times up, and this would be the opposite of what's trying to be achieved. When we're trying to drive down wait-lists and wait times, creating a culture where health-care professionals become torn, and, you know, in the most sinister interpretation, can be incited to have longer wait times in the public system so that people will turn to the private. It's not a great scenario.

I think what we have endeavoured to do is strike a balance by acknowledging that their expertise—there is expertise in another milieu but crafting contracts that are publicly funded and that indeed adhere to the kinds of principles that I cited earlier that don't allow for the poaching to occur, that allow, in fact, experts to be brought into the province, net new professionals to be brought into the province. And so I wouldn't, as the member has

characterized, respectively I would say—I wouldn't say that I've had a grand conversion and have developed a deep-seated love for private health care.

I would say that, if anything, I've become more steadfast in my view that you can innovate, you can build new partnerships while passionately protecting publicly funded health care. It's been my experience that people don't really look for that option, private health care, when wait times are down. So the challenge and the energy on our part is working to drive down the wait times, not find new ways to expand private health care.

And we can take the dialogue right out of the window when people have access to the service that they need, when they need it. We're not always getting that right, I will concede that point, and we've got a lot of work to do. We have had some very good success but one can never sleep on the issue of bringing down wait times, and really that's where I want to expend my energy. So I don't want my praise for the outcomes and the output at Maples Surgical Centre to be confused with a passion for private health care, because nothing could be further from the truth.

Mrs. Driedger: With all due respect to the minister, I did see the business case for the Pan Am Clinic, and there was nothing in any of that that would make me believe that there was a need to buy it. And, in fact, it was functioning very, very efficiently and I don't think the government needed to put their money into the bricks and mortar. They could've continued on just that they—as they've been doing with Western or with the Maples and just had a contract.

And I have always said—or any of us have always said, as we've been talking about, you know, having contracts with these clinics, yes, you have to, you know, make sure you've got a really good contract, and that's where you can control, you know, the parameters around which you enter into a contract with a private clinic, and it does work. The minister herself is acknowledging that it can be done and, yes, you expect certain outcomes, you expect certain behaviour from them, and you can build all of that into a contract. So engaging with the private clinic, as long as it stays publicly funded, does work.

And I'll ask the minister: Are there two lines—you know, she was talking two lines—are there two lines at the Maples or at the Western clinics?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, on the issue of Pan Am and whether or not the business case was compelling or not compelling, I guess that's what makes this interesting, right, is that there's going to be a difference of opinion and a difference of points of view. It was certainly the view of the government at the time and the minister of the day that the purchase of Pan Am was a good decision.

I think they provide excellent service in the context that they currently exist. I think that they have been a really important partner in moving forward with a variety of kinds of health care here in Manitoba, and I think we can be here, reasonable people, that reasonably disagree on whether or not the purchase of Pan Am was necessary, a good investment, a great idea but, you know, it really comes down to our differences in approaches.

* (16:00)

And in our contracting with private clinics, we certainly do look very closely at the landscape in Manitoba and with patient need. And we look at the individual case that can be presented by the clinic and overlay that with where our current wait times are existing, how quickly the public system, you know, is able to deal with capacity and where we have to build that capacity in the short term, in the medium term. And, I mean, certainly the relationship with Western has been going on for a while now, but this is under constant review. If we can, within the context of the publicly funded system, amend protocols to provide care in the timeliest of fashion, then those relationships may not be needed.

But we are also pragmatic, and the patient needs to be at the forefront and ideology needs to take the second row. And we believe that if there's an opportunity to have a contract that is reasonable—and believe me, there have been discussions over time where there have been some real whoppers presented that we have respectfully declined—but when the contracts are reasonable and we believe that there can be a real value added to throughput, we are open. We have shown that.

I just wanted to read into the record for the member Maples' services: pediatric dental; ear, nose and throat, adult and children; and plastics. And I think I need to—do I need to go back on Western still or did I do that list in its entirety? I think I did that list, didn't I? Just to double-check. Yes, various surgical procedures such as breast, cataract, vasectomy, plastic and the necessary anesthesia. Yes, I did say that before. Sorry about that.

Mrs. Driedger: So, just so I'm clear, those two private clinics in the—with the types of surgeries that they're doing right now, they are providing insured services?

Ms. Oswald: The answer is yes, and they're—it's being publicly funded, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: So can the minister tell us why the NDP have vilified my caucus and us when that is exactly what we have been promoting for the last decade, publicly funded private services? Why, when we are on the same page, why have the NDP torqued our position when all we have been saying is exactly what this government is doing, that there is a role for publicly funded care within a private clinic where you can have a good contract set up to deliver that service?

The minister is basically doing what we have been saying is a good thing to do because you do expand capacity in your system. You do it when you need it for patients, as we see Saskatchewan is doing that. They've moved very much into looking at using private clinics to bring down the waits. And the minister did say it is about what we need to do for patients.

So I'm really curious. For the last 10 years I've taken a real beating from some of her colleagues, sometimes in a not very nice way, when we are saying right now exactly the same darn thing. Can she please explain what's happened here?

Ms. Oswald: Well, I'll try, and I'll do it nicely. I think over time the debate on public-private has, indeed, been about points of view of the members opposite versus points of view of our caucus. And I think that, with great respect to the member, that your members have not said what you have described. They may have recently amended a view. I believe the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), in April of '06, we would give the right to purchase private services. The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), in '05, patients should be allowed to purchase MRI services. We know that in the '90s, patients, I believe it was at Western, could pay to access services at the clinic and ostensibly jump the queue. And we have issues with that, and, you know, some of them are cranky and some of them are philosophical.

The issue I think was always with the two lines, as I described. You know, certainly, the line in the public system was longer, the line in the private system was shorter, and if you had enough money or

a really great credit card, you got to go to the front of the line regardless of your medical need. And those in the public system, with really serious medical needs but not a serious bank account, couldn't get the service in the same fashion. And I think it's that philosophical argument on which the debate has gone back and forth.

So, in the context of what the member is saying today, and I will concede the point, I haven't been here for the whole 10 years—11 years. I've been around here for the last few. And I have heard members of her caucus say things about access to health care that don't fully match what she's representing today. And I—you know, I will say, quite frankly, is, I believe that this is what the member believes. I believe that the member thinks a lot of things about health care that aren't that far afield from what I think. I think that the member believes that abstinence only is not the best approach. That is not consistent with her whole caucus.

I believe that the member believes that Selkirk Mental Health Centre should not be turned into a jail with a wall around it because there is a prisoner in it that committed a horrifying act. That is not what her whole caucus believes.

I believe that this member, and I say this in all sincerity, I believe that this member believes that as you move into housing opportunities for the homeless, that you shouldn't have to be 100 per cent dried out before you gain access, because the housing-first philosophy is one that's being proven to work across the nation. We know that not all members of her caucus think that.

And I, frankly, believe she must have a challenge on her hands every day. I believe—come on over, I say to the member from Charleswood. But for now, I will say on this issue, we know that there have been varying degrees of opinion. The member presents one today that seems to be parallel with a model that we have adopted in confined contracts, but I would respectfully suggest that it isn't the message that has been shared over the decade. And I think it's on those points that I've raise, that some of the spirited discussion has evolved.

Mrs. Driedger: And thank the minister for the invitation to come on over, but I am going to decline that invitation. We're too far apart on too many values and issues.

* (16:10)

But I'm—this is a very interesting discussion, you know, in terms of what we're having right now, because, you know, we sound like we are on the same page in terms of, you know, being able to utilize private clinics to bring down waiting lists. There's a way to do it. People have been showing that it's workable. You need a good business case for it and you need good monitoring. It's about transparency. And I've been saying for years that that's doable. You don't open the floodgates and, you know, create something out there that you can't control, but, certainly, in a measured way, if it really is about the patient, then there are some opportunities. And I'll ask for one opportunity right now.

The waiting list for ultrasounds are so bad and not getting better. Why isn't there a way of having ultrasounds done outside of a hospital setting or—you know, that one particular diagnostic case comes to mind because the—we don't seem to be able to bring down that waiting list, and just wondered why there isn't, you know, more opportunity to look at allowing or having a contract with a private clinic until you can get that wait-list down properly.

Ms. Oswald: And, again, at the centre of the discussion in what sounds like a heated debate on public-private, in my view, is the issue of wait times and working very hard across the system to find innovative ways that we can do that.

And, you know, as technology evolves, in some cases there are new ways you can find to do things. As scopes of practice change within health professions, you can find new ways of doing things.

And I want to say that we have been vigilant in making efforts to find new and innovative ways to drive down wait times. And we know, I believe, according to the website, today the ultrasound wait elective is nine weeks. We've seen that come down from 20 weeks in 1998. But we think that we can bring it down even further, and we are open to building our capacity and looking at a variety of different venues in which ultrasound can be performed.

We have been approached over time by private entities that might want to engage in that kind of arrangement that have not been willing to fulfill requirements as set out, and—like, for example, having medical director on—involved in the organization. And we just have to respectfully decline these offers because we know that patient safety has to be at the outset.

Paying for profit costs is not our preferred option. Absolutely not. And we want every nickel to go into the front line and into publicly funded care.

And I was reminded of an article recently, just hearkening back to the discussion we were having about the Pan Am Clinic, and there was an interesting discussion coming directly from Dr. Hildahl, actually, and he says—it was just in November of 2010 in *The Globe and Mail*, and I think it's worth providing in the context of this dialogue—it says: Pan Am specializes in bone and joint surgeries. Private, for-profit clinics offering the same services cannot compete against it because they have to build in a profit, he said.

Dr. Hildahl has first-hand experience doing just this. He cut corners—his words—to boost the clinic's profits when it was private, he said. While patient safety was never jeopardized, the clinic's equipment wasn't always state of the art.

After the government acquired Pan Am, the clinic's payments for cataract procedures fell to \$700 from \$1,000. And any surplus these days is plowed back into patient care.

I don't think private for profit care is the way to go, he said. It's a short game strategy, not a long game strategy.

Again, that came from *The Globe and Mail*, November 12, 2010.

So, again, I think it comes down to a balance. We are willing to look in times of longer wait lists or times than we like at alternatives, but our real energies, our real goals are to build the best publicly funded system in the nation. And we have seen very good success, you know, with concerted, focused investment in areas like cancer care, for example, and in areas of cardiac.

But we know that there's more that we can do and our commitment and our dedication is, without a doubt, in building that publicly funded system so that it's health care for all, and that we don't get into a slippery slope that we have seen in other jurisdictions can become very, very steep in very short order. We want to maintain and value, you know, everything that Tommy Douglas taught us, and we're committed to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: And I would bring it to the minister's attention that it was the Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba that did bring Medicare into the province. So we don't have anything against

Medicare and, in fact, Tommy Douglas's dream was only half-fulfilled because there were other things, and the government doesn't want to talk about it, but Tommy Douglas did believe in a few other aspects that he felt needed to be put in place in order to have a better health-care system.

Now, when the minister talks about cataracts going from 1,000 to 700, that's not hard to do if you're negotiating a contract and you're Gary Doer and you says: Take it or leave it, buddy; if you want to be a private clinic and you want our business, yes, take your price down—and if you want to lose all the business, so be it, but otherwise I'm only paying you 700 bucks.

So it's not hard to put a contract in place, depending how much you want to strong-arm a clinic.

So there's also ways of torquing the, you know, information that's out there. Nobody has been able to take the cost of a—you know, I'll throw cataract surgery out, but it could be any type of surgery, and actually determining what it costs in a private clinic versus what it might cost at the Health Sciences Centre or at St. B or at a community hospital, because at a hospital you cannot easily determine what the cost is, and we need to be able to get to that point to do it. Because, while you say, okay, we can do cataracts for \$1,000 at a clinic, a clinic can actually figure out what all their costs are; a hospital can't. You don't factor in the heating or the lighting or the cleaning or the—any of the services, and Canada isn't there yet where we can actually properly and accurately say, you know, what a comparison of a cost would be between a hospital and a private clinic. And each hospital is different, too, because each hospital has different operating costs. Depends on how efficiently they run or whether it's a tertiary-care facility.

So it's not comparing apples to apples when the minister is saying, well, we can do it cheaper in a hospital.

I don't think she can say that, and she's naive if she things that there is that ability to do it, because you can't. It's just, you know, until everything is factored in, it's just very difficult to do.

But I'm glad we reached a point where, you know, the government has become a bit more open-minded in terms of looking at and understanding that there is some value to publicly funded private clinics, as long as you have the right

contract in place and you're doing it for the right reason, and that right reason is the patient, because it should always be. And most patients don't give a darn who owns the building; they want care and they want to get away from pain and suffering. So, you know, I'm glad to see that the government has moved to being more open-minded with that.

Moving on, or moving back, I—just for confirmation—under executive support, which is the support to the minister's—well, to the Minister of Health through her own office and political staff and the deputy minister's office, can the minister just confirm that that particular cost is basically \$1.2 million annually?

* (16:20)

Ms. Oswald: Not to, you know, want to put a stick into the hornet's nest again, but just finishing off potentially, at least for now, this discussion, the member raises the example of, you know, Gary Doer, you know, negotiating with Pan Am, and, you know, again, I wasn't here at the time. I imagine there were very spirited discussions that went on at the time, but the fact of the matter was there were negotiations that drove down a cost, and this is, I think, central to any kind of relationship in which you might engage.

I'm reminded that members from the Conservative caucus, you know, begged government to engage with the Maples clinic, and had that happened at the time that that egging on was happening, the nature of the contract would have been significantly more expensive. There were lots of negotiations that went on subsequent to the outcry from the Conservatives, and, I mean, at the time, they were offering MRI services. They don't do that anymore, but at the time they were, and they were proposing \$700 per MRI. And the negotiations that happened—and I don't believe Gary Doer was at the table—were to drive those down to \$300 a scan, a really significant saving.

And so I would suggest that in the context of wait times and wait lists and a really concerted effort on the part of Manitoba Health, you know, the representatives of the public system, that contracts can be negotiated and can be much, much better than sometimes are initially proposed. And, again, we'll—I haven't any doubt—continue to have debates with the member opposite on this issue.

I will continue to say that we have very strong feelings, based in evidence, based in research, that

say that opening the door to a whole bunch of private health care isn't good for patients. Around the world, again and again and again, you know, research finds the same thing: parallel private systems lengthen the wait for health care in public systems, seriously compromises access for those waiting for care in the public system. The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation said that.

And so we are very protective of the system for those reasons, and I would suggest that we will continue to look for innovations when needed, when wait times are longer than we want them to be, and we will engage in temporary contracts for those reasons, but our message is clear: that we want health care to be accessible for all.

In response to the member's question concerning the executive report sum, that number is correct. It captures costs of the minister's office and the deputy minister's office and the ongoing operating for same. So it's not singularly in my office; it captures Mr. Sussman's office as well.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how many individuals working within Manitoba Health are actually seconded currently from the WRHA?

Ms. Oswald: Sorry, I forgot the question. Did you say seconded from the WRHA to Manitoba Health? Is that right? Thank you.

Current secondments from the WRHA to Manitoba Health: There're one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight of them. I can name them if you wish: Jeanette Edwards, Milton Sussman, Betsi Dolin, Barb Kraft, Susan Turnbull, Dr. Lynne Warda, Terry Goertzen, Claire Betker.

Mrs. Driedger: And can the minister indicate why they are on secondment? Why have they not severed their role with the WRHA to take on a job in Manitoba Health?

Ms. Oswald: Again, it's really been our view that the sharing of expertise through these relationships and through these arrangements have been a benefit to Manitoba Health. And it's worth noting that there are secondments from Manitoba Health to the WRHA, and the sharing of that expertise also helps us work in a way that is consultative, collaborative and it's not something, you know, we do in large order, but it is a kind of relationship that we think we can really get some benefits from in terms of sharing that knowledge and expertise. And so these are the arrangements that have been developed.

Mrs. Driedger: I know we've had this conversation probably just about every year in Estimates, and I'm going to just indicate once more for the record that I think that's a breach of clear lines of accountability. I think it muddies the lines of accountability, especially at the higher levels. I would note, then, that with the number of people that the minister has indicated this year, that it's probably looks like it's tripled; the number of secondments have tripled over the last year.

And I would ask the minister, because somebody in—with a great deal of knowledge about financing has indicated to me that the reason this could be done is because Manitoba Health would—actually, I'm going to retract that little bit.

The reason that it's done is because there is a higher financial payout to these people if they are left on secondment. Is that true?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, I wanted to be clear for the member that in the secondment arrangements the—in—it's very clearly articulated that if they, you know, are seconded to Manitoba Health, then they report to Manitoba Health, and vice versa, and that really is not—thank you—is not something that we have concerns about. We believe that those arrangements and those agreements clearly articulate lines of accountability and transparency. And, you know, we feel confident that that is, in fact, what is taking place. We don't have concerns about muddied lines of accountability, as was cited earlier.

* (16:30)

Again, we know that the ultimate line of accountability is to the patient in Manitoba and to families, and we want to ensure that we have the best possible expertise in a given role at a given time. And we know that if transferring from one organization completely into another organization causes an individual to have a disincentive to want to move to share their expertise—whether it's how their pensions can be arranged to be moved over or not moved over—if there is an inherent disincentive for people to share their expertise across organizations that all Manitobans, I believe, don't get the benefit of that expertise.

Now where I would agree or be open to what the member is saying is, I think that we should try to find an opportunity where this kind of transition might be able to be made more seamlessly with no disincentive to an individual to keep their expertise in one house versus another house. And, you know, I

would be very open to advice from, you know, actuarial experts, of which I am not one, on how this could be achieved outside of a secondment arrangement.

But, ultimately, to know that we are able to secure the employ of people that have had a lot of experience in the system and have had—you know, that have a willingness to share their expertise in a different context, I think, is something that we shouldn't take lightly and we should, where appropriate, find ways to accommodate that, and I think that that's what we have tried to do. And I think having people like some of the people that have been—well, all the people that I've mentioned in that different role has been of great value to the people of Manitoba. And so I'm open to looking at different ways that this might be able to be achieved, but for now this is the way that it is happening and we don't have concerns about the lines of accountability.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister needs to be aware that the perception is totally opposite to the rhetoric she's just put forward, and nobody in the private system has this luxury. I agree with her, then, maybe there should be a way of looking at this differently and finding a way to deal with it. I don't disagree or dispute that any of these people—whoever they all are—I don't dispute their ability to provide services or the expertise they bring in the job. That's not where I'm coming from, and my concern is more around perception by the front lines. It does not come across as clear lines of accountability, and if you talk to people, you know, out in the real world, nobody has this kind of a soft-landing approach to doing business like this.

So I know I've brought that up every year. It's still a burr in my bonnet after all this time, but if there was a way of rectifying it, I guess I would urge the minister to find a way so that we can move past this area of secondments and have people doing, you know, their specific jobs.

Ms. Oswald: The member's quite right. We have had this discussion over time and I believe that she has made her point of view on this exceedingly clear. But just, you know, for the record, it would be this member's decision to terminate all secondments were she to be in my chair. Is that correct?

Mrs. Driedger: My question to the minister was: Is there not a way to look at addressing the ability of people to be mobile here so that you don't end up having the whole issue of secondments as an issue? Is there not a way—you know, when people move

from one job to another, there isn't always a safety net that goes with them, and in the private system it's just—it's not something that's there. And, you know, she's indicated that perhaps she needs to look at a way to address it and I just—I would hope that she would at least have a look at it.

Ms. Oswald: And, again, you know, we've talked about innovation across the spectrum of the departments whether it concerns wait times or different ways of delivering care or so forth, and, you know, I'm always open to hearing some suggestions about how contracts could be developed or expertise could be shared.

And I'm still not totally clear if the member was saying that secondments would be disallowed by the Conservative caucus. I didn't quite get clarity on that, but does the member have a suggestion on how she might look at dealing with this issue of sharing expertise? What might she recommend? I'd be interested.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister seems to be anxious to move into this chair, and in opposition she'd certainly have that opportunity.

But, certainly, she's in her chair. It's under her purview that changes can be made, and, you know, she's got access to all these experts around her. She knows full well we don't, so my question to her had been, you know, is there no way to deal with it.

And, you know, she wants to ask questions. We could certainly switch positions when she's ready.

Ms. Oswald: Well, golly, Mr. Chair, I know there are times when the member opposite is quite cross with me when I say that I don't want advice from her, and then when I ask for her advice she doesn't really want to give me that advice, and I'm perplexed.

But I can say that there are ways to always look, I think, at the best possible ways, I think, that we can remunerate individuals that have a lot of expertise to bring to the discussion and bring to the table and striking that delicate balance between fairly and competitively compensating people in leadership roles with ensuring that our expenditures really translate into front-line care, which is our priority.

I think we need to be continuously looking at how we can move forward with compensation models, whether it's for senior management, whether it's for a deputy minister, whether it's for an executive director that's chiefly in charge of

transforming how physicians are remunerated in innovative and attention-getting projects like the Physician Integrated Network.

In any of those contexts, I think we want to try to ensure that we have the best people that not only Manitoba has to offer but, indeed, that we're competitive across the nation, and so I will remain vigilant in looking at those compensation models, and while she didn't take me up on it today, I remain open to hearing advice from the member opposite on this matter, and in the interim I know she likely has some other questions.

I would just, again, commend these individuals that have been named today, and others, for their dedication to Manitobans and for their creativity and intellect and grace, really, that they bring to the work that they do.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate that of staff hired in 2010-11, are all of them chosen through competition in Manitoba Health, or do some people actually get appointed and bypass that competition process?

Ms. Oswald: I can say that a competitive process is certainly the vast, vast majority of the kind of appointment that would occur within Manitoba Health. Appointments are quite rare. They do happen, though; oftentimes, in cases where someone has been acting in a role for quite some time, although even that's not always the case. You know, there are usually competitions. So it's quite rare. The majority of positions are done through competition.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it a breach of any rule when somebody is appointed directly?

Ms. Oswald: So, I am informed that apparently it is not the breaking of a rule, but it's just not really the norm. It's not the practice. As I said, it's quite a rare event to happen. You know, predominantly a competition occurs. If the—I'm informed that if the appointment did occur, it would not be an infraction of a rule of which I'm aware.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether any positions have been reclassified in the past year?

Ms. Oswald: It is safe to say that there are likely some that have been reclassified but I would have to do a bit of homework for the member to bring back some more detailed information on that.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, I would appreciate that. Can the minister indicate what the vacancy rate is in the Department of Health?

Ms. Oswald: The total rate is 6.1 per cent. The department itself currently exists at a 7 per cent vacancy rate. We certainly work hard to maintain low rates at Selkirk Mental Health Centre and Cadham, which sits closer to 5.

Mrs. Driedger: That seems a bit higher than other years. Is that something deliberate to save—is that a cost-saving measure that's been put in place?

Ms. Oswald: No, it's not an aggressive effort to hold the line on costs. In fact, Cadham Lab is actually down. It was 7 per cent last year, and we have driven it down to 5. SMHC, you know, is stable at 5 and the department, again, exists at 7. So, actually, it's come down a bit at—yes—come down a bit at Cadham.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us how many trips she's actually taken in the last year and whether those trips are funded out of the Department of Health or out of some different budget, like Executive Council?

Ms. Oswald: I regret to inform the member that there's been one trip funded out of my office to the FPT meeting. I guess that was Newfoundland. Is that correct? So, sadly—no, I'm kidding. I like being at home with my five-year-old, the truth be told.

But that was the one travel that would have been captured in last year's expenses.

Mrs. Driedger: Has any of the Premier's travel been paid for by the Department of Health?

Ms. Oswald: It's not my understanding that there was any, and I thought that all this got published publicly. But in any event, I'll check for the member and let her know. I'd have to gather a little data on that.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the Minister of Health indicate if there's a wage freeze within her department?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, the MGEU contract is a freeze, I guess. So that would capture the people in my department, yes.

Mrs. Driedger: Does that also affect those people in Cadham Lab and Selkirk as well?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, it does.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the minister expect any large number of retirements coming up in the Department of Health, knowing that the baby boomers are coming of age here, and, you know, I think everybody's worried that we're going to lose some experienced, talented people? Is there some serious concern on—from her perspective within Manitoba Health?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, certainly Manitoba Health or my department is really no different from any department across government or, arguably, you know, many, many entities across society where, as we look forward to the coming years, we will see significant retirements happening. And I believe that across government, there is a renewal strategy in place, you know, through the civil service to endeavour to have young, fabulous people engaged in employment and also being mentored by the very people of which you speak, that are so valuable and wise and have much expertise to share.

* (16:50)

So I believe there's actually a cross-government initiative going on in this respect. Certainly, within the system itself, we pay very close attention to what our—what's happening in the same context with our front-line providers; nurses, for example. We have been working very hard through education and recruitment to increase our complement of nurses, but we know that retirements loom there as well and that there's a very serious redoubling of efforts that will be required in that respect. So it's not a concept that is unique to the Department of Health, but it is one that must be addressed, and I believe that we have, you know, some of the best mentors government has to offer right here in the Department of Health to nurture the young people that will be coming up through the ranks.

Mrs. Driedger: A number of years back, the Province of Manitoba created the position of provincial director of patient access, and Dr. Luis Oppenheimer was able to secure that position. And it looks like it's a provincial position, but it's not clear who pays him, and it does raise a question, is: How many other people in the system are expensed to other entities like universities, hospitals? And it just—it's certainly a way of hiding the number of people hired within a department or a way of hiding the number of bureaucrats and administrators and senior management by expensing them out to different entities. And Dr. Oppenheimer doesn't appear anywhere, and actually he's not the only one.

So can the minister indicate how some of these positions get expensed?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, I will have a look at the concept that the member raises. It's my understanding Dr. Oppenheimer is paid through the WRHA. We'll double-check. That's what I understand, but I will endeavour to double-check that for you. It may be that the Department of Health, you know, does provide the funding for that, but I'll check the process to provide clarity for the member on the nature of this particular appointment, provincial appointment, and any others that might bear a similar funding arrangement. I don't have that information at my fingertips, so I'll need to do a bit of homework.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell me, in Brandon we have a number of IMGs that have conditional licences, and apparently right now there is a rule that somebody's made that says they can't work in two different locations, so that if they were hired for this clinic, if the clinic had a satellite here, according to the rule that is in place, these IMGs with conditional licences can only work at this one clinic, and that apparently a minister's certificate is needed to be able to allow them to work at two sites. And I'm told that it's the College of Physicians and Surgeons that may be the entity that doesn't allow them to work at two sites.

And I imagine there's some rules in place in terms of you want to be able to, you know, provide the supports to IMGs, but when you consider that they have a doctor's office and also work in a hospital, you've actually already breached that particular rule. But what it does, it really narrows down the ability to properly serve a community. And I agreed to bring this question to the minister to see if she can find out where this comes from because it's not specified in the RHA legislation, and it does hamper a clinic's ability to expand or do business if there is a restriction that says IMGs can only be in one site, but then if they are in the hospital, that's actually already breached the rule.

So I wonder if the minister could look into that. It's creating quite a serious problem in Brandon, and there doesn't seem to be any ability right now for this group to find out what is accurate or not.

Ms. Oswald: The rule does exist within the context of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is their rule. It concerns the need for these conditionally licensed practitioners to work directly with a

preceptor which is usually at one site, and so that has been the restriction.

But I will commit to the member to look at the nuance of a physical environment where it's a matter of whether or not that person can work down the hall under the context of the rule within the college and see if there's, you know, an anomaly here that needs to be amended or, indeed, perhaps a more fulsome explanation for the context of the situation that she's describing to me.

But I can say that that is where that rule comes from within the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the connectedness to that preceptor. So I'll investigate.

Mrs. Driedger: Just to add a little bit more information to that, you know, Brandon isn't that huge of a city. It's a city, it's big enough, but it's in one place, so what the question was related to is, you know, if you have an opportunity to expand and perhaps have two different locations, two different buildings, yes, you may have a preceptor, but there's phones. There is—you know, is that preceptor with the IMG when the IMG's in the hospital doing surgery or doing something else?

And this is probably an issue that can get a little bit heated if it doesn't have some kind of a reasonable explanation to it.

Ms. Oswald: Again, I'll commit to the member to explore the situation that she is describing in the Brandon context.

I do know that the work that has been done with international medical graduates in Manitoba has been extensive, and the success rate in being able to take international graduates into an entirely new culture and nurture them through the work that is happening with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in partnership with the RHAs, I might add, and the effort that has been made to focus and to supervise and to mentor and to have continuous access to this preceptor has been really, really important, I think, in converting the success rate and the retention rate for the international medical graduates.

Has it always been absolutely perfect? No, it hasn't and there have been moments and times where either the IMGs or the preceptors have taken issue with the process, but I do know that there has been an ongoing effort to strike the right balance between supervision and independence of practice, between working through the conditional nature of the licence

through to full licensure with expert supervision and guidance coming from the preceptors.

And, so, again, I hear what the member is saying about working on trying to strike a balance in a specific facility where one—

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

SPORT

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of Sport.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? Please proceed.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Sport): Mr. Chairperson, and thank you very much to colleagues. It's indeed my privilege to introduce the 2011 and 2012 Estimates for Sport and the Sport Secretariat.

This past year has been another great year for Manitoba's sporting community. We started the year with two great events in April. As members know, we spoke about this last year in the Estimates of this same department. On April 13th, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly had the honour of welcoming and acknowledging Manitoba's great winter athletes from the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, and all our province was deeply proud of the achievements of our athletes at the 2010 games.

As you no doubt remember, Mr. Chairperson, six Manitobans found their way to the podium, including the gold medal achievements of Jonathan Toews and Jennifer Botterill with Team Canada's hockey teams and the great Jon Montgomery from Russell. And I know the member is very proud of him as well, the member from Russell who's in committee with us this afternoon.

While Canada's greatest Olympian, Cindy Klassen, didn't reach the podium, her long-time teammate, Clara Hughes, capped her speeding—speed skating career in her final Olympic speed skating race with a bronze medal. And we're all very proud of the accomplishments of both these women, particularly how they have represented the province of Manitoba. The Olympic flame is still burning in Canada's—in Clara's heart, as she is now currently training and competing and trying to earn a spot on

Canada's cycling team for the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games, and if she succeeds it'll bring her career full circle back to her days as a member of Canada's cycling team at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Our attention remained on sport just two days later, when the Sport for Life Centre held its grand opening on April 15th, 2010 as the new home for Sport Manitoba and 75 provincial sport organization. The centre represents a new and exciting chapter in the evolution as amateur sport development and growth in the province of Manitoba. At this event, the Province had the honour of bestowing the Order of the Buffalo Hunt on the 100-year-old—101-year-old swimmer, Mr. Jaring Timmerman. Mr. Timmerman is the embodiment of the sport of life philosophy and a true inspiration to all of the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.

This past year was also an exciting year for sport events in Manitoba. Both Brandon and Dauphin were the spotlight—were in the spotlight hosting major hockey events. Brandon played host to the 2010 Memorial Cup and Dauphin hosted the National Junior A Championships, the RBC Cup. Last August, Manitoba's golf fans surely enjoyed watching some of the best professional women golfers in the world compete in the 2010 CN Canadian Women's Open golf championship, and this—bringing national and international sporting events to Manitoba brings a variety of benefits to our province.

And allow me to take the opportunity as well to thank all the volunteers from the province of Manitoba. I believe that Manitoba is second to none when it comes to the volunteerism that is shown when we put on major events like sporting events.

Further evidence of this is seen this past winter with the announcement that Canada will host the FIFA's 2015 Women's World Cup of soccer, and Winnipeg is in the running to be one of the host cities of this most prestigious tournament. The 2015 Women's World Cup will be the largest tournament in the Women's World Cup history, featuring some 24 countries playing in 52 matches.

We're also delighted, in March, to receive the announcement that Winnipeg has been selected as the host city for the 2013 Roar of the wing—Rings Canadian Olympic Curling Trials. In December 2013, Winnipeg will welcome Canada's best men's and women's curling teams as they compete for a

chance to represent Canada at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

So, Mr. Chairperson, staying with this past winter, there are two stories I would like to share today. In February, the well-prepared Team Manitoba journeyed to Halifax to compete at the 2011 Canada Winter Games. The games were tremendous on so many levels, and the organizers in Halifax really delivered on some of the legendary Maritime charm and hospitality. Our athletes captured 25 medals in total—five gold, seven silver and 13 bronze—en route to a solid fifth-place finish in the overall provincial-territorial flag points race. Team Manitoba was pleased with the results and the overall improvement from a sixth place finish at the last games that were held in 2007.

*(14:50)

If I may return to curling for just a moment. I would be remiss if I didn't end my remarks with some of the—without comments on the outstanding achievements of Manitoba's curlers this past year. Canadian titles in both senior men's and women's master championships and the exciting men's world championships through the nearly flawless performance by Jeff Stoughton and his skilled rinkmates.

Heading into next season, Manitoba will be riding the wave of having two of—the top three men's and women's teams in the world proudly wearing Manitoba's colours. It is gratifying, once again, to see Manitoba's rich curling heritage back to where it belongs, at the top of the curling world.

So, I'm very pleased that these Estimates provide for sustained funding levels to Sport Manitoba, it's proud provincial mandate and the Team Canada Volleyball Centre.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those opening remarks. Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement as well? Please proceed.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I do want to put a few comments on the record for an opening statement. I'd like to thank all the volunteers across this fine province who are involved in sport, whether it be at a professional, semi-professional or whether it's youth rec, at whatever level. Volunteers are what make it happen. And I would suggest to this committee, even those individuals who get paid, by in large, are volunteering their time, because if they were actually to equalize the amount of time per hour

and what they earn, it would still be an equivalent to volunteerism. They put a lot of time into sport. And that's what makes sports work and what makes sports so great. I want to thank the board members and committees, people who sit on committees, whether it be at youth, amateur, whether it be at professional sports. Those are the individuals that sit evenings, time away from their families, time away from their professions and their businesses. They take the time to make decisions that are best for the athletes of this province.

And I'll declare a little bit of a conflict of interest when I thank the parents who do the driving and often drag reluctant athletes to their practices and to their games. And it is the parents that put a lot of time into it, and I think the parents deserve a lot of recognition.

Last but not least, athletes. And I would like to report to this committee that I had the amazing opportunity yesterday to pick up two of Manitoba's finest athletes. And one of them, my 14-year-old son, Stefan, from his soccer practice, and the other one being my 11-year-old daughter, Corina, from her soccer practice. And they put in a lot of effort and they put in a lot of enthusiasm and they put in a lot of time and commitment. In the end, it is them that this is all about.

And when you see these young athletes on the field and, I'd like to point out my son was in Saskatoon all weekend, no, not, not having a great time swimming in swimming pools, and whatever else, or playing video games or sitting and watching movies. He was part of a WinMan volleyball team and the U14-year team got third place for all of Canada. And he was but one of many, many young athletes that competed, from Manitoba, at that national competition. And they are what we are all here for. They are what it's all about.

And to all those athletes from very young ages up to, we mentioned Mr. Timmerman, who's now over 100. In fact, the minister didn't even mention that Mr. Timmerman had spoken to the group for the opening of the Sport Manitoba building, and he, at 100 years old, won the swimming competition for his age group for Manitoba. He actually won it at 100 years old.

Now, the only thing is, there was nobody else. Nobody else had got into the swimming pool, but he swam it, and he won it, and that's amazing. And, you know, for those of us who go to soccer fields or we watch hockey or any other little sport, and we see the

three-and-a-half and four-year-olds running out on the field and you think, that has just got to be the cutest thing ever. And to see Mr. Timmerman get up and talk about how he won his competition at 100, isn't that one of the—you know, just the most amazing things. And that is what sport is all about.

We look forward to having the opportunity, if we can, on a global way, ask questions of this—of the minister. And I know the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) would like to start with some questioning, so I will hand it over to her.

Mr. Chairperson: Just before we do that, well, first I'll thank the official opposition critic for those opening remarks, and we'll ask the minister's staff to come join us at the head table.

And, Minister, perhaps when they're settled, you'd be kind enough to do introductions for us.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I'm joined by the Deputy Minister, Harvey Bostrom, and the director is Mr. Michael Benson.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Honourable Minister. The floor is now officially open for questions.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I think, as we all know, and I know my colleague from Springfield has just talked a little bit about his children and soccer and some of the other sports that take place in our communities, being hockey and basketball, baseball—the list goes on. And, of course, these are all run out of our community centres, and each community is very dependent on their community centres to provide that area that we can all get together and gather and celebrate our kids as they move through the years in the various sports that they play. And I know, I, for one, my children both have played at the community centre. They both played hockey, they both played soccer, and they've made and built many great relationships in doing so.

So I really believe that our community centres are really the cornerstone of our community, that bringing so many different people together and providing that exercise, of course, that our kids really need, want and deserve.

And I guess I, first off, wanted to—in the case of the Tuxedo Community Centre, I know sometimes it's—I might be a little bit ahead of myself here, because I know that they are looking at making an application with the minister with respect to upgrades that need to take place at the community centre in order to further the area of baseball and

soccer in the fields. And I might be a bit premature on bringing this forward, but sometimes Estimates are held at a time where I know this is coming forward. And I'm wondering, are there programs in place that we can—that I can direct our—the leaders in our community centre to, within your department, to encourage more kids to get involved in sports in the community, and to ensure that the facilities are there and upgraded to the extent that's needed in order to facilitate these various sporting activities?

I understand some of this comes, obviously, at the city level. But what is it that the provincial department would have to offer here in the way of programs?

Mr. Robinson: One of the substantial areas that this government has made investments on has been, obviously, with the community centres, which the member speaks about—the member for Tuxedo. And they are very important in providing our young people with an outlet to become involved in activities. Not all our children are going to be hockey stars or curling stars or some of these other elite sporting activities. But, indeed, it's a place where our young people have an opportunity to perhaps learn different activities that are much more positive than what goes on in our society.

With respect to funding, there are other departments that have direct responsibility. One that comes to mind is the Community Places program which I had responsibility over in my previous capacity as the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. That responsibility now lies with the Minister responsible for Housing who has got that under her portfolio, and, certainly, the Community Places program has been agile in its approach in trying to accommodate the needs of the recreation and the community centres and some of the things that they want to get involved with.

* (15:00)

Certainly, I think that our government would be open to community centres on specific projects that they'd like to undertake, as members would know, and I know that the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) would certainly know that sometimes—being a former minister in a previous government—sometimes these requests may come to this department, but it is our responsibility to shop around and find the appropriate department, and if we can't find an appropriate department, we find creative ways to try and support the initiatives of these community centres.

An example I can give is in northern Manitoba where these opportunities aren't as prevalent as they may be in other areas of the province and where sporting activities are not so readily available. Outdoor activities such as trapping skills and how to live off the land, those kind of initiatives have been done through Sport Manitoba, the delivery agent for sport of this province, and Sport Manitoba, with the 80 organizations that come under its umbrella, certainly have that capacity.

But I will gladly work with the member for Tuxedo in any of these initiatives that she talks about with the community centres or community centre in her constituency in trying to find the proper department if Sport Manitoba, indeed, is unable to find the necessary resources within its reach, to try and be creative and find ways and find solutions to these outstanding needs as she describes.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the minister very much for that. Sometimes it 's difficult for people in our communities to understand that there's many different government departments out there, so I appreciate the minister's offer of helping us to guide the president of our community centre, being Lori Shenkarow, maybe through this process. So I appreciate that. I will pass that information on to her.

I just want to also take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers out there in the Tuxedo Community Centre but, indeed, community centres all across Winnipeg and Manitoba who really make it just such a great place for children to strive in the communities.

My second question for the minister has to do with a different community centre that is just outside of my constituency in the Charleswood area, the Roblin Park Community Centre, which I think has recently been established as a community centre. I had a meeting with them today and they indicated to me that there is an application in with the government now—I believe it's through your department. It's called The First Sport Program. Now, I could be mistaken, but they have an application in for \$20,000 from the Province, and I believe the deadline for that application was the end of April, which they met the deadline on that.

And the application, the \$20,000 that they're asking for, is for half the \$40,000 funding that is needed to upgrade the basketball facilities at the community centre, and basketball is by far the largest sport that is played at that specific community centre. There's more than 300 participants in the ages of nine

to 15 age group, both boys and girls, and so it's a big deal for the community that this goes through.

And I'm wondering if I could ask the minister if he is familiar with this program, if it is within his department. Could he explain what the process is now that the application is in, what is the time frame around getting back to the Roblin Park Community Centre with respect to this application?

Mr. Robinson: I'm somewhat familiar with the community centre she's talking about—Rolan Park, I believe it's called in Charleswood.

In March of this year, this government announced the launch of the first sports program, and this will provide \$1 million to buy equipment and those kind of initiatives that the community centres are involved with.

The application process is ongoing. It falls under the responsibility of the Minister responsible for Housing under the Community Places program. I will check with her on the status of the \$20,000 application made by this particular community centre and report back to the member as soon as I can.

Mrs. Stefanson: I just want to thank the minister again for that and his co-operation with, again, facilitating between government departments. I apologize. I just thought it was maybe under your department. So—but again, just on behalf of the community centres and their—the people who have applied for this application, I appreciate the minister's offer to help. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I have a couple of comments and a couple of questions for the minister, if I may. And first of all, I thank the minister for his comments regarding the—our super athletes in our province and how well they did at the Olympics. And I represent a community that on two occasions now has had the fortune of having an Olympic athlete, one of them being Theoren Fleury and the other one, Jon Montgomery.

And, you know, it isn't often that small communities like this have the opportunity to have someone from their midst achieve a goal as was achieved by either Theoren or Jon, and I think that we sometimes miss an opportunity. And I look at myself, because I was once in government and probably had the opportunity to do something about it and missed it. And now is the second time when I think that perhaps it's an opportunity for us to

develop programs for youth in these small communities where athletes come from.

But, in order to develop these programs, we need a little bit of assistance from a department like the department of responsible—the Minister responsible for Sport. And I'm wondering whether there is any thought from the department or the minister in providing a little bit of, perhaps, seed money to begin programs that focus on what can become if young athletes focus their attention and their dreams on achieving goals like those that were achieved by our Olympic athletes.

And I'm just wondering whether the minister might comment on that, first of all.

Mr. Robinson: Well, I just want to agree with the member. Certainly the—often Russell is unrecognized for having produced two of our most outstanding athletes in the history of sport in the province or in the world, in fact—Jon Montgomery and Theo Fleury.

Certainly, I think that if we were to do something in their honour—even some signage or maybe a bursary program for people wanting to pursue a career in athletics—maybe some seed money, I'm thinking in the neighbourhood of \$10,000 maybe as a starting point. Perhaps we could look at something like that collectively.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that because I do believe that Manitoba general has been gifted with some super athletes, and we need to capitalize on their successes and especially motivate young people as the critic for Sport spoke about in his case, in his family's case. And there are so many out there who look up to these not only as heroes within their community, but they're models, they're mentors.

And when we have the types of problems that we have in some of our communities in terms of youth not being engaged, you know, the issue of obesity, the—there are many health issues that come along, and perhaps we can use the achievement of these individuals as a launch for developing a program throughout our system that, in fact, would motivate young people to get engaged in training and in activities that propel them to achieve more than they could without these programs. So I thank the minister for that.

* (15:10)

The other question I have falls a little bit on the heels of the question asked by the member from Tuxedo. Rural community centres constantly

struggle. At the present time, we are trying to put enough money together to complete a multiplex building in Russell, and its focus is that of a community centre and to provide a facility that is going to be used not only by the community, but indeed by a larger area. And I think the area has come to realize that we have now passed the stage of where every community surrounding us can have a world-class facility or a state-of-the-art facility, and so, therefore, we have to pool our resources and build these communities' centres where they can be most efficiently utilized and provide the best opportunities for our youth and for our adults as well.

And what we're finding in Russell is that we're a few million dollars short in being able to complete the facility, and I'm wondering whether or not the minister could identify or perhaps point us in a direction that we could perhaps pursue to help us achieve the goals. The community is raising its money, but it's going to be a long time before we can raise the kind of money that is required to finish the facility. And with the increased costs, as they seem to occur no matter what kind of a facility we build, it's become a significant challenge. So all I'm asking the minister is for some guidance perhaps as to where we could look and perhaps point us in the right direction.

Mr. Robinson: Let me, first of all, assure the member that I will follow up on the initial question of Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Fleury, indeed, two heroes of mine as well, for the accomplishments that they have achieved, not only for their own individual sports, but indeed for the positive role modelling that they have provided to young people—and they're truly a testament to you can be anything you want to be—and the work that they have done with their respective sporting activities. And I will follow up with our department, and I will be giving instruction to our director of Sport to come up with an idea on how we can pursue that so that'll enable some of our youth in that area to perhaps, you know, come to the realization that there are positive things that could be done in life as opposed to negative things, if I may put it that way.

With respect to the rural community centres, Russell, like other community centres, is faced with the challenge of having to deal with aging infrastructure; 1967, I believe, was the year that—the year of the Centennial, obviously, that many of these projects got under way, and it's been a constant battle in the last couple of years, certainly in our

federal-provincial and territorial discussions. We have tried to impress upon the federal government that there is, indeed, a need, and we commend obviously the national government and their initiatives on instituting an infrastructure project. But I think we need one to deal strictly with recreational activities, and we have impressed upon them the need to do that, and we've asked them continuously, and we have gone through three Sport ministers in the last couple of years, regrettably. We—and then the latest Sport minister whom I deeply admired was not successful in his re-election aspirations in his own constituency in British Columbia.

Whoever the new Sport minister is, we have always tried to impress upon the Sport ministers that they must convince their governments—the Government of Canada, rather—that they have to be a champion on some of these local aspirations we have from provinces and territories, because this is one of the pressing issues that we have. It's a matter of catch-up; there's many millions of dollars that are required in rural Canada on the aging infrastructure that we have. And in some communities, the requirement for even some of these recreational facilities, these community centres, don't even have up-to-date standards on fire escape routes or—and some, I believe, would be condemned if they were looked into seriously.

So the member is right. We—it's a matter of catch-up, and with other members of this government, we'll raise this matter. And certainly, the details of this question, I'll take under advisement and hopefully we'll get the answers that the member requests, and ask other ministries that perhaps have the—a closer tie with the necessary funds required to upgrade many of these aging facilities that we have throughout the province of Manitoba. Certainly, Russell is among many in this province that requires upgrading on a lot of the needs that exist in that community and other communities as well.

Mr. Derkach: I just want to conclude by thanking the minister for his response, and certainly I look forward to whatever programs might come to be available for communities to take part in. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Schuler: My first question is: Could the minister provide a list of the political staff that he has within the department of Sport?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I don't have any political staff in this department. The staff that we have in this department are contained in the

Estimates book, page 4, and that is the extent of the people that we have employed in this department. It's a very small department and is more of a—plays more of a co-ordinating role.

The sport delivery agency, as I said, is Sport Manitoba, has been for some time, and they do a tremendous job in the sports delivery system in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: And what I should have asked is: Could the minister tell us who his political staff are?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the special assistant is Jean-Marc Prévost, and the executive assistant is Jackie Joss.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us how many times he travelled outside of the province?

Mr. Robinson: In the last—in this last year, once, to attend the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting responsible for Sport in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and also to attend the opening ceremonies of the Canada Winter Games.

Mr. Schuler: Did the Premier (Mr. Selinger) join the minister at all on any of these two trips?

Mr. Robinson: Actually, it's only been one trip and, no, the Premier wasn't with me.

Mr. Schuler: Has any of the Premier's travel been paid for out of this department?

Mr. Robinson: No.

Mr. Schuler: Could the minister tell us how many community centres are currently in need of renovations and/or repairs?

* (15:20)

Mr. Robinson: I will take that question under advisement, get back to the member. I don't have the exact number, but I am quite confident in saying that probably all of them require some upgrades.

Mr. Schuler: Then is there a structure in place to determine the priority of renovations and repairs?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, there is a process of assessment on needs and that's done primarily by the Community Places Program. On the issue of infrastructure, this department doesn't have that responsibility.

Mr. Schuler: Is there a budget for renovations and repairs to community clubs?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, the budget is held by Community Places or other departments as may be required. For example, in the past, the other departments including Infrastructure and Transportation have been responsible for identifying needs or replacing of Community Places to a greater extent than some, or renovation. But this department is not directly involved and is not engaged in the financing of such for community centres.

Mr. Schuler: So a priority list in regards to supporting community centres and how that should be allocated, then that wouldn't be under the department of Sport? Where would that then be held? Or is there even a priority list?

Mr. Robinson: I'm not even sure if there's such a thing as a priority list, but indeed the Community Places Program would have more detailed information as to the list of community centres throughout the province that require renovations or upgrades to their facilities. I will commit to the member that I will seek out that information and find out who has the primary responsibility. I do know that, as I said in a previous question to the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), that many of the current facilities that we have throughout the province of Manitoba were built around the year of the Centennial. Many are in need of upgrades and I would have to say that we indeed have a very serious backlog in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us what the situation is with fire alarm certificates? Are they all currently up to date in community clubs?

Mr. Robinson: I believe that most of them have to comply with regulations under the fire code and certainly that responsibility, being that they're public buildings, would fall under the Department of Labour and—but it is an interesting question, and certainly I think that is something that is worthy of further examination on my part.

Mr. Schuler: To the minister on that, I mean we should probably be clear. We don't just mean community clubs but sports facilities. I think we're sort of saying community club but what we actually mean is—by and large, community clubs are the hubs for community sports. And though they do other activities besides sports they do crafts and music and they do dance and that kind of thing, I'm including in that, also sports facilities, indoor arenas, soccer pitches, basketball courts and so on and so forth.

And I'm not too sure if any of them have elevators. Can the minister tell us if any of the facilities that do have an elevator, and I know only of a handful, are their elevator certificates up to date?

Mr. Robinson: I think the point that the member for Springfield is raising is that, indeed, these buildings are public and they have to meet certain standards. And there are possibly some other buildings in the other areas of the province that I'm not familiar with, but certainly, on the issue of elevator and the safety of elevators and whether or not they're certified to be deemed to—safe—deemed safe to operate, I would assume that they have to go through a procedure of inspection.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us, insofar as boiler inspections, are they all up to date in community centres and community sports facilities?

Mr. Robinson: I will take that question under advisement and do a quick assessment, as I indicated in the previous answer, and check on that question.

I believe, in addition, I said that I would check into fire safety, the alarms, the elevators and now I will check with the boiler systems that exist in some of these centres, recreational, community and other centres of that nature.

Mr. Schuler: And while we're on this topic, can the minister update the committee on the East Elmwood Community Centre which tragically burnt down just in early spring, late winter? Of course, we're all incredibly thankful that there was nobody in the facility but it certainly burnt right down to the ground. And where is that project right now?

Mr. Robinson: It, indeed, was a big loss in the eastern part of the city. And to the best of my knowledge, the City of Winnipeg has embarked upon an initiative to replace the building. Certainly is needed.

And I would say that, indeed, the Province, if not, they're not doing so right now, are engaged in replacing and finding ways to be creative in replacing the community centre, which was a huge loss to the community.

And I will find out the details on that. Certainly, my department of Sport is not directly involved in that. But I believe that other department—another department within this government may be involved in dealing with the city government on how that building should be replaced.

Mr. Schuler: Last year when we had the opportunity to sit in Estimates, I had raised the issue of soccer in Brandon. And I know the minister had spoken that he was going to speak with Sport Manitoba to find out why it was. And I relayed to the committee about the fact that kids were playing on basically a little plastic tile system at the Keystone Centre in Brandon, and there were buckets on the sidelines of the indoor soccer pitch. And when I inquired why there were buckets seemingly in harm's way of players, that it was to collect water from a leaky roof.

And the minister was going to get back to me on that one and he hasn't. I was wondering if the department got back to him on what kind of accommodation could be made. And again, most of these soccer pitches—and I would point out to the committee that the University of Manitoba soccer pitch, I believe, by and large, the only downtime they have when they're not being leased out, is from three in the morning till six in the morning. It's being used for soccer, football, ultimate Frisbee, hockey camps for—especially in the winter—for training and so on and so forth. So, clearly, Brandon is in need of some kind of a field house whereby you could have indoor soccer, and not just soccer, but, I think I mentioned to the committee last time, you know, football is growing in Brandon and so on and so forth.

Could the minister give us an update from our discussion from last year?

* (15:30)

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I did respond to the member by letter last year following the Estimates process outlining the questions that he raised in the—in committee on the same issue. I will go back and refresh my memory on the particulars of that question. I do recall responding to him by letter on some of the details. I will also be checking with Sport Manitoba to see what improvements, if any, have been made on the facility in Brandon.

Mr. Schuler: And, with the unfortunate flooding that's taking place in Brandon, I'm sure this committee would know that there are the beautiful soccer fields—when you come in from No. 1, they're on the left-hand side. There's a lot of baseball diamonds and some very, very nice soccer fields which are all under water, and I would suspect, if at all, they might be available for late summer, if at all. If a lot of sediment came with it, then those fields will have to be reworked.

Can the minister give us an update? Because it's not just soccer; you know, I think football plays out there. I know there's a lot of baseball diamonds that—there are baseball diamonds out there. Can the minister give us an update, what might be done to help Brandon with all of those outdoor fields? And I think they're called the Kinsmen fields and, you know, I have to say to committee, I'm having one of those moments. My kids play there, and I've been there for meetings, and I can't remember the name of the fields. But I think the minister knows what I'm talking about, and they are going to need some help to get those up to par for any use this summer.

Mr. Robinson: Well, the first issue, obviously, Mr. Chairperson, is to ensure that there is no damage and human loss in the current flood that's occurring in Brandon. I think that's first and foremost. Secondly, we have to worry about the damage that's going to be left by the waters that are currently covering the area that the member for Springfield is referring to. Certainly, it'd be a huge loss. I believe the facility is called the Kinsmen park. I will check into it.

I think that the member raises a good point. The life after the flood—we are going to have to, obviously, make an assessment. Those facilities that are currently under water right now will have to be examined and we will do that in due course. We just have to get through this very difficult period of time right now, and I will do my best to work along with the ministers that are dealing with the issue right now and report back to the member as to what damage has been caused. And, no doubt, the government has to assume a certain degree of responsibility, along with the City of Brandon and, maybe, as well, the federal government on how we replace any loss of these very important jewels in our community.

Mr. Schuler: And I thank the minister for that answer, and, of course, you know, we're getting ahead of ourselves, I think. People right now, their primary concern is that their homes and their businesses be protected. Unfortunately, I don't think I'll have an opportunity to raise these issue with the minister as this will be the only Estimates that I will have with him today and we won't have it for afterward.

So could I just ask the minister if he could, perhaps, instruct his department that, when all is said and done and all levels of government look at what we learned from this flood and how we can prevent future damage, that perhaps, and I do believe there is some diking around those fields. Clearly, they

weren't high enough or something was breached. And, again, all the times I've been out there—I haven't spent that much time looking at how they've been flood proofed, but perhaps as part of that whole process they look at flood proofing also those fields.

You know, somehow something must've happened that they got—that they all got flooded. So, you know, perhaps that's something that the department could also put a little note to themselves, and through to the minister to the department, that perhaps there could be something done to help protect those. Because I know there is a building on the site which stores a lot of sports paraphernalia, whether it's the bases and or what—soccer balls or bats and baseballs, or whatever it is out there. And I suspect if they didn't get it out in time then, you know, all of that will be, if not ruined, certainly in not very good shape so I—if the minister could comment on that.

Mr. Robinson: Well, I certainly want to concur with the thoughts expressed by the member for Springfield. Indeed, those are very valuable areas of land, but, of course, we don't control nature and it's very difficult to determine as to what's going to be flooded or not going to be flooded. We're dealing with an issue here that we have no familiarity with.

It's indeed a—it's—it'll probably not happen in our lifetime again. But it's something that is very crucial, very critical and very much a part of the community requirements in Brandon, and there are many valuable assets that are there. And I think that the member presents a good recommendation that we should be considering ways of how we protect these areas that are used for leisure and recreation and sporting activities. As well, certainly, we'll take that recommendation under serious consideration.

Mr. Schuler: And the last time we met we talked about an indoor facility and we've referenced that already. There were some proponents looking at perhaps building an indoor soccer pitch which would—it's basically an indoor field. Can the minister update us on where those discussions might be?

Mr. Robinson: I understand that the Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association and the Winnipeg soccer association are currently putting together a proposal to government to consider—another location be considered to be funded by not only this government but, I would assume, other levels of government to develop one similar to the one at the University of Manitoba.

The location—we have no idea as to where that may be located but certainly I think that the work is under way right now. And, as I said, the proposal is being currently developed by those organizations that I said at the—I named at the outset.

Mr. Schuler: This one was specifically that I raised. There were some private proponents looking at a facility for Brandon. And have they approached the department about putting a facility up in Brandon? And, again, it's not just a need for soccer. These facilities are definitely needed for getting football ready to go for their season. Frisbee uses them. Like, basically every sport goes in and uses them, and that's what makes them financially viable. But, you know—and this is specific to Brandon and certainly want to soon move on to facilities for Winnipeg.

* (15:40)

But in Brandon there were some private proponents that were looking at putting a building up. I don't know if they've approached the minister. Has the minister been in discussions with them? If he could just comment on the Brandon situation.

Mr. Robinson: Not to date, Mr. Chairperson. We have not received any correspondence from anybody regarding a facility of this nature in the Brandon area to date. I will investigate further and, if there is something to report, I will advise the member.

Mr. Schuler: And, as we all know by now, there's the great news that the FIFA Women's World Cup will be here in 2015, and that's, of course, very exciting for our province and for—hopefully for our city. In fact, there's been a lot of different news on that one, and I don't know if the committee knows this, but actually Canada's ranking right now, as of today, from the FIFA World Cup site, the women's team is in 6th place. And that's an amazing placement. They're doing incredibly well and Canadians should be very excited. I think not just did Canada—and when we say Canada, we mean, of course, the sum of its parts. The provinces all participated in that—so did Manitoba—and they put together a very compelling argument for having that world championship here in Canada. I know that we're all going to be very excited about having it here.

Now, they've—and not just did we put a good program forward; also somebody dropped out, probably realizing that they didn't have as strong of a program put forward. So luck came our way in the fact that one of them decided not to be part of this

and Canada got it, and I think that speaks to how strong of a proposal we put forward.

The minister would have met with the Canadian Soccer Association group that was coming through, which is a precursor to FIFA coming through and looking at facilities. Can the minister tell us how the meetings went with the CSA, and I suspect MSA was included in those meetings, and how did the discussions go in regards to having some of the games to be held here in Manitoba?

Mr. Robinson: I can report that the meetings went well. I was not a part of the meetings that occurred here. The First Minister, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), was involved in that element of it.

The member is absolutely right about the whole game of soccer, while a lot of us are currently watching hockey right now. We're kind of putting soccer to the side for the time being, which will come back to us after the hockey season is over, and I think that there are other Vancouver Canucks fan here—fans here. Up until last night, I was cheering for the Nashville Predators, but from now on I'm solidly behind the Vancouver Canucks until we find out the outcome.

And we were very impressed—they were very impressed, these sanctioning bodies, the bodies that are responsible for soccer, with the facilities in Winnipeg, especially the legacy of the 1999 Pan Am Games that were held here.

But certainly with soccer and the appeal of the game itself, it's well documented. The grassroots popularity of the sport in Canada is considerable, second only to hockey in overall popularity and participation. Statistically, soccer is the fastest-growing sport in Canada, and that's good to know.

The Canadian Soccer Association reports that, I believe, over 400,000 women play organized soccer in Canada. The popularity of the game is further distinguished by the fact that nearly 45 per cent of all players, of all soccer players, of all ages, are female. And, unlike Canada's men's World Cup status, women's—the women's national hockey team is a real contender, currently sitting at, I believe the member said, sixth in the world rankings, for sure ninth in the world rankings.

As the host nation for 2015, the expectations are tremendous and expectations will be high for Canada's national women's team, and our province is, indeed, very proud to support the efforts of bringing the World Cup, the Women's World Cup, to

Winnipeg in 2015. The reputation of Manitoba to hosting our world-class sporting events is second to none. And I know that the 2015 world—Women's World Cup will provide another exciting opportunity to demonstrate the passion and enthusiasm we have here in Manitoba.

And FIFA will come to Winnipeg this fall to 'contact'—to conduct I guess it will be a visual inspection of the sites that are going to be utilized during the—during that process. And a final decision on Winnipeg as a host city—or a host site will be made by early 2012, but we are very excited about the prospects. And I know that all members in this Legislature will join me in embracing that enthusiasm that we currently hold.

Mr. Schuler: Well, and I know that there is a lot of enthusiasm not just in Manitoba but also across the country, to see at least a few of these games come to Manitoba. I know of a lot of individuals in my family who will want to be buying tickets and going, and that's, you know, just incredibly exciting.

Can the minister tell us—and, unfortunately, he wasn't in the meeting with the Premier (Mr. Selinger), but I'm sure he was briefed on sort of what the discussion was—what is Manitoba doing in an attempt to become one of the hosts—so that Winnipeg becomes one of the host cities for the FIFA World Cup?

Mr. Robinson: Well, among the many things that we have to do is to demonstrate to the world and the FIFA people the willingness and the enthusiasm, and the facilities, the record of our volunteerism in the city and the province of Manitoba—in the city of Winnipeg, the province of Manitoba. And those are the things that they want to see. Obviously, the facilities, they're very important.

And I think that we're very confident. We don't want to be overly confident about the pending announcement in early 2012, but we're excited about the enthusiasm that has been expressed by the FIFA people about Winnipeg. And I believe that our chances are tremendous and that we'll be able to host a portion of the FIFA World Cup here in Winnipeg in 2015. I think that there's some more work to do, but, certainly, I think those are the key elements that they view as important factors in determining for themselves the ability to make a final decision.

Mr. Schuler: Were there discussions at that meeting about various facilities and what may or may have to

be improved at them, or was there a request for further facilities to be built to host these teams?

Mr. Robinson: At that meeting, there was no requirement for additional construction of needed facilities. I believe that the infrastructure that is required to host such an event is within our reach and within our grasp, and all the requirements are—appear to be well in hand. And I think that the rest is entirely going to be based on their decision, as I say, to get—the criteria is based on—well, there's some stringent criteria.

But, certainly, volunteerism is among those things, and we've demonstrated that over and over again with the various events that have been held here. I remember the Ford World Curling Championships that were held here some years ago, and the tremendous number of volunteers that came out, the '99 Pan Am Games, the 2002 North American Indigenous Games. And any time we've had to put on events of significant magnitude, the volunteerism in Winnipeg and Manitoba has been tremendous.

Mr. Schuler: So there was no ask and no commitment for any facilities, any practice facilities that needed to be built for the 2015 games, if Winnipeg was to be a host?

* (15:50)

Mr. Robinson: About the only—and this wasn't a requirement of the FIFA people that were here—among the items that were presented to them were the existing facilities that we have here. I think that the Rady centre is planning on building some benches, but that was already in the plans anyway. But I think that the necessary requirements to host such an event were already in existence here in Winnipeg.

Mr. Schuler: Were there discussions with the FIFA group to use the stadium for some of their venues?

Mr. Robinson: All the games would be played at the new stadium.

Mr. Schuler: Was there some discussion about how the lines were going to be painted on the artificial turf?

Mr. Robinson: I was not part of that discussion and I have no knowledge whether or not that was part of the discussion or not, but certainly I would assume that would be one of the requirements of the FIFA people in the requirements that they have.

Mr. Schuler: The question is: The stadium to be built at the University of Manitoba, will the lines be permanently painted or permanently affixed to the turf at—for the facility at the University of Manitoba?

Mr. Robinson: That's one of the details being worked out right now in the discussions that are being held with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers Football Club, and certainly I'm not privy to the details of any conversations that are currently being held with the Blue Bombers Football Club, but I would assume that would be definitely one of their considerations.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, the—I thank the minister for not answering that question.

The question is—the University of Manitoba facility, the Bombers club wants to paint permanent lines on the Astroturf which then would cause difficulty for any kind of a international competition for any other sport to come because they're not going to have competing lines on the field. And from what I understand, discussions were that the Bombers said, no, they were going to put permanent lines down and that they didn't want temporary lines put on until after the 2005 FIFA World Cup games were over.

And, you know, certainly we don't want this to be an issue that could perhaps scuttle Winnipeg as being one of the host cities, because this is a very exciting time. And I think when we go into this, reason and compromise are two things that we should probably be looking at when discussions like this take place.

And can the minister tell us, you know, is that sort of the approach that's being taken towards this issue?

Mr. Robinson: As I indicated to this committee, the dialogue is ongoing, I'm sure, on that particular subject of the—that requirement. I also understand that there's talk of removing the football field and putting up in a FIFA-ready field for the World Cup games that are going to be held here, and I imagine that in time we'll become knowledgeable.

I don't know how much of an issue it is, whether it's a contentious issue or not, but I am made to understand that it's an item of discussion currently being addressed, and I think in time we'll all be knowledgeable as to the progress and dialogue about the matter, and I never really considered this to be a serious matter. I was more interested in hosting the 2015 FIFA games, along with other Manitobans. And certainly, if there's any news to relay to the

member, I will notify him as being—in his responsibilities as the Sport critic for the opposition.

Mr. Schuler: And clearly, that was one of the options that was discussed because I understand that the Bisons' football field could be a recipient of the Astroturf that's going to be laid down right now, and new turf could be laid down for the World Cup games. You know, that certainly is one of the options. It's just that, again, we don't want something like this to, by any means, become a detriment to us getting the games here, because that certainly would be just a real exciting time for us to hold such an international competition here. And I'm glad the minister is aware of it and certainly hope that the minister will continue to put political pressure on that these issues be resolved and that they not become big issues; that they just continue to be dealt with and that whatever the committee is, you know, going to need for hosting such an event, that we can accommodate that, and certainly that's what we would like to see, I think, all of us who are interested in seeing the 2015 games come here, at least a few of them.

So I don't know if the minister wants to comment on that yet, but I will go on to my next question. He can go back and comment on what I've just said but.

My next question to the minister is: Obviously, a block of funding is given to Sport Manitoba. Is there any other funding that's given to sports outside of that block funding to Sport Manitoba from the department—from the government of Manitoba?

Mr. Robinson: The Sport Secretariat that I have responsibility for primarily plays that role of being a quarterback in the sport delivery system in the province of Manitoba. All the funding goes through, or most of the funding goes through Sport Manitoba, who is responsible for the distribution of monies to the various sports organizations in the province of Manitoba, of which 80-or-so are part of Sport Manitoba.

On the Sport Secretariat side, we have an initiative which provides financial support to the Team Canada Volleyball Centre, I believe, that totals \$49,000 annually. And we also—\$76,000—I ask for forgiveness on that oversight. Also the Manitoba Boxing Commission, we fund that roughly in the amount of \$14,000. And the Community Access Program, which is really an events acquisition initiative for the major events, and I believe that the event acquisition funds that we expend is in the

neighbourhood of 49.5—\$49,500 annually. An example of that was the CN Canadian Women's Open golf championship that was held here last summer, and I believe the event winner of that was Michelle Wie. I'm not a follower of golf too much, but I understand that she did a great job in winning that event.

* (16:00)

Mr. Schuler: To the minister: So, basically, block funding is given to Sport Manitoba and then the funding goes to the various sports organizations. Can the minister tell us how that is then reported? Like, how is there an accounting for that kind of money given to government and to the public.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, they are—they're accountable for the money that they receive through sports—or through the Province of Manitoba. They provide annual reports that are tabled by myself to the Legislative Assembly, and it has been like that for quite a number of years. As contained in the Estimates book, I believe, in the foreword of the Estimates book, it gives a history of how it evolved. The—it came from the Manitoba Sports Federation to Sport Manitoba in 1996. In 2007 the provincial department, Manitoba Sport, was converted to a Sport Secretariat under the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism. And sport—in 2009, the Sports Secretariat was severed in the Culture, Heritage and Tourism to fall under the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for Sport. Later, of course, we renamed that, and it came under the responsibility of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, where it currently is.

The sports—Sport Manitoba is therefore directly responsible for reporting to the Province of Manitoba accountability considerations, where it spends its money, and we table the reports that are forwarded to us by Sport Manitoba to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Schuler: Does the department of Sport involve itself at all in infrastructure, or do they allow that all to be with Community Places and with other departments when it comes to dealing with facilities? Is the department of Sport only on the programming side?

Mr. Robinson: What we do provide is consultation, recommendations, and, certainly, we've been a champion with the federal government in trying to advance the argument that we do need a major infrastructure initiative in the province of Manitoba

that's related to the need to improve upon the recreation facilities that we have throughout. As I said at the outset of the—of this segment of the Estimates process on this particular department, we have been trying to find a champion that would advance the cause of the need to improve our recreational facilities in the province of Manitoba. And the responsibility falls under—primarily under the other departments of this government, whether it be Infrastructure, the Community Places program. We're more in the business of ensuring that the sport delivery systems are accomplished through the department, and it plays more of a co-ordinating role with the other departments to ensure that these initiatives are—see reality.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, see, my concern is that if you do go to Community Places, I mean, basically, they're just a funding arm and applications come forward and then a decision is made on a whole bunch of levels on why or why a project will not be funded, whichever way they go.

And yet, we have, across the city of Winnipeg and throughout the province, for instance, a real deficit when it comes to the arenas that our kids are playing in. And a lot of those were built 30 and 40 years ago and are now finding themselves to be in really tough shape.

And, you know, throughout this Estimates today, obviously, I have a much clearer idea of where sports is. And having had the opportunity to travel the province and talk to people, is that there really isn't an advocate for a holistic approach when it comes to sports. If you have, sort of, one body that does the funding of facilities but you got to come and you got to ask for it, and then they decide which is the most needy. And, on the other hand, you have a body that advocates for the programming and you don't have, sort of, the coming together of the two of them—because, yes, yes, we do want to have, you know, really strong sports programs but I would suggest to the minister that we keep hitting that ceiling of not being able to accommodate any more kids in sports.

And for instance, in basketball, I think I mentioned to the minister in our last set of Estimates, that by and large, Filipino kids just love basketball and they are very good at it. My son's also a basketball player and has gone up against some of their teams, and they are just magnificent. Yet, if you look around the city of Winnipeg, I mean, other than in the schools, there really aren't very good facilities

outside of the schools when it comes to basketball. So, for instance, if the schools are locked down for the Christmas holidays or they have their own programming, it's hard for kids to get in there and to play.

And there's a really nice facility at Garden City sports complex—Seven Oaks—yes, Garden City sports complex, sorry, in Seven Oaks. And it's a nice facility but it's one little court and that's sort of the problem with all of this.

And I would suggest to the minister that that's where sports kind of falls between the cracks, because you don't have someone out there saying, we've got arenas in the city that have past their prime. They probably shouldn't be functioning in the way they're functioning right now.

And I know the City has responsibility and is looking at, you know, they're looking, in fact, the next day or so of putting artificial ice in some of these facilities just so they can extend the life of the arena because they were never intended initially to have hockey in the summer. And yet there's such a demand for summer hockey, that because they can't air condition the facilities, they're going to put artificial ice down. And you know there's a lot of controversy about that as well.

But, again, there's a real lack of infrastructure, whether it's in the city of Winnipeg and around the province. And I don't get the sense that there's necessarily a handle on that. And, you know, is there somewhere within sport or somewhere else, where that's going to be tracked? Because I would suggest to the minister, this is going to become an increasingly bigger issue, rather than less of an issue. And the cries are going to come from communities saying, you know, we are going to need some assistance for redeveloping or building new facilities.

And right now, the way the model seems to work, unless I have it wrong—and if I do, the minister please correct me—but the way to do it is to apply to Community Places and hope that you get a yes, that there isn't too much demand or that in the group that's applied for money, that yours is the most needy. I think there's a real gap there in the whole sports area, in regards to facilities and the kinds of needs that they have now and on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Robinson: Well, the member does raise a good point. And I think that we're doing our best, as government, and the previous governments have always tried to determine how we best address the

recreational facilities. Without a doubt, there is a recreational facilities deficit in the province of Manitoba. We must figure out ways of how we can address this issue. Some of these issues have been long-standing, and we need to address them. I believe that we're going about it in the proper way, and that is consulting between departments through some inter-departmental efforts in how we address some of the outstanding needs that we have.

*(16:10)

Sport Manitoba in itself is the sport-delivery agent. It has a five-year renewable agreement with the Province of Manitoba to ensure that the sport-policy directives of the Province are delivered to the broad public. It's composed of a 15-member board, a volunteer board. The chairperson is Mr. Paul Robson, a respected member of the community—has been for some time now, and the other representatives on the board itself come from—I believe that the Province of Manitoba appoints five members on this 15-member volunteer board. Three members are members at large, and we appoint the chairperson and vice-chairperson. The vice-chairperson is Dr. Henry Janzen, who is a former Winnipeg Blue Bomber.

And they are joined by representatives from the 76 provincial sports organizations who name five: the Manitoba Games Council, which appoints one; the Manitoba regional councils, which also represent another representative; the Manitoba athlete association, and a joint council representing the three universities, the Manitoba High School Association, and the Manitoba Physical Education Teachers' Association each appoint one. And they carry out some of the aspirations of the recreational and sporting needs of this province, and they carry out the mandate that's provided to them by the government of Manitoba.

If I can go back to the issue that the member has just raised, he is probably correct, because we do have to—I think that we have to assess, and I take it to be a good recommendation. I think we have to assess some of the recreational and sporting needs, particularly when it relates to facilities in the province of Manitoba. We have to have a close look at what is required, and we have to definitely achieve a priority list or a—certainly a connection and action plan.

We've asked the federal government repeatedly to work with us on this. Unfortunately, we haven't had a—until the last Parliament, a minister devoted

strictly to sport, because the—on the issue of infrastructure, that usually falls with the—with other departments.

But we do need a champion without a doubt, because other provinces and other territories have expressed the same concerns that I'm expressing at this committee, that there is a need to catch up on a lot of the recreational facilities that we have in and the deficits that we have in those areas in terms of the conditions of those facilities in other areas of not only Manitoba but, indeed, Canada.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, see and just further to that, and then I want to move on to other questions. I mean, I had to hear a statement made by the honourable member for Southdale, Erin Selby, when she talks about her community club, and, you know, during the 2007 election campaign, the premier, Gary Doer, made a commitment to expand Southdale Community Centre for \$2 million.

And, again, it was a political announcement and we all get that, but there was also a need there, and I guess the question a lot of clubs have, and a lot of organizations have, is, is how do you access your community to get that kind of a commitment, because some communities are growing, others, you know, have deteriorating facilities and, in this case, you know, the Premier was the advocate for it and got it done.

And we are going to see increasing demands coming up and we've seen some pretty painful issues being debated in the city of Winnipeg where, you know, some were closed to create one more of a central community club. These facilities are getting old, and even the one that burned down in east Elmwood, you know, obviously there was no sprinkler system. I take it there was probably no alarm on that would've notified the police that somebody had broken in.

You know, these facilities—and I remember the facility well from growing up in Elmwood. I mean, it was old then, and they're getting older, and somewhere there's going to have to be an advocate for the kinds of sports facilities that are going to be needed, not just new ones but also repairing and retrofitting the ones that exist.

And I certainly appreciate the minister's candour and discussion on this because I don't think anybody has a silver bullet on this issue because in the end it will come down to money, and I think we all know that. It's just—I think what has to be is some kind of a

system whereby we're going to start looking at it, and then how do we rank them; how do these—the various needs get rated and get funded and get—and move forward.

I do want to move on to another question and that is: How will the community component work with the new stadium at the University of Manitoba?

Mr. Robinson: The—well, there's—first of all, over 80 per cent of the public funds going into the new stadium will be repaid by the Bombers from new property taxes that are generated from a new private-sector development of the current Canad Inns Stadium land. This will enable the new stadium to be built without impacting funding for core government services like health care, roads and education.

The Blue Bombers Football Club have assumed the role—a lead role and a very significant role in this project, and they are being supported by the full commitment of the City, the Province and the University of Manitoba. This is more than just a stadium for the Blue Bombers, and that is why you see a strong commitment from both the Province and the City of Winnipeg.

This is going to be a university facility and home to the Bisons as well. It'll also be a community facility with all-season opportunities for sport and recreational activities. Over 75 per cent of the time the stadium will be used by the community and amateur sports, so it's not simply a building that will be strictly owned by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers Football Club. It'll also be used by the community, and I think that in short—in the short period of time we have, that's the best way I can explain the community accessibility to the new stadium that's currently being built.

Mr. Schuler: Was the minister involved in the decision-making process regarding the stadium and the community-use component?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, no, I was not.

Mr. Schuler: Who's—then who's working with the new stadium group in advocating and making sure that there is going to be community access to the new stadium?

Who would be the group or the individual or the minister or the designate that would be making sure that the community component is going to be first and in the forefront of the development of the stadium program?

Mr. Robinson: Ultimately the Province is represented by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Development, the CEDC, and the final decision, obviously, is made by the Executive Council which is the Cabinet.

The recommendations are brought forth and that was one of the assurances that this government wanted, is that there be community accessibility to the new stadium that is being built to allow the use by the broader community, not strictly by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers or the Bisons, but, indeed, that there be accessibility to other community groups that may want to use the facility.

Mr. Schuler: And, you know, I get it. The government has to lay out the broad framework. But I don't think anybody's under the impression that it's the Cabinet that meets with the individuals who are going to run the stadium and starts to work out the details of, you know, you're going to get this time slot and this time slot.

* (16:20)

Like, there's got to be someone that is going to be sitting down and saying, okay, how do you, as the Bomber's club, or whoever is going to run the stadium, and I don't know if they've got a manager yet or a scheduler, but how do the proponents or the individuals who are going to run the stadium—how do they view community involvement, because, as the minister knows, that, you know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions? And there's got to be someone who's going to stand there and is going to say, well, you know what, you know, it came from Cabinet all the way down that there has to be youth sport and community sport involved in using this facility. And there are a million ways that that can be scuttled if individuals don't want to see that go forward. So who is it from the government side that ensures that that's actually going to happen?

Mr. Robinson: Through the Cabinet Committee on Economic Development. As I pointed out to the member, we want assurance, obviously, as legislators and as members of the Executive Council and as MLAs, that we want to ensure that there is accessibility by the community to the stadium and certain—because we do represent the public after all, we want assurances. In this case, the Province is represented by this committee that I indicated to ensure that these provisions are there to allow for the community to have access to the facility that's currently under construction.

Mr. Schuler: But is there one individual? Is there a point person who's been designated as the individual who is ensuring that that's going to take place? Because, again, I'm not under the impression that the Cabinet meets with the individuals running the stadium, nor am I under the impression that it's the economic committee of Cabinet. Like, is it Jeff Hnatiuk who's going to make sure that that happens? Is it the deputy minister of Sport that's supposed to be the one that ensures that that happens?

Because, you know what, I know that the basketball—and bless the universities and we love our universities dearly, but just like, you know, their basketball courts were all supposed to be used for community teams to come and play. And, by the way, I'd say this to suggest to the minister that that's also not something that happens, and neither are the volleyball courts made available.

I can tell the minister—and I'm in the thick of this one—I'm living the dream, Minister, when it comes to youth sport. I tell you I know almost every school intimately in this city and in this province because we either play in their playground for sports or in their gymnasiums we play sport. And you sit and you talk to people and they say, you know what, why are the doors locked on a lot of these facilities? And the intent always was that they were supposed to be open for amateur sport and that's actually not what happens, you know. Like my—the member from Brandon East always used to tell me the devil's in the details.

So my question is very clearly to the minister. Who—who's the individual? What's the name of the man or the woman who are responsible to make sure that youth sport, that community's sports, gets access to that facility? Because, if not, I would suggest to the minister, you know, good intentions are great. But there's got to be somebody there who's going to say, okay, we need this written into your plan.

This has to be written into your business plan. This has to be written into your minutes. This has to be part of your bylaws. Like, if it's not going to be front and centre, I would suggest to the minister, in time, once all the balloons and the cake are gone and all the hype is gone, that there will be a padlock on those facilities and community groups. And it happens over and over and over again, and I see it. I see it first-hand, Minister, and, you know, it's unfortunate because in the end it's the kids on the other side of the fence looking in and saying, wow, what a nice facility, wouldn't I love to be there.

Mr. Robinson: Well, I respect the member's concerns and I share, to a certain degree, some of the concerns that he has. Let me assure him that there is going to be a community use agreement that'll outline the terms of the facility's use. This committee will exist, made up of representatives from the university, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers Football Club, Sport Manitoba and other interested community groups.

This committee will uphold the expectations of the community use agreement, and, as far as naming an individual that will represent the aspirations of the province, I certainly can't provide that today because people's roles will change in time. And I think that that's the best answer I can give to the member right now. But, certainly, this committee will be established to ensure that there is a community use agreement, and that was part of the terms and the conditions that were laid out at the outset when we embarked upon this initiative of building a new stadium.

Mr. Schuler: And, again, to the minister, just so that I'm very clear. For instance, when will community groups be able to obtain access to the facilities? What will the cost to rent—booking fees be for the facilities? How will they book them, and who will they go to? Because, you know, those are all questions that are starting to be asked. Like, great, there's a facility; how do we access them? If there are costs involved, are there plans to offer assistance to community organizations with limited funding so they can utilize the space?

There are a lot of schools who don't have very good or full-size gymnasiums who, for instance, I know in the north end, are able to use the Seven Oaks Soccer Complex, and for a minimal amount of money are allowed to go in. And often it's the school divisions, whether it's Winnipeg No. 1 or Seven Oaks School Division that will help to defray the costs, and the kids get to go into there and have physical education classes. I know a lot of schools use the arenas during the day to go and do physical activity. I mean, that's the kind of thing that has to happen.

But to use the University of Manitoba facility, is it going to be the Bombers? Like, do you have to call the Bombers' office? Well, I would suggest to the minister, that's a little intimidating for you, as a community club that has volunteer parents running it, that, by in large, are working during the day, that somehow they're going to be expected to call in the

evening, where I suspect nobody will be in the office at the Bomber offices, and then are going to try to book facility space.

Anyway, it's sort of like the mechanics of it and, again, I would say to the minister, perhaps either it's a committee or an individual that should already be there to go around and ask the community, like, what is it that they would like to see out of that facility? What needs do they have? How would they use it? How would they like to use that facility? Because, to sort of call it a, you know, a community access, like, then you've got to start defining what you actually mean by that. And I know the minister is well aware of it, and I'm sure he's heard a lot of these complaints coming forward. So, I leave it at that, and time is moving on, so I've sort of put the concerns that we have on the record, and I'll ask my next question. If the minister would like to comment on this, I certainly would like to hear his concerns on it.

I do want to move on to the issue of head injuries. The CFL recently began a campaign to promote concussion awareness to players at the high school, university and professional levels. My question to the minister: What is Manitoba doing to bring awareness to this serious issue to prevent head injuries?

* (16:30)

Mr. Robinson: Well, this is a huge issue across the sporting community, and I share with the member's concern about the issue itself, on the broad issue of head injuries.

Sport Manitoba, through one of its PSOs, provincial sports organizations, called the SMC, the Sports Medicine Council, is undertaking some work currently to make a determination and recommend to Sport Manitoba and ultimately to this government on how we address this issue. Certainly, right now, educating coaches and educating players about the proper use of headgear, for example, in hockey and other sporting activities are very important, and this is a major issue and we want to take all precautions. But, certainly, the experts at the sports medical council, which is a part of the umbrella of Sport Manitoba, is making the appropriate recommendations, and we certainly rely on their expertise to recommend to Sport Manitoba and ultimately to this government on how we address this issue.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and to that, I mean, clearly there have been head injuries over the years, and probably

the kind of attention hasn't been applied to it that should be, but we also know that sport has changed a lot. Not just has the play changed, the speed of play has changed. We know that hockey used to be played—when you look at the old clips of 40, 50, maybe even 60 years ago, and there were really no protections for players, but also the speed and the way it was played wasn't there as well. We now have skates that are sharpened and that the speed at which you can get to in hockey right now is just amazing, and also that the protection is a lot better also.

But with all that comes the ability to injure yourself far greater. I have a neighbour of mine was in the United States, I think it was Fargo, and his little guy—who was I think 12 or maybe he was 11 at the time—was playing in a hockey game and wiped out and went headfirst into the boards. And I don't know if he played for the rest of the season. It's just getting to be more and more of an issue.

In fact, I have an article here from the *National Post* and they're talking about—that what they want to do is start dealing with the culture. And I think that's one of the problems—here it is: The organizations present—this was at the introduction of the national-wide concussion awareness campaign. The organizations present at the news conference said they are determined to ensure there is a cultural shift when it comes to head injuries. And I think that's something that's going to have to take place.

And I think, by and large, you know, coaches and parents look out for the best interests of kids. I don't question that. I think sometimes we just don't realize how serious these issues can be, and it is a cultural shift, just like we used to allow smoking on airplanes. Now, when I go to schools and I talk about, you know, what we legislate here, would anybody want to go back to allow smoking in airplanes? And the kids look at you like—inconceivable that you actually could have had that kind of thing, or smoking in a grocery store. It just means that there's been a cultural shift, and that's what has to take place with head injuries.

And one of the suggestions is the amateur football rule book will now require officials to report suspected concussions to coaches. And that's not just football; that's got to be with all sports, whether it's hockey, soccer. I know of an incident in soccer where there was a major concussion on a goalie, and he was out for three and a half months.

So my question to the minister is: How active is he in the pushing—because sometimes we have to be

pushed, you know, for how long did we suffer with smoking and non-smoking sections in restaurants before all of a sudden—and that was during my term here. I saw, you know, we disallowed the smoking in restaurants. But it takes that push. It takes that cultural shift, then, for something like that to be done.

So, again, to the minister, you know: Has he been pushing his department and amateur sport and professional sport to start pushing this cultural shift that we recognize concussions are a very serious issue?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we have been very concerned about this issue about concussions and how they appear to be on the rise. That is why we have asked the Sports Secretariat to convey our concerns to Sport Manitoba and ultimately Sport Manitoba has conveyed that to the group that has the most expertise in this area, that being the sports medical council. The sports medical council has studied this and they are going to be recommending making further recommendations to Sport Manitoba as well as coaches, players and probably parents on how we prevent the whole issue of head injuries and, ultimately, in some cases, and unfortunately concussions that are being experienced by some of our young athletes, and I certainly don't want to see that.

I want to see extra measures, extraordinary measures if need be, taken to ensure that that doesn't happen in a time to come. So on these issues it's currently being addressed by Sport Manitoba and one of its PSOs, the sports medical council, and I will rely on their good judgment and their recommendations for our government to consider. There is a need for this government to action something. We certainly will do that and I will be asking the sports critic to work with me on how we address this issue if we're not addressing it adequately.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, anyway, there are two components to this, and the one component is, for instance, in hockey, the way players are being hit, and that I think is one discussion.

Basically, what I'm focusing on here is the recognition, and it's this cultural shift that—you know, and I've heard it, by the way, I've heard it with minor injuries at various sports levels, so this isn't a sport where a parent or a coach has said, oh, come on, suck it up.

And, you know, maybe that works if you twisted a foot a little bit; you have to sort of work the foot in a little bit and get it to work again and there'll be a little bit of pain.

However, when it comes to head injuries, I don't think there is any room for "just suck it up." I think there's going to have to be that cultural shift. And, again, not how it occurred, because, you know, there are injuries, I would say by and large, are not cheap shots or, you know, by an elbow to the head. I mean, they are just part of sports because it's getting faster, just because of the way where our kids are getting bigger. You know, I'm taller than my dad and my son's already taller than I am. And that means that we're going to have a lot more of these injuries.

And in the case of soccer the goalie went down, there were—everybody was going for the ball and somebody landed on the goalie's head, and, you know, three-and-a-half months later, you know, he finally could go back in goal. And, by the way, he couldn't even play volleyball. I think a month later he went and played volleyball and he served one ball and he went to the coach and said: I'm getting dizzy.

I mean, they are serious. So, again, to say to the minister, this is something that there is going to have to be that cultural shift; there's going to have to be that education component and it's going to have to be, you know, province by province, town and city, municipality by municipality, club by club, that coaches and parents all have to recognize that because of the way we're now playing sports and that it's gotten faster and our kids are bigger that we're going to have to be very careful when it comes to head injuries and that, you know, if the kid's holding their head at all and if a ref sees that a kid's touching his head at all that they should immediately be pulled off the field and at least be assessed for that game.

And I think that's where the cultural shift's going to have to come in, and not—you know, and, Minister, I've seen this, you know, where the ref goes to the kid, says, are you okay? And the pressure's on the kid. I mean, for Pete's sake, this kid's like 10, 11, and all the teammates are standing around and, you know, all the spectators are standing around looking at the kid, and, you know, the bench is looking at the kid. So what's the first instinct? The kid says, yes, I'm okay.

And actually where the cultural shift's going to have to be is—is that, you know: Would you please leave the field and get an assessment? There's lots of time; you can come back out again.

And so, that's sort of where I'm getting at, not just how it occurred, but, then, how it's dealt with and how that—sort of that culture shift will be communicating.

*(16:40)

Mr. Robinson: Well, I just want to share with the member that I fully understand what he's talking about. I—you know, I read the news. I read the sports pages a fair amount. I hear about the sports injuries being sustained by some big-name players. Sidney Crosby comes to mind, obviously. I hear about those and some of the unfortunate incidents that have happened with—I'd say in the big leagues.

But little reported are the activities that go on in the minors. For example, some of the examples that the member for Springfield has pointed out, those concern me a great deal, and, as I said, we are taking this issue very seriously, and we want to ensure that no long-term injuries are sustained by any of our young athletes. We want them to grow up to be good athletes, to be fair-minded and to play fair, and we certainly have a lot of aspirations for all our children, I believe, that we want them to excel in sporting activities, whatever it is they may pursuing—may be pursuing.

That is why we've asked Sport Manitoba, through its provincial sport organization known as the sports medical council, to examine this issue further, and upon their recommendation, if there is a need for us to impose some decisions at this level in our responsibility as legislators, then we ought to be doing that.

But I think that we're taking every precaution and every measure to ensure that this issue is given serious attention.

Mr. Schuler: The next issue that I do want to discuss with the minister, and it was very topical for awhile in the media, and it has to do with Sport Canada's long-term athlete development plan.

And there's a lot of good things in there. I've read through it and gone through it, and I'm sure the minister's been briefed on it, and there are some very interesting things, for instance, that 12 and under, or U12 sports, that there would be no posting of results for their games. Now, I understand, to my chagrin, that soccer has already agreed to follow suit.

Can the minister tell us, has Hockey Manitoba agreed to not record and post U12 hockey game results?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I'm not aware of hockey changing its current way of doing business. I know that the game of soccer is looking at perhaps—well, I know that they're examining the issue.

I think that, primarily, the issue with amateur sport in the province of Manitoba, and through the provincial sports organizations that are part of Sport Manitoba, their main area of interest and—well, I suppose interest is skills development and how there is a deeper respect among each other as participants in a particular sporting activity. And that's what they've been involved with. But, to my knowledge, there's been no further work done. Certainly, it's an issue that I'll raise with Sport Manitoba at the earliest opportunity. The CEO, Jeff Hnatiuk, and I have periodic meetings; somehow—that I'll raise with him if there's any—if there's been any further work done on the matter.

Mr. Schuler: Well, what I've heard out there, and what's been conveyed to me is that if you don't participate in this, Sport Manitoba cuts you off with your funding. Either you buy into this, or by 2014 and I think, for Sport Manitoba, it might even be earlier, that you either comply with this or your funding is going to be cut.

And my question is: Is that going to be applied to all youth sports?

Mr. Robinson: I will investigate this matter. I have no first-hand knowledge about that assertion conveyed by the member for Springfield, and I will report back to him at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Schuler: Absolutely, and, you know, I would appreciate if the minister would look into this.

I guess what really offends most parents, whether they agree with no posting of results, U12 in sports, is that it, again, it's one of these top-down—I don't even know who the Sports Canada long-term development committee was. Certainly, they never talked to me or any other parent that I know of, nor did they talk to any club that I know of—and I've spoken to all the clubs—and neither have they talked to any of the coaches.

This is another one of those top-down, and it is so offensive, Minister, because, you know, it is my fees that pay for all of this, by and large, and I know there is government money, which means the money just came out of my other pocket. So, instead of my sports fees, it came out of my taxes. And they come across like the lords-on-high and decree things, and

then if we don't do it, they're going to cut our funding. So you're going to cut my money from me. And you know what? It becomes so offensive.

And this is basically driven by volunteers, by parents, and some—in some cases, individuals who don't even have kids in hockey or soccer or volleyball, basketball, badminton, whatever it is—and it's sort of like these commands from on-high come down and nobody ever talked to any of the sports organizations. Nobody was ever consulted, and that's why, Minister, I would suggest that's why this backlash came, and I got something, by the way, from my kid's registration, and I read with great interest, I think it was Hector Vergara's comment that there was all this controversy created by the media. No, no, it means neither the WYSA or MSA get it. It's the parents who pay for all of this; it's the parents who foot all the bills on all of this; it's the parents that make these organizations look good, and nobody was ever consulted on this.

I mean, maybe it was a good idea, but perhaps you could have talked to us about it. And that's what the clubs, that's what the coaches, that's what the boards are saying, that's what parents are saying. And, by the way, Minister, I would suggest to you, if you went to 11- and 12-year-olds, they would tell you, yes, they would like the results posted.

And you know what? Nobody's arguing. Right now, currently it's U9, meaning under nine—they don't post results. Why? Why would you? You know, after nine, it starts to get a little bit more competitive. You know what? There are far greater things that they should have been dealing with than this particular one, and it is the burr under the saddle of a lot of the sports.

And, from what I understand, it's hockey has basically said, they are not going to do it. And my question then is, so then does one sport not have to comply and the other one has to comply, because from what I understand is that Sport Manitoba will not fund those organizations who do not accept all tenets of the Sport Canada's long-term athlete development?

* (16:50)

And you know what, Minister? The thing is if you and I ran our politics the way some of these organizations run themselves, we would not be at this table. I mean, by virtue of us being at this table

means we have to go into our communities and we have to talk to individuals, and what's so offensive about a lot of this, Minister, isn't that they're not, you know, they're not well intentioned or that, you know, they don't mean what's best for the kids. I'm sure they do, but could you at least have talked to some of the parents? Could you have talked to some of the clubs? You know, could there have been at least some discussion? You know, why has it got to be this heavy hand of Sport coming down once again on the individuals who pay their wage, on the parents who foot all the bills?

I've yet to hear of the Sport Canada long-term development planning committee foot any bill. It's the parents that do it, and minister, that's where the rub is and that's where the backlash was, and you know what? My dear friend Hector and Alastair Gillespie from WYSA, you know what? They're not getting it if they think this was a media thing. It wasn't, because I can tell you, Minister, I never walked into a sports facility for those two months when this first came out without being inundated. I mean, I felt like wearing a fake beard and a Groucho Marx glasses and nose so I could actually maybe watch my kids' sports without being inundated with coaches and parents and club presidents saying, hey, Schuler, aren't you a politician? What are you guys trying to do? The least you could have done is talk to us.

You know what, Minister? Maybe that should be a message back to some of the sports gods on high. It's maybe you could—I hope they don't think it's beneath them. Maybe you could go and just talk to the parents and the clubs and just get some feedback and don't just blame it on the media because it wasn't a media creation. That was legitimate. Parents really frustrated that this came out of nowhere and they were never consulted.

Mr. Chairperson: Just before recognizing the honourable minister, two gentle reminders: We are discussing the Estimates of the department of Sport, so it's useful if comments are related to the orange book in front of us in some manner. Also, comments made in the table, regardless of direction, should go through the Chair rather than being directed at any particular individual around the table. That said, we'll recognize the honourable minister.

Mr. Robison: In the previous response I gave to the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I said

that I would be talking with Sport Manitoba officials to get a greater understanding of this, and we'll see where the discussion takes us, and, perhaps, community awareness has to be raised about this matter, and I will try and get some answers and provide them by writing to the member for Springfield.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and again, I believe the Estimates front page, it says Sport. And we had agreed to do a global discussion, and this is very important because I would like to point out to the committee that over \$12 million goes to Sport Manitoba, public money, taxpayers' money, parents' money, grandparents' money, almost \$12 million. And you know what? I think the concerns that that money could be withheld from athletes and teams because of a policy that came down, I think is valid at this table and I'd appreciate it if the minister, you know, if he would get to me on it.

You know, perhaps the guys could lighten up a little bit—through the Chair to the minister. You know, maybe they could lighten up just a little bit. I think some of it is coming down a little, little too heavy handed.

And I think we're probably at the end of the Estimates questioning. I thank the minister for his answers.

Mr. Robinson: No, thank you very much to the member for Springfield. I did say that I would follow up on a few issues and I will do that.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. Thank you all.

Now, moving to the resolutions for the department of Sport. This won't take long.

Resolution 28.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,959,000 for Sport, Sport, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for the department of Sport.

What is the will of the committee?

The committee—the hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

INNOVATION, ENERGY AND MINES

* (14:40)

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 Innovation, Energy and Mines.

Does the honourable minister have an opening comment?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): In the interests of time, I don't intend to make an opening comment. There's much I'd like to speak about, but, hopefully, it will come up during the course of discussion—[interjection] But, since the member across is encouraging me and had told me that this may be the best two and a half hours of my life, I—in the hallway, Madam Chair.

I can't help but say that there are some really exciting things that are happening in Innovation, Energy and Mines in Manitoba that perhaps doesn't get the attention that it does, such as the fact that we've gone from 367 servers to 46 and updated most of our servers; that we have now the largest wind farm in the country that was set up this year; that a billion dollars in revenue is coming in from oil in Manitoba; that the largest mining operation in the last 50 years; that the department's been able to replace 13,000 desktops with newer models, allowing for internal video conferencing and thereby reducing travel; that we've doubled the funding to MHRC since we've come to office; well, in fact, more than that, more than doubled, but doubled funding on research. And the very exciting innovations going on with respect to the electric bus project that we're involved in, as well as the fetal alcohol project that we're doing in conjunction with the University of Manitoba and Israel, just to name a few, point to some of the innovations and highlights that have occurred in this area.

And, with those few comments, I turn it over to my learned colleague.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

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

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): And I do appreciate the minister's optimism; however, I'm sure as we're going through the Estimates today that

maybe I can't quite share the optimism in not only his department but his government. We do recognize that Innovation's energy, particularly, and mines are very important to the future of Manitoba. We do know that going forward innovation is extremely important, as we do compete globally, not just simply within the—within our nation, within our western Canadian location, but certainly globally, and innovation is extremely important.

We also know that in Manitoba we have to increase our productivity which, needless to say, rests with innovation. We also know that research and development is extremely important, and I do know that the minister and his departments have some responsibility with respect to R&D, with biotech, with food production, perhaps even GMOs. We do know that there is a real opportunity for pharmaceuticals here in the province; however, the minister, perhaps, will give us some benchmarks and some successes that he and his department have had over the past 12 months. They have been few and far between, but I do know that the minister does have a tendency to expand a bit with rhetoric, and I'm sure that I'll be treated to that today.

We do know, also, that if managed properly through his department, that this particular department couldn't well—could well be the most vital department that the Province has. As I mentioned, with energy possibilities, alternative forms of energy where we have—if it's managed properly, also with Manitoba Hydro, that he does have a responsibility for with his department, and we talk about mining.

We'll get into the mining section of this Estimates because, quite frankly, I think we have dropped the ball in mining in Manitoba. I think there's an opportunity to turn that corner, however, under this particular management, this government's management, that hasn't been the case. So, Madam Chair, I do thank the minister for being here. I do wish we were in one of the other rooms. This is—seems to be a little bit too informal—or too formal, quite frankly. I do enjoy the other informality of 254 and 255, but I'm sure the minister will shout at me as he has done in the past many times so that I'm prepared to hear the answers that he has to my questions.

So thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I wish that we could continue with our Estimates.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the honourable member for Brandon West 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 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. Chomiak: The people who join me today are the Deputy Minister John Clarkson; the Finance Administrative Shared Services executive director, Craig Halwachs; the Mineral Resources Division assistant deputy minister, John Fox; and the director of Finance and Accountability, Peter Moreira.

Madam Chairperson: Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mr. Borotsik: I do ask for the minister's indulgence. I know in the past we have had the opportunity of dealing with them in a global fashion. There are a number of areas that are identified in the Estimates book that I've identified. However, we could deal globally, I would appreciate it, as opposed to chronologically.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I concur with the member.

Madam Chairperson: So it's agreed that we will be proceeding in a global fashion.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Borotsik: Just a couple of general questions, initially, through the minister. I wonder if the minister, as normal, would provide the list of his political staff within the department and their position and their names, please.

Mr. Chomiak: The people that are in my office are Amanda Creasy, who's the correspondence secretary; Shirley Heppner, who's the secretary; Kurt Penner, who's the special assistant; and Jill Stockwell, who's the executive assistant.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Penner was there last year. I am sorry, I missed the name of the other individual, but that's a change from the political staff from last year?

Mr. Chomiak: No, I believe Jill has been with me for the last year and a half, up to two years, I believe. She's in the—yes.

* (14:50)

Mr. Borotsik: Are there any contract employees in the department? There have been contract employees in other departments. I wonder if the minister has any contract employees in his department.

Mr. Chomiak: I'm advised there's not.

Mr. Borotsik: Currently, as identified in the Estimates book, on page No. 13, it identifies 358.32 FTEs, full-time equivalents. Last year there were 355.32, which is an increase of three. I understand that there are two that have been in Mineral Resources and one in Energy Development Initiatives. Can the minister tell me the actual positions that those three employees fulfill?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I can, Madam Chairperson.

Yes, the two employees in the Petroleum division are petroleum inspectors that were added to deal with the additional workload issues, and the other person in the Energy—pardon me, one's an inspector and one's an engineering aid, and the other individual in the Energy sector is Tom Garrett, who is involved with—and the title is as a technical appointment.

Mr. Borotsik: We know that the budget in Estimates is 358.32. Perhaps, just for my own curiosity, how do you get a point 32?

Mr. Chomiak: The decimal application of FTEs is as a result of term time because of summer students, et cetera. They get added to the department.

Mr. Borotsik: The budget is 358.32. Can the minister tell me how many vacancies there are, currently, in his department?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, 16.10.

Mr. Borotsik: And, of the 16.10, can the minister tell me what the timeline is to replace those vacancies or, in fact, will those vacancies be in place for the complete budget year?

Mr. Chomiak: Because of the variety of activities undertaken by the department and the nature of the department, we will manage around those vacancies and, in some cases, I suspect we'll be able to fill them; in some cases, we may or may not, depending on circumstances.

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, if the minister looks on page 13, he's also seen a credit for salaries of some \$3 million. It showed less for staff turnover. That staff turnover in vacancies—when you say that of the 16.1—can the minister tell me just how many staff have been

budgeted for that \$3 million that won't be expended through the department this year?

Mr. Chomiak: We don't attach the number of staff persons to that, but we use that number around the level of which we hire people and manage people and move people around with respect to various activities between salaries, allowances, separation, pensions, et cetera. So that figure doesn't attach directly to FTEs.

Mr. Borotsik: But it is a fairly significant amount. As a matter of fact, it's about \$315,000 more this year than it was the previous year in the Estimates. If you look at salaries of even, say, at a \$100,000, you're looking at about 30 staff members.

So maybe the minister could help me and find and explain to me just where they're going to find that \$3 million, if you will, on staff turnover recoveries, because it is a recovery to the department's Estimates.

Mr. Chomiak: It is a \$3-million reduction, but we manage it, by the way, we recruit people and deal with people throughout the year as well as built into it are the merit increases that have occurred—that occur automatically to the staff as well as the bonuses, et cetera. The member—I—we do pay—we do acknowledge payment of the pension liabilities, et cetera, through our—through all of our staffing issues.

Mr. Borotsik: Are salaries frozen for the department for this fiscal year?

Mr. Chomiak: Salaries are frozen in accordance with the collective agreement.

Mr. Borotsik: Cost of living increases are frozen. Will there be merit increases paid to individuals in the department?

Mr. Chomiak: I think that they are, according to the collective agreement.

Mr. Borotsik: Does the minister have a budget amount for the merit increases that will be associated to his department?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, \$166,000.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Mr. Minister, I do appreciate the candid answer.

Can the minister please outline the extraprovincial travel that he has done over the past fiscal year—extraprovincial, not within the province. I know that the minister is around the province quite

substantially in a lot of places, just anything outside of the province.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I think this is on the Web, but, notwithstanding that: February 11, trip to Toronto to have a pleasant meeting with the Vale executives; March, in Toronto to have a—meetings with the Prospectors and Developers Association; March 2010, Halifax, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick on meeting with Energy Ministers; June 2010, meeting with petroleum executives at the Petroleum Club—yes, they allowed a New Democrat in there—the—June, early July, in Québec City at the FPT meeting; and then July 14th to 23rd, London, England to attend the Farnsworth air show in England where we had a tremendous opportunity to see how well-respected Manitoba is in Europe by virtue of its—the Rolls Royce deal and the Pratt and Whitney deal to put their—to test their state-of-the-art jet engines in Thompson, Manitoba; the mission to Israel in October 2010; then another meeting—oh, and another meeting with Vale executives November 24th in Toronto; meeting with Vic Toews in December 2010; World Energy Congress in Montréal, September, in Montréal, Québec; a meeting in Saskatoon with Genome Prairie in September; and then also in September, Calgary to attend and speak at the funeral of a former British Columbia Cabinet minister on behalf of the Province of Manitoba; and then December 2010, Regina in meeting with the Energy Minister of Saskatchewan.

* (15:00)

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Did the Premier (Mr. Selinger) attend any of those sessions with you?

Mr. Chomiak: The only sessions that the Premier was at that I attended was part of the trip to Israel.

Mr. Borotsik: The trip to Israel, was that paid through your department or was it paid through some other sources?

Mr. Chomiak: It was paid through the department.

Mr. Borotsik: Was any of the Premier's travel paid through the department?

Mr. Chomiak: No.

Mr. Borotsik: Maybe if the minister could, just again for my curiosity, the Farnsworth air show in England, you did mention the fact that it was a—had to do with Rolls Royce engines. Could you just explain a little bit to me exactly what the Farnsworth

air show had to do with our innovation here in the province of Manitoba, and I suspect it's with the aerospace industry, but maybe you could just expand on that a bit.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I'd be happy to do that.

I was actually attending on behalf of the minister of entrepreneurship, education, training, so I went on his behalf to represent the Province. Farnsworth is one of the—every year, there's a revolving air show, international air show, held in either Paris or London, and it includes everyone from the aircraft industry. Manitoba, together with the other prairie provinces, sponsor a booth and a site there, as well as—actually, Thompson Unlimited sponsors a site as well at that air show, as do the other provinces.

So we had the occasion—it was actually pretty heady stuff in the sense that we had some significant negotiations and discussions with some of the major players in the world aeronautics industry, including the Pratt and Whitney executives who had joined up with Rolls Royce to test their jet engines in Thompson, Manitoba. And it was no small feat, together with assistance from Western Diversification Canada, to set up that site, and it's a world-class site. And I won't go on too much on that because I—it's one of my favourite talking points. It was very impressive.

We also met with executives of Magellan Aerospace as well as the executive management of Standard Aero and—as well as the Québec industry. We met with—we pretty—we went from morning till night for about six days at the air show every day till evening in terms of promoting and becoming involved in activities including discussions and meetings with the federal Minister of Industry, Mr. Clement, and discussions relating to federal participation in some of the activities that are occurring at Standard Aero and at Magellan here in Manitoba, including some of the expansions that have recently been announced and taking place, as well as effectively pitching the fact that Manitoba is one of the hubs of aerospace in the country, much to the chagrin of some of my colleagues in places like Alberta. And we've been able to garner a disproportionate amount of activity because of the—both the technical training that goes on here and the hub of activity that occurs in Winnipeg.

So, in short, it was a—quite an impressive and useful venture to be meeting with key executives and, out of that, several proposals—we spent some time with Natural Resources Canada with respect to

some of the programs coming down the pipe and some of the 'priorizations' being made by NRC with respect to future developments which may occur in Canada. So, in a very short version, that's the summary of what occurred in the Farnsworth.

Mr. Borotsik: You mention the Province of Québec in attendance. Were other ministers in attendance from Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, the ministers were in attendance from Ontario, New Brunswick—I don't recall seeing the Saskatchewan minister there, but I think there was a Saskatchewan minister there. Certainly, there was an Alberta minister there, federal Minister Clement, federal Minister Yelich and several others, as well as Ontario ministers, of course, that were in attendance as well. Québec's minister was there as well. So almost all of the provinces had ministerial representation at the air show.

Mr. Borotsik: The reason I mention Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia is, needless to say, for the New West Partnership. But we have some questions about that a little later. I have questions about that a little later. Obviously, they have got the same interests as the New West Partnership that we would as Manitoba, but how we advance those projects, just as an individual province, remains to be seen.

Going back just very briefly to the vacancy question. You did indicate that there were 16.10 vacancies within your total department. Do you have a breakdown as to where those vacancies are?

Mr. Chomiak: We have six vacancies in the mining sector; six in the BDT, which is business development and transformation; and two in Strategic Planning; and three in the Energy Development.

* (15:10)

Mr. Borotsik: In the six in the mining sector, can you tell me which departments in mining they come from?

Mr. Chomiak: Two in Geology, one in Client Services, one in Mines branch and one in Business and Policy, and three have been filled in Petroleum.

Mr. Borotsik: I caught the two in Geology and the one in Mines and Business. What was the other two in?

Mr. Chomiak: Two in Geology, one in Client Services, one in Business Policy and Development, and, one in Mines.

Mr. Borotsik: Two in Geology, one in Client Services, one in Mines, one in Business. Two, three, four, five. There were six identified.

Mr. Chomiak: The member's correct. One additional one in Mining Recording area.

Mr. Borotsik: Going into Energy, if the minister could go to page 24 in the Estimates book please.

Halfway down, the activity identification, there's a bullet point there that says, assist Manitoba Hydro in issues relating to transmission reliability, power sales and hydro generation.

Did the minister or members of his department have any discussion or any input into the transmission of the Bipole III and the location of Bipole III?

Mr. Chomiak: The—I as minister obviously had some—there was some internal discussions with respect to staff. There certainly was some assistance with respect to dealing with various issues of jurisdiction and issues of mining, et cetera, that would have been considered, et cetera. But not—I wouldn't say there's a formal departmental input to that particular process, although it is an ongoing process that we all, in government, have had discussions about.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, that is somewhat disconcerting because it does say here, quite specifically, that the department does have a responsibility to certainly assist Manitoba Hydro in issues related to transmission reliability, power sales and hydro generation.

Also, if the minister goes to policy eight, mineral resources, and it says, and I'll read it: With assistance from the Province, Manitoba mineral, oil and gas resources, including lands containing high, and underlined, mineral potential, such as greenstone belts in the Thompson nickel belt, will be identified in development plans. And I quote again, "protected from conflicting surface land uses that could interfere with access to these resources." So, under policy 8, land policy 8, Mineral Resources, it's the responsibility of the government to protect, and it says so, protect from conflicting surface land uses, the greenstone belts, the Thompson nickel belt and anything else that should be identified in development plans. And in the Estimates book, it says that the responsibility certainly lies with the department.

Did the minister and his staff or anybody in his department have any input with respect to a location of a major transmission line going through the greenstone and Thompson nickel belt?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Borotsik: And what was the department's position on having that location, that transmission location in those very sensitive mineral areas?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, as the member indicated, it is part of our role to assist Hydro in terms of transmission and related issues as they relate to mineral development and mining.

Mr. Borotsik: What was the position of the department when they were asked for their opinion with that location of that particular transmission line as it relates to their responsibility under policy 8 Mineral Resources?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we provided our advice.

Mr. Borotsik: And can the minister expand a little bit? What was the advice? What was the opinion? We do have—and I don't have to tell the minister, we have a huge opportunity with resources, mineral resources in the north. We do know that they're going to be impacted by the bipole. Can the minister not be a little bit more forthcoming and tell us exactly what the opinions of his department were with respect to the impact of that Bipole III location on those mineral resources?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we're obviously very interested in maximizing the potential for mineral development, as well as the potential. The member should understand that this isn't a one-track or one-trick pony. This is several issues and policies at stake, not just the issue of mineral development mining, but the issue of energy development, of energy transmission.

There's a myriad of issues that are affected in this rule on the advice that's provided by the department in its various capacity—capacities and rules to the—to Hydro or to anyone in general. The department is the Department of Innovation, Energy and mining, so it has input on a number of levels and provides that advice accordingly.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, and certainly I appreciate the different issues that the government has identified with respect to the location of Bipole III, but I would suspect that the member or the Minister of Innovation, Energy and, particularly, Mines would be very concerned with the development of deposits in the area that's going to be impacted.

Did the minister consult or have any consultation with the stakeholders, the miners in the province of Manitoba? And if—maybe if he did have, can the minister tell me what their concerns might have been?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we consult regularly, on a regular basis, seek their input and advice and provide assistance and direction to Manitoba Hydro, based on the advice and some of the suggestions made by not only the mineral industry, but by other players in the field respecting energy transmission, energy consumption, energy efficiency, energy utilization and geological formations, mineral interests, socio-economic impacts with respect to various scenarios. And so we provide all of that advice to Hydro as is part of the point that's been made by the member.

Mr. Borotsik: Did the minister have any meetings with the major players in the mining industry, specifically dealing with the location of Bipole III?

* (15:20)

Mr. Chomiak: I've had a lot of meetings with representatives, individually, of the mining industry and with the mining association on every issue affecting mining. And I specifically—there have been discussions—I know there were discussions with representatives at various meetings, et cetera, but I can't quantify that for the member at this point other than that there had been—we have had those discussions.

Mr. Borotsik: Were there ever any concerns expressed to the minister or members of his staff from the mining industry with respect to the west-side location of the Bipole III?

Mr. Chomiak: There's been issues of concern respecting all forms of transmission all across the province of Manitoba on almost—on literally every issue. It's very difficult in the modern era to do transmission anywhere, and I just remind the member that in one of the meetings that I attended in—with the energy ministers of—in Québec or Montréal, the minister from Alberta was furious at the fact that, notwithstanding that the energy company in Alberta had the transmission rights between Calgary and Edmonton actually owned and locked down, they could not build a transmission line between Edmonton and Calgary because of opposition to that. And it's—the point that I take from that is that it's—there's virtually nowhere that you can put transmission anymore without some interest

being affected, and the role of government and the role of all of us is try to make the best possible decision in the interest of—in the varied interest of both the environmental, the energy, and the related concerns as it relates to transmission. It's a—I often cite the issue of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline as an example of a really fast project that started in 1970 and I'm—we're still waiting for something to be laid, and we're now, what, 30 years out, 35 years out, and was supposed to start being developed last year and another injunction, another court case, and it's gone nowhere, and it's a very complex issue that requires a continued discussions and advice to be provided to all.

Mr. Borotsik: And I do thank the minister for his explanation of all of the potential pitfalls with respect to location of transmission lines, but my question was fairly specific: Were there any concerns brought forward to the minister by the mining industry specifically with their location of Bipole III and specifically in the northern mining regions?

Mr. Chomiak: I am aware of discussions that took place between the mining industry and in Hydro with respect to the route, and I think, as I recall, there was a fair amount of agreement that the routes being looked at were—would minimize, to the extent possible, any impact on mining.

Mr. Borotsik: And I appreciate conversations and consultation with Hydro and mining, but, again, I go back to policy 8, Mineral Resources, which is the responsibility to protect, and I underline the comment "protect" the greenstone belts, Thompson nickel belts, from conflicting surface land uses. That conflicting surface land use would be a bipole. As we recognize when you build a bipole, it would take out any opportunity for not only exploration but development in those areas with mining. Mining's very important in this province; the minister's indicated that. I agree with him. Mining is extremely vital and is going to be more so over the coming years. We recognize that commodity prices are going through the roof. We recognize that globally, commodities are going to be in demand. Again, I go back to the minister and ask a simple question: Under policy—under land use policy 8, it's the minister's responsibility to protect our future development of mining as it pertains to any type of other conflicting surface land uses. Was that not put forward to not only Manitoba Hydro but to the government of the day, suggesting that perhaps this is the wrong way to go with respect to mining in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: I'm not sure that conflicting land use is necessarily a zero-sum kind of solution, and that is that there are conflicting land uses that occur every time in everything that we do. And it's the question of rationalizing and developing your overall policy in the best interest of the province's environmental, energy and mineral interests. It's not a system that has a—one sector played off against the other. It's a question of accommodation and it's a question of compromise and determining what's the best land use with respect to the particular land in question. Maximizing, of course, in the interest of mining and energy—maximizing the potential of the province.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, with all due respect, and I do have a lot of respect for the minister, I do believe that mining should've well taken precedent. Because to inhibit that development over the next hundred years, in my estimation, is a waste of a resource—experience that I've had in the past. We've stopped developments because of aggregate, not just simply the potential for mining gold and other minerals and copper and zinc, but aggregate has stopped developments in the past. But, in this particular case, obviously, that doesn't come into play.

The minister has talked about other types of energy. As a matter of fact we go back to page 24, and the activity identification of the energy development initiatives it does talk, and I quote: "development of renewal energy projects such as community wind, large-scale wind, biofuels, solar energy." But I'd like to concentrate on those two areas first of all, community wind and large-scale wind.

But let's talk the community first. There's a number of proposals that are now put forward to the department with respect to community development of wind power. Can the minister tell me exactly how interested his department is in developing community wind, and if there have been—if there's any go-forward with the initiatives that have been proposal—proposed to his department at the present time?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe that we set out a target several years ago of a certain amount of large-scale wind combined with a certain amount of community wind. And, as a result of the processes the most recent project that's come on board has been the pattern development, the St. Joseph's wind farm, that'd originally been—had been contemplated to be

300 megawatts and ended up coming in at about 180 megawatts due to a number of varying conditions.

At the same time a number of proposals have come in on the community wind side and the province still is a—still is considering a number of proposals with respect to community wind, and intends to move on some form of community wind, but we're still evaluating the various ramifications. The process hasn't moved quite as quickly as we—it's funny because one could sit back and say it hasn't moved quite as quickly as we anticipated, yet we've probably moved faster in terms of our wind capacity than any other province, notwithstanding that some provinces, most notably Ontario, are offering incredible incentives to wind development.

You know, we still opened the largest wind farm in the country recently and there are a number of proposals before us with respect to community wind. We have—our energy people have met with many other proponents. There's also monitoring going on throughout the province in rural and northern Manitoba. Our goal has been to—our goal—one of our major goals in terms of energy has been to do value added. So the petroleum development that's going on in southwest Manitoba has value-added, you know, a billion dollars into the Manitoba economy.

* (15:30)

The wind turbines that have been put in place have value-added millions of dollars to those communities and to those areas. The advantages and benefits of community wind are not the same or on the same scale as that of large wind. There's a number of considerations to take into account. It's more expensive, frankly, to do community wind. On the other hand, it allows for local investment and local development.

So all of those options are being looked at and weighed as we look at the numerous proposals that are before the Energy Department.

I wish I was in a position to provide the member with a direct answer on community wind, but I don't have a specific answer for him on community wind other than we're looking at a number of proposals that are before us.

Mr. Borotsik: And I appreciate the minister's comments, but those proposals have been before his department for some time now, and as I read the comments in the Estimates book, it does say, support community wind. And I do know that there are a

number of proposals ready to go. They have, certainly, done their due diligence. They know the wind that's available. They do know the cost. They do know the distribution required.

How is his—how is the minister's department supporting those communities in taking that to the next step? There are a number of communities out there, and I can mention names. I don't have to. I know the minister knows those names. When is it that they're going to have the opportunity to develop their one-off community? We have no community projects right now in community wind. Is the minister saying that that's not going to happen, or, if he isn't saying that, can he give me some idea as to when it might happen?

Mr. Chomiak: What we hope to do is to develop a or some community wind capacity in order to determine the—both the viability and the ability to move forward on community wind. The—what we discovered in terms of the process for large-scale wind was a great deal of interest right across the province, and a process that tried to maximize the benefits to the community as well as keep the costs to a level that made it reasonable to melt—meld the wind into the—into our transmission system. With community wind, it's just as difficult, but more complex because the cost of the wind is greater, and the—therefore the—since you are dealing with a utility that's a public utility and you're dealing with a cost that's going to affect everyone, we want to put ourselves in a position that we're maximizing the benefits to community and maximizing the benefits to Hydro.

I noted that just today the Leader of the Opposition in Ontario has promised that they're going to eliminate the energy incentives that are in place in Ontario. So that says to me that the 13 and a half cents per kilowatt hour that Ontario is paying for wind is going to be eliminated, which probably means a lot of proposals for wind projects in Ontario that are on the board now may go by the wayside.

So the—one of the issues that occurred in the—I mean, it was not that long ago that the Ontario government announced a sweeping incentive proposal for renewable resources. I mean, they were getting 43 cents a kilowatt hour for solar, 13 and a half cents a kilowatt hour for wind; and the Ontario government was acclaimed as the most advanced and wonderful region in North America to do energy efficiency. Well, it quite hasn't worked out like that

because of the costs. The costs have risen and the integration of those assets into the system hasn't occurred as smoothly as some had wanted.

In Manitoba, we tend to try to—we try to be innovative and pragmatic in how we approach these matters. So there will be community wind in Manitoba. I can't give a specific timeline. There are a lot of proposals before us, and we are going to have to continue to work our way through them. We're working closely with the proponents at all levels, assisting some in dealing with Hydro, assisting some in reviewing some of the concepts and pricing, et cetera, and we hope to be able to be in a position to do some announcements of community wind as soon as possible.

Mr. Borotsik: The answer doesn't give me a lot of confidence in community wind. Maybe, just as a suggestion, you should take out of the Estimates book next time and just keep the large wind projects, and the minister has indicated that Manitoba's head and shoulders above everybody with innovation, with large wind projects, and needless to say, he's talking about St. Joseph's and Pattern Energy. I guess one can develop a lot of large-wind projects when one's prepared to put in \$260 million into the project that's government money.

The minister talks about 13 and a half cents incentives from the Province of Ontario to their wind. Perhaps the minister would like to tell me what the incentive was for Pattern Energy and at what cost the wind power is being purchased right now at Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Chomiak: The member makes my point. You—the member—the cost of integrating anytime—any kind of renewable 'horse'—resource into a system that has the lowest hydroelectric rates in the country is a challenge. The diversification and the need for diversification of wind energy is very significant. One of the significant factors for both the Pattern and the St. Leon project was incentives from the federal government, both flow-through shares that apply to the companies as well as significant incentives that were attached to the wind projects.

It's been quite surprising, I mean, if we followed—let's follow the reasoning, and I, you know, this is an interesting point the member raises because every day the members stand up in the House and are apoplectic about the 'acopalypse' coming down—*[interjection]*—not bad, eh?—the 'accoplics' coming down upon us because of increased costs, quote, because of the bipole. And, you know, the members

are raging every day. Every day they stand up and do petitions about the cost of electricity. We have the lowest electrical cost in North America. We want to keep them lower; that's why we're building security into bipole.

Now the member says, well—*[interjection]*—well, aside from the issue of privatization, the member asks about incentives and costs. We're actually the—it was a—quite a remarkable deal that was done with Pattern Energy in terms of providing a loan at a time when no money was going to any wind companies anywhere because the subsidies had dropped out. We were still able to put in a significant project that provides \$37 million to farm, basically farm people, to provide value-added as well as provide for a—I can't—I don't have a public figure of the cost that Manitoba Hydro's paying, but it's not 13 and a half cents a kilowatt hour, I can assure the member that. And, yes, a loan was taken out, but, in terms of the cost, it is significantly in the advantage of Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans that, over the lifespan of this wind farm, it won't increase the costs of power, and it'll provide backup and support.

* (15:40)

So, you know, community wind costs more. It will be a cost. And, if we were to do a community wind project in one area or another area, I know that inevitably we'd hear complaints from members opposite about why this area, not this area, why that area, not that area. And so, one has to be very prudent in managing the energy and in managing the cost. And we want low-cost power in Manitoba forever, the long term. We want to manage it that way and we want to maximize it. And that's why we want to be prudent in how we develop our renewable resources.

Other jurisdictions have gone different ways. We've decided to go in a prudent fashion, developing large-scale wind, biodiesel, ethanol, electrical assets, and, no, we haven't achieved a community wind yet, but we will, and we'll do it in a Manitoba fashion, which is both rewarding to the community, advantageous to Manitoba Hydro and, as members opposite remind us every day, keeping the cost of Hydro at the lowest level possible.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, I have to say that the minister and Hydro and his department are not going about it the proper way to keep those costs low. He says he doesn't know what the cost of wind power is from St. Joseph, but it's not 13 and a half cents. It may well be a little bit less, but I don't suspect substantially, and

the sale of that power domestically, yes, is around six and a half cents a kilowatt hour. But the sale of that power to the US right now is around two and a half to four cents per kilowatt hour. So, if you're paying anything slightly less than 13 and a half cents but generating anything from 6.8 cents to 4 cents doesn't make a lot of fiscal sense to me, but I suppose fiscal reality isn't something that the minister is interested in.

As well as a \$260-million loan that was given to Pattern Energy that was not made available to other proposals at the time, but we won't get into the St. Joseph's, other than the fact that it is to develop some 180 megawatts of power at what we consider to be a substantial cost. But maybe if the minister wants to correct me and tell me what the terms of that agreement are with St. Joseph's and Pattern Energy, if he wants to tell me what the terms of the \$260-million loan is with Pattern, if he wants to tell me what the cost of power or what the purchase-of-power rate is from St. Joseph's, if he wants to tell me that, then perhaps I can buy into his suggestion that this is the best thing since sliced bread. Does the minister wish to answer some of those questions with respect to Pattern?

Mr. Chomiak: When I had the honour of standing there with Minister Toews and reminding Minister Toews about the federal commitment to that particular project and, as we unveiled it and the community was so happy that there was an economic development, at the same time, I was aware that the power purchase price is confidential, but Manitoba Hydro believe it's one of the lowest price wind power purchase agreements in the country. And the Pattern Energy \$260-million borrowing loan is at a rate-interest rate slightly above Manitoba Hydro's low cost of borrowing, which allows the project to proceed.

And members opposite must not abandon rural Manitoba and small communities. They need alternatives to develop and if you go down there and talk to the community and the farmers, this is the best thing that's happened in that area in a hundred years.

And, you know, Madam Chairperson, this is a government that believes in value-added. That's why, you know, a billion dollars in the oil industry in rural Manitoba and 1,500 jobs, you know, 1,500 jobs. I never heard the member stand up and talk about the 1,500 jobs west of his community that have been developed because of the oil industry or the millions

of dollars that are going into communities like St. Joseph's and St. Leon and surrounding areas that have the effect of keeping people employed and providing value-added to small towns and small communities who have seen their base dramatically eroded by the economic downturn and by the large-scale economic development and the closure of railroads and the increasing costs of feeds and inputs to the agriculture industry.

So it's not—I think it's a fairly significant fact and, you know, we can discuss this till the end of day, and I don't want to go on; the member's correct. But we've been able to achieve low-cost energy and value-added at the same time. And that means something in this province to thousands and thousands of people otherwise who would not have access to this kind of resource and income. And no matter where you go in the world, where governments can get economic activity in areas outside of large urban centres is a additional bonus and significant to the entire province.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): While the minister is on, and I hope I'm spared a rant, but I'm just going to ask anyway. Speaking of large-scale wind projects, the mountain wind project, which is a group of landowners and an energy company from Notre Dame, were in to meet with the minister and his staff here, I believe it would be in the last couple of months. Could he update us as to sort of the gist of the meeting and what happened from that meeting?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I remember the meeting well. It was a very well-developed and well-articulated argument by that particular group. They were asking for, as I recall, a guaranteed price at a particular level and investment was going to be based on that price. I think it's one of the proposals that's in the mix that we're looking at. And, again, what we have to weigh is the question of this kind of project, vis-a-vis other projects that we have in the queue, and what would maximize—what we can utilize to best serve the community. I think that when we do our small-scale wind, it'll be only one or two projects so that we can look at the viability of it and then move forward to do others based on the experience. So they had a fairly good proposal I remember. There were some issues—actually, we don't have our energy people down here right now, but I might be able to get to it later in the Estimates. I might get a note yet.

Mr. Pedersen: Just a small correction. This is a large-scale project. This isn't a community—so called small scale. This is a large-scale project for the

mountain wind, and one of the reasons that the mountain wind project people came in to meet you was to ask you to help facilitate a meeting—setting up a meeting of Manitoba Hydro. Is this anywhere near coming to happen?

Mr. Chomiak: I recall that the mountain—again, I'm going from memory, I'll get a note to the member shortly or I'll get back to the member shortly on that particular project.

Mr. Pedersen: So then changing electric gears again, I want to go to low-speed vehicles. And I want—would ask the minister for an update on the pilot project in the town of Carman with Northland Machinery, town of Carman and where this particular project is at.

Mr. Chomiak: As the member would know, the government is committed to expanding the use of environmentally friendly vehicles. We've partnered with AMM to establish a working group to explore the use of next generation environmentally friendly vehicles as an option. It will look at electric and alternately fuel vehicles that are zero or low emission to determine how best to balance the safety limitations of such vehicles with their potential benefits. The particular issue in this case is golf carts, or vehicles that are like golf carts, designed—or not designed, or intended really for on-road use and aren't constructed or specified as safety or crash worthiness standards. I know there are some jurisdictions that have allowed it. I'd thought that they were registerable under The Highway Traffic Act, but, apparently, they're not registerable under The Highway Traffic Act, and so that's where it remains.

* (15:50)

We remain in discussions but—and I've had several discussions with individuals and from other jurisdictions concerning the use of golf carts. There are some places, and, you know, I've seen them utilized in gated communities in Kelowna and I know they're utilized in some other places. There's some concern about the safety related to them. And so, while we continue discussions with them, the—we're spending a lot of time and energy working with some other communities with respect to vehicles that are considered roadworthy and considered applicable to commercial application that can be manufactured here in Manitoba.

Mr. Pedersen: You mentioned the AMM, working group with the AMM. Has that working group been

set up? Have the parameters been set up with that group, for that group, and where is it at right now?

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to recognizing the honourable minister, if he could introduce the new staff who are with him at the table.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I've been joined by Jim Crone of—he's director of Energy Development Initiative or the Energy czar, or however you want to [*inaudible*].

Madam Chairperson, I was mistaken. I miss—the member's right. I got the new mountain wind project wrong. It was a large-scale project and we asked them to discuss that with Hydro, and I think we assisted in the facilitation. I don't know if that's been set up yet.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I was confusing it with another project, which is—and this was one—a large, more than 300-megawatt project that was outside of the original RFP and we advised them to discuss it with Hydro. And I guess the best I can say is that they should continue to discuss it with Hydro because, at this point, I don't know what the specific—when the next large tranche of wind will be launched, but certainly, if there's opportunity to do so, it will do so.

To return to the question just asked about the low-speed vehicle and whether or not the AMM meeting and its terms of reference has been set up, I'll just pause for a second and find out what the status of that is.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Chair, then, to the minister, if we want to continue on the mountain wind project while he's—but I'm not sure if he's ready.

We're just trying to get our lines of communication here. The mountain wind project was large—is a large scale and it's actually quite large scale, and so I take it from your comments, then, that your department is not involved in setting up a meeting with mountain wind and Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Chomiak: I think we've advised them to meet with Hydro. If they need our assistance in meeting with Hydro or assistance in either setting up the meeting or assistance from us, we're prepared to do that.

Mr. Pedersen: I will pass that on to the group, then, the next time I'm talking to them.

And so, going back to low-speed vehicles again, and it's where we're at with the AMM, in terms of reference, et cetera.

Mr. Chomiak: That's with MIT and AMM, so I don't have—my official doesn't know what the status of it is between AMM and MIT at this point.

Mr. Pedersen: All right, I'll bring it up with MIT then, when they get into their Estimates.

But, just for the record, you should know that Northland Machinery, they do have federal transport safety—are federal transport safety approved.

So I know that you have your favourites when you want to do press releases, et cetera, but you should look at Northland Machinery's low-speed vehicle and, particularly, I would certainly urge you to get onboard with this. Carman is an excellent—the town of Carman is an excellent set-up for this. We're only talking about crossing the major highways, not travelling down them. And the town of Carman is certainly onboard with this. They want to get this project up and running. It would enhance their community as well. And, when I see those mobility carts travelling down the highway in—within the town of Carman, that is certainly not safe, and it's not something that we want to advocate. And this would be a better process to have this project set up.

Mr. Chomiak: I'm having—I'm well familiar with Carman, and it's a fine location. And anything we could do that would help the economic development of Carman, we're prepared to do.

We don't have favourites. There are projects that meet certain standards. Some do; some don't. I'm advised that the Northland's vehicle is not considered a low-speed vehicle and it does not meet federal standards for low-speed vehicles, according to MIT.

Now, I remember going back and forth on this and I—we had the same thing with Westward, which is located in another community, and with respect to federal standards, of whether it was a three-wheeled vehicle, et cetera. So it does get complicated.

We do not want to dissuade development of alternative electric vehicles. At the same time, we don't want to be contrary to laws and regulations that may come into effect, and which may or may not be commercially viable. We're testing a low-speed vehicle at the University of Winnipeg in a sort of off-road situation. And we've encouraged testing by utilities, et cetera, of some other low-speed vehicles. So, if we can help with this, we certainly can. It

seems to be under the auspices of MIT. We hear conflicting issues with respect to the road safety viability and the definition of vehicles.

My own personal view is there's room for low-speed vehicles, but the future is in an electric vehicle that can get one from point A to point B, both in distance and in safety. But that doesn't mean that there aren't situations as there is in other jurisdictions, where low-speed vehicles can be utilized safely.

Mr. Borotsik: Just a comment. Going back to the Estimates book and again, reading the Energy Development Initiatives, it says specifically: Support companies in the development of renewable energy projects such as community wind and large-scale wind.

So, in dealing with mountain wind, can the minister tell me just exactly what support has been there from his department?

* (16:00)

Mr. Chomiak: We helped them develop the community wind process. We worked the—worked with them to work with Hydro through the process. We connected them with large a multinational company that they're now connected with, which provides them with the ability to actually be—have a better capacity to succeed. And we interviewed companies that might be partners with them. In other words, we try to support—we helped them to interview companies that might be partners with them. So we've been a supportive role to almost any company or entity that comes to our door trying to develop wind projects.

The member ought to know that the—ultimately, Hydro has to make the decision with respect to the—both the viability of projects. We've essentially outlined a policy of having a certain amount of megawatts of wind that we think should be in the mix. And we—various processes have gone through. We've gone through two different processes with respect to large-scale wind and—in order to achieve our goal, and there's continuing dialogue on different processes.

You'd be surprised how many companies come through, international, national, wanting to do wind projects in Manitoba, but they go to all jurisdictions too. And, you know, one has to be prudent with the—and be fair and try to be as fair as possible, and have Hydro make their decisions based on the best commercial and environmental options that they

think is in the interests of the province. And I think that covers it.

Mr. Borotsik: Switching gears a little bit, we'll get off of wind.

I wonder if the minister could just give me an update as to the success of his geothermal projects here in the province of Manitoba. I was told last year Manitoba is the front-runner in geothermal projects. Can he tell me how many this past year have been developed and where geothermal is heading in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chair, the total number of geothermal installations in Manitoba are estimated approximately 7,000 to 8,000, and there's more to come in terms of the market survey.

You should note that there is a difference between a geothermal for commercial use and geothermal on an individual basis. For example, in 2010, The Forks Market converted to geothermal. Although The Forks Market is only one commercial product-project, it is 150 times larger than a typical home in terms of its total heating and cooling costs.

The federal energy program that offered a \$4,375 grant for existing homes was terminated on March 31st, 2010. I think the federal budget may or may not continue that program for another year. I believe the federal budget does that when it passes.

The average—in Manitoba, since inception, we provided \$271,000 in grants and almost a million dollars in tax credits, actually at one point \$2 million in tax credits, and we indicated we will be increasing the support for geothermal through refundable tax credit as of April 13 of this year. So, for a typical geothermal home, Manitobans can receive 3,400 incentives, including refundable Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit worth \$2,400 and a thousand-dollar grant for homes in a natural gas-serviced area. For conversion in an existing home, they can receive a refundable tax credit worth about \$2,400 from the Province, and owners of commercial buildings can receive up to 15 per cent of the value of their installed systems, and building owners who install new district geothermal system with a minimum of three buildings served by geothermal may receive up to \$150,000 in Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit. And Manitoba heat pump manufacturers can receive up to 7.5 per cent of the price for qualifying heat pumps. To be specific, the number of geothermal installations is 7,000 to 8,000.

Mr. Borotsik: That's not quite specific; 7,000 to 8,000 is a fairly large range. How many applicants have there been for the credit this fiscal year?

Mr. Chomiak: A number of approved grant applications—80 homes plus three commercial system payments, and that was from '09 to March 11, and April 1 to March 3 of last year was 50 homes plus two commercial. I don't quite understand—oh, I see. Since inception—80 homes plus three commercial districts—there's been 510 tax credits since the inception of the program in 2007. We don't have the tax credits in this year's program, but we know the grants that have been approved in this year is 50 homes plus two commercial district systems.

Mr. Borotsik: So correct me if I'm wrong, you say there's between 7,000 and 8,000 geothermal installations currently within the province, and there are approximately 80 to 50 that are being installed on an annual basis from this point forward. Is that the way I read this?

*(16:10)

Mr. Chomiak: We used the tax credit number of 500 for the past three years in order to indicate those are real number of installations that have been put in place. Not everyone who installs gets a grant, and so the grants are only, this year, 50. That doesn't mean there's only 50 projects that are going on this year; it's much greater than that. We don't have this year's numbers. We do know that over the past three years, there's been 500 installations that took advantage of the tax credit.

Mr. Borotsik: But the minister or the department has no idea as to actually how many installations there are on an annual basis.

Mr. Chomiak: On an annual basis, we expect between 500 and 1,000. I think that the—that one of the activities of the geothermal association that's been set up is to do a tracking of the installations undertaken by their members, and they're in the process of developing—the last time that I met with them, they're in the process of developing a system in order to track geothermal because, frankly, not every geothermal that's installed takes advantage of either the grants or the credits, nor is every geothermal that's installed necessarily done by members of the geothermal association or alliance in Manitoba.

And we have tried to do, over the past few years, is to develop an association organization—it would be a licensing regulatory body that would allow for the

development of geothermal in such a way that both the consumers, public and the association could have the ability to not only track, but to—for purposes of liability and for purposes of warranty—to ensure that the system's working well.

So we're in the process of doing that, but we don't have, as a department, the actual numbers of what's a—of the number of geothermal installations every year.

Mr. Borotsik: Okay, and so my comment simply is, in reality, we have no idea how many installations there are on an annual basis. So to make comments like we are the largest geothermal installation in the country really is not backed by any factual information. It's just simply a matter of somebody saying we've got the most geothermal installations in the country.

If there's no numbers, if it can't be backed up, how can anyone make that particular comment?

Mr. Chomiak: From our survey across the country and discussions, on a per capita basis, we believe we're the largest number of installations in the country. And, in fact, I reflected that in my discussions, when I was in England, to the High Commissioner to London when we were there, because the City of London has now ordered all of its new housing to be geothermal. And I outlined for them the expertise that is available in Manitoba, in order to just point out the fact that in Manitoba, despite the fact we have the lowest hydro rates in the country, we still are very innovative and energy-conscious consumers and entrepreneurs here who are prepared to do—who are prepared to be innovative with respect to energy.

Mr. Borotsik: I'd like to switch gears a little bit and go into the third prong of the minister's department, mining. As we've indicated earlier, mining is a very important economic factor in the province of Manitoba. Approximately 4 per cent of GDP, 12.5 per cent of our total exports in the province of Manitoba are mining commodities. As part of the big picture of mining, we recognize that there's existing mines and some of those existing mines in Manitoba are being expanded and development is continuing, and we're very appreciative of that.

It's very nice to see current large mining operations in the province of Manitoba continuing to be viable, as well they should with respect to the commodity prices that are in the world today. But, in order to get to development of new mines, there's a

need to have exploration within the province of Manitoba. The exploration finds the deposits. The deposits then are developed by usually large miners, and I don't have to tell the minister that.

Exploration is the life blood of future mining in the province of Manitoba, but I've been told recently that most of the exploration comes from junior miners. And, in the province of Manitoba, those junior miners in the last year have dropped from 70 junior miners doing prospecting and exploration in the province of Manitoba to 39 junior miners currently in the province of Manitoba.

We also see—the proof is in the pudding—in exploration dollars that have been identified by Natural Resources Canada. Manitoba, for 2010 and projected 2011, is the only province in the country that is going to actually have a decrease in exploration expenditures.

Can the minister tell me why Manitoba has gone from 70 to 39 junior explorations in the province of Manitoba and why our actual exploration expenditures are dropping? We're the only province that has less exploration expenditures this year than in the country. Can the minister tell me why that is?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, a number of those explorations and developments have turned the—have—the major Lalor deposit is turned into, actually, a mining development, so something that was a major exploration the last few years is now turned into actual mining development.

Secondly, the—there has been a reduction in juniors involved in some of the mining exploration that has occurred. Unfortunately, the EnerCan numbers that—the projected numbers that EnerCan provided, we do not believe are accurate.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We actually believe that we're targeted for a mining exploration this year of 115 rather than the 79 that was forecast in EnerCan. So we'll see how that plays out at the end of the year.

The other issue is the NEAP grant had been decreased and we've boosted that up again in order to encourage additional mining incentives. And we feel quite comfortable going into this year that we'll see a significant increase in exploration and mining development activities.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, I hate to say, but the minister is probably hiding from reality. First of all, the Natural

Resources Canada information is, in fact, factual information. This comes off of information filed by mining companies and exploration companies with respect to CCRA. So, when these numbers are put forward, one has to respect the numbers from Natural Resources Canada and not the projections that come from the minister's office or from the minister's staff.

So I would certainly put much more precedents in the numbers that came forward from national resources—Natural Resources Canada. And, if you look at the 2010 numbers, Manitoba had \$79 million in exploration, and it's the only one, as I said, that has been dropping in the last three years in a row. It went from 152 to 97 to 79 to 76. Exploration dollars are important in order to look forward to the future in mining in Manitoba. When juniors are leaving and they are not putting their funding here, they're putting it somewhere else. And, again, if I look at the numbers those—somewhere else is in Western Canada, in Saskatchewan, in Ontario, in Québec; they're growing by leaps and bounds. As a matter of fact, it's going to end up being over \$3 billion in exploration, in expenditures next year, yet Manitoba is getting not even a portion of its share on this one. So if the minister just simply says, well, we're doing a great job about exploration, I have to disagree with him at this point in time. And we're not doing a great job of exploration.

* (16:20)

I'd like to quote, and I'm not going to give you the name of the company, but I am going to make a quote right now. This is a—this comes from a company that was trying to get some exploration going here in the province of Manitoba, and I quote, and it says: We just dropped our project in Manitoba because the places take—the place takes way too long to get permits for even basic field programs. It then says something about, to the effect, If the NDP get thrown out, possibly we would look to return. Great geology, but need coordination on permitting.

Would the minister please tell me what the permitting process is, how long it takes to get a permit, and how long it takes compared—to get a permit this year as it did last year?

Mr. Chomiak: And before I get to the member's question I—you know, the member made a number of statements. The—when I re-reviewed—EnerCan's No. 3 key company is currently exploring in Manitoba are missing from the EnerCan numbers. So I just want to point that out, and we anticipate the

numbers at the end of 2011 will be much higher than projected.

A billion dollars in petroleum exploration in revenues is nothing to laugh at. And the member seems to totally ignore the fact that we're the best jurisdiction in the country with respect to oil exploration dollars. So the minister—the member can't have it both ways talking about exploration going otherwise. And we have a billion dollars in this province, and have the best exploration figures in the entire country and growing at the fastest rate.

Commodity prices have increased dramatically. Manitoba, historically, always had a different variance in terms of juniors and senior companies with respect to exploration. The split is 65 senior this year, 35 junior, which is different than the rest of Canada, which is 44 senior and 56 junior. Over the past five years the exploration expenditure split in Manitoba has been 57 senior, 43 junior, compared to Canadian expenditure of 38 and 62. Most of the holdings in Manitoba are under the tenure of Vale or HudBay, and there's less action and activity for juniors with respect to that.

As it relates to permits, the number of applications in 2009 was 82, and the processing time was an average of 50 days. In 2010 the number of applications was 123, and the processing time was 40 days and our guidelines have indicated 60 days of processing. The member should know that one of the factors that, of course, are significant with respect to mining exploration is the section 35, mandatory provisions of consultation. And we're developing different processes, in different areas, to try to deal with this issue, which obviously does affect the permitting issues. But the stats that are given to me indicate that the time for processing, on average, has gone down and is below the stated guidelines on the mining website.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, the minister should know that, in fact, we have quite a reduction—have had quite a reduction from juniors from 70 to 39. There's a reason for that happening. The minister should know that comments made, as I have just quoted, with respect to this one junior that says he will not come back into Manitoba, currently, that those types of comments aren't very positive when dealing with other members in the industry.

Can the minister tell me, just what is the current backlog of exploration permits? How many have been applied, and what is the backlog at the present time?

Mr. Chomiak: I've heard lots of comments from juniors; some positive, some negative. There are some frustration with some junior companies. There are some companies that are very excited. We're very excited that Bucko has backup in production. We're very excited about an announcement coming out of Mustang. Obviously, the Lalor Lake project is the largest mining development in the province in the last 50 years that's occurring. So the member's comments have to be taken with a grain of salt.

We have worked with some of the juniors. We have tried to bring down times for permitting and tried to accommodate as much as we could. In 2010, the Mines branch had 123 work permit applications for review; 12 are still in the process of consultation. So far this year there's been 39 work permit applications; 17 are still in consultation. Pardon me, seven are in consultation.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Chair, in the budget book, it was identified as the exploration expenditures at some \$85.9 million, yet the actual number was \$79.3 million. And this coming from—that this was last year, 2010. It's actual; it comes from Natural Resources Canada. It's taken off of the financials and the tax records—it's \$79.3 million. Yet the budget books indicate \$85.9 million. Can you tell me why the discrepancy in the two numbers?

Mr. Chomiak: I'm advised that NRCan makes a projection starting the year and continues the projection throughout the year, and a variance of 10 or 15 per cent is within the norm.

Mr. Borotsik: A variance of between 10 and 15 per cent is in the norm; I appreciate that norm. It's perhaps not as quite as one should—quite as close as one should be.

On page 9 on the Estimates book, Mineral Exploration Assistance Program has increased by \$500,000 this year. It's now going to be \$1.5 million compared to last year's of \$1 million. In 2009 that was \$2.5 million.

Now it's heading in the right direction. Obviously, if you're looking at mineral exploration assistance. However, it's dropped from 2.5 to 1.5. Can the minister tell me why the original drop from 2.5 to \$1 million in the 2010-11 budget?

Mr. Chomiak: All I know is that in the member's own proposal and budget amendment, there was a proposal of a cut of half a billion dollars in the budget, which would have meant either there would have been no mineral assistance program or there

would have been no—there would have been a massive layoff of front-care providers.

I don't mean to be rhetorical, but during the recession what we tried to do is to pump as much money into front line and infrastructure as we could. One of the issues that was looked at was the mineral assistance program, the impact that it was having on the industry and exploration, and the decision was made to go with the lower program. We've now bumped it back up. Presumably, it will result in more mineral exploration, and we'll see if that, in fact, takes place.

Mr. Borotsik: It obviously achieved the purpose that was set out. We've reduced our exploration expenditures from \$79 million to \$76 million projected. We were as high, at one point in time, as \$152 million, but we're heading in the right direction. We're going all the way down, and certainly those exploration dollars are going to other jurisdictions.

As a matter of fact, just as an interest, Manitoba's also dropped from first place with respect to exploration, to ninth place. So we're heading in the wrong direction. *[interjection]* And, as the minister can say, he can talk about petroleum all he wants, the fact is we're talking about miners and mining and exploration in mining. If he doesn't want to deal with that issue, then maybe we can deal with something else going forward.

But still with something else going forward, can the minister tell me, on the Community Reserve Fund, just how much money is in that particular reserve fund?

* (16:30)

Mr. Chomiak: I think the member ought to not just be totally doom dwelling on exploration, ought to look at some of the developments that are going on with respect to the entire Manitoba economy and, you know, the—I find it really perplexing that the members can stand up—I—the member stood up every day and said, we're spending too much money, and then asks for an incentive and a grant to be provided to mining companies to do exploration. As valuable as that is, when you make a—when you have to make budgetary decisions during a recession—oh, I forgot. The members opposite said there was no recession, so I'll take that back.

The member's question with respect to status of the fund is that the uncommitted balance as of April 1st was \$11,107,000.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, and I think the minister should still be aware of the fact that Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in the country, the only jurisdiction in the country—we're even behind Prince Edward Island right now—at having a reduction in exploration expenditures, and that's a fact. If he wants to just simply say that that's not happening here in Manitoba, he's more than welcome to hide from that particular issue, hide from that particular issue, but the fact is that mining in the province of Manitoba right now, Madam Chairperson, is, in fact, going backwards and not going forwards.

Now, we have a community reserve—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairperson: Order. The honourable member for Brandon West has the floor.

Mr. Borotsik: The Community Reserve Fund will be used in Thompson as a result of the Vale Inco smelter closure, or will there be any of that money from the Community Reserve Fund used?

Mr. Chomiak: Is that a suggestion the member's making?

Mr. Borotsik: It was a question. Maybe the minister would like to answer a question. Will any of that money in the Community Reserve Fund be used in Thompson as a result of the Vale Inco smelter closing? That's a simple question. That's what the Community Reserve Fund is meant for.

Mr. Chomiak: It sounds like the member's suggesting that we use the Community Reserve Fund in Thompson dealing with Vale. I can't comment at this time because we're still in discussions with Vale and, unlike the members opposite who suggested we increase taxation on Vale when the matter first came out, we're taking a—we're trying to take an approach that's more pragmatic, and we're still trying to negotiate and deal with that rather significant, international company that has made a decision that we find not acceptable.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, Madam Chair, perhaps I should mention that on January 20th of 2009, there was an order-in-council, and the order was that starting the fiscal year of 2008-2009, the Minister of Finance is authorized to make payments totalling \$1.5 million out of the mining community reserve support, Manitoba Geological Surveys. So that was one of the orders-in-council.

And it also says here in the authority that where the amount in the mining community reserve exceeds \$10,000, direct the expenditure of the reserve of that amount and any part of that amount by which the reserve exceeds \$10 million to encourage and assist exploration. So is anything that's above and beyond the \$10 million in the Community Reserve Fund going to be going to encourage and assist exploration projects as per order-in-council?

Mr. Chomiak: The MEAP exploration fund, as well as the prospectors exploration fund, is paid out of that account.

Mr. Borotsik: There's 11 million—I wrote it down—11 million, some-odd thousand. So is the 1 million is the surplus from the Community Reserve Fund of that 1 million-plus going to go to the exploration fund?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, the MEAP exploration of \$1.5 million this year has already come off of the community fund, and the remaining amount in the community fund as of April 1st is \$11,100,000.

Mr. Borotsik: So, just for my own clarification, the full \$1.5 million in the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program is coming from the Community Reserve Fund. Is that correct?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just the first question deals with the situation of the Vale mine and the smelter in Thompson. There's a lot of jobs hanging in the balance here. There is the future of whether we'll be doing smelting in Manitoba at all, or whether that is going to be all be done from this point forward in Voisey Bay or in Sudbury.

Maybe the minister can provide the latest update on where things are in terms of a, you know, a decision and an agreement on the Vale mine and the smelter situation?

Mr. Chomiak: The unilateral decision by Vale to shut down the mine and smelter, a decision made in November, took everyone by surprise, and, consequently, we put together a group with the community, the union and other participants to launch discussions with Vale, not accepting the principle that the smelter and refinery had to close, arguing that those operations were profitable, but not in the international company's view, profitable enough, vis-à-vis their other operations across the country.

That fact and the fact that some money from the federal export development corporation had gone to Vale to enhance and expand both the Sudbury and the Voisey Bay operation were of concern to us. And so we launched a series of initiatives and discussions with Vale that continue, as we speak.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I think there's a fair amount of concern that the, you know, this decision by Vale was in November and that things have now dragged on for month after month after month, you know, and there's doesn't seem to be any sign of progress. You know, the—there must be a problem here. When are we going to hear an announcement?

Mr. Chomiak: The member should recognize that the actual closure of their mine's—the smelter and refinery is not for some period of time. Vale makes the argument that they made the announcement early to allow for preparations, et cetera, and, essentially, have indicated that that is their bottom line.

We have asserted otherwise, and the—we have worked closely with all of the participants in order to—including working with the federal government, including working with the former opposition party in Ottawa and the new opposition party in Ottawa, to try to change that decision. And we're still in the process of changing a corporate decision that's been made, that will severely impact the future of Thompson and district. And the—we are concerned about the timeline. We know the school year is coming to an end, and people have made decisions and are making decisions. So we're trying to come to some kind of clarification on what the future will be as soon as possible.

* (16:40)

Mr. Gerrard: I certainly look forward to a positive announcement, hope for it. But, you know, there's a concern that I've heard from a number of people that, you know, that you and the government are going to wait until—may not make an announcement before the election that—if you were re-elected you would then feel that you could comfortably close it down.

And so there's a lot of concern, and the concern is that, you know, this needs to be settled before an election and not wait until after.

Mr. Chomiak: This is far more important than an election. People's lives are at stake and their futures are at stake. It's the election—or the non-election and the federal election are only dates on a calendar. We're talking about a closure in 2015 that will affect up to 500 jobs and severely affect the economy.

So we're also dealing with a large company who've already made a decision. We've already put our provincial position out there, which is obviously contrary to that of Vale, and now we're in some discussions with them. That is better than no discussions, and a decision just to go forward with a closure and shut down and proceed on that basis. So we are continuing to work on that initiative.

Mr. Gerrard: Are discussions of a future of a mine at Pipe Lake part of the discussions?

Mr. Chomiak: The—Vale committed to invest a billion dollars in the future of mining in November. They didn't commit to do alternatives and to do necessarily commensurate redevelopment if the refinery and smelter closed. They also committed to \$3 billion potash investment in Saskatchewan and several billion dollars in Ontario and several billion dollars in Newfoundland. Those were capital decisions made by Vale.

We clearly are taking Vale at their word that they're going to continue their pipe expansion and a billion dollars in mining expansion. What is at issue is whether or not there will be a—upgrades and value-added done in Manitoba, and that's been one of the issues that's been—it's obviously we're in disagreement with Vale on.

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to switch directions a little bit. I believe the minister's responsible for—under the innovation area, the digital media strategy. And I know that, you know, this got off to a pretty rough start when there were discussions of how the Province would support the production of digital games and so on—and an industry in this area.

And the Province started out with having a tax credit which was analogous to the film tax credit, but then that was—concept although it had been started, and let people know—was cancelled in the middle of things. And then there was, I believe, a grants program, started. Maybe the minister could provide an indication of what the digital media and, specifically, the digital games production industry strategy is.

Mr. Chomiak: The digital assistance that was put in was put in originally to match that of the Film and Sound Tax Credit. We're working with the federal government to support the local Manitoba digital media entity, industry, and the budget announced a new commercialization program that will be part of our innovation program that will be rolled out shortly

with specifics regarding. There'll be specifics as it relates to digital media.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the—I mean, in the early phase, there was a specific focus on digital games because it was seen it was pretty promising and pretty sizable market opportunity. I wonder if the minister can tell us today how many companies we're dealing with in digital media as a whole and how many just specifically in terms of digital games and what the sort of revenue, gross revenues, would be for the industry.

Mr. Chomiak: We don't have that specific information in front of us, but we'll provide it. We'll take notice and provide it to the member.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for—and look forward to receiving that shortly. I think the—this is clearly an area where, I mean there is potential. Is the new commercialization strategy going to be—go back to the concept of a tax credit like the film tax credit? Is it going to use the grant program or what sort of—what's going to be the basis of this?

Mr. Chomiak: The new commercialization fund will be within E, T and T, so—and we'll probably announce specifically shortly. I should remind—or should outline to the member, in addition to the new commercialization fund that'll be available, we have existing programs still in place as well as incubation capacity still in place to digital media as well as the other initiatives announced earlier, so there will be additional supports that—commensurate with our new innovation fund that will be announced shortly by—and will specifically be in the Department of Energy—pardon, Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade.

Mr. Gerrard: Just wondering whether that commercialization fund is going to focus in on digital media or whether it's going to be a much broader—

Mr. Chomiak: It'll be a broad-based program to which digital media will have access.

Mr. Gerrard: I'll turn it back to the MLA for Brandon.

Mr. Borotsik: Back to mining. I know that the minister loves to talk about mining and what's happening or not happening in that particular industry.

* (16:50)

Can the minister tell me exactly how many geologists there are in the department and if this compares favourably to the number of geologists that there were last year? As part of that, I'd like to know how many of the geologists are actually field geologists. I guess they can find that too. And then, how many geological surveys are going to be completed in this particular year?

Mr. Chomiak: I'll take that question as notice and provide that information to the member.

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, as the minister's indicated, I do plan on finishing at five. There's a couple of other sections I'd like to talk about that we can wrap up by three minutes to, because the chairman needs three minutes to go through line-by-line, and I will make darn sure that—nope, three minutes—make darn sure that the minister has three minutes.

Duty to consult—part of the issue, I think, with respects to exploration and permitting in Manitoba is duty to consult. Can the minister, just very briefly, tell me what the role of government is in duty to consult—in the duty to consult process, and what role he has industry play in the duty to consult process?

Mr. Chomiak: The member probably knows—like we could talk all afternoon about this, but just in short, it's a constitutional duty on the part of the government to consult with First Nations. We do encourage companies to be helpful and to work with First Nations to provide them with information assistance in order to move the process along. And—but at the end of the day, the constitution duty is on the provincial government's part to consult with those entities prior to any major activities undertaken.

Mr. Borotsik: I do appreciate the constitutional requirement. It's also, as provided in the Canadian constitution, Manitoba has ownership and authority of mines and mineral underrights, including royalties. That's constitutional.

Is that information passed on when dealing with the duty to consult?

Mr. Chomiak: I'm not quite clear what the member's getting at. I mean we know where the ownership lies, and we know that we have a duty to consult with respect to activities that are undertaken. And it—so those dual responsibilities are undertaken by the Province.

Mr. Borotsik: My last question and then we won't certainly have time to do clause by clause. New West

Partnership, the department is Innovation, Energy and Mines. Innovation is a very major part of the department as a whole. One of the cornerstones of the New West Partnership, and there are a number of them, but one of the cornerstones of the New West Partnership is innovation, and it states that innovation which will enable provincial innovation efforts to be co-ordinated to better attract investment and talent, helping build critical mass of innovation activities in the west. So innovation is a cornerstone of the New West Partnership. Innovation is a cornerstone of the minister's department. Has the minister discussed membership in the New West Partnership with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia?

Mr. Chomiak: We've done better than that, Madam Chairperson. We've worked with Saskatchewan, Alberta, and BC on a number of fronts. More specifically, if the member would note, earlier on my visit to Saskatoon was an opportunity to review the Saskatoon efforts at innovation. In fact, Saskatchewan has now wanted to come onside Manitoba on a number of initiatives we're undertaking in Australia and New Zealand, India and Israel.

Similarly, with respect to Alberta, we've had discussions for—on a number of ventures that we're doing outside of Manitoba that we're doing in partnership with Alberta, and there's been some similar discussions with respect to BC, so the innovation agenda is flexible enough and is robust enough that we can function both in the federation, within the region and extraterritorially for the benefit of the entire country, as well as looking at the regions. One of my favourite topics, and I wish we had a lot of time to talk about it.

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, and I wish we had more time to talk about it, too, because it's one of my favourite topics that I've always found the collaboration with other provinces, and when you have a project like the New West Partnership that has got a partnership between three western Canadian provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan—yet, Manitoba was not invited into that partnership, and Manitoba has not been allowed into the partnership.

I still ask the same question. Had the minister, at any point in time through his department, suggest that Manitoba be a partner in the New West Partnership? Simple question. Does the minister feel—and I know that he has collaborations with individual provinces on certain issues. Does he not

feel it would be better for Manitoba to be a part of the New West Partnership?

Mr. Chomiak: I think that our collaborations have been the most effective, the most useful for the province of Manitoba, as they exist. And I was recently in discussions with Premier Wall of Saskatchewan as recently as Saturday, and I think that we've got as good a relationship and ability to innovate with the other provinces as anywhere in the country and still act in the traditional role that Manitoba's always played as something of a mediator between east and west, north and south, in that capacity.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. There are no other questions? Seeing no other questions, is the House ready for resolutions?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Chairperson: Yes.

Resolution 18.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,799,000 for Innovation, Energy and Mines, Energy Development Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 18.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$22,761,000 for Innovation, Energy and Mines, Science, Innovation and Business Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 18.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,333,000 for Innovation, Energy and Mines, Business Transformation and Technology, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 18.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,748,000 for Innovation, Energy and Mines, Mineral Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (17:00)

IN SESSION**House Business**

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, could I ask leave that the House not see the clock so that I can make an announcement?

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreeable for the Speaker not to see the clock for a few minutes? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Howard: I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations meeting which had previously been scheduled for this evening will

be cancelled due to flood-related activities that are going on; and, in co-ordination and consultation with the opposition, the meeting will have to be rescheduled at a later date.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations meeting which had previously been scheduled for this evening to consider annual reports for MPI will have to be cancelled due to a flood-related activity in the opposition critic's constituency. The meeting will have to be rescheduled at a later date. Okay? *[Agreed]*

So now the hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

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