

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

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

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

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 3, 2015

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Interprovincial Migration

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Manitoba is the best province in this country to call home. While Manitoba welcomes thousands of new international immigrants on a yearly basis, we lose many Manitobans due to interprovincial migration.

Mr. Speaker, according to recent data from the TD Economics, Manitoba has the second worst interprovincial migration rate in Canada. In 2012, the province lost over 4,200 Manitobans to other provinces. Manitoba has some of the highest population losses in Canada due to interprovincial migration. This is a very serious problem for Manitoba because the largest demographic of individuals leaving Manitoba are our youth, those between the ages of 20 and 27. Everyone in this House agrees that our youth are our future. We are losing some of our brightest and hardest working young people to other provinces, and they usually don't come back.

There are several reasons our youth are leaving this province, and the NDP government can take credit for all of these: their high-tax policy, a payroll tax and all the roadblocks they've put in the way to start a small business. Manitoba has the lowest number of small-business employers per capita. It is clear that this NDP government is driving away Manitobans, especially our youth. As our population continues to age, it is this demographic that we—most essential to have in the province. The youth are very important to us.

While the NDP may boast about spending taxpayer dollars in various departments, one thing is clear: Manitobans are paying more and getting less. Manitobans want and deserve a change for the better. This change will come in April 2016.

#### Kildonan-East Collegiate Girls' Club

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Two years ago, teachers Angel Audrey and Deanna Michaleski-Tellier at Kildonan-East Collegiate decided to start a girls' club. Today we are joined by members of the girls' club, Angel and Deanna and Sigrun Bailey from the RENN Trail Committee with her husband Chuck. Welcome.

Now in its second year, the girls' club is a place for students to meet and talk about issues faced by women in their community, nationally and globally. They participate in events like the international day of the girl, collect donations for women's organizations and create projects to encourage women and girls to share with and learn from other strong women in their community.

The club's latest project is a series of sculptures on the life cycle of the monarch butterfly, displayed along the Northeast Pioneers Greenway trail. Led by artist Denise Préfontaine, the club met with women of all ages to work on the mosaic tiling. Later, the girls will work with RENN Trail Committee, Naturalists Society and the City of Winnipeg parks to plant milkweed, a food source for butterflies, around the sculptures.

While building the sculptures, the women and girls shared stories with each other. Having female role models is crucial for young women. They gain an inner strength and confidence from their interaction with other women, and it's important we foster the sense of female community in young girls.

It's up to all of us to ensure that schools and teachers have the resources they need to help their students create healthy, respectful relationships. We now have antibullying legislation to give schools those resources, including our safe and inclusive schools act and our Tell Them For Me student survey. We want every single child in Manitoba to feel safe at school.

Groups like the KEC girls' club are instrumental in creating space for young girls to support one another, skills that will carry with them into womanhood.

Thank you to the KEC girls' club, Denise Préfontaine and the RENN Trail Committee for your

beautiful contribution to Winnipeg's public arts scene. As well, thank you, Angel and Deanna, for your dedication to our future female leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave to include the names of the girls in the club for the public record.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to include the names in the Hansard proceedings of today? *[Agreed]*

*Members of the Kildonan-East Collegiate girls' club: Mary Anderson, Keyanna Downey, Ben Greskiw, Sarah Frederikson, Ga-Young Kim, Beth Kostyk, Angie Ortiz, Jordann Relph, Tania Wiebe*

### Children in Care

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak today about the crisis in Child and Family Services in Manitoba.

As everyone in the House knows, we have a record number of children in care in this province, with the April number showing 10,861 and the number still rising. We also know that the large number of children in care is a symptom of lack of support of families in the system affected by CFS.

Why is it that we have so many more children in care than other jurisdictions? Saskatchewan, for example, with a similar demographic to us, with the exception of a lower population of French, has a mere 4,600 children in care. Why do we have such a significant difference?

When we look at the breakdown of children in care in Saskatchewan, we find, and in fact, only 60 per cent of their children in care are First Nations, where our own corresponding number is over 90 per cent many times. Why is it we have done so poorly in regards to this?

If you look at the results in terms of children in care, based on first advocate—or, sorry, Children's Advocate office reports, we find that there is absolutely no reason to believe that children in care in Manitoba are any safer than in any other province. In fact, our numbers in terms of incidents with children in care seems to be correspondingly higher than almost any other province in the country, Mr. Speaker.

So we certainly have a crisis situation in regard to Child and Family Services, and we are making no progress, Mr. Speaker.

### Earl Grey Community Centre

**Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge):** I need only go a few blocks anywhere in Fort Rouge to see that our neighbourhood values a strong spirit of community.

Our NDP government shares this belief that community is more than a word, it's vital to our well-being. That's why we created the Winnipeg Community Infrastructure Program, and that's why we're investing \$30,000 to help the Earl Grey Community Centre renovate its kitchen and office space.

These upgrades will support Earl Grey's programs for people of all ages. For young athletes, there's competitive basketball. For seniors, there are weekly gatherings for cards and conversation.

For families with young kids, there's Ride and Play, a drop-in play group where kids can make crafts, solve puzzles, build with giant blocks and jump in a bouncy castle. It's a way for parents to get out of the house and spend quality time with their children and their neighbours. My family has enjoyed many of the Family Fun Nights regularly held at Earl Grey.

Thank you to the staff and volunteers who make Earl Grey one of the busiest community centres in the city. They coach the teams, they run the canteen, and they write the grant applications that result in new investments in the community.

Rather than making deep cuts that hurt families, our NDP government chooses to invest in community organizations that matter to people in Fort Rouge and across Manitoba. We want community groups to have what they need to be the heart of our neighbourhoods.

Thank you.

### Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre— Event of the Year Award

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and draw attention of this House yet again to the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre in Morden. The CFDC recently received another award, this time from Manitoba Tourism for Event of the Year in the \$5,000-and-under category.

The centre received the award for their unveiling of Suzy the mosasaur, the centre's most important display in the last 10 years. Suzy the mosasaur was unveiled in March of 2015. At nine metres long, she

was discovered in 1977 just northwest of Morden very near to where Bruce, the museum's other prize mosasaur, was found. Suzy is now exhibited in the CFDC alongside Bruce the mosasaur in the Mosasaur Hall.

Mr. Speaker, with total tourism funding in the province sitting at just \$7.5 million, which is half of what is spent in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and less than half that is spent in PEI and our neighbours in Saskatchewan, this award obviously would not have been possible without the financial support of many local community groups and businesses, the City of Morden, the hard-working staff and board and volunteers.

We know that tourism funding has stagnated in this province. Despite receiving \$250 million in tax revenue, the NDP has failed to act. The CFDC should be commended for being able to succeed and to thrive in spite of the lack of support that this government has shown for funding tourism in this province.

We congratulate the CFDC.

\* (13:40)

It says a great deal about the passion and commitment that the museum has for the work they are doing for their collections, for their exhibits, for their programs. And I congratulate the CFDC on this award and wish them continued success in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes members' statements.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** And just prior to oral questions, I'd like to take a moment today to welcome and introduce to the House one of our new pages who is joining us for this session. We have Julia Antonyshyn who is a student at the University of Winnipeg Collegiate.

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here to the Manitoba Legislature and wish you well in your time here. Thank you.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** And also seated in the public gallery we have family members of our other page, Hilary Ransom. We have Joan Ransom, who is the mother, and we have Gail Kennedy and Terry Kennedy, who are the grandparents of Hilary.

Welcome, also, to the Manitoba Legislature.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Untendered Contracts Reporting Timeline

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, a year ago, Mr. Speaker, today a year ago, we had a little rebellion in this province, an unfortunate event that was historic in its nature.

And I understand the present for an anniversary of one year is paper. I was going to table the 300 pages of blacked-out documents for the Premier to reread and study, but I'll save him the effort. They're all blacked out, so I won't bother.

I want to ask him a question about The Financial Administration Act, though, because it speaks to the causes of the rebellion. The Financial Administration Act was drafted 20 years ago, and it was designed to protect taxpayers against irresponsible spending such as untendered contracts that an irresponsible government might give out to their friends.

Now, section 80 reads that any untendered document shall be reported within 30 days, shall be being, of course, the strongest word, I'm told, Mr. Speaker, that can be present in any legislation compelling action. Shall be reported in 30 days.

I want to ask the Premier in respect of this legislation: Is that law optional?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we've had a Auditor General's report on contracts and how they should be reported. We followed the recommendations put forward by the Auditor General instead of the system that the Conservatives had when they were in power of being on a single terminal in the Legislative Library. We now put them fully online, and we are complying with all the recommendations of the Auditor General, and that's the way it should be. We should take advantage of our independent officers of the Legislature when they give us constructive recommendation and move forward and provide information within the parameters of the freedom of information protection act that we have in Manitoba, and that's exactly what we do.

The member opposite knows full well if he has any concerns about any of the information he's received, at the bottom of every page of information he 'ceives'—receives, he can make an appeal to the Ombudsman. He's never made an appeal, which tells us that he's posturing in the Legislature again. Instead of following the procedures that we've all

agreed to to allow him to make an appeal, he forgoes the appeal and tries to score political points through grandstanding in the Legislature.

Nothing new, we've seen it many times before, and I suspect we'll see it in the subsequent questions.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, a smattering of applause from a divided caucus.

And the Premier's response reveals that he hasn't learned anything from the experience. He claims he's following in the Auditor General's recommendations, but after the Auditor General's report came out, the Premier still backed his minister in trying to give away an additional \$5-million untendered contract to a party pal.

Now, shall–shall–report within 30 days, that doesn't mean maybe or could or might or flip a coin. It means you do it or you break the law.

Now, the minister in charge of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation purchased, through six different contracts, over \$9 million of Tiger tubes from a pal. Now, not once, Mr. Speaker, did he report those untendered contracts. Not once did he report them within 30 days, not once.

Can the Premier confirm that the minister broke the law?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat for him: the recommendations we received from the Auditor General to improve transparency requirements with respect to contracts that are rendered in Manitoba have been completely followed by this government.

And as a matter of fact, if we vote on the budget implementation act, there is additional provision in that legislation which will again increase the ability to be fully transparent on contracts in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and that's the rules we're following and that's the recommendations we're following. The member full well knows that.

We're focused on providing good value to Manitobans. The member opposite has said he would cancel the infrastructure program in Manitoba where we do a variety of contracts throughout the entire province to improve our roads, to prude—to improve our water and sewer infrastructure, to ensure Manitobans have good jobs. We're doing that to build a better Manitoba.

He wants to cancel those contracts? It's no wonder he's not interested in the subject; he wouldn't

be rendering any contracts because he wouldn't be doing anything to build a stronger Manitoba.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the people who know him best rebelled because of those kinds of answers. Mr. Speaker, they rebelled a year ago and they're still rebelling, but quieter right now.

Now, fully transparent—the Premier just used the phrase fully transparent and good value, yet he and his minister colluded in trying to give away \$14 million of untendered contracts to the same provider, a friend of his party.

The law says shall–shall–report within 30 days. The law says shall, Mr. Speaker. That means do it. Don't talk about doing it later, do it.

The minister gave six different untendered Tiger Dam contracts to his pal. The minister of MIT did not report even one of them. He reported zero of them, nada, zilch, none at all. So at least he was consistent; he broke the law every single time.

Now, the Premier, who caused this rebellion by ignoring this conduct, has also done nothing at all.

Would the Premier today stand up and accept responsibility for causing the rebellion within his own caucus and within his own party a year ago?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, every time we get a recommendation to improve the procedures of government with respect to anything, including contracts and increasing transparency, we have followed it, and that's exactly what we've done in this case.

The member opposite knows full well that the only contract that has been made available for Tiger Dam tubes into the Interlake was done by the federal government, which is currently under investigation. The contract that we rendered for \$5 million was tendered. It was not awarded because the federal government moved ahead and provided the equipment themselves.

We will follow the transparency requirements as recommended to us by the Auditor General. We've put them online now. If the members opposite would move more rapidly to pass the budget implementation bill, we could put additional measures in place for transparency.

That's what we will do as we roll out a record infrastructure program that requires tendering and allows us to build the streets, the highways, the water

and sewer projects which will make life better for all Manitobans.

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

### Reporting Practices

**Mr. Pallister:** The Premier (Mr. Selinger) knows so little about shopping he's not even discouraged by the fact that Saskatchewan's now shopping without giving Manitobans a chance to bid on the jobs. He's not even concerned. It took him six months to even call the Premier of Saskatchewan on it.

The minister really, really went over the 30 days, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the six different Tiger Dam contracts, none of them tendered, none of them made available on the website as they should be by law—not one—took over 12 years to actually appear on August 28th, magically, this year. Twelve years: The minister waited a total of over 2,300 days to report the first contract he gave.

Now, we've established that reporting for this minister, reporting untendered contracts isn't even an option if he's giving them away to his pal. If he's giving them away to his pal, then he doesn't have to report them.

So I have to ask the Premier: In The Financial Administration Act of our province, a law designed to protect taxpayers, is there a special category exempting the member from Thompson?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we have increased the powers of the Auditor General's office to give them a greater ability to examine any question that they think is important in Manitoba, and they have done that. And when they make their recommendations, we follow them.

There was an outdated system in place by the members opposite. We have modernized that system.

And the largest untendered contract ever rendered in Manitoba was when the member opposite privatized the telephone system. There was no tendering on that. They bulldozed that through the House. They made every Manitoban pay for it. They took Manitobans from having the lowest rates for the telephone system to having among the highest rates. Every time they open up a bill on their cellphone now, they can remember that the largest untendered contract was by the Leader of the Opposition when he broke his promise and privatized the telephone system.

**Mr. Pallister:** The Premier claims accountability, but he's only accountable once caught. Mr. Speaker, once he's caught he is then accountable, he says.

However, he uses the word transparency today but refuses to table any evidence at all that isn't blacked out as far as the Tiger Dams contract is concerned. Then he says he's not going to do anything at all for months on end about the minister trying to give away a seventh untendered contract to his pal.

\*(13:50)

Now, maybe it's a two-tier law—maybe it's a two-tier law. Let the Premier explain this. Although the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) not once reported \$9 million of untendered contracts as the law requires, he did manage to report thousands of other contracts totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. It seems like he picks and chooses the contracts he wants to report. Now, the law is designed to protect taxpayers. How can it possibly work when the minister feels that he's not obligated to obey it?

Will the Premier recognize that in not overseeing this properly, he has become an accomplice to that minister's misconduct?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, what we have done is we've taken the recommendations provided to us and we followed up on them and increased transparency with respect to contracts in the province of Manitoba.

The member opposite complained about the special contract that we put in place to protect Manitobans with an air ambulance service. He said that should have been tendered out. We entered into that contract for the air ambulance service at a time when Manitobans' lives were at risk and there was no other provider of that service available in the country. We took the advantage of providing that service to Manitobans so that lives would be saved, and we did it for a compelling reason: There was a very serious flood going on in 2009 and in 2011. So we provided that service to Manitobans and we made sure that that service was improved when we saw that there were difficulties in the way the service was provided. That puts Manitobans first.

And we continue to put Manitobans first with our infrastructure program. Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we put Manitobans first when we did a QuickCare clinic announcement, which provides more service to all Manitobans when they have a minor medical need. What's the policy of the Leader

of the Opposition? A two-tier health-care system. And I can tell you right now when he goes to a tier-tell health—two-tier health-care system, he won't be tendering it.

**Mr. Pallister:** I see the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) very tender on these questions.

Now, he actually had the nerve to cite the helicopter contract which the Auditor General said the government broke every rule in the book giving out. But the very contract he refused to shop, which he now claims he did for the good of Manitobans, he did so he could do a PR announcement just before the last election. Everybody knows that in this province. Obviously, not the man for change. He's learned nothing over the last year at all.

So the minister—let's get it straight. The minister reported untendered contracts except when he gave them to pals of his party. His Cabinet colleagues got tired of \$9 million worth of coziness and balked at a further \$5-million untendered contract. The Premier failed to stand up to the MLA for Thompson, as he's doing again today. And all Manitobans got to watch the spectacle of five senior Cabinet ministers walking out on their Premier because of it.

Now, either the Premier covered up the \$9-million untendered Tiger Dam contracts or he didn't know, so I want to ask him this: Which is it, incompetent or in on it?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well the \$5-million contract that was being proposed for the Interlake was fully tendered and not awarded because the federal government moved ahead with their own approach to that, which is currently under investigation. Those are the facts on the record.

And when previous contracts were reviewed by the Auditor General and recommendations made, we followed those recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and we provided a higher level of transparency on recording those contracts than was ever provided by the members opposite. They had never provided any transparency themselves in the way that we are doing now. We have taken it to a new level of transparency. We're prepared to take it to an even higher level of transparency as soon as the members opposite allow the budget implementation bill to be passed.

And I say again, the largest untendered contract in the history of the province: the privatization of the telephone system. They tried to privatize the home-care system and they weren't able to get away

with it, and they weren't prepared to tender it either. And now they're talking about a two-tier health-care system, which means more privatization, and they have no plans to tender that as well, Mr. Speaker. They want to bull it through against the will of Manitobans, who support a universally accessible and affordable health-care system.

### **Winnipeg ERs Performance Targets**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** This NDP government has failed to achieve a series of performance targets in our Winnipeg ERs. In fact, fewer ER patients are seen within four hours now than they were three years ago, yet another broken NDP promise.

Mr. Speaker, is this because, as the former minister of Justice said a year ago, and I quote, the Premier has become more concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing the things in the best interest of the province?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that we've hired more doctors, opened more beds, hired more nurses and set targets speaks to the openness of this government. The fact that we've allowed this information to go online and this information to go to the opposition speaks to the fact that we're prepared to be open and accountable for what happens in this province. We aren't doing things behind closed doors.

Yes, it's true that the WRHA has admitted it did not hit its targets, Mr. Speaker, but it's better to have targets that you don't hit than to fire nurses and fire doctors if you don't have any heart—any targets to shoot at.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Manitobans deserve a government who will put patients' lives ahead of their own political self-interest.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) has failed to keep her promises on ER wait times and admissions in Winnipeg, putting patients' lives at risk, while at the same time has allowed administration costs to skyrocket. This jeopardizes much needed patient health care in Winnipeg.

One year ago today, the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) left her Cabinet post, citing that there was a, quote—there was, and I quote, an inability to be heard on some important issues.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree with her colleague from Seine River? Is that why ER



wait times are on the rise? Will her Premier (Mr. Selinger) just not listen?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, we have 22 clinics that are either been built or in the process of being built. We have, for the first time in history, and I believe other provinces are looking at the fact that we've opened QuickCare clinics.

Now, those QuickCare clinics are staffed by nurses, by specially trained nurses. Nurse practitioners, they're called. I want to remind members opposite that they cancelled those training programs. They had no nurse practitioners. They cancelled the training programs. We've brought it back. We have more nurses, which allows us to open QuickCare clinics that allows you to take a patient, if it's not in an ER situation, to go to a QuickCare clinic.

Mr. Speaker, we may not have reached our targets, but we didn't have to close the largest hospital in the history of Manitoba, the Misericordia Hospital, and we still reduced times from times when members opposite would not put those waiting lists either—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

#### **Hydro Development Rate Increases**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** A year ago today, the member from Minto said that the Premier has become more concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing things in the best interest of the province.

I would like to ask the Minister of Hydro: As every member opposite went door to door and told Manitobans that Bipole III and Keeyask would not cost them a cent, would he agree that the member from Minto was right, this Premier cannot be trusted? Yes or no?

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** No.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, a year ago today, the member from Fort Rouge said this: For me is acutely a fact of my ability to be heard on some very serious issues. End of quote.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister responsible: When every member opposite went door to door and told Manitobans that hydro rates would not rise as a result of Bipole III and Keeyask—instead, we now know that hydro rates will either

double or triple in the years to come—was the member from Fort Rouge right?

**Mr. Robinson:** Again, Mr. Speaker, no.

#### **Infrastructure Projects Approval Method**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, the MLA for Seine River said, quote: It's become clear if you are in a position where you support the point of view of the Premier that your priorities and your projects move up the queue. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, is that how this NDP government prioritizes infrastructure projects? If an NDP LA—MLA supported the Premier today, do they get a new road? Do they get a new bridge? And you get a new road, and you get a new road, and you get a new bridge, but only if you're a favourite of the Premier, not if it is in the best interests of Manitobans.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, finally a question about infrastructure.

\* (14:00)

And the simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is there's not an MLA in this House that hasn't benefited from the historic investment in infrastructure that we've made.

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Seine River went further and said that projects move up the queue, quote, ahead of what was once a government plan and what would be, indeed, the priorities of Manitobans and what Manitobans need, end quote.

Mr. Speaker, it had—has become what the Premier needs, not what Manitobans need. Is that how infrastructure planning is carried out in the Premier's world?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, in the real world of infrastructure, you start with a vision, and we had Manitoba 2020 vision. It outlined the need for investments in infrastructure. The second thing you need is to put in place a plan, and we have a plan. The third thing you do, and, you know, you need the revenue source, and we put in place the 1 cent on the dollar.

We, Mr. Speaker, year over year over the last two years, have had historic increase. This will be—I'm giving away probably a bit of a sneak preview of our press conference we're going to have on

Thursday—the best year ever for paving in this province.

So the way we do infrastructure, we have a vision, we have a plan, and we get it done.

### **Violence against Women Protection Order Review**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's rate against violence against women is double the national average.

Protection orders are only one tool, but for them to work they need to be accessible, they need to be obtainable, and they need to be enforceable.

Fourteen years ago the Minister of Justice, the same Minister of Justice that we have today, put out a press release talking about the need to strengthen protection orders and protection for women. Today, 14 years later, he is again reviewing protection orders, and more than half of them are denied.

Why has it taken 14 years and tragic, tragic circumstances, Mr. Speaker, for this minister to finally get around to working on protection orders?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, there's been some horrific tragedies in this province over the last several weeks, and I think it's due in all of us to wish all strength to the surviving families. This is the most difficult times of their lives.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we learn from those lessons. And, yes, indeed, in 2005 we strengthened the protection order legislation in this province and we expanded it to those that are suffering at the hands of usually fellows in teen dating relationships and for elders who are suffering at the hands of who they thought were loved ones.

But it is high time that we redouble efforts, that we look at what lessons can be learned and strengthen protection orders in this province, and I hope to work with all members, not on a partisan basis.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And, Mr. Speaker, that's the same promise and the same commitment that the Minister of Justice, the same Minister of Justice, made 14 years ago.

Even if protection orders become more accessible and they become more obtainable, they still have to be enforceable. When there are breaches, we need to ensure that those breaches are followed up and that they're taken seriously.

Yesterday in committee, the Minister of Justice indicated that the NDP would be breaking their 2011 election commitment on hiring more police officers because he indicated that there are enough police officers.

If that is the case, how is this Attorney General, this Minister of Justice, going to ensure that these protection orders are actually enforced?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, to the first part of his question, Mr. Speaker, protection orders have to be followed up by officials that are assigned that responsibility, whether they be police or prosecutions, and we have been recognized for a very strong continuum of care in this province in a follow-up to domestic violence situations.

But we cannot stop and we cannot rest on any laurels, Mr. Speaker, because it's still not good enough. Any time there's a tragedy, it must spur us to further action and look to make sure that all steps can be taken.

In terms of Winnipeg Police Service, we rely on the Winnipeg Police Service to write its multi-year plan and how its policing resources should be dedicated. If the member wants to take over WPS, he's in the wrong Chamber.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, this is an Attorney General, this is a government that made a promise on policing. They made a promise 14 years ago to get protection orders right, 14 years ago.

More recently, in 2011, the government indicated that they were going to be using electronic monitoring ankle bracelets for the enforcement of domestic violence. Yesterday, the minister indicated that after four years there are only eight—only eight—units being used to ensure that domestic violence perpetrators, those who are in danger of reoffending, are actually under electronic monitoring.

Broken a promise on police, broken a promise on electronic monitoring in terms of having it being robust 14 years after he said he's going to get it fixed.

Mr. Speaker, why should people believe him now that it's going to get better?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, Manitobans know that this province has the highest policing per capita, Mr. Speaker, and we support that.

And, indeed, Mr. Speaker, we've had a 650 per cent increase of funding to Winnipeg Police Service to help them with their policing. But they're

telling us it's not more officers they want. They want smart policing; they want analysis; they want data-driven policing. And the reductions of crime are extraordinary that I'm seeing from Winnipeg Police Service as a result of this change in policing.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, there's been a 41 per cent reduction in crime severity in Manitoba over the last decade. And members opposite might say, well, it's going down in other places too; that's the biggest reduction in Canada.

We have to continue on that path. We have to continue, though, working in partnership with Winnipeg police, not telling them what to do.

### **Proportional Representation Request for Government Support**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, there's a steadily growing appreciation that democracy will be improved by moving toward a form of proportional representation.

Indeed, Manitoba Liberals have all not only recognized this but have committed to move the province toward this enhanced democracy.

I ask the Premier: Does the NDP government support the Manitoba Liberal initiative to move toward proportional representation?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the website actually says something different. It says they support studying it. And, of course, we would obviously be open to studying any system, that we've had similar systems in Manitoba in the past. They were changed in 1957 under the Roblin government of the day, who went to a first-past-the-post system.

We've made very significant forms in democracy, Mr. Speaker. We banned corporate and union donations, was not supported by the members of the opposition. Banning corporate and union donations put the purchasing power for democracy back in the hands of the average citizen.

We've supported public support for political parties in Manitoba; the opposition has resisted that and voted against that on a continuous basis. That allows political parties to offer more independently from fear of favour of corporate or of big-business influence or big influence from anybody in particular.

We want to—we've opened up our polls to allow people to vote anywhere they live in Manitoba,

Mr. Speaker, and we've made advanced polling more frequent in Manitoba.

We're open to any good ideas on improving democracy which will allow the people of Manitoba to get good quality government, which they deserve.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, proportional representation can result in a Legislature composition which is better representative of all Manitobans.

Manitoba Liberals have already announced that they would bring in proportional representation.

Would the Premier himself support a Legislature which better reflects the wishes of all voters, using proportional representation as Liberals will do?

**Mr. Selinger:** As I said, I'll give him the—repeat the answer I made on the first time he queried me on this.

We're open to studying, along with the member opposite. These questions are important in how we can improve democracy. I only wish the member opposite would stand up and say he did not—that he supports our legislation to ban corporate and union donations.

I hope he supports the bill that we have in front of the House right now which moves us towards a permanent voting list, Mr. Speaker.

And we've seen in the federal election onerous requirements for people to identify themselves when they go to the polls. We have a system in Manitoba where you can vouch for somebody when they go to the polls, and our Chief Electoral Officer has said that's a very sound system which allows more people to vote. We do not want to put that at risk like the members of the opposition do. That would disentitle people that are senior citizens. That would disentitle people without driver's licences.

We want every Manitoban to have the right to vote, and I hope the member from River Heights will support that initiative and not pretend that—he has opposed it in the past, and he has opposed banning corporate and union donations.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier should check the facts before he makes statements.

But, Mr. Speaker, I see that the Premier is uncertain about where he stands on proportional representation. While the Manitoba Liberals want to move forward with proportional representation and a system in which the Legislature better reflects the

desires of all voters, the NDP and the Premier remain stuck and unsure of where they stand.

\* (14:10)

Why, after 16 years of government, is the Premier not able to state clearly where he stands: for or against proportional representation?

**Mr. Selinger:** I've answered that question twice, but he speaks to the issue of greater representation in the Legislature. And that is one of the most important things in a democracy, is to have people in the Legislature that reflect all the peoples of Manitoba.

And I'm proud of the caucus that we have on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We represent all the different parts of Manitoba. We represent indigenous people. We represent people of visible minorities. We represent women and men, of course. And we represent people from all parts of Manitoba: the North, the rural areas, the urban areas.

And we look forward to encouraging more people to enter into the democratic process and presenting themselves for office. That's the key, is recruiting good quality citizens, of which we have over a million in Manitoba, that want to consider presenting themselves for public life. And we know—we know—that there are people that want to do that, which is why we've reformed the rules of this Legislature to make it more family-friendly so people can actually come and be in this place and still be able to have time for their families.

These are all measures to make a democracy more accessible, to make democracy more accountable, to make the democracy fairer by banning corporate and union donations, and I invite the member to look at a broader discussion on how we can strengthen the democratic fabric of this province.

#### **Trans Canada Trail Funding Grant**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** With so many gorgeous locations in Manitoba, it's no surprise that Manitobans everywhere really look forward to a chance to get out and explore the beautiful parts of our province.

And as witnessed by our \$100-million parks program, our government is firmly in support of that, unlike the opposition parties who seem to can't wait to bring in an era of privatizing and cuts and hacking and slashing. And we actually believe government should make life better, not worse, or, as it were, forward, not back, as someone wisely put it once.

I'm wondering if our Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development might be able to inform the House of just the latest initiative our government has launched to help people enjoy our great outdoors.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** Today I was proud to stand with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the minister of local government to make an announcement of our commitment of \$800,000 to help complete the remaining section of the Trans Canada Trail through Manitoba.

While the opposition wants to cut, we've invested over \$5.75 million to the Trans Canada Trail, to development in Manitoba. We are proud of Manitoba is what is it doing in its part of encourage Canadians to get out and explore what the province has to offer.

Thank you so much.

#### **Assiniboine Valley Flood (2011) Compensation Claim Settlements**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** Mr. Speaker, it's too bad the minister hasn't been around for the last four and a half years to support agriculture producers in Manitoba.

Today we acknowledge the four-and-a-half-year anniversary of the 2011 Assiniboine valley flooding below the Shellmouth Dam. Agriculture producers have still not been paid, despite promises made by this Premier. The government is clearly hiding behind their own legislation in not dealing with these claims from four and a half years ago caused by artificial flooding.

Mr. Speaker, one year ago, the member for Southdale said, and I quote: People feel angry. They feel the Premier has broken their trust.

Does the minister responsible agree with the member for Southdale that the Premier has broken his word on this file?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the member's incorrect. Over the last decade there have been numerous years in which we have made payments.

And I point out to the member opposite that the key element with the Shellmouth Dam is in terms of artificial flooding. We actually did put in legislation that mirrors what has been in place for a number of years in the Red River Valley.

We have also asked, by the way, for a review not only of the operating rules of the Shellmouth Dam, but we have indicated our willingness to look into how the program is administered. I point out again there are other programs that have been in place, agricultural supports for natural flooding.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have provided compensation, but we've indicated to producers in that area and the municipalities in that area that we're also prepared to look at some changes, both on the operating side and in terms of the programs. But, again, we have provided assistance.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, this minister has dropped the ball for four and a half years. Clearly, agriculture producers are angry with the Premier and this NDP government.

Producers were forced to sign documents saying they would not sue the government prior to even discussing any flood claims. What a disrespectful way to carry out business. Four and a half years later, claims have still not been paid, despite promises from this government.

Mr. Speaker, one year ago, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) said, and I quote, there's a lot of evidence and realization that there are many people in Manitoba that are angry with this Premier.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister responsible agree with the member from Minto that many Manitobans are angry with the Premier over this issue?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I point out again that it was this government that actually brought in the statutory coverage. When members opposite were in government, there was absolutely no legal recognition of the fact that there are circumstances where there's artificial flooding the Shellmouth Dam. I point out that not only in terms of the Shellmouth but in terms of Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, the Assiniboine valley, it was this government that was there for flood victims.

And I put on the record that when we were fighting with the flood in real time, I wonder where the Leader of the Opposition was, someone who likes to get up every day and lecture us in terms of floods. Bottom line, when he was minister of EMO in the '90s, he quit. And when there was a major flood last time in 2014, we don't know where he was.

### Infrastructure Department Yearly Funding Record

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the Premier, and, I understand, the minister of not making public tenders to friends, are going to do a publicity event announcing conspicuous construction.

Now, there's only been one department of this government that's been under budget, and that has been the case now for five consecutive years, 'til this year, of course, a pre-election year, Mr. Speaker. Only one department, every other department over budget, the result, of course, doubling our debt in the last six years.

So that department, these ministers are—now, I understand from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), they're going to celebrate how much they're spending this year just before an election.

But I wonder if the Premier would make it clear to Manitobans the reasons why the Infrastructure Department was underspent for the last five consecutive years by this government. Can he make that clear?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, every year we've increased the spending on infrastructure in Manitoba. That means more roads have been improved. That means more flood protection has been provided. That means more sewer and water programs have been put in place. And every year we've ramped it up to a higher level.

We brought in the five-year, 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar program to improve infrastructure in Manitoba. We did that with an analysis by the Conference Board of Canada that that would generate 60,000 jobs. We've seen that steady increase.

We've said, if there's ever a reason that the budget is underspent in a particular year because of a weather event or early freeze-up, that that money would be rolled over to the next year, Mr. Speaker, and we have done that. We've rolled that money over to the next year to make sure it stays committed to infrastructure, and that has resulted in a good summer this year with excellent weather and a record build this year of over \$1 billion.

And if there's ever a reason why the money can't be spent because of weather events, it's rolled over to ensure Manitobans that they will get value for the

money and the infrastructure they need to improve our economy and have good jobs in Manitoba.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the Premier's integrity is the only thing that's rolling over, Mr. Speaker, and dying.

The fact is for the last five years the government's underspent on infrastructure, taken the money and put it into other departments of government because it didn't value infrastructure. And when they raised the PST, it took them a full year to figure out—through internal polling, I expect—that infrastructure is something we should invest in on a regular basis.

Now they claim they love infrastructure, but for five years they didn't, Mr. Speaker. They took the money away and they put it in every other department of government but that one.

The Premier speaks about spending appropriate amounts except because of weather. Saskatchewan was right on their budget exactly. Ontario was 1 per cent under their budget over that same time period, and this government was over 20 per cent underspent on the very thing they're now running on.

The thing they claim they love is the thing they hated for five years. Can the Premier explain that to Manitobans, please?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I actually just explained it to him. The increase in infrastructure spending has been on an upward trend every single year. Any money that's not 'expent' because of specific reasons has been rolled over to future years. And that's a very direct contrast to the member opposite.

\* (14:20)

As a member of government, he raised the gas tax and cut the highways budget. He took more revenue out of the pockets of people that drive the roads: truck drivers, Manitobans, individual vehicle owners. He took more money out of their pocket and actually cut the highways budget, Mr. Speaker. That infrastructure deficit is what we're addressing today. The deficit in infrastructure that is the legacy of their time in office is exactly what we're doing today.

And, Mr. Speaker, our debt is lower as a proportion of the economy than when the member opposite was in office, and our cost of servicing the debt is 5.6 cents on the dollar. When the member opposite was in office, it was 13.3 cents on the dollar.

We're getting more value for the money. The money we're spending on servicing the debt is 58 per cent less, and we're creating good jobs in Manitoba. And what is the Leader of the Opposition's approach to that?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

**Mr. Pallister:** No, cancel the government—cancel the government. Interest rates were six times as high—interest rates were six times as high—and the Premier isn't even concerned that now we pay about the same amount in interest on our debt as when interest rates were six times as high.

Mr. Speaker, basic financial management, the member doesn't get it. He doubled the provincial debt in six prosperous years. He cut our credit rating in good times. He raised our PST. He raided the rainy day fund, and now he's claiming he's a friend of infrastructure, and he's raided it for years.

Where's the credibility in that? Explain that.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite had no rainy day fund. We put \$800 million aside in the good times to buffer the—*[interjection]* The member opposite seems to be concerned. Yes, they only had a rainy day fund when they sold off the telephone system. We know that. We kept all Manitobans' assets whole.

We put money aside during the good times to buffer and support the economy during the difficult times, and who supports our policy? None other than the former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge, who has said, at these very low interest rates, and given the need for infrastructure to allow for further economic development in Canada, it really does make sense at this point in time for governments to borrow in order to finance that infrastructure.

We're doing exactly that, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition defies all the good wisdom in this country and says he would cancel the program, cancel good jobs, cancel opportunities for infrastructure and put the Manitoba economy in the tank.

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

## PETITIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now move on to petitions.

**Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair  
and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses in Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconceivable by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to repair and reopen provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

This petition is signed by R. Bruce, R. Bruce, A. Good and many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Applied Behavioural Analysis Services**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services, which notes the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 68 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 148 children by September 2016 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

(4) The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will decrease the scientifically proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, thus not allowing them full access to ABA services promised them as they wait on their wait-list.

(5) Waiting lists, forced decrease in services and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the ministers of Family Services, Education and Advanced Learning and Health consider making funding available to address the current waiting list of ABA services.

This is signed by H. Musto, N. Vesbury, B. Campbell and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**Beausejour District Hospital—  
Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by D. Long, E. Long, D. Sprout and many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

### **Bipole III Land Expropriation— Collective Bargaining Request**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the background to this petition:

(1) On November 19th, 2014, the Premier authorized an order-in-council enabling Manitoba Hydro to take valuable and productive farmland from its—for its controversial Bipole III transmission line project without the due process of law.

(2) On November 24th, 2014, the minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act signed a confirming order for the province of Manitoba declaring that no notice to landowners is required for the seizure of property.

(3) This waiver of notice represents an attack on rural families and their property rights in a modern democratic society. There was not even an opportunity provided for debate in the Manitoba Legislature.

(4) In many cases, the private property seized has been part of a family farm for generations.

(5) Manitoba Hydro has claimed that it has only ever expropriated one landowner in its entire history of operation.

(6) The provincial government has now gone ahead and instituted expropriation procedures against more than 200 landowners impacted by Bipole III.

(7) Since November 2013, the Manitoba Bipole III Landowner Committee, MBLC, in association with the Canadian Association of Energy and

Pipeline Landowner Associations, CAEPLA, have been trying to engage Manitoba Hydro to negotiate a fair business agreement.

(8) For over 14 months, the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro have acted in bad faith in their dealings with Manitoba landowners or their duly authorized agents. These actions have denied farmers their right to bargain collectively to protect their property and their businesses from Bipole III.

(9) MBLC and CAEPLA has now—has not formed an association to stop Bipole III project and they are not antidevelopment.

\* (14:30)

(10) MBLC and CAEPLA have—has simply come together, as a group of people, as Manitobans, to stand up for the property rights and the right to collectively bargain for a fair business agreement that protects the future and well-being of their businesses.

(11) MBLC and CAEPLA are duly authorized agents for Manitoba landowners who wish to exercise their freedom to associate and negotiate in good faith.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government immediately direct Manitoba Hydro to engage with MBLC and CAEPLA in order to negotiate a fair business agreement that addresses the many legitimate concerns of farm families affected by the Bipole III transmission line.

And this petition has been signed by G. Reimer, B. Klassen, B. Reimer and many, many more fine Manitobans.

### **Request to Reduce Speed Limit along Road 9E, La Salle, Manitoba**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) The community of La Salle, Manitoba, continues to see significant residential growth, including new developments along Road 9E.

(2) As part of this growth, additional active transportation improvements are being constructed



by the RM of MacDonald, including the installation of walking paths.

(3) One of these paths is less than 10 feet away from Road 9E, a gravel road where the current speed limit is 90 kilometres an hour.

(4) Families and individuals, including those with small children and pets, are concerned about the safety of using walking paths with high-speed traffic being within such close proximity.

(5) Interconnecting roads, including Road 47NE and Vouriot Road, have speed limits of 70 kilometres an hour and 50 kilometres an hour respectively.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the potential danger of allowing high-speed travel on a gravel road immediately adjacent to a walking path.

(2) To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation consider reducing the speed limit along Road 9E similar to Road 47NE and Vouriot Road.

And this is signed by L. Giesbrecht, M. Lagace and M. Laval and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but still have not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses in the Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government repair and reopen provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

And this petition is signed by C. Berg, C. Moore and C. Capuska and many more fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes petitions. We'll now move on to grievances.

The honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), rising on a grievance? No? Okay.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

*(Continued)*

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

*(Continued)*

**Mr. Speaker:** So we'll move on to orders to the day, government business.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Could you resolve the House into Committee of Supply?

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair, and the various committee Chairs to the committee rooms.

### **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

**(Concurrent Sections)**

#### **JUSTICE**

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to some semblance of order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Justice. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I think we left off with questions around recidivism and the definition of it, and the different approach to it across the country. The department just provided some additional information. I'll just share it briefly with the committee.

I think we had already said that there was no national consensus and—not just in terms of

definition, but even the time frames. A number of jurisdictions, though, do use the time frame of two years, and the Auditor General has asked us to have a look at that, which we are doing. But it's interesting to see that some jurisdictions include new charges, including administration of justice violations, new charges excluding administration of justice violations, new charges for violence following a conviction for violence—so they separate that out. Then—and we're looking at—we're doing convictions now, so some others do that as well, the new convictions including breach convictions. And some do new convictions for violence following a conviction for a violent offence.

But I think this is what is newsworthy. There is a national group that's studying this to try and get some common elements to the definition in place, and so that we can start to compare across the country and we can really rely on the best data possible. And what they're coming down to is thinking that recidivism itself, perhaps, isn't what is the measure. It's recontact with the justice system, whether it's with the police or the courts or corrections. And so, in other words, we may be on the cusp of a very different measure of recidivism and hopefully one that has some national application.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I think, then, if I understand the minister correctly, if we're moving back to—or going—possibly moving to a national standard—which I agree has, you know, positive elements to it—if we're moving to a system where a recidivist would be defined as somebody who has recontact with the system, isn't that closer to the system we had when it was about somebody was charged in the system we have now and is convicted?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The measure, though, may be recontact, but resulting in conviction, not charges. So that's the question that's outstanding.

I mean, let's face it, it would be a false recidivism rate if charges were—say there was five charges laid against an individual, those are all counted and, in fact, there was an acquittal, an acquittal that wouldn't perhaps be as good a measure as we can attain.

But, anyway, I think we'll have to be informed by the national group, and in the meantime we'll continue with the system that we put in place in, I think it was 2012.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I think the question that I was in the middle of yesterday when I got cut off, which

was my fault, Mr. Chairperson, because I think when I reset my clock due to daylight savings time—which is a whole another line of questioning—I think I set it five minutes off. So I thought I was on good time, and then I got cut off in mid-flight.

But what the question was about, if an individual has been released from a provincial correctional centre, and within two years they're recontact, they get charged, they're remanded and they haven't been convicted before that two year window closes, but they're in remand, somebody who's in remand in that scenario, isn't considered someone who is a recidivist because they haven't actually been convicted. Is that correct?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, that's right, and—but that's why there is a debate about whether even two years is appropriate and—or whether it's two years may be appropriate for some, but three and five is also appropriate. That's why the Auditor General raised the issue, I think, in that context.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Changing topics, Mr. Chairperson, and I asked this question, I believe, at a PAC committee hearing in relation to an Auditor General's report. I just want an update on if there's newer numbers on the number of individuals who are entering and exiting, if they're done at both at the same—if they're both done, the provincial adult and youth and women's correctional centres, who identify themselves as gang affiliated?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm advised that the number of youth that have been identified as gang members is 90. And the adults is 467.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I thank the staff for the answer. Is—are they identified going into the system and exiting the system? Or are they only identified going into?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm advised that the assessment is done on their—on coming in. But I'm also advised that if they become associated when they're in custody, then they will be managed accordingly.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And what data or information can the minister provide on how likely somebody who is maybe not gang affiliated coming into the correctional system becomes gang affiliated during their time within the correctional system?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** For some time now, Manitoba Corrections has had in place a model to segregate different gangs as best they can. They try to manage that on an ongoing basis, but they also have to deal

with the reality that allegiances vary almost daily, I'm told. In other words, there's no constant whatsoever. Allegiances can be very weak, and they may, in some cases, be very strong. But it's just a constant dynamic that they attempt to manage.

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Goertzen:** Some time ago the Province passed legislation—I don't believe the current minister was minister at the time, although I stand to be corrected—regarding the listing of gangs so that they didn't have to be reprovved that they were organized criminal entities in court again.

Can the minister update us how many gangs have been officially designated as such and can he name them?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I believe the intention was to list the Hells Angels and that is the gang that is listed. The intention was to list the Hells Angels and that has been done. It's the first time, I understand, in North America where this approach has been taken.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Was that the only gang that was intended to be listed? Because I remember from past Estimates and, again, in fairness, it wasn't this minister at the time, but I think that the intention what we heard from other ministers was there was intended to list other gangs because there are other known gangs in the province of Manitoba. This is the first time I'm hearing that it was only intended for the Hells Angels.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, well, the legislation enables the listing of other criminal organizations, as well, but I think at the outset the indication was the Hells Angels was the initial focus of this. That means that we, in fact, could list other criminal organizations in consultation with police, and that—those—that relationship is well sealed between the Manitoba Justice and law enforcement in this regard. And so if there are decisions that lead that way, we'll see more than Hells Angels listed.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, I think at the time that it was promoted as sort of a—if I remember, and I don't have the, you know, information right in front of me, so I'm going a bit off memory which is always both tricky and dangerous—but it was promoted as more of a tool for prosecutions and to be able to make the prosecution of gangs easier and more streamlined, and I thought the intention was to list as many gangs as might have members who are being prosecuted in Manitoba.

I mean, if it's—it was beneficial for the prosecution of Hells Angels, why wouldn't it be beneficial for the prosecution of the Indian Posse?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm advised that there's a high evidentiary threshold that has to be met and that was met for the Hells Angels, but the department is attuned to whether other opportunities might exist for other criminal organizations to be listed.

But it should be corrected that, first of all, this is not for a prosecution of criminal cases and we have pursued the federal government to determine if there's an interest to do something similar under the Criminal Code of Canada for prosecutors. But this is in respect of the administration of provincial statutes, for example, whether it's fortified buildings or safer communities and neighbourhoods.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I thank the minister for that clarification. I think, maybe, we had terminology mixed up there, but I appreciate what he's saying and I'm glad for the clarification.

Shifting gears, and I'm sorry we'll be doing this today in terms of moving from topic to topic. I want to talk a little bit about the community safety officer program, which the minister referenced in his opening statement yesterday, and I'll—and we have the right people at the right table, so that's good.

Can he just give us an update in terms of where Thompson is at with the pilot project, whether that's, sort of, moved out of the pilot project phase.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes. We have the launch of both the community safety officers and the First Nations Safety Officer Program which, of course, complements the cadet approach in Winnipeg, so all part of a, I think a progressive move to recognizing that many of the issues that come to the attention of police and take their time is about antisocial behaviour and, as well, can deal—as well can lead to the deployment of persons that aren't necessarily police officers to deal with matters so that police are left to deal with the more serious matters in the community.

I'm always pleased to see, when driving through the city of Winnipeg, the deployment of cadets, for example, at intersections. That's one example. I think that there is also an expectation that community safety officers will be more involved in proactive preventative work as well. So we'll continue to see that develop.

It really began in June in full bore in Thompson. It's a two-year pilot. We've been keeping abreast of how that's being received. I'll be talking to the City of Thompson political representatives about this in the near future and, as well, our staff and our lead staff on this project have met in the last week or two with the Thompson project people, including the city representatives and the RCMP and, most notably, some of the CSOs themselves, and this has been very positively received, so I think we'll look to see, as we drill down, what kind of work they're doing and what difference it makes in terms of the demands on the RCMP. But I'll just say that I think that this is the wave of the future, and I've had some discussions with other communities about CSOs and we'll see if we can start to move the dial in terms of moving beyond Thompson and, of course, the First Nations communities. So this is a good start.

**Mr. Goertzen:** It's legislation that our party supported, as the minister, I'm sure, remembers.

Just a point of clarification: Are CSOs peace officers? There's been some dispute about that.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes.

**Mr. Goertzen:** For some reason there seems to be some confusion on that. I don't propose to suggest who is the reason for that confusion, but I know that there have been communities and, quite frankly, the one that I live in, the city of Steinbach, and nearby the RM of Hanover, who dealt with, you know, this issue in terms of policing, and both fast-growing areas. I think Hanover is the fastest growing RM, and the city of Steinbach is either the fastest growing city or close to it, in Manitoba, maybe even western Canada, and, you know, inquiries that they've made have come back with different information, both in terms of whether or not individuals are peace officers or if they're looking to move individuals from a bylaw enforcement position which both the RM and the city have, into a community safety officer position.

Is there a reason for the confusion or is it that sometimes confusion is just confusion, but if they were to move to a CSO position from their current bylaw officers, they would be peace officers?

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** If they do become CSOs, they indeed will become peace officers, and there is the ability to enforce bylaws and there could be provincial statutes that can be enforced as well.

I'll just highlight for the member, though, that there are ongoing intensive discussions about further relief for police officers when it comes to other kinds of social-antisocial behaviour, whether it's intoxicated persons or those that are dealing with mental health challenges in their life and looking for greater options, a greater array, or a continuum, shall we say, of people that can help in those situations without taking police officers off the important duties that they have in dealing with threats to public safety. So that work is in progress.

And I hope that we can report publicly in due course, but we have a lot of stakeholders there and we want to make sure that we get that right, but if the police aren't doing a job any more, that someone else is trained and able to deal with whether it's someone passed out on the corner or someone that has to be taken to hospital under The Mental Health Act.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I'll just touch on that briefly, then, because the minister raises a point that both he and I have heard, I'm sure, from those in law enforcement about, you know, when they come across somebody who they believe is dealing with issues of mental health and they bring them into a medical facility, they bring them in under The Mental Health Act, and they're not able to release them to somebody else, who, I believe, has to have a peace officer status. There has to be somebody who stays with them. And so police have certainly indicated to me in—from different municipal forces—their concern about how much time this takes, not that they don't think that that's important that somebody be with them, but maybe not necessarily somebody who is a uniformed officer who then isn't on the street.

Just as a quick point, CSOs, obviously, could fulfill that responsibility because they're peace officers, is that correct?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, CSOs and cadets may have a role there, certainly, and they've been empowered with the legislative scheme to do exactly that. But there are other responses, as well, that may be appropriate, and it might be that it's not all or nothing for different situations. It could be based on a risk assessment. It could be based on different technology. Like, do people actually have to be transported as often as they are? Can we use tele-health to a greater extent? Are there other individuals that are skilled, for example, Main Street Project workers that have different skill sets may be appropriate to do this kind of work.

So that's the effort that's under way now. And I know it's a long-standing concern, particularly municipalities that are paying for RCMP officers when they have to transport someone and then wait at the hospital and then take them back home. And, in fact, I've heard of situations most recently from the city of Brandon where an officer was taken off the beat for, like, over a day or two because of the transport issues.

So I think we have to step back and look at what we really need police officers for, and it really comes down to public safety. And that's the test and it has to remain the test. And we have to, I think, realign our resources accordingly, and we can do that, but it has to be done right. And the right people have to be in the room, and we're making best efforts at that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, this is a specific concern that's been raised to me by councillors with the City of Steinbach, I know it's been raised by other municipal officials, but, you know, that ability to try to get RCMP officers away from doing that monitoring of an individual who is under a mental health order—what the minister's talking about, I think, you know, speaks to promise of movement in this particular situation. Would it require legislative change, or is it something that can be done by regulation or by policy?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, I think it's both. Legislation currently requires peace officers to deal with intoxicated persons under the IPDA, I understand, and under The Mental Health Act. So that's the first step and then the second step is by way of policy, looking to see who, in fact, should be on the job and, you know, trained accordingly to do that. And there are other issues that have to be attended to that relate to that. But this is where the CSOs and cadets, I think, are the frontrunners of a new way of doing business, but I think we could go beyond that.

I might just add that the WPS really had recognized this and this is where the discussions came from with Manitoba Justice, and led to the creation of the cadet program which we fully support, and just hope we can get everything—everybody staffed up there.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is there a time frame for some of these initiatives to come to fruition? Can the minister indicate that? I know we're on a tight legislative time frame with only another, sort of, three-week set of sitting weeks after this, and then the ones that we get in February for another three weeks.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, the gentlemen are sitting here, that we've had the discussions with, and I can tell you that I'm very eager to move this quickly. And perhaps we could have discussions with the member about how we can move that ahead, but we still have work to do on that one.

There are people that are in the room with us that are working on the options. Like I say, we can't just bring in a change without knowing what the support services are going to look like, then, down the road.

But I can assure the member—and I've had discussions with the senior officers of the Winnipeg Police Service just two weeks ago about this—we're pulling out all the stops; we're trying to move as quickly as we can. But it is our intention to try to get amendments introduced into the House in this session, absolutely, but when we can do it, I'm not going to commit to yet but we're doing what we can.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, this session ends on Thursday, so if he's hoping to do it this session, then I look forward to that rapid speed. I guess things can happen. I see the former Attorney General—current House leader's ready to give leave, so I look forward to seeing the bill tomorrow, I guess, and we'll have that discussion.

The issue's important, though, and I know the minister misspoke in terms of one session and I understand that, but I wanted to leave it on the record about, you know, it's an important issue to many communities, not the least of which is mine, which, obviously I bring forward. And I'm glad that there's some feeling that need—things need to change, and the time frame will be the time frame, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, but I—or Mr. Chairperson, but I want to leave it as an important issue.

Returning to the issue of CSOs, though, the Attorney General indicated that that is sort of the new wave of doing things, and I just want to know how fast that wave is moving, because, certainly, there's many communities who I know—and he was indicating he's spoken to some and then we might be speaking about the same ones, but have indicated that they would like the ability to apply for that program and have individuals at peace officer—peace officer status to deal with some provincial legislation that the RCMP then wouldn't have to deal with as frequently. Can he indicate at what point other communities might be able to access this program?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, the next step is to put in place safety officers in 31 communities, actually, across Manitoba under the First Nations Safety Officer Program. That will start within months. Different communities are different timelines, but that is on a—it's full steam ahead, I'm assured.

In terms of other communities across Manitoba, we've had some initial discussions and some interest expressed and—so that will be part of any budget discussions.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, and just in terms of the budgetary process, then, I know that there was a financial contribution made to Thompson in terms of their pilot project. Is the Province indicating that they'll provide similar funding support for other municipalities as they go forward at the ratio that Thompson was funded?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, one reason that Thompson's a pilot was just to see how this works in terms of funding for one, and—so that's an open matter that's subject to further discussion. I don't think anyone is firmly entrenched in any particular funding model. It may either differ by community or we may have a different formula that's province-wide.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Goertzen:** The—I understand this is sort of happening at a staged approach. I'm wondering why other communities might not be able to apply sooner. I mean, they'll be responsible for hiring their own CSOs, I'm assuming. They might be taking their existing bylaw enforcement officers and putting them into CSO positions and the additional training that may be required.

Why do they have to—why couldn't they proceed quicker as opposed to having to wait for another stage to be completed?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, the program was never designed just to work, like, all at once, all—you know, immediately. It is going to be done based on modelling this in Thompson, and in the meantime, start to develop discussions with different communities that might have an interest in this. I'll be speaking with AMM and certainly reminding municipalities that if they do have an interest in a community safety officer program, they should contact us and we can begin discussions.

But this is going to be a staged matter. It's also a budgetary matter and has to be done in a way that builds on the experiences as we learn from them.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think it will be important when the minister visits AMM—I'm assuming he means at the annual meetings later this month, or maybe he has a different meeting arranged with them—you know, that he's clear with those officials that CSOs are peace officers, because I think there is significant confusion there.

And, in terms of the timing, obviously, I might have some objections to how slow the program will be rolling out, recognizing there are things that have to be tested and checked, but I think that there is a great desire in many communities to have a program like this. And I'll again reference my community, because I'm not telling any secrets out of school then, that both the—I think the City of Steinbach and the RM of Hanover would at least have interest in looking at the program, and I think the time is a concern, that it could possibly be that delayed.

But he hasn't—the minister hasn't given a specific time frame, but communities like the City of Steinbach, which is the third largest city, as the minister knows, and the RM of Hanover, which, I think, is the largest municipality in Manitoba, what kind of a time frame could those municipal bodies be looking at for a CSO program if they were interested and applied for it?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, I will be meeting with the City of Steinbach in—I think it's the next few weeks that we have a meeting scheduled on this issue. I think there might be a couple of other issues, but this is a key issue, and the issue of IPDA and mental health transfers is part of that. But it all really comes down to this idea of having more options for community safety approaches.

So I can assure the member that we'll have a discussion with Steinbach and I'll hear first-hand what their vision might be, and perhaps we can find some way of proceeding together in a way that makes sense.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, and I'll leave on the record, putting on more my MLA for Steinbach hat than the critic role hat, that I think it's—would certainly advocate strongly that the minister listen clearly to their wishes and the changing nature of those communities.

As communities grow, there's many great things that come from growth within regions, within cities, but there are things that aren't so great. Certainly, we've seen greater instances of methamphetamine in the community, there have been concerns about

fantanyl, and that's—I wouldn't want to call it a natural by-product of growth, but it's an unfortunate by-product of growth. And the ability for police to be able to concentrate on matters such as that in terms of rooting out those difficult things in the community that can be so destructive for kids and concentrating on those things as opposed to other issues which maybe CSOs might be better conditioned for, I think, is important.

So I'm glad to hear that the minister is having those meetings. I certainly would leave him with the feeling that, you know, I hope that he'll listen to those concerns strongly and act upon them in as timely a fashion as he possibly can. That's my MLA hat, but, of course, I know there are other communities who feel the same way and who also would be interested in a program such as this.

So—but on the issue of mental health, I want to ask a quick question which I suspect will spark a bit of a shuffle, but on the mental health court, just in terms of the time frames, if the minister can give a bit of a brief description of how one becomes eligible for entry into the Mental Health Court program.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, I'm a strong supporter of the mental health court and, as well, the drug court, and I think that this is an approach that has to grow.

In terms of the specific question, those that are eligible will be those with axis 1 mental disorders, and includes schizophrenia, for example, bipolar, anxiety disorders and severe depression. It was not designed to include those with Alzheimer's or FASD or personality disorders. By the way, with FASD we have a very unique need-in-Manitoba approach for youth with FASD and, in fact, that was the initial discussions about the mental health court was in that context, and then the current member—minister of mines took this to the next level and, as a result, we have this court.

I also will add that it doesn't include those that are not criminally responsible or unfit to instruct counsel as defined under the Criminal Code.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Can the minister indicate how many individuals are currently part of the mental health court program and how many might be qualified but haven't yet started the program?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** There are—I'm advised there are currently 35 participants under the jurisdiction of the court.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is there a number of individuals who've been accepted, essentially, but haven't actually started the program, or do you start the day that you're accepted?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm told there's no—there's no wait-list, if that's the word.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Is there a wait time to start the program?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm advised that—well, there's an assessment according to the criteria that we just listed, but we're not aware of any, like, delay issues or complaints about that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** So an individual becomes assessed and then they become qualified, and do they then start the program immediately?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Practically, what the mental health court does is it links someone who is under charge with a—essentially a PACT team, and that could consist of a psychiatrist, of course, the team leader, and there will be a multidisciplinary team, usually four service co-ordinators and the administrator, of course, is all part of that. So it's that kind of intensive more wraparound support that is the hallmark of the Mental Health Court.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Goertzen:** As a minister, can you just clarify for me, we did—we filed a freedom of information request—and I'll take responsibility for this one, not all the ones that were alleged yesterday, but on this particular one—about the delay between entering the mental health court and we were told that it was 42 days, that was the most recent data that was provided under the freedom of information request. What is that then if the minister indicates there is no—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, I understand that, what is that, that's a month and a half or so, that would be the assessment period.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And is that something that is considered reasonable or is there a goal to try to reduce the assessment period?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I'm advised by courts that that's been recognized as a reasonable time frame for the assessment to take place and the conclusions to be drawn and the person to then be referred into the initiative.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Now there was an assessment done by, I believe, a couple of—I don't have the names in front of me so I'll apologize—professors from the University of Winnipeg, on the mental health court. I saw them do a presentation on it. They expressed concerns about that length of time, they thought that that was, I think they were supportive of the court, don't get me wrong, but I think that they thought that that was a potentially failing of—a potential failing that took too long to start the programming. Is that—that's not an assessment of the department then?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, no, that's not what I'm hearing here, but I think that would be Dr. Weinrath and I'm—I look forward to actually meeting with him on a few issues. I know he's got a particular interest in the mental health court and I think he did work on the drug court as well. So I want to sit down with him and I'll explore that with him to determine if, you know, that's an issue, if, you know, clearly if that would contribute to a remand population that's one we would want to prioritize. But we'll canvass it further; I don't think we'll just leave it at that.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And I'll leave it at that. It may have been, and I'm sorry I don't have the name of the professor in front of me, it was a while ago that I saw the presentation, it was interesting and informative, but the name simply escapes me.

The—you mentioned remand, and so if we can talk a bit about remand. At the—in the provincial correctional centres I understand that the remand population, and I'm not sure if it's an average across each of the institutions or if it's adult males and, or youth, is at about 70 per cent. Is that the most up-to-date data?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, that's the approximate number. I think the last number was, you know, 69 per cent in September. But, yes, I think 70 per cent is what I speak of publically, and is unacceptable.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, I mean, and I agree with the minister, it's unacceptable. And I think it's been unacceptably high for a very long time.

I didn't go back to Hansard to other discussions we've had at Estimates committee when the member was the minister previously and I was the critic at that time as well, I didn't want to go down that memory lane and he probably wouldn't want to join me on that walk. But, I mean, this has been a problem for a very long time and I remember different iterations of the discussion, one in fact

where I believe it was this minister, but I, you know, it may have been maybe the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), or maybe even the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talking about how they believe the solution to the remand issue in Manitoba would be the elimination of two-for-one sentencing. And I know there's been some work on that under the former federal government now, and yet the problem not only is it not getting better it seems to be getting worse.

Is there a reason why the previous statement of the government about how the elimination of two-for-one sentencing would deal with this problem, and I think that the—all ministers have spent a lot of time in Ottawa lobbying on that issue, and for the record I agree with them on that issue, I didn't necessarily agree that it would deal with remand, but I agree with the changes on two-for-one sentencing. I think even the member for Kildonan may have been threatened to be in the Senate jail for that reason and I came to his defence at that time and I, you know, still would defend him on that. But is there reason why that didn't seem to be the solution that they were looking for?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, as we look at the reasons for the remand population growth over the years, there are just so many factors and it's difficult to separate out.

First of all, the two-for-one credit was, I think, a perverse incentive that had to be dealt with for every reason. And at the same time, there was a change in federal criminal justice policy that played some role, we all suspect. But, again, it's difficult to identify the extent of the impact of every factor that has contributed to the remand population the way it is.

What I can say is that we do know, however, while all the causes may be difficult to discern independently, we are confident that some of the solutions can be put to work and the remand population can be brought down.

First of all, we have quietly, over the summer, initiated a new approach called the independent case assessment process, or ICAP, and it's a brand new unit of seven prosecutors and two support staff that is looking at the in-custody population at the Remand Centre, or on remand, with a view to identifying as early as possible after charges are laid what disposition can be arrived at more swiftly. So far they've analyzed 1,500 cases and there's been a disposition arrived at for 500. So I think it's reasonable to assume that those 500 may well have



been in remand still if not for those efforts. But that's just the start, and it is brand new.

I've asked ICAP, now, to focus on those on remand status that are there for several days. We have an indication that a very high percentage of the remand population—that's 70 per cent—are comprised of people that are there for just a day or two, quite frankly. And I'm concerned that there may have developed a process that has to be rethought. We also recognize that sometimes people have to be in there for a few days. But we think that that is, perhaps, low-hanging fruit, and we're going to get into that now.

It isn't acceptable that, if it's just a processing issue that people are at the Remand Centre in large volumes of turnover because that's the way we've done it, and that's not good enough. So we're going to look to see, now, as the next stage, how the—those that are in there for a week or two, or even if just a few days, can be dealt with differently.

At the same time, ICAP is continuing its efforts, and—but there are other approaches, too, that have to be taken, and this includes making sure that the conditions—because many of them are in there on breaches—are individually tailored to the risk of the offender. The days of boiler plate conditions have to be ended, and some good work has already been started on that one with the judiciary. I've been assured of that. And I've asked the department to step up its efforts to make sure that individual assessment takes place. We just can't be—we have to be governed by safety and risk management, and we can't be putting people into the Remand Centre because they had a beer, for example, and it was unrelated to the nature of the offence that was alleged, or, you know, that are—they missed an appointment and it's not a part of a long—you know, for example, if there's a series of missed appointments there has to be a consequence, and I accept that, but if there's a missed appointment and that's the only reason, that has to be looked at.

It may be appropriate in some circumstances. It may be a very high-risk individual and every breach that is tailored to risk should be acted on, but I think we have to have that individual assessment. But there are many other changes that we have to pursue and, in fact, getting back to the Mental Health Court, we also have to make sure that we are getting to the root of the issues that are ending up in the justice system. And that's why mental health, addictions and job skills have to be more strongly promoted, and that's

what we're doing both in custody and outside of custody.

\* (15:40)

The bail supervision program is another way that we have looked to better manage the remand population, and we've had meetings with both John Howard and the E Fry Society to make sure that we can move to full capacity of those programs. And Crown prosecutors and the John Howard, for example, have met to make sure that Crown prosecutors can indeed have full assurance and confidence in the supervisory capacity of John Howard.

And, by the way, I—it's my sense that, indeed, they're very strict with the oversight of the conditions that people are out on bail for.

So I think on a number of fronts, we're moving ahead for a different approach because the incarceration rate, the overcrowding that results from that one being driven by the remand population, especially for those that—serving very, very few days, has got to be curtailed, but it has to be done in a way where public safety is still the test. We are moving in the right way and we have to continue that, while at the same time addressing this issue of the remand population.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister says that it's moving in the right way, and yet I suppose if I look back at his speech from when he was the critic, actually, in the '90s when remand was, I think, significantly lower, he would have been much more critical about. Even when he became the minister in 1999, if I'd have taken one of his speeches from then about remand, could have pretty much taken maybe different program names but plugged in the same speech. I don't think much has changed in 15 years to either his statements on this issue. The programs have changed, the initiatives have changed but the problem has actually worsened.

So I'm not really sure where, when he says he's moving ahead on this—if this is moving ahead, then I suspect next year or if he's fortunate enough to still be in government, it'll be 80 per cent. And we'll just keep moving ahead 'til we get closer to the entire population being on remand.

So I don't know that many people will have much comfort in those comments since those are the same comments that he made and has been making for 14 years during the time that's he's been the Attorney General. But, I guess, in his defense, the

other Attorney Generals in there have been saying the same things, too, so it's just the same speech, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, but I don't expect much is going to change.

The issue of the percentage of Aboriginal people who are incarcerated, I believe in the 1990s, it was about 46 per cent. Today, if I remember correctly, it was slightly over 70 per cent who identified as Aboriginal who were incarcerated. Can he give an explanation in terms of why there's a greater percentage of Aboriginals incarcerated now than there were when he became minister in 1999?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, just to answer the political statements of the member, first of all, what I was talking about was the move to address crime in Manitoba. We talked the other day about the reduction in crime severity. It's an index now that's been developed and used nationally. The—so now we have both crime rates and we have the crime severity. I don't take any comfort from the positive movement except to remind us that we can make a difference when we bear down and continue to innovate. The 41 per cent reduction over the last decade in crime severity is very notable, and that's what I was referring to, is we have to always have public safety as the test for our changes and how we're dealing with the remand population.

Manitoba has made some excellent movement, and I think the auto theft strategy is one that was one of the most successful crime prevention and suppression initiatives in North American history, and I'm hearing that from others. That's not what we call it. But people have given awards to that program and recognized it internationally as being a model for how an approach can be taken to what was an epidemic and unhinging almost every family in this province and move the dial on that one very significantly. In fact, in Winnipeg, I believe it was an 83 per cent reduction in auto theft as a result.

So that's what I was talking about in terms of moving in the right direction. We have to continue that. There are, obviously, some very serious challenges in terms of the need to bring down the violent crime rate in this province and that's why we always have to look to see what changes we can bring in.

Today in the Legislature, the member was wondering why we were going to look at protection orders because we had looked at them, what, 10 years ago. Well, yes, you have to continually look at that. You have to always strengthen your

approaches and learn from shortcomings and learn from insights of people, so that's what we're going to do there.

In terms of Aboriginal offenders, there's been some analysis that had indicated—I think this is a CCJS analysis—that in 2013-14, they represented 64 per cent of admissions to correctional services in Manitoba, and that was the second highest after Saskatchewan. But my understanding is that would also include—*[interjection]* I think—the interpretation of that is that that would be provincial correctional services. In Saskatchewan it looks like 74 per cent.

**Mr. Goertzen:** In terms of the Manitoba's scenario, is that an increase since the minister was First Minister in 1999?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, I'd have to—I don't have those numbers here. But it does speak to the need to continue to work to strengthen Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal families and, also, the need to make sure that, for some offences appropriate resources and responses are put in place. And I think to some good extent, restorative justice approaches have been recognized, for example, through Onashowewin here in the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think the Auditor General, in her report in March of 2014 last year, indicated that 46 per cent of incarcerated adult offenders identify as Aboriginal in the mid-1990s. Why would there be such an increase under his government?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, well, I'll leave that to sociologists and criminologists, but whether that—it could be many factors, including self-identification, and it could be population trends, as well, there, but that's just mere speculation.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I just wanted to ask because it was, I think, in the 1990s when he was critic, he indicated that that was significantly too high, so I guess the views have changed on that since then.

I'll leave it to my friend from River Heights who has some questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister, any comment?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** What's that?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry. Was there any comment on it? No, okay.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Now, it's my understanding that there—with the Drug Treatment Court that there was a period from approximately

April 2014 through August 2015, of about 15, 16 months where there was no new people allowed into the program because it was—I think there was uncertainties about whether it was going to be funded, and I was just—have asked the minister what—because I've heard various explanations, what was the reason for the program not being able to accommodate new people for about 15 or 16 months?

\*(15:50)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The intakes began again in September. I understand that there was a suspension of intakes while the management of the Drug Treatment Court was realigned in step with what the federal government had directed the Province to do. The federal government had made a decision that it should not be a project of the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba but rather of courts in Manitoba Justice. So that caused quite a disruption, but it's full steam ahead now, and I'm sure the honourable member will join with me asking for the federal government to be very proactive in working with the Province so that we can expand the Drug Treatment Court's work in this province.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister.

Approximately how many people could've been taken in during that 15-, 16-month period if the court had been operating on a continuous basis?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** There could be maybe 20 people that may have benefited during that period of time. But I should remind the member that the work of the court continued nonetheless. Those who were already admitted were continuing on with their programming. It wasn't a cessation of the court itself.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister is talking about the need for an expansion of the court. What would be the minister's estimate of the increased capacity that really is needed for optimum situation of Manitobans?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The—both the Mental Health Court and Drug Treatment Court are in Winnipeg. Drug Treatment Court is actually called the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court and it was a unique model. It was built from the ground up that was unique to Manitoba's challenges. But I think it's morphed over time. It was originally intended to deal with, I think, drug use and sexual exploitation, and that was some initial thinking, but it has changed over the time. But, if there was to be expansion, which I would like to see and have discussions with the federal

government about, it would be into the other cities of Manitoba where the Addictions Foundation, for example, has a presence. That would be, I think, the low-hanging fruit for expansion.

**Mr. Gerrard:** From the numbers that the minister's provided, it would appear that there's capacity at the moment for approximately, say, 20 people a year to take the programming; you know, the minister may be able to correct or update that. Is the need 40 or 80 or 160? What, sort of, would be a ballpark figure of what the need would be, provided that you—one had the capacity in, you know, other centres in Manitoba, like Brandon and Thompson and The Pas?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes, I think expansion in Winnipeg would be laudable, but I think that as a provincial government, it's important to provide services as best we can across the province. So that's why I think the next step would be, both with regard to the Mental Health Court and the Drug Treatment Court, to have expansion into other parts of the province so it's not just a Winnipeg service.

**Mr. Gerrard:** And—but just to get some idea of the size of the expansion that would be needed, if, for instance, you had a court in Brandon and Thompson and The Pas, what would be the total intake capacity that would be appropriate to the need?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** That would depend in large part on the service providers. But, I mean, that's a question that I hope that we can attend to because, so far, there has been no discussion whatsoever of expansion of this. It's just a matter of keeping going what we have and it hasn't been easy in the last little while. But if there's a different approach at Ottawa, and I will certainly encourage it, I'll ask the member to maybe call in his favours, but perhaps we can move on that, and that would be laudable.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So I would take it from, you know, setting up programs in other sites, that we would probably be talking about moving from 20 a year up to 60 or 80 a year, something like that?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Yes. I'm advised that actually there's not a lot of people that have been, you know, banging at the door here in Winnipeg to get into the program. It's—there's high demands on those that come in, but the numbers are—I don't want to get into the numbers right now. I just think that if there's a willingness, then we can look to the numbers.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I think we're ready to move to the resolutions by force of time. As I mentioned the session will end on Thursday, and I believe that there

are a few more departments that are looking for time, so that is what it is.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right.

Seeing no further questions, we will proceed to consideration of the resolutions.

Thanks to the staff and the critic and the minister and everyone for their deliberations on this.

So first one.

Resolution 4.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$39,420,000 for Justice, Criminal Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$44,939,000 for Justice, Civil Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$381,343,000 for Justice, Community Safety, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$60,048,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,050,000 for Justice, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,694,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 4.1(a) the minister's salary contained in resolution 4.1.

Floor is open for questions, if any.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I don't believe, and I'll stand to be corrected again, that I've ever challenged the

Minister of Justice's salary, and I won't change that habit today.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. We will then proceed to consideration of resolution 4.1.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,597,000 for Justice, Administration, Finance and Justice Innovation, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

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

Shall we have a brief recess to allow the appropriate staff and people arrive?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall we have a brief recess?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. We are in recess.

*The committee recessed at 3:59 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 4:03 p.m.*

*Mr. Clarence Pettersen, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

## MINERAL RESOURCES

**The Acting Chairperson (Clarence Pettersen):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Mineral Resources.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

**The Acting Chairperson (Clarence Pettersen):** Go ahead.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, normally I don't do an opening statement with respect to Supplementary Estimates, but I'm making an opening statement this year because I want to commend all of the work of the department officials,

and I don't get enough opportunity often to thank them for their dedication and work. So that's the reason I'm doing an opening statement for this year.

For the past year and a half the department has had a strong focus on sustainable development of our mineral and petroleum resources. The 2014 value of mining and petroleum totalled \$3 billion, with metallic minerals accounting of \$1.2 billion, industrial minerals accounting for \$214 million, and petroleum, \$1.6 billion.

The past year has not been an easy one for the mining and mineral sector. Continued weakness and commodity prices and instability in global economies and financial markets has created uncertainty in mineral investments, forcing many mining companies to revise their exploration programs.

Accordingly, the actual exploration spending in 2014 was down 56 per cent from the previous year to 27.1 million. The forecast for 2015 is 36.2 million, an increase of 28 per cent, 2014.

While there's been an overall decline in expenditures experienced across Canadian provinces and territories in recent years, the 2015 forecast increase for Manitoba is occurring while Canadian expenditures are stagnant. Despite these challenges in Manitoba, we turned to the top 10 place in the world for mineral investments according to the 2014 institute survey of mining companies. The survey noted Manitoba's excellence in policy perception, mineral potential and geological database.

In response to the decreased investment due to challenging economic times and to help sustain mineral exploration in the province we've renewed our mineral incentive programs. Funding for the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program was doubled to \$3 million for 2014 and 2015-16, with assistance of 50 per cent of approved eligible expenses available for companies. Funding for the Manitoba Prospectors Assistance Program was also increased to \$125,000. The Manitoba mining exploration tax credit was renewed and we introduced double assessment credits for work complete in 2014 and 2015. Altogether, Manitoba's package of exploration incentives is the best in Canada.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

While new exploration is down and Manitoba's experienced an unprecedented period of mine development with two mines in production and several gold mines potentially set to reopen in the next 12 to 36 months. HudBay's \$440-million Lalor

mine reached full production in the second quarter of 2014, at 2,700 tons of ore per day. Reed Lake, a HudBay-VMS joint venture is now in full production of approximately 1,300 tons of ore per day. HudBay recently purchased the former New Britannia Mine in Snow Lake, paving the way for potential reopening of the mill. Alamos Gold corp has acquired Carlisle Goldfields as is—as it proceeds with feasibility study on the Lynn Lake gold project. The Monument Bay Project is proceeding towards a feasibility study, having been purchased by Yamana Gold corp, a well-financed Canadian gold mining company. The recent inclusion of recoverable tungsten significantly improves the project's economics. The gold resource is approaching 3,000,000 ounces.

Work under the orphaned and abandoned mine site rehab program continues with rehabilitation activity in 2014-15 taking place in—at 16 sites. An estimated \$34 million will be spent in 2015-16 to finalize remediation of the remaining high-hazard sites. More than 10 per cent of the \$170 million spent on addressing the environmental legacy issues at orphaned abandoned mine sites has been awarded to First Nation contractors and business owners. All tenders have a set-aside for First Nations or local communities.

In partnership with Jobs and the Economy, Mineral Resources has provided training to First Nations and northern community members to run the water treatment plant as the Ruttan Mine site. Training has also included heavy equipment operating training at Lynn Lake and Sherridon.

Through the minister's Mining Advisory Council, leadership for Manitoba First Nations and the mineral industry are working as partners to increase First Nation participation in Manitoba's mineral resource sector. The inaugural meeting was held on October 2013 at the Legislature. The council continues to meet and make recommendations on benefit sharing, training jobs, economic development opportunities and Crown-Aboriginal consultation and accommodation.

Manitoba now holds 100 per cent interest in Manitoba Potash Corporation, currently are working with Micon International to solicit competitive bids for the sale of the corporation. The first stage of the marketing campaign was launched in January 2015, and is proceeding through the evaluation of expressions of interest received from a number of interested parties. The geoscientific investigations

conducted by the geological survey greatly facilitate the mineral and hydrocarbon exploration of Manitoba. In today's global economy a modern, accessible public geoscience knowledge base is a key competitive advantage. This knowledge is essential to attract domestic and foreign investment in resource exploration and development. Geoscience activities also address land use and environmental issues facing Manitobans and help us to create wise land management processes for sustainable development.

The geoscience advantage program has been extended for a fourth year. The Province has committed another \$400,000 in geoscience funding this year to continue enhancing our provincial geoscience knowledge base and help companies develop exploration plans. With this funding we are able to support exploration for the next generation of world-class nickel, copper, zinc and gold deposits, while laying the ground work for securing tomorrow's energy resources.

Two major federal geoscience programs provide opportunities for Manitoba to collaborate with the Geological Survey of Canada and geological surveys of adjacent jurisdictions. The first is a targeted geoscience initiative, of which a new five-year phase was announced last April. The focus of TGI-5 will be on innovation and advancement of 'deef' exploration methods. The second is Canada's Geo-mapping for Energy and Minerals program which provides modern and regional-scale geological knowledge of Canada's north. In 2013, the federal government committed to phase 2 of the program, providing \$100 million in funding until 2020.

Collaborative projects in Manitoba focus on the Hudson Bay lowlands 'stratigraphy' and its hydrocarbon potential, as well as quaternary geology, that is, till sampling indicating mineral resources, quaternary mapping ice floes of Manitoba's far north with integrated bedrock mapping.

\* (16:10)

Turning to the petroleum sector, last year was another busy year in Manitoba's oil fields despite the decline of oil prices in the latter portion of 2014. Oil prices for Manitoba production dropped from a high of \$106 per barrel in June 2014 to an average of \$60 per barrel for the second quarter of 2015. We experienced the commensurate drop in drilling activity. However, overall the industry here in Manitoba has retained momentum. Year to date, there have been 184 wells drilled compared to 336 in

2014. The province now has 4,464 producing oil wells. Oil production in 2014 totalled 17.3 million barrels, a drop of 6.8 per cent since production peaked in 2013. In 2014, industry invested \$1 billion in Manitoba's oil field and the value of production reached \$1.6 billion.

A study of the economic impacts of the oil industry investment in Manitoba conducted by the MBS concluded that oil industry investment in 2014 resulted in an estimated \$123 million in direct and indirect provincial revenue and over 4,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The oil and gas industry is a major contributor to the economy of southwestern Manitoba, providing jobs to communities such as Brandon, Virden, Melita, Deloraine and Reston. Drilling occurred throughout southwest Manitoba; 464 wells drilled in 2014. Daly, Sinclair, Waskada, Pierson, Manson and Birdtail were the top fields for drilling. There were 64 other wells drilled in areas outside existing fields.

With 166 new wells, Tundra Oil & Gas Partnership was Manitoba's top explorer. Other companies at top 5 include Corex Resources, EOG Resources, Alkane Exploration and Crescent Point Energy. Overall, 28 different companies drilled new wells in 2014.

In closing, again, I'd like to thank senior management and staff for their continuing commitment and the work of the department, and I'm open to questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** Yes. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable member for Spruce Woods, please proceed.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just briefly, too, I thank the minister for his comments, and I, too, want to acknowledge the good work the officials within the department, the good work they carry out for us.

You know, sometimes I think the Mineral Resources Department gets overlooked. There's obviously lots of opportunity, certainly both in the mining sector and in the oil and gas sector, I think, in Manitoba. Clearly, we're facing some challenges in both sectors with low commodity prices and other

issues, and I hope we can have a good discussion about some of the issues that the industry is facing going forward and what the Province has in mind to look at some of those challenges there.

Clearly, this sector, mineral resources, can have a positive influence on the bottom line of the province and certainly, I think, can have a positive influence on the jobs available to many Manitobans. And certainly, we look forward to doing what we can to, you know, foster that development in both the oil and gas and certainly in the mining sector as well. And it's always nice to travel the province and see what's going on around the province and have a discussion with people that are involved in the industry and get their feedback in terms of what the issues are and what the challenges are. And it's been a fun opportunity for me to do that, and I look forward to our discussions here today.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the official opposition critic for those opening remarks as well.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer, as usual, consideration of line item 18.1(a) contained in resolution 18.1.

At this time, minister's staff can come join us and, perhaps, once they're settled, minister, you'd be kind enough to introduce your staff to the committee.

That's organized. Honourable Minister.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I'm impressed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes, it's pretty good.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Today, I'd like to introduce the Deputy Minister, Hugh Eliasson, I don't think a stranger to anyone here, and as well as the assistant deputy minister, John Fox, and Amy Thiessen, who's the acting executive director of finance and accountability for the department.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Great. Welcome, all.

Quick question: Does the committee wish to proceed globally or chronologically?

**Mr. Cullen:** I think I'd like to have a global discussion today.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Global has been proposed. Is that acceptable? *[Agreed]*

All right. Thank you. It is agreed questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner

with all resolutions passed once questioning has concluded.

And wouldn't you know it, the floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Cullen:** I think, first of all, I just want to clear up some things in the supplementary information, a few items there, if I could.

Maybe, first of all, I'll just say to the assistant deputy minister Fox I understand he's leaning—leaving us for other pastures to the north, so I just want to thank him for his work over the years here in Manitoba, and certainly wish you all the best in the future as you make your way to the Yukon, a beautiful part of the country, and I wish you all the best in that. And, again, thank you for your service.

I see the—on page 6 there's been a 25 per cent reduction in administration and finance. Can the minister explain what particular area they've chosen to reduce that, about \$200,000?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That's—that reduction is a result of the fact that the deputy minister does double duty in his—the deputy minister for two departments, and his salary's paid out of Jobs and the Economy rather than Mineral Resources.

**Mr. Cullen:** Okay. Further down that page, there is a transfer of accommodation cost recovery charges to Finance. Looks like a \$775,000 figure. Could the minister explain that?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Accommodation cost used to be paid for by departments; now they're paid for centrally out of Finance.

**Mr. Cullen:** So accommodation cost, I'm hoping you could be a little more specific of what accommodation cost is.

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's the cost of lease facilities and structures.

**Mr. Cullen:** Page 9, there's costs related to capital assets. I wonder if the minister could explain what those capital assets would be.

**Mr. Chomiak:** It relates to the ongoing cost of iMaQs, Integrated Mining and Quarrying System, and for the Brady Road core storage facility, which is accessible for people to review core samples.

**Mr. Cullen:** Okay, just so I'm clear, this looks like an expense line item, 6 per cent of the budget.

Could the minister provide me a breakdown of the capital assets related to that line item, at some

point in time? I don't need it today, but in—at some point in time if you could provide me a breakdown in terms of the actual, like, expense line item for this year.

**Mr. Chomiak:** That won't be a problem.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you, and I appreciate that from the minister.

Page 11 of the schedule 8, and I know we have the minister and executive support there. Is that executive support within the minister's office? And if the minister could explain those five positions or if there's any political staff included in those five positions.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's the special assistant minister, Jeff Hook; Shirley—the appointments secretary, Shirley Heppner; the other support staff in my office, Erika Rempel, Miriam Jezik, who's the secretary to the deputy minister, and my EA, whose name escapes me right now. Yes, Amity—it's Amity. It's actually in the book; it's Amity Sagness, S-a-g-n-e-s-s.

**Mr. Cullen:** Schedule outlines 107.1 full-time equivalents. Is there any secondments from other departments in here, or is there any secondments from the department to other departments or any other agencies within government?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's no to both questions. There's no secondments to the department; there's no department secondments anywhere else.

**Mr. Cullen:** The Manitoba Geological Survey, here it shows 52 full-time equivalents. I know page 23 breaks that down a little more in terms of the managerial, professional, administrative. Is—what I'm looking for is the actual number of bodies in the Manitoba Geological Survey, in that particular branch. So I'm looking for—I know the book says we're—we have 52 full-time equivalents, but how many actually employees do we have in that particular branch?

**Mr. Chomiak:** If the member doesn't mind, we'll calculate it and get the actual number of bodies—or the number of actual people back to the member.

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, I would appreciate that. I'm looking for the actual number of employees. And, if you could, at the same time, if you could break them down as you have on page 23 here in terms of the categories managerial, professional and

administrative support. If the minister could do that for me, I'd appreciate it.

And then I'd 'saguess' that would—subsequently, that should outline how many vacant positions we have.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I concur.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I wanted to take this just a couple steps further as well, while we've made the request.

In the Mines section, page 27 of the Estimates book, again, we have 25 and a half full-time positions. If the minister could, for me, identify how many bodies are actually employed in that branch and, again, in which category they are employed.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I'll similarly take that under notice and provide that information and the breakdowns to the member.

**Mr. Cullen:** And while I'm asking, I'll ask him as well for page 29, the Petroleum Branch, if he can undertake the same undertaking there and, again, provide me a breakdown of managerial, professional, administrative and how that works compared to the 23 full-time equivalents.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Again, I will provide that in the breakdown to the member.

**Mr. Cullen:** I wonder if the minister has a handle in terms of how many 'vacances' we have within his department at this point in time. I realize the full numbers will be coming, but I just want to get a sense of how many positions are vacant at this point in time.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I'm advised there's 19.7 positions currently vacant.

**Mr. Cullen:** Can the minister, in general terms, kind of outline how long those positions have been vacant, and subsequently, is there an expectation those vacancies will—any vacancies will be filled in the near future?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There's no position that's been vacant for more than two years, and that's an exception. Most are much less than that. There's a constant turnover, and positions are advertised and filled as soon as possible through a competition.

**Mr. Cullen:** Could the minister indicate, then, how many positions are currently being advertised?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There's five positions that are being currently recruited for.



**Mr. Cullen:** The other question, then, we have an ADM leaving in the next month or so.

What's the process and time frame in terms of filling that position?

**Mr. Chomiak:** And I don't want John to leave, but he's leaving on December 4th, and it's—I wish him well, and I wish he would stay, but there is other opportunities in—for him and he's following that plan.

We'll fill the position on an acting basis immediately, and the process is already under way to update the job description and move on in that regard.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's response.

The other line item here is the—in the boards and the commissions. I know there's no staff related to them, but there is expenses there.

Which boards and commissions—and this is on page 31 of the Estimates book—so if the minister could just outline which boards and commissions that has been paid for out of that particular line item?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I—it's the Surface Rights Board and the Mining Board.

**Mr. Cullen:** Again, just to clarify then, those positions on those respective boards, they are appointed by an order-in-council?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, they are.

**Mr. Cullen:** So this figure, then, would represent stipends for those individuals as well as board expenses?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That would be correct.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Cullen:** Just—I'm actually perusing the annual report from '14-15. I think it's a pretty good—hopefully, a good way to kind of go through the departments, sort of line-by-line, if you will, to get a sense where things are at.

In terms of the, pardon me, the 2014 capital expenditures and revenue, and we're looking at about 7 per cent of the provincial GDP, clearly the markets have not been favourable to the sector, and I wonder if the minister can make some comments in terms of where the estimates are?

You know, we were talking capital expenditures of 1.4 billion, exports of about 8.7 per cent. So is, has the department have a handle in terms of what their feeling is for this particular year compared to

last year? Like, are we looking at a 5 per cent downturn, a 10 per cent downturn, and what the impact is going to be?

**Mr. Chomiak:** So the reference is to the contribution of the mining and petroleum sector to the provincial GDP. We anticipate mining activity to be down roughly 50 per cent. The, pardon me, oil and gas will be down 50 per cent. Within the mining sector commodity prices in most cases are at almost all-time lows for the last little period. Capital markets are not rebounding dramatically.

The positive side is that our exploration activities are up this year from prediction and within five years we anticipate that the full production of Lalor and Reed will contribute to the, to an increase, or to a rebounding of GDP. And we keep our fingers crossed in terms of the advanced exploration that are going on with respect to some of the gold and tantalum and some of the exploration activity that is ongoing.

**Mr. Cullen:** So does the minister have a bit of an idea what the revenue for the Province would be in terms of the royalties from the petroleum, like the oil and gas sector, for this year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The Province collects revenue from the oil industry in the form of royalties on the production and Crown-owned oil and gas rights, production taxes on the production from free oiled oil and gas rights and from leasing Crown oil and gas rights. Revenue collected is a function of the international price. Original revenue estimates were 23.5 million based on an average price of a much higher average oil price, and a daily production of 42,000 barrels per day and land sale revenue 2.3 million. Revenue's been revised 18.4 million based on oil price of \$60 a barrel.

**Mr. Cullen:** I wonder if the minister, then, would have the production volumes that are relative to last year, what the anticipated, I'm assuming there could be a decrease in barrels produced.

**Mr. Chomiak:** While we look at the specifics I know that we've decreased from our mighty oil field of 50,000 barrels per day, down to around 42,000 barrels per day in terms of output. We've gone from an oil high price of \$106 a barrel, down to a varying price with respect to this fiscal year; I think we're projecting an average price commensurate with that in other provinces of \$60 per barrel. And we anticipate a 10 per cent drop in production.

**Mr. Cullen:** I think last year we had 464 wells drilled. What's the expectation for this year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** We're projecting 225 to 250.

**Mr. Cullen:** Okay, thank you very much for that.

I'm just curious what kind of feedback the minister and the department are getting from the companies that are doing business out there, and what they perceive as being the roadblocks to enhancing, you know, production there. Clearly, the economics of oil aren't that good, but I think more of like—I know there's been issues around infrastructure and actually just physically getting into some of these sites and moving product around there.

Is that something the minister's hearing? Or what else is he hearing there in terms of what, maybe, can be done from a government perspective or a policy perspective to make sure that, you know, we don't cut off production?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Ironically, with the decreased production, there's been less concern with respect to infrastructure as opposed to when production was increasing and was going full bore. So it's relatively complaint-free, and everyone's crossing their fingers in that industry and looking for some kind of a price rebound.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate that response.

Does the department have an idea in terms of the labour force—and this is specifically around the oil industry—has there been a decrease in the number of employees—people working out in southwestern Manitoba?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Just to put it into perspective, there's 30 to 35 jobs per active rig. And we've gone from a high of 10 to 15 active rigs down to less than 10 active rigs, so the—on average—so the commensurate with that based on the price of oil will see the increase or the decrease in job activity. Fortunately, certainly in my visits to the oil field, it's been indicated that many of the individuals working are expats or locals who participate in this activity and have opportunities, certainly not elsewhere, but have opportunities here in Manitoba to pursue other activities.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Cullen:** There is a reference in the report to investigations around shallow—shale gas. I was wondering if the minister could comment in terms of

where the investigation's at and if there's any—anybody looking at doing any drilling for gas.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think several years ago one of the geological surveys indicated there was some potential for some shale gas development in the region and extending beyond the region, but based on comparative figures and numbers vis-à-vis other jurisdictions, that there wasn't any economic value in pursuing those activities at that time, and there'd be even less economic value in pursuing those activities at this time.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the minister's comments. Switching over to the mining side of things, you know, clearly, commodity prices are a challenge for the industry right now, and obviously that's going to impact the bottom line for the Province. And I do have a chart here, kind of following the mining tax paid to the Province here, and I look back at 2007 and the Province collected \$102,000, and at 2013 we were down to about, you know, \$10 million.

Can the minister make a comment on what 2014 revenues were and what the anticipated 2015 mining tax revenues would be?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The tax was just collected by the Department of Finance. It was anticipated to be less than \$10 million. It's largely volatile due to the flow of commodity prices. We also have a very generous—we have a very competitive and probably the most—well, if not one the most generous tax incentive programs in the country, and in terms of actual revenue there's a significant period of time, a levelled profit-orientated tax that's paid to the Province based on profitability, which doesn't occur during—doesn't occur until mine maturity, and in the case of Manitoba, significantly we've had two mines open in the last several years, but in terms of actual revenue from those sites, we will not see any revenue from those sites for probably five years.

**Mr. Cullen:** Okay. Just to clarify, then, so the Province is estimating to take in about \$10 million this year on the mining tax. Is that—do I understand the minister correctly?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thanks for the clarification on that.

So the other item, then, of course, is the income tax portion. Is the Province—what is the figure the Province is looking at collecting in terms of—in the income tax portion this year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** So, mining tax is a function of profit that is paid by the companies with respect to corporate and personal income tax. That's both based on individual and company payments to the Department of Finance. I don't have those figures in front of me.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I wonder if the member—the minister and his staff would be able to get those numbers for me from the Finance Department, if that wouldn't be too much to ask.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I believe that the Mining Association of Manitoba collects those figures. And those figures we can provide to the member for the past few years.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Obviously, it's pretty important, I would think, to the Finance Department and certainly all members of government and certainly the residents of Manitoba as well, so I would certainly appreciate those undertakings. And I'll maybe get into a little more discussion on taxes and tax rates, hopefully tomorrow.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask about the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program, MEAP. A year ago, there was \$3 million available for assistance. Can the minister say just how much was actually paid out under that particular program?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Under the 2014-15 offering, companies had until June 15th to submit applications along with final reports. Fourteen of the 22 proof projects were completed; total final payout amounted to \$1.2 million. For 2015-16, MEAP held an offering in June 2015 which allocated \$3 million assistance to 23 approved applicants for a total of \$18 million in exploration expenditures. We're expecting the final reports in regard to the completion by mid-June 2016. We anticipate something in the same range as was paid out last year.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate that.

Also, under the Manitoba Prospectors Assistance Program, there was \$125,000 allowance. Again, if the minister could provide how much money was paid out under that program and how many different projects that program funded.

\*(16:50)

**Mr. Chomiak:** With respect to the specific numbers as it relates to the prospectors program, we will provide the member with that information.

I should indicate, though, I think it's significant to indicate that Manitoba's exploration incentive

programs are the most generous in the country and have been lauded nationally as—given the difficulties on some of the capital markets and the exploration and some of the difficulties being encountered by junior mining companies, as the most generous in the country. And so we're, I think, we're quite pleased with the fact that we added the—we increased the incentives in order to deal with the lack of capital at the bequest of junior mining companies and prospectors.

With respect to the funding for the prospectors incentive program specifically, I'll get back to the member.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's comments on the programs.

I guess the alarming statistic to me is when we look at what, you know, the Canadian Natural Resources statistics are telling us. And they're telling us in Manitoba we're getting a more declining percentage of that exploration dollar being spent in Manitoba versus other jurisdictions across Canada. And we may have good programs in place, but the fact remains is we're less than half of where we were a few years ago. And that to me is alarming, because, as the minister knows, quite frankly, if we don't have people on the field doing the exploration, it's difficult to find new mines in Manitoba.

So those particular statistics I find quite alarming, and I'm just wondering what we could be doing to try to enhance a bigger share of that exploration dollar here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Chomiak:** There's a couple points I think that I will refer to.

First, late last year at the mining convention I indicated that as a result of our enhancement to incentives we anticipate that we would be increasing our share of exploration activities in the country, and indeed, seven provinces has declined in the last year and we've actually increased our exploration activities, which means that there's been a reverse to the trend.

The other factor that I think has to play into it is that we've developed two mines in Manitoba that have gone from exploration to actual development in a very short period of time; that is Reed and Lalor. And both of those are success stories that are playing out in terms of jobs and activity, albeit not necessarily in terms of revenues directly to the Province. So I think the initiative that the department took with respect to advancing those two projects

and going to mine status ought to be recognized as fairly significant.

The issue with respect to mining exploration and development is, as respects the national Natural Resources Canada view, is it's not very—it's not a very good outlook for Canadian mining in general at present. And as I said many times in the House, I don't know of any other jurisdiction that's opened two mines in the last—within the last year or two except Manitoba.

And so with the exploration activity going up, I anticipate that there will be better results in Manitoba in the next period of time and I look forward to being able to see those developments through.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's response. Obviously it's encouraging to have two mines open. And certainly congratulate the people at HudBay that have, you know, invested in Manitoba. That's very important, certainly, for those communities and I think for the Province as well.

The unfortunate part is we've also had a number of projects that close. And that's an alarming statistic. I think we've had eight or nine, I think, close over the last, you know, 15 to 16 years. So it's a bit of a challenge. And obviously the exploration side of it is important to us.

And certainly that's the feedback that I'm getting from certainly the prospectors and developers. And you know, even the mining companies themselves recognize that there's only a certain commodity that's left under the existing infrastructure in mines, and they have to find new sources. And it's pretty critical for the development of the industry. I just hope that the department, you know, shares those concerns that, you know, there is issue out there in terms of attracting investment dollars.

As the minister knows, it's—you know, we're competing with an—exploration dollars and investment dollars worldwide. So we have to do everything possible to make sure that we—that we're an attractive place to do business, and I think it's not just a—it's not just your department, Mr. Minister, that has to be aware of that. I think there has to be a recognition within government across the lines that this is an important industry and we have to do what we can to make sure that we attract that investment dollar.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I agree with the member, often the benefits of mining are out of sight, out of mind, no pun intended. But virtually everything we function with has some kind of relationship relative to mining.

I want to quote from the Money CNN news com feed: quote—to—CEO Max Porterfield on The Gold Report saying that it's what makes Manitoba, quote, question on—this was on CNN—what makes Manitoba such a good mining jurisdiction? Response: It's in Canada. Of course, it's safe and stable. Manitoba has excellent infrastructure and experienced workforce. The provincial government is very supportive of mining through its Mineral Exploration Assistance Program and issues rebates of up to 40 per cent on exploration expenditures up to \$200,000 a year. Furthermore, we've seen the major companies such as Alamos, Yamani [*phonetic*] recently establish a presence. End of quote.

Yes, Mr. Chairperson, if we add to that the fact that we have a—significant training incentives and the lowest hydro power rates in the country, while the picture is not positive generally across the country relative to a lot of jurisdictions, I think there's been a fair amount of attention paid to our stable infrastructure and the investments we made in mining.

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the minister for that and those comments as well.

And there's probably a whole myriad of issues around the mining sector that have to be addressed and, in my view, I don't think there's one thing that we, you know, we can put our finger on that's going to enhance the exploration dollars coming to Manitoba, and not the investment dollars.

So I think there's a lot of things that we have to work on. At least, that's certainly the message that I'm getting from the industry. I certainly hope the department would continue to work people and hear—and listen to that feedback as well.

I want to mention here, Mr. Chair, about the Mineral Potential Assessment Committee. I—it looks to me like this is a relatively new committee, and I'd like to get a bit of an understanding on that particular committee in terms of who sits on that committee and how it operates.

**Mr. Chomiak:** In late 2014, the deputies in Mineral Resources and Conservation agreed that the Province would work together to achieve a balance between development and protection for our protected areas together with representatives from industry established under the Mineral Potential Assessment Committee. It's been set up to replace the former MELC, mineral evaluation—the MELC, a process that had occurred between 1998 and 2009. The mandate is to assess areas proposed for protection for

the mineral–potential to establish new protocols and guidelines and best practices related to that–to those park and to those environmental developments.

So it's essentially and industry-departmental committee that looks at potential sites and achieves a balance between both environmental sustainable protection and the viability of mining and outlines–

**Mr. Chairperson:** Forgive the interruption, but the hour of being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

### CONSERVATION AND WATER STEWARDSHIP

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** As the minister knows unfortunately time is finite thing, and that being said, I will attempt to make my questions brief and in turn hope that the minister will take a cue from his colleague today and keep his answers brief as well. Any outstanding questions I'll simply put forward to the minister in writing and again hope for a rapid, or a timely response to those queries.

To that end, I'm wondering if the minister can give an update. His government in September of last year announced, sorry, announced a review of the operation of various flood control infrastructures. That report was concluded in the end of February, we are now in November, so, and I'm wondering if the minister can provide an update as to the–that report and when that report is anticipated to being made public considering it was, like I said, from my understanding it's–that it was completed at the end of February.

**Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** I thank the member for the question.

That report, it's my understanding is in the domain of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. Much as I would welcome the opportunity to speak at length on flooding and in particular given the impact on my constituency which is, I think, clear to one and all, given the flooding in

Lake Manitoba and subsequent to that Lake St. Martin, the evacuation of entire communities and people in the thousands. It's a topic that is near and dear to my heart.

And you know, my determination to resolve those situations is unequivocal. In fact, at the time of my re-election, I dedicated this term in office to working tirelessly to resolve these issues, and I'm pleased to say that we are well down the road in this regard in terms of, you know, our commitment to a secondary outlet, to going into the existing emergency outlet and expanding its capacity by an amount equal to the volume that the secondary outlet from Lake Manitoba will flow. Which is important so that we do not put additional burden onto the people around Lake St. Martin who, frankly, suffered more than any as result of high water levels on Lake Manitoba for so, so many years.

So it's only fair to ensure them that any additional works out of Lake Manitoba will not additionally impact them. I think it's very relevant to put on the record that that emergency outlet itself, which is an emergency outlet, the power to control it still resides with the federal government.

We have to apply, and they have to approve our use of it, otherwise we jeopardize the potential for disaster financial assistance. And it's been a little bit frustrating for us in recent times. We've had high water levels. We're not allowed to use it, because we weren't at critical flood stage yet, I think was the answer, but perhaps the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) could answer that better than I.

But converting that emergency outlet to a permanent status is fundamental going forward to our overall control of the system. And then of course putting a permanent control structure on there, so that we don't need to have a track hoe sitting there on a year-round basis on the off chance that it may have to open the outlet up, or close it up, or what have you. So that's a mega project in itself.

Not to mention completion of reach 3 that will take water out of the Big Buffalo marsh to Lake Winnipeg, its ultimate destination. And the reconfiguration of that, of course, which is a part of our plan given the feedback that we've had from First Nations peoples and their discussions on the fishery which does fall within the domain of this department. It's my understanding plans are under way to reconfigure that structure as well to address those concerns.

And of course, in order to access all of this territory, because this is some of the most remote, inhospitable, inaccessible land imaginable, quite frankly, anybody that has ever had to traverse this land it—knows it's virtually impossible to move through, you know, during the summer, certainly. You need an Argo or—a helicopter, I find, is best to traverse this territory. You know, to get to all these locations, we need to build a—an access road. So you know, plans for that as well are under way.

So, when you look at it, you're not talking about just one ditch like members opposite are tend—or tend to do. That seems to be what matters to them, if it mattered to them at all frankly, which is somewhat questionable. Certainly doesn't matter to the Liberals, I think, who have said they won't proceed with it until such time that they'll balance their budget.

\* (14:50)

But, in short, and in conclusion, I don't want to talk overly long. The—we're talking about probably five big capital projects all inclusive to do this with a completion date of 2020 which will be work well done. It's work that's been in planning for some time now, it requires section 35 consultation with First Nations people, et cetera, et cetera.

So, just to answer your question, I think this process is well under way, and when we return to office in the spring we will see it through to completion by the date 2020, or in that range is our objective.

So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Martin:** Once again, in the interest of co-operation, I would ask the minister to try to condense his answers. The answer in a nutshell was that it rests with the Minister of Transportation, that file.

The—I have received correspondence from the Lac du Bonnet Wildlife Association. I'm sure the minister has, as well. Hopefully, this will not require a 10-minute response on behalf of the minister. And if the minister can clarify the changes in relation to the scope of the powers of conservation officers, does that include the enforcement of distracted driver laws here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I apologize for my previous answer for going overly long and I will try and restrain myself, but the member should not lead on a

topic of such great importance to me as that one was and expect me to answer in a few seconds.

So, again, to the question raised by the member, you know, with the new Conservation Officers Act, powers of the officers have been enhanced in recognition of their role as peace officers. And in the normal course of doing their duties they are empowered to enforce laws other than related specifically to wildlife or the fisheries or what have you. For example, if they were doing a night patrol and stopped a vehicle and the drivers were impaired, they would have the power to invoke the law and the same applies to distracted driving.

So I hope that answers the question in a brief enough manner for the member.

**Mr. Martin:** I appreciate that clarification then, that conservation officers will be responsible, or will have the power, sorry, let me rephrase that, will also have the power or scope to deal with distracted driving under Manitoba's laws and there's been no directive otherwise.

One of the other queries by the Lac du Bonnet wildlife federation was that they had indicated that conservation officers have removed the Canadian flag from their uniforms after displaying it for many years, and that they expressed some concern over this, that while there is a large provincial coat of arms on their uniforms, that they were concerned about the loss of the Canadian insignia on those uniforms. And I'm wondering if the minister can comment on that decision.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, first of all, I want to apologize to the member opposite. After discussions with staff I've been informed that at the request of the RCMP, that the actual charge of distracted driving not be enforced by our conservation officers. So that's clarification, and an apology.

As to the wearing of the Canadian flag, well, this is a provincial force and that's reflected by the coat of arms that is present on the uniform. In order to avoid confusion as to who these people work for, whether it's the government of Manitoba or the Government of Canada, a decision was made to not have the Canadian flag as a part of that. However, if officers so choose, if they want to wear a pin with the Canadian flag, I've been told they are free to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Martin:** Sorry, to go back to the minister's clarification, just so that I'm clear on the point, the conservation officers have the authority to enforce Manitoba's distracted driving laws as part of their new scope under the changes, but have been directed not to by the department as a result of a request by the RCMP, if I'm understanding the minister's clarification.

Can the minister table a copy of that request by the RCMP?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Again, in law, conservation officers do not have the authority to enforce distracted driving legislation. The member requested written documentation from the RCMP to that effect and there is no written letter or anything of that nature. This was something that came up in the course of discussions between our authorities and RCMP authorities. They meet on occasion to discuss the law in general, and that's how this came about. So there's no written letter to that effect.

\*(15:00)

The member asked about the duties of a conservation officer. They are listed in regulation in The Conservation Officers Act. So if the member wants to know what the full duties are of a conservation officer, that is where he can go to find it. That's public record and available easily to him, and it makes reference to the various different other pieces of legislation.

So I hope that answers the—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Member for Morris.

**Mr. Martin:** I'm—like I said, Mr. Chair, my goal here is not to belabour the point. I—this is the third response to this—what I thought was a straightforward question and it's the third different response I've gotten from the minister. I think maybe the simplest solution is that if I could request the minister a separate briefing for me so I can better understand this.

His first response was that they did have authority, and there was no directive to prevent them. The second answer was they simply weren't doing it as a—they were not enforcing as a result of a request by the RCMP, and the third answer was they actually don't have the authority and it was a verbal request by the RCMP.

So if the minister would be willing to set up a briefing for myself just so I can get clarity of those three divergent answers, that would be of value.

Moving to another issue, Mr. Speaker, that I brought up several times in the House and that is obviously one that the minister referenced in his opening comments, and that is the big game crisis in our province as identified by the Manitoba Wildlife Federation.

I'm wondering if the minister is obviously aware of the killings of 15 moose along the Grass River Provincial Park, obviously, illegal shootings done—a roadway within a provincial park. I'm wondering if the minister can provide any update in terms of that investigation, which I think shocked all hunters in this province to see that senseless slaughter, especially when some of these cows had twin fetuses and given that the state of the population was a loss.

So, while I understand there may be an ongoing investigation and, if that's the minister's response, I'm fine with that as well.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, as to the member's request, first of all, I—you know, I erroneously put incorrect information on the record for which I apologized and attempted to correct it, and I think we have a clear answer at this point. However, if the member opposite would like a briefing on this issue or in the spirit of openness and co-operation on any issue, you know, I would endeavour to see that come to pass. So on this particular topic, yes, we will arrange a briefing for you at your convenience.

On the topic of the killing of moose that the member made reference to, any killing of a big game animal shot from a roadway, as I understand it, is against the law. Discharging firearms in that manner, regardless of who you are, and in some of the cases there was wastage as well, which is also against the law. Anybody that harvests a big game animal should not be doing it just for trophy purposes or whatever; it's incumbent upon them to make the best and fullest use of that animal as is possible, and to my understanding, that includes ribcages and necks and things like that as well. So I would just encourage all hunters if they're going to harvest an animal to do their utmost to use it to their greatest ability.

There were a number of events in that particular region the member referenced. There are some confidentiality issues, obviously, if officers are still investigating or what have you. We're not going to go into that great a detail. You know, we do put decoys out on occasion and attempt to catch these, well, I guess we could call them road hunters—that's what they are—in order to discourage that type of

behaviour. It's a concern to all hunters, frankly, whether they're licensed hunters or people exercising a treaty right to hunt for food.

This kind of activity does not give hunting in general a good image, and I think all of us who hunt responsibly with respect for wild game are appalled at this kind of behaviour. I know I am. And we will do our utmost to endeavour to bring these people to justice because they are breaking the law as I described.

**Mr. Martin:** The minister mentioned the use of decoys as one of the tools that they utilize in terms of dealing with poaching. I know the Sierra Club international, the Manitoba chapter, donated a very expensive mechanical moose to the department probably about a year ago or so, about, and I think it was late 2013 or '14. Can the minister advise or confirm when they received that mechanical moose decoy and how many times it has been used since they received it and to what, in the end—sorry, the end result of its usage to date in terms of charges.

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, you know, I don't want to go into intimate detail on this because obviously we don't want to expose our strategy to the night hunting crowd out there, giving them directions as to where and when we have these units in operation, but I can, you know, give you some details anyway.

We did receive a donation from, it was the Sierra Club, I believe you made reference to, about a year and a half ago. It was added to our complement of 45 decoys that we've got, and last year 43 of the 45 were in operation in various locations across the province, and this includes, you know, not just one species of animal, but other big game species as well. Typically, we'll deploy them on a complaints basis because gratuitous use of them in the eyes of the court might be viewed as a form of entrapment, so we have to be cognizant of that fact and use them, you know, strategically in that sense. So I hope that answers the member's question.

**Mr. Martin:** The minister indicated that the use of these decoys is complaint driven. Can the minister identify, then, how many complaints he received that resulted in the use of decoys? And, again, I understand the minister's comment. I'm not asking for the locations; I'm simply asking for the number of times they were utilized and the second part of the question being how many times their use resulted in charges being laid.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, I have been called to task at the very beginning of this hearing by the member opposite, and I do not want to make the same mistake putting incorrect information on the record, speculating. Shorter answer is, well, we do not have those specific numbers available for you right now as to exactly how many arrests and so forth. So, as we discussed before, this is something we'll take under advisement, and we'll get that information back to the member.

**Mr. Martin:** Obviously, aerial night surveillance is another tool used in dealing with poaches—poachers and spotlighting. I'm wondering how many times the minister—how many times night aerial servants—surveillance has been utilized in 2015, and how does that compare to the previous year in terms of both the number of flights, the budget allocated and, obviously, the—any successful charges laid as a result of that utilization of aerial night surveillance?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Specific to the member's question how many flights occurred this year, it's my understanding that three flights have been undertaken and that two more are planned. There were no charges as a result of this.

We've had a number of occasions where charges have been laid from ground patrols. The department tries a variety of methods when it comes to the challenging task of arresting poachers, night hunters, call them what you will. In previous years, the program was suspended because, as I said earlier, the department likes to experiment with different methods. At the request of the conservation officers association, the program was reinstated this year.

**Mr. Martin:** Can the minister identify the time frame in which the—it was suspended?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** The previous two years, the aerial flights were suspended.

**Mr. Martin:** The one issue we hear a lot about—I'm sure the minister has heard a lot about as well—is the discharging of firearms at night. There was an unfortunate incident a few years ago that resulted in the death of an individual who was mistakenly identified as a big game and was subsequently shot by his hunting partner at night who misidentified the LED lights on his hat as the eyes of an animal.

I'm wondering if the minister can advise what his department is doing in relation to this issue, just given the obviously safety concerns related to that and especially considering an individual was shot and killed.



**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I'm actually familiar, very familiar, with that situation the member described. I will make a few points here. First of all, night hunting as per the direction of the Supreme Court is allowed for First Nations people. So that's right up front at the situation that the court has spoken.

But it is of concern to us, to any of us who hunt, you know, we make some very powerful weapons nowadays; some of these rifle bullets can travel two, three or more miles. Trying to see that far, obviously, in darkness is—there are scenarios where that is inherently unsafe, and I would not think otherwise.

\* (15:20)

So we are trying to address this in one manner, and that is when we have a conservation closure in an area, such as just occurred in areas 29 and 29A, I believe, provincial forests, or what was that again, the—Turtle Mountain. Right, I'm sorry. I knew the game hunting area; I forgot the name of the actual area that was recently closed because numbers were down. And before we go back into an area like that and open it back up again for hunting once numbers have recovered, we go in and we meet with the First Nations leadership to discuss the issue of night hunting and express our concerns in this regard. And this is under the domain of the section 35 constitutional duty to consult that we're exercising this particular action, and—I was going to say surprisingly, but it's really not surprising that a number of the leadership of the First Nations and First Nations people in general agree that this practice is dangerous in some circumstances and that we should be giving it some thought, which we are.

It will take time to, you know, go through this section 35 consultation. How much time it will take, I don't know, but it's a process that is under way.

**Mr. Martin:** Just to clarify then, so the minister—I understood the minister right that they formally engaged with First Nations under section 35 a duty to consult in order to formulate a province-wide policy on the issue of spotlighting?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Mr. Chair, again, if I recall the question fully, the duty to consult when you infringe on treaty rights is mandatory. As I said, this is a policy that this government is undertaking, and I hope that answers the member's question.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I do have a question for the minister and his department.

The Shoal lakes within the Interlake region, as the minister is full aware, there was a total number of farmers, cattlemen and so on that had been bought out and the government's position after the buyout, they stocked a million fish into the Shoal Lake in 2012 and again in 2013.

What is the department's policy going forward, are they going to continue to stock? There's a number of recreational areas been developed there and they would like to know for future plans what the department's plans are.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I thank the member for Lakeside for his question. He is correct that the lake was stocked on a couple of occasions. That's sporadic. Basically, you know, we do an analysis; I was going to say we take stock of the needs out there, but I don't want to be frivolous. So we do an analysis of where the need is and direct fish accordingly.

I asked what kind of fish was being stocked there, and just to pre-empt the next question, if that's what it is, we don't know the answer to that here. We can take that under advisement. I know there's been really good perch fishing in the Shoal lakes the last couple years, a number of people have pointed that out to me, some master angler fish being taken out of there. So we do stock perch, so maybe that's what occurred, but we can get the answer to that question.

And if the member opposite feels that this would be a good thing to do again, habitat is important. You know, as this lake comes back down to a more reasonable level, that might have the negative impact of detracting on that habitat, but I'm not a biologist or an expert in the biology of fish. I am a master angler, but I don't think that applies to the question here.

So if the member opposite is making the suggestion we restock once again, then we'll give that due consideration.

**Mr. Eichler:** Simply asking clarification, it was walleye, just—you don't need to dig it up, I already know. You—when you ask a question, you should know the answer.

So the next question, then, is a follow-up to what I asked earlier, and what is the long-term plan for the Shoal lakes in the Interlake? Is it going to be staying a recreation area or is it going to be drained off or let natural drainage occur?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I thank the member for Lakeside for clarifying that it was walleye we

stocked in there, but I do know there's some master angler perch being taken out of there as well, so.

As to whether it's going to remain as a recreational fishery, that depends on Mother Nature more than anything. As long as it's sustainable from a habitat perspective in that regard, then we'll continue to exercise whatever powers we have to manage that.

\* (15:30)

As to the lake levels themselves, as the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is well aware, there's no big artificial outlets to the lake and it will fluctuate naturally based on conditions, whether it remains wet as it's been for too many years. But those things can turn on a dime. I'm sure the member himself recalls the drought of 2003, how quickly conditions changed there and how traumatic that was for the people. I know that we've experienced floods of late, and they can be traumatic, too, but droughts are a thousand times worse than floods are.

When it's wet you can always find some grass somewhere. Droughts, I recall vividly the drought of 2003 with—there was a provincial election under way at the time and I happened to be running against the president of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, I'm sure a friend of the member opposite, Betty Green, at the time.

And things really got bad with the BSE crisis, the border closure, the banks slammed their doors on ranchers as well, the deal with the federal government, the BSE recovery program, failed us miserably. Rather than getting I think it was \$43 million, we got around \$3 million from that program. The provincial government at the day—of the day did not take their money off the table, our share of it. We rolled it into other programs, feed and freight assistance programs, as I recall. There was some set-asides, I believe, as well, and then ultimately \$100 million in low-interest loans as well were delivered.

But the point being that droughts are a thousand times worse, as I said. I recall driving out to view pastures with the Minister of Agriculture, the honourable Rosann Wowchuk at the time. We took her to a pasture, this was in July, and I picked a pebble up off the gravel road and threw it out into this pasture and you could literally watch it roll to a stop. That's how badly those fields were not just grazed down by the cattle but by the grasshoppers that followed.

So—and we have to bear in mind that long-term projections from climatologists are for drought periods in the prairies. So, you know, any natural areas where water builds up now in fact may be to our benefit in future times, and I can again give an example of that. I know that in the drought of 2003 some of our producers were in dire straits and the Department of Conservation at the time did open up access to some of the wildlife management areas in the Interlake and allowed ranchers to go in and graze those lands, and I could name names but I won't.

So, you know, when we look at areas like the Shoal lakes, we should have an all-encompassing view of that, I think. Thank you.

**Mr. Martin:** Again, I'll encourage the minister to try to tighten his responses.

I recently had an opportunity to visit Dawn and Arch Dowsett at East Blue Lake. I'm sure the minister is well aware that the water at East Blue Lake has risen considerably, about 10 feet. The flooding has threatened their investment and not only their investment but the provincial park as well.

What I'm requesting I'm wondering if the minister's colleague, the MLA for Swan River, who is also happens to be the Minister of Agriculture, had attended the Dowsetts' place of business a couple of weeks prior, so this fall. He had indicated to the Dowsetts that the 10-metre rise in the lake had occurred previously during their mandate and actually in one single year had risen and fallen 10 feet, so that's a 20-foot differential in the span of one year.

I wonder if the minister can table any supporting documentation as to his colleague's claim that the East Blue Lake had risen and fallen a total of 20 feet in a single calendar year.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I won't speak for the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), he can speak for himself and it's my understanding that he will be next in the Estimates queue so you will have that opportunity to ask him about his engagement.

However, this file is familiar to me. I've read through the advisory notes on it and I'll try and be brief, but there is no easy solution to this. It's—there is no natural outlet to this particular lake. This particular lake is aquifer charged, so you might pump and pump and pump and it will naturally recharge itself, and that's not to say we haven't tried. There has been pumping activity, the department has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to address

this particular concern. There was a hydrologist hired, there was a consultant's report done up.

But, as I said, no easy solution to this problem, no cheap solution to this problem, it's a natural occurrence, no natural outlet, so it's a difficult situation but it's not unique to this particular location. This is—there's a lot of water in Manitoba.

**Mr. Martin:** Is the minister or his department aware of any time that the East Blue Lake rose and fell by a 20-foot differential in a single calendar year?

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, in short, we're not aware of that but we don't want to put any incorrect information on the record, so that's the short answer as I know the member likes short answers.

**Mr. Martin:** Well, then I'll assume that the minister will get that information to me in terms of clarity.

That being said, in November 2008, in the government Throne Speech, they committed the government to banning non-recyclable bags. At that time the minister had indicated they'd been studying the issue for the previous two years going back to 2006. The goal at that time was the ban would be phased in over a two year period for full 'impemation' into 2010.

That being said, it's with interest that the government in December of 2014 announced plans to look at banning non-recyclable bags.

So my question to the minister is what happened to the 2008 ban that his government had spent two years researching going back to 2006 and had committed to phase in by 2010, only to reannounce plans to review a ban on plastic bags in December 12th of 2014?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** The whole topic of non-recyclable plastic bags is complex and, dare I say, confusing. It's almost symbolic for a lot of people. That's the most visible thing. Certainly, when you're a rural resident, and you take your own drive out to the garbage dump and see plastic bags hanging in the bushes, that stands out. But, that said, bans are complex and have been tried in other jurisdictions and haven't worked.

So, you know, I think it could always be characterized as a knee-jerk reaction to something that's iconic or most visible to the eye. It's really not the best approach. It's—you know, our approach is a comprehensive waste and recycling strategy. You

know, focusing on curbside composting in cities, for example, is something that would be much more lucrative or beneficial, I would suggest, and then, of course, the real challenges to our waste disposal grounds are dealing with construction, renovation and demolition waste. Those are the things—the industrial, commercial, institutional waste stream are the things that put the most challenges on the system.

So, you know, there are more than one way to skin a cat, I guess, and this is our preferred course to take a comprehensive, well-thought-out approach to waste management as opposed to just gut reactions to things that might seem simple but are actually much more complex.

**Mr. Martin:** Well, I find the minister's response is interesting because, again, it was his government that made the commitment in November 2008 to ban nonrecyclable bags. Now the minister says it's a knee-jerk reaction. It was his government that said they'd been studying the issue for two years going back to 2006. And now the minister's saying that's not the—that bans are complex. And it's his government, or his immediate predecessor, that indicated in December of last year that a total ban on single-use plastic bags was under discussion. So, like I said, it's a bit—it's sometimes hard to follow the bouncing ball or, I guess, the flying plastic bag in this case when it comes to the NDP's policy on this one.

The issue that dominates a lot of summertime conversation, because people are out at their cottages in the summer time, is that is the government's plans and continued implementation of significant increases in cottagers' lease fees and service fees in the range of up to 750 per cent. The NDP have made it clear that they've described cottagers as Nygård's is the phrase that the minister has used. The minister has gone on record, as well, as talking about how these cottagers are diverting resources away from the public treasury, resources for health and education that is being used to subsidize their way of life. A recent comment from the Whiteshell Cottagers Association president noted that I cannot fathom the thinking of an NDP government that, for a small increase in revenue, is prepared to sacrifice the deep interests of the very people they are committed to support, that is, modest-income Manitobans. And make no mistake: when it comes to income levels, cottagers are no different from ordinary Manitobans. Cottagers are simply ordinary Manitobans, many of them fixed-income seniors who have prioritized their expenditures and found ways by dint of hard work and sweat equity to build and enjoy their cabins and

to pass this experience down to the next generation. And now it seems that this government, through its hikes, is threatening that dream.

Now, I know the government has indicated that part of the hikes of 700—of up to 750 per cent is to fund the government's \$100-million upgrades to provincial parks. That being said, though, I do notice in Estimates in section 4 that the total expenditures on capital investment, which is to include—provides for infrastructure, upgrading facilities including parks infrastructure, is down by 54 per cent or \$27.8 million since 2012, so over the last three years, which makes one wonder where the funding is going. Because in that time frame, the fees and—lease fees and service fees for cottagers have been going up significantly with many cottagers now at the \$3,000 or near that \$3,000 cap that the government has indicated that it will have in place at least until after the next provincial election and then at which time they will fully implement the 750 per cent increase.

I'm wondering if the minister could advise whether or not—considering that he now refers to his own government's policy on the use of bags as a knee-jerk reaction, complex and not the best approach—whether or not there is a change under his leadership to the issue of cottagers and the 750 per cent lease and 250 per cent service fees that many cottagers are currently facing.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** I find myself at a bit of a—in a bit of a conundrum or a dilemma here. The member, at the beginning of this hearing, stressed the brevity of my answers, asking me to restrain myself and not speak at great length, has now put three complex and challenging questions on the table. He asks me to respond to the use of non-recyclable bags—

**An Honourable Member:** No, I didn't.

**Mr. Nevakshonoff:** Well, he says he didn't, but I listened carefully to his question, and when he responds to my answer, then he can expect a response in kind if it's a challenging way he put his question. Then, he put the question of cottage lease fees on the table, which is another very complicated issue altogether, and at the conclusion of his question segued into a discussion on parks and spending and so forth. So would the—does the member opposite want me to try and jam all three of those issues into a very brief answer, or would he like me to focus on one or the other or all three in succession? If he wants short answers, then he should consider putting short questions to—through the Chair.

**Mr. Martin:** The minister's free to jam anything he wants, Mr. Chair. That being said, I'm prepared to conclude Estimates at this time.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, I will now deal with the resolutions.

Resolution 12.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$68,939,000 for Conservation and Water Stewardship, Parks and Regional Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,963,000 for Conservation and Water Stewardship, Environmental Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$27,332,000 for Conservation and Water Stewardship, Water Stewardship and Biodiversity, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,434,000 for Conservation and Water Stewardship, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$23,523,000 for Conservation and Water Stewardship, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

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

At this point we request—[interjection] No, they're gone.

Yes, are there any questions?

Resolution 12.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,421,000 for Conservation and Water

Stewardship, Finance and Crown Lands, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. *[interjection]* Yes, and we'll take a brief recess of five minutes.

*The committee recessed at 3:53 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:59 p.m.*

**ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS**

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** I do have a few opening comments with respect to the department.

We have a department that is not so large in number but does have a large degree of responsibility in that we have a responsibility of roughly 80 per cent of the land mass of the province of Manitoba. Some of the areas that we have been working on through one of the areas of our government, of our department, is the Agreements Management and Aboriginal Consultations Branch, and that's dealing with the issue of Crown consultations—the Aboriginal-Crown consultations, which is really facilitating Crown-Aboriginal consultations, which to this day remains a high priority.

Three Crown-Aboriginal consultation files co-ordinated by our department were concluded in 2014-2015, and that was the consultation processes that included Sunterra's Interlake peat harvest expansion project, and Manitoba Hydro's Lake Winnipeg East System Improvement Transmission project, and the Keeyask Generation and transmission project.

As well, we have responsibility for treaty land entitlement. As you know, to date, all treaty land entitlement agreements, a total of in excess of 598,000 acres have been transferred by Manitoba to Canada, with 574,000 acres set apart as reserve. In the area of natural resource co-management, the department remains actively involved in natural resources co-management with First Nations and northern communities. The Cross Lake Northern Flood Agreement implementation process still continues. Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro continue to work with the Cross Lake First Nation in implementing the NFA through yearly action plans worth approximately \$5.6 million each a year.

Now, this action plan programs include land exchange, debris clean-up, archeology, safe ice trails, commercial fishing, trapping, domestic fishing and hot lunch at the school. And what we're very proud of, and this is the first of its kind in western Canada, is, of course, the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Canada-Manitoba tripartite agreement on self-government.

Now, I recall, about a year and a half ago, former minister Bernard Valcourt and former Brandon-Souris member of Parliament Merv Tweed, and the MLA for Brandon West and I attended the signing of the Canada-Manitoba Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Governance Agreement and Tripartite Governance Agreement on August 30th, 2013. Now, this is the first self-government agreement with a First Nation and the Province of Manitoba. These agreements remove Sioux Valley from certain provisions of the Indian Act and allows for Sioux Valley Dakota Nation to have laws to co-exist with current federal and provincial laws. And we were happy to be a part of that process.

And, of course, the Interlake 2011 flooding, that continues to be an issue. First Nations of Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin, Pinaymootang, and Dauphin River continue to undergo some serious discussion with our—not only our provincial mediator—negotiator, but, indeed, the federal negotiator who was still in place, and the outcome of his tenure, of course, will be determined in the coming days with the change of government in Ottawa. But Sid Dutchak has been doing a good job and, on behalf of the federal government, and on the part of the Province, we have Mr. Harold Westdal who has been working diligently with the First Nation. And we've had our challenges, no doubt, you know, some of the First Nations have changed consultants along the way several times and it's been

a huge challenge, as you can well imagine, Mr. Chair.

But the federal government and Manitoba, through Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Northern Development Canada, are co-operating on two related objectives in response to this event: construction of new homes and infrastructure to enable evacuees to return home. And they're currently working on two issues, and that is the construction of new homes and infrastructure to enable evacuees to be able to go home.

And it's been four years, you know, and I'll be the first to admit that four years is unacceptable. That's a long period of time, but you know what? It's not simply just sending people back to their home communities. It's also a matter of building and replacing entire infrastructure, entire communities, to a large extent, and I was very proud, back in August, to be a part of a groundbreaking ceremony with the Lake St. Martin First Nation that occurred.

And I note that there was a question raised in the Chamber yesterday with respect to tendering. Let me point out and let me address that issue right off the bat with relation to the two thousand and—I believe that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was the one that raised this issue with the—with this matter. The department is currently co-ordinating the land's component of the settlement negotiations and is working with the lead provincial negotiator along with the provincial departments to complete the land status reviews.

On the infrastructure, each of the four nations are at different levels in negotiations with the Province and with the federal government through the working table. Now, what Canada and Manitoba have done is they have addressed the First Nations concern raised in the housing project tender. Now, I just want to point out here right off the bat that the housing tender is expected to be released next week. Both the road and the housing tender were developed and reviewed by Canada and Manitoba under the federal government's standard tendering practices, so I just want to put that on the record right at the start, Mr. Chair, that, in fact, there is nothing going on that would say that this is being done in an incorrect fashion.

The department is also dealing with the Inuit south-of-60 negotiations. Now, this is something that has been ongoing for some 40 years, if I recall. This department, on behalf of Manitoba, is engaged in, without a prejudice, negotiation for the settlement of

Inuit claims to land. Now, this is including harvesting rights, resource management as defined—in a defined area in northeast Manitoba adjacent to the Hudson Bay as part of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement that was settled off in 1993.

Now, prior to 1912, and everything north of 53 in the province of Manitoba up until 1912 was regarded to be part of the Northwest Territories. So, the areas north of the 53rd parallel were regarded to be—because I remember my father and grandfather, their birth certificates were deemed to be born in Norway House, Northwest Territories, and that was prior to 1912, of course. So we have this arrangement here that has to be taken into consideration, that, in fact, the current boundaries now did not exist prior to 1912.

\* (16:10)

On the issue of Canada-Manitoba Hydro relations, Manitoba Hydro-related initiatives include work right now at Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, and I know that we did a lot of questioning on the part of members to the chair of the board of Manitoba Hydro when he was here for the Crown corporations hearings, committee hearings that we had recently, and there are many answers that have to be responded to by letter that were committed to by the chair of Manitoba Hydro along with the acting CEO of the corporation. So those are still being developed for members that asked questions and are owed these explanations on certain questions that they had.

I think I will leave it there for now because I know that the members will have questions relating to matters that I've raised and perhaps matters unrelated to the department, in fact, but I just would like to leave it at that for the time being. But those are some of the highlights of the activities of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Not really; I'll go right to questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we will now defer consideration of line item 19.1.(a) contained in resolution 19.1.

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

**Mr. Robinson:** Seated to my immediate left is Robert Wavey, the deputy minister of the department. We have Rob Ballantyne next to him, the executive director of the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat. Freda Albert across from the deputy minister. Freda is the director of the Local Government Development Division. And we have Pavlo Motruk, the finance minister representing the executive financial officer, Angel Anderson, this afternoon in our Estimates process.

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

**Mr. Briese:** Globally, please.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

The floor is now open for questions.

I assume we've agreed—the committee's agreed to this, global? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Briese:** Thanks for the opening comments, Mr. Minister. You certainly did touch on quite a number of things that I would like to get a little more information on. And I know the Estimates are going to end up sometime tomorrow, so that's why I didn't want to take any time with an opening. I'd rather just go to some questions.

So, firstly, I'm just wondering what your—the staffing's at in your department and how—what your vacancy rate is.

**Mr. Robinson:** I'm advised by the staff that the vacancy rate currently is between 5 and 6 per cent.

**Mr. Briese:** Are the—is the department actively trying to fill those positions?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes, Mr. Chair, they are.

**Mr. Briese:** With limited time, I—there's some things I do want to get into, and I'd like to talk somewhat about the East Side Road Authority. And I know we just recently changed the name on it. It is now just the East Side Road Authority, not the floodway authority too.

The question I asked last year and I'll ask again is: What's the—how many people are actually working for the East Side Road Authority? What's the staff?

**Mr. Robinson:** I believe that it's in the mid-'70s, Mr. Chair, if the member's asking about the number—the staff complement within the department of—the

East Side Road Authority in itself, but by today's end, I hope to have an accurate number for you.

Let me just say that the east side of Lake Winnipeg has 13 remote and isolated First Nations communities, and from there, of course, benefits and opportunities are being extended to many people who ordinarily didn't have an opportunity to have employment opportunities are now receiving those training and employment opportunities, which means a whole lot to the social fabric of any given community. We have a number of people that are currently in training situations. A lot of people are now getting employment opportunities for the first time in some of these communities on the activities that are going on within their communities.

And I know that the first leg of the all-weather road system was completed last fall. And I had the honour of being participant in the opening of that element—or that segment of the all-weather road system, which is the first part between the Hollow Water First Nation and the Bloodvein First Nation.

And now the activities carry on with the Bloodvein northward portion, and the Berens River portion, of course, is carrying on with the portion between Berens River southward to meet the activities that are going on that are happening northward of Bloodvein.

**Mr. Briese:** The funding on the east-side road, does—is it allocated through your department or is it through Infrastructure and Transportation?

**Mr. Robinson:** The commitment was for a multi-year initiative, as the member recalls in our previous discussions. The money is derived from the department of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. It's entirely a provincial initiative.

And certainly what we've been talking about, and the member will know as well, that we have to date, as of March 31, 2015, we have invested \$315 million in the all-season road initiative.

And I'd like to do a recap of the work to date, and that—this is going back to March: in R2—and if I had a map, I'd show it to the member—6.5 kilometres; R3, 11.7 kilometres; R4, 10.4 kilometres; R5, 7.3 kilometres; R6, 3.4 kilometres; R7, 2.6 kilometres; R7A and R7A2, 2.3 kilometres; R8, 2.8 kilometres; and R15, 2.5 kilometres.

The completed bridge projects include B1, which is the Wanipigow River; B2, which is the Loon Creek; B3, the Bloodvein River; B4, the Long

Body Creek. And three Acrow Panel bridges at Feather Rapids, Mainland River and Red Sucker Lake have been installed as well.

Under construction are: R9, 9.6 kilometres of road there; R10, 19.5 kilometres; and R11, which is 8.7 kilometres. And under construction are bridge projects two Acrow Panel bridges at the Hayes River and the Laidlaw river, which is further north.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Briese:** So the funding comes through MIT, and does the east side authority, that 70-some people you have, are they paid through MIT too, or are they paid through Aboriginal and Northern Affairs?

**Mr. Robinson:** The East Side Road Authority in itself is a, as the member correctly pointed out, an amalgamation of what happened with the Winnipeg Floodway authority. There's been an amalgamation since then with the east-side road project and the Winnipeg Floodway authority, and now it's simply known as the East Side Road Authority after the work was completed. Now it operates as an arm's-length agency of government. The money is received by them and they have their own CEO, Mr. Ernie Gilroy, who's been doing a tremendous job along with his staff in determining what has to be done. They negotiate with First Nations on things that they have to negotiate on, and the work is carried out by this Crown agency, we'll call our government, and it's been successful to date.

**Mr. Briese:** It's my understanding that the road is now either up to or past Bloodvein. But I've had some correspondence from Princess Harbour, and I'm sure the minister's aware of this issue, where they've now cancelled—quit the ferry service as of October the 14th, and on the website it names Princess Harbour as one of the communities that is going to—was supposed to get a road into it, and I believe, from my information, it's about 10 kilometres, and they're kind of isolated now. Is there a piece of road going to go into them, and if so, when?

**Mr. Robinson:** I'm in receipt of the letters that have been sent to various members of this Legislature by the contact person in that community. The East Side Road Authority will, I'm sure, undertake some discussions with the folks at Princess Harbour to determine whether or not there is the argument that can be made to enable, I believe it's six kilometres we're talking about, from the—

**An Honourable Member:** I thought it was 10.

**Mr. Robinson:** —yes—from the main all-weather road to the community. So I anticipate that we'll get an update on the dialogue that has—occurring between the East Side Road Authority and the community of Princess Harbour.

**Mr. Briese:** And will you—when you get that information, will you send it on to me, please? What—I presume you can also send me that breakdown you just ran off on the various projects and the costs. I would appreciate that.

I'm going to bounce around a little bit here because there's a certain number of things I do want to kind of cover off, but I was also very pleased earlier in the year, and you mentioned it in your remarks, about the self-government movement that Sioux Valley—and I would just ask if there are any other First Nations in the province that are looking at that process, or are you working with other First Nations of the province to go there because I think it's a, in my view, an excellent move. It's something that probably should've been done a long time ago.

**Mr. Robinson:** I'm very pleased with the activities that went on in Sioux Valley.

We would not know because we would not enter the picture as a provincial government until later on, until dialogue has been held with the federal government, and with the change of governments in Ottawa, I think that we'll see more movement in giving some attention to self-government initiatives from the Province of Manitoba. At least I'm anticipating, and I'm hopeful that that'll be the route this will take in the next little while. But the way Sioux Valley did it was initially the federal government was engaged in discussions over two decades ago until the time we finalized the self-government agreement in 2013.

So it is a lengthy process, and it requires all parties to be very patient in this process, indeed, Mr. Chair, and we anticipate that there'll be other First Nations that'll want to move in that direction. To date, however, I can't report that there's been any other communities that want to move in that direction at the moment.

**Mr. Briese:** Another issue I wanted to ask about, that I asked about last year and I want to follow up on as the—there's a treaty land entitlement going on up in the Lac du Bonnet area, and there seem to be some disagreement, at least, on the municipal service agreement or a memorandum of understanding.



And it's my understanding that—this goes back to my municipal days—that when there's a treaty—when there's a change on municipal land and there's services required by the municipality from the municipality such as firefighting, water, sewer, whatever, that the first step is to enter into a municipal service agreement with the incorporated municipality.

Now, the Lac du Bonnet one, I believe, included some Crown land and possibly some private land, and I just wondering what stage that's at. What's happened up there?

**Mr. Robinson:** I understand that there's been discussions between the First Nation at Brokenhead and Lac du Bonnet, and they feel that there is no need for a community services agreement because there's no development being proposed by the First Nation at the current time.

But, indeed, I recall the issue, and then it just kind of went away. Certainly, in recent months, nothing has been brought to my attention to indicate otherwise.

**Mr. Briese:** It was my understanding, Mr. Minister, that before the land can go to reserve status, they—there must be a municipal service agreement in place. So are they taking this land to reserve status, or is it just sitting in their ownership now without a movement toward reserve status?

**Mr. Robinson:** I understand that the Brokenhead First Nation at the current time has no desire to move ahead with it. Ultimately, if a final decision were needed, the federal government ultimately makes that decision and—but there is no plan at the current time by the Brokenhead First Nation.

And the meetings that occurred with the Lac du Bonnet people—and I recall some of the signs that went up by the Lac du Bonnet people a year and a half ago or some—I thought I saved those pictures of some of the, regrettably, some misunderstanding on the part of some people on the negotiations that were occurring. The dialogue has stopped at the current time, but it is my understanding that once the conversion has been made, and once a piece of land has been designated as reserve land, then the—that could occur. And following that, of course, would be the work required to secure all the necessary services agreements and other matters that are required to be fulfilled, and then that's how it proceeds.

Thus, let me point to an example. Little Saskatchewan First Nation, which is part of the 2011

flood, has, I believe, eight pieces of land within the RM of Grahamdale that are designated as reserve land. Now, in order for them to proceed with any development on those—on any, or all the eight pieces of land that they own within the RM of Grahamdale, they require the RM of Grahamdale to be satisfied with community services agreements. So that example would apply to the RM of Brokenhead and the RM—or, pardon me, the First Nation of Brokenhead and the RM of Brokenhead.

**Mr. Briese:** Thank you, Minister. That's my understanding, too, and I remember some of the first movements with land going to reserve status where those things all—the—it's my understanding that they're to be in place before it actually transfers to reserve status.

The other one, and you touched on it in your opening remarks, was the Inuit claims up in the Churchill area, and I'm just wondering where that's progressed to, because they were looking at some, I believe it was traditional hunting grounds along the bay very close to Churchill, or fairly close to Churchill. And I'm not sure what the basis of the Inuit claim is because they wouldn't have a treaty entitlement or—per se. Is it something around traditional lands or—what is the claim that they—or how are they laying claim to this, I guess, would be my question.

**Mr. Robinson:** The issue is on both sides of the border, the Manitoba-Nunavut border, and the negotiations have been conducted in earnest. The Inuit are seeking settlement of their land, the harvesting rights. There are—there's indications that the Inuit people actually lived at—in what is now known as Manitoba before European contact. The Dene people, the same. They were moving and harvesting in what is now the territory of Nunavut prior to contact.

So what we have to do is, taking into consideration some of these traditional land uses of both Dene and the Inuit, we have to have a satisfactory arrangement concluded, and I'm quite excited by the fact that dialogue between our government, the Inuit and the Dene people are going at a good pace, and I hope that in the near future that we'll be able to finalize an agreement with the Manitoba Dene with the overlap.

And it's an overlap with—that involves the Dene who have claimed certain portions of what is now Nunavut that they claim is part of their traditional land use area, as with the Inuit people who have

actually documented evidence that they lived in what is now York Factory and what is now Churchill prior to contact. And there's evidence, too, by the people that do that kind of work, the archaeologists and people like that, that in fact, that there are burial sites within what is now the province of Manitoba, of Inuit burial grounds, and there's also evidence that Inuit people had settlements in and around what is York Factory.

I was talking to a gentleman there that writes for the—one of the Winnipeg newspapers about his canoeing trip this fall or this summer to what is York Factory. And although we didn't get into that but it was—it reminded me about these burial sites that are in different areas of what is now Manitoba. Along the Churchill River, certainly, being a young boy in Churchill, a young man, I was advised of some areas we shouldn't go to because of burial grounds being located there of Inuit people.

And it was the elders at that time. I recall the late Jimmy Spence who was a very wise elder. He moved, along with his brother Jarvis Spence. Jarvis is the father of current Mayor Mike Spence up in Churchill, who—he passed on some years ago, but he was a great source of that oral history about the settlement of the Inuit people, the Dene people and the Crees that lived in that area of northern Manitoba.

And he also advised—and I recall when we did an apology to the Dene people back in 2010, on the occasion of the premiers' Council of the Federation's meeting in Churchill, we did it at the site of where Treaty No. 5 was signed, the adherence to Treaty No. 5 in 1910 with the Dene people. And that was before, of course, 1956. I understand that in today's—one of today's papers, part 2 is, and I didn't see the write-up yet, but part 2 of the first—a continuation of the first story of the challenges that the Dene people had, which was in last Thursday's Winnipeg paper. Part 2 of that story is in today's newspaper, and I didn't have an opportunity to read it yet but, certainly, it's a huge story.

So, to summarize, what I'm trying to say is that the land has always been used, and the nations of the Inuit people and the Dene and the Crees was always used within that area, and the occupancy by the Inuit and the Dene and the Cree were always there, and we were taught that as young people. And the, as I said, in 1910 the adherence to Treaty No. 5 was signed off at what they call DOT Hill in Churchill. And I would invite members of all stripes of this House, if they

ever have the opportunity to go there, and I believe you as the Chair of this committee, Mr. Chairman, have the—have had the opportunity to go up on that hill where that Treaty 5 was signed in 1910. And it's really quite a feeling when you go up there and you sit there and you think about the history of the community.

And we view Churchill as primarily being the port town but it's much more the history of it is so great because it became the centre for trade and commerce in years gone by, by the Crees, the Dene and the Inuit people, which opened up, of course, the fur trade in western Canada.

Another thing that happened was, of course, in the 1700s, around 1716, the war that was going on between the Dene and the Cree, and there was a woman that was taken slave by the Crees, and it's not because that the Crees were naughty, it was just that the way things happened in those days. The woman's name is Thanadelthur, and I know the deputy minister and I, you know, received the oral teaching of this history. And it was really this woman in the 1716 era that brokered a deal with the Dene and the Cree which enabled the fur trade to commence in that part of northern Manitoba, therefore opening up western Canada.

So it's a beautiful history and I'm probably boring the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese). I know he wouldn't remember that. We weren't around in those days.

**Mr. Briese:** I'll mention to the minister, I have been at Churchill on several occasions, so I do have some understanding of the lay of the land. I went in once on the rail, by the way, and that was an interesting ride. At least, I was inside the car, not riding the rails.

The Community Economic Development Fund, a couple of questions around it. One, how much—how many loans, funding went out this year, the value of—and, you can get this to me later if you want, but the value of the amounts that went out, and the defaults.

I remember asking last year and getting a figure on default at 12.6 per cent, I think, over the last five years and I'm just wondering if that's still a fairly consistent number on those.

**Mr. Robinson:** Elements of the information requested by the member, I'll certainly avail myself to getting them to him in a very short period of time.

In fact, in 2015, the total loans exceeded \$10 million. The total bad debt was \$730,000, and the bad debt percentage therefore is about 7.10 per cent. So the 5-year average percentage is about 8.31 per cent. So that, basically, I guess, would be the response to the question posed by the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese).

**Mr. Briese:** Thank you very much. That's the information I want, to just update the things I've got from last year.

The other thing that is because of the federal court—or the major court case, the Metis land claims that there was a court decision saying, I believe, that the Metis have a claim to some properties and some land, and—what's the status of that and what's the department doing in that regard?

**Mr. Robinson:** I wonder if the member can clarify which claim he's directly referring to.

**Mr. Briese:** I probably can't but it's the—David Chartrand has talked about the—I know there's a particular claim in the Forks area or they—there appears to be some claim in there, but I'm wondering if the department is doing anything dealing with the Metis land claim.

**Mr. Robinson:** On June 26th, 2015, President David Chartrand met with Tom Isaac, Canada's recently appointed ministerial representative on the MMF land claim and Metis section 35 rights worker, or, I suppose, expert. While Mr. Isaac was originally expected to complete his final report and recommendations by, I believe it was, December, 2015, which is coming up quite quickly, his meetings with other Metis groups were cancelled due to the federal election that occurred just now.

In August of 2015 at the annual meeting of the Northern Association of Community Councils, President Chartrand brought greetings on behalf of the MMF and he told delegates at that time that they expected a settlement. The court case itself, of course, was won, and if I could quickly summarize—and I'm just going by memory, but basically the Metis won a court case in the federal court, which indicated that the honour of the Crown had not been upheld in the dealings with the Metis people.

As far as how this was going to be determined, this is something that is currently being debated right now between the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Government of Canada, and I believe that we're all looking forward to the outcome of that dialogue.

**Mr. Briese:** I'm looking forward to it, too, but it occurs to me that this is quite a bit different than a First Nations claim, and I'm just—it's going to be interesting to see what roles different levels of government play in this because there's no treaties. There's nothing like that that were made with the First Nation people—or with the Metis people, as far as I know, and this is something that could fall fairly solidly on the shoulders of the Province, with the feds being too involved in it, and that would be a concern of mine.

Just—I want to just touch on the Northern Association of Community Councils too. I know I'm keeping the pages turning over their pretty solidly, but I'm interested in their—what their capital budget was and I would like a list of their capital projects. I believe you provided me with one last year, and if you would do that again I would appreciate it. But I wouldn't mind having on the record here what the total of capital projects were in the last year.

**Mr. Robinson:** The Local Government Development Division of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has primary responsibility under The Northern Affairs Act. The minister is responsible for municipal services in designated communities throughout the unorganized territory of northern Manitoba as defined in the act, which is an area that I said at the outset of our Estimates process, with respect to this department, covers about 80 per cent of the province of Manitoba.

Now, to deliver this mandate, funding for operating and maintenance and the costs associated with that, the delivery of municipal services to 50 communities that we have responsibility for, is allocated through a formula based on existing community infrastructure. This allocation is approximately \$10 million and it covers 80 per cent of the estimated community operation and maintenance. The balance of 20 per cent is the responsibility of individual communities, and it's generated by service fees and property taxes.

Support for community services and community development is co-ordinated through two regions: the northern region which has 19 communities served by 16 full-time employees and the north-central region which is responsible for 31 communities and served by 15 full-time employees.

Support services are provided to communities in the following specific areas: municipal

administration for effective community management and administrative capacity, and technical and public works for optimum maintenance of community infrastructure and community self-sufficiency in all areas of public works and protective services for developing community capability.

In the area of capital, in addition to the operation and maintenance costs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs also provides funding through The Loan Act authority for capital projects. In 2015-16, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs will be starting a lagoon project, water treatment plant upgrade and raw water intake worth \$419,000. These projects will be carried over into the following fiscal year for completion.

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has also unfinished projects from previous years that will be completed in 2015 and '16; these include four water treatment plant replacement upgrades, water and sewer lines, road upgrades, a community hall, three sewer treatment facilities including a lagoon, four waste disposal facilities including a transfer station, and these projects total about \$13.8 million.

So, Mr. Chair, I believe that with the amount of responsibility and what the department has to work with, it's been quite frugal and it's been—it's due to the work that the community—or the department staff have been doing in ensuring that some of these infrastructure things are not too outdated, but to give a good quality of life to the citizens of this province as enjoyed by the rest.

**Mr. Briese:** I'll turn it over to the member for River Heights.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** The minister was very involved in organizing the apology to those survivors of the '60s scoop, and I wonder what the minister has now planned moving forward in terms of what are the next steps.

**Mr. Robinson:** Well, that was indeed one of the black eyes in the history of Canada, indeed, and the member for River Heights will agree with me because a lot of the people that came to the round table that we hosted are people that he's very much acquainted with as well.

Now, the first part of the work that is being done there was—is a—was a round table that I hosted and we could only limit that to, I believe, 20 people. And the 20 people were people that were adopted from—adopted out of their homes, their communities and in some cases out—right out of their province and right out of their country.

I recall one young woman who was adopted out to the country of Holland, and in the Netherlands she was taken. And at the age of 11 she was impregnated by her adoptive father. And because her body was ill-equipped to—and the doctor from—the member being a doctor will know this, her body was ill-equipped, not equipped to carry the pregnancy and therefore had to abort the child. This woman later had children when she 12, 13 and 14 to her adoptive father. She finally escaped that situation in Holland and made her way back to Canada in the early 1980s. I remember meeting her at the airport, along with the people that were instrumental in her repatriation. That is only one of the—one story of many that we heard of how these people were—what they experienced in their all—and all of them have their own individual circumstances.

Colleen Rajotte is a person that we called upon to help us out because she herself was an adoptee. And she originates in Saskatchewan, but she was raised in the southern part of Winnipeg. And in those days, she was the only dark child within that family and probably the school that she attended. And she, too, has her own story.

The issue itself is much like what the residential school stories started off as. And we hope that in time it's included as part of the TRC's final report, Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. And we hope that in the time to come that we will have a national government that'll be sensitive to the needs of these people.

It is my view that these adoptees, which nobody really knows for certain as to how many there was, but unlike those of us that survived the residential school system, these adoptees didn't have anybody. They didn't have another person, in a lot of cases, to turn to. At the very least, those of us that went to residential schools had other kids with us to be—to help one another out, if you will. But a lot of these kids were adopted out to homes in Tennessee; people in—some people were adopted out to New Jersey; and I know of one family, three siblings that were sent off to Louisiana.

This woman has now returned to Manitoba, lives in Manitoba. Her brother lives somewhere back in the United States. And her other brother is serving a 20-year sentence in a prison in the southern states.

It is very difficult because some of them are not welcome back into their community because they don't know, they don't belong there, there's no sense

of belonging. So really what happened was their lives were taken away from them.

And I hope that in the time ahead that their stories will be completely heard and that there be justice served to them for the first time in their lives. And there are many stories that are out there, and I've had the opportunity of hearing some of them, not all of them, but certainly what happened here in Manitoba.

And we can only go by rough numbers. According to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, roughly 3,000 kids were adopted out in the 1960s, that decade. But that's not counting out what happened right up to the 1990s as well, so—until the practice was stopped largely due to the efforts of Judge Kimelman, who, with his report in the early '80s, stopped the export of kids from Manitoba to other parts of the world.

And it was an action that I believe calls for an apology by the national government, and an inquiry at the very least, a commission similar to that of the TRC that could further investigate the circumstances of this lost group of people. And many of them regrettably have passed on since this happened to them, but it's something that we all have to collectively understand, work together and ensure that never occurs again in the future.

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

#### **EDUCATION AND ADVANCED LEARNING**

\* (14:40)

**Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education and Advanced Learning.

Will the ministerial and opposition staff please enter the Chamber.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Madam Chair, just turn it over to the member for—

**Madam Chairperson:** Oh, the honourable member for River Heights.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** First of all, Madam Chair, I would like to thank the minister for

being ready to work together on Bill 215 to see what we can do to include interpersonal family violence in the curriculum and to help reduce this in the province.

I'd like to ask the minister—there's been a lot of concerns about math education in the province—whether he can give us an update on the status of the move to improve mathematics education in Manitoba.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I thank the member for the question, and I thank him for his kind words. We do look forward to trying to work together to find a way through for that particular bill, and as I said last week in the House, I commend him for putting it on the agenda and look forward to future discussions on that point.

If I heard the member correctly, and I didn't quite have my earpiece in, but if I heard the member correctly, he was asking for an update on what we're doing in relation to math and the quality in—what we call the quality initiative. So he will recall that about a little more than a year ago, myself, along with the member, a representative from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, a representative from the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, a representative from Manitoba association of school boards and then, finally, a representative from the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. They are the stakeholders in which—within which we operate and consult with. I held a media briefing to announce a quality initiative that included five points. The first of those was providing more support for teachers and students in their early years.

What that has resulted in is a very careful and progressive conversation with the deans of education at all three of the teaching education programs here in Manitoba at the U of M, U of W and Brandon U for a discussion on how we could enhance and improve teacher training in regard to the quality initiative, which we generally refer to as an emphasis on numeracy and literacy. I believe that we have put in place a very robust plan within the teacher education program to increase the number of hours that teachers are taught how to work on numeracy and literacy in the classroom. And so I believe that we've made very good progress on that. Of course, we are wanting to provide more support for teachers and students as well, and so if he were to look online today, he would see enhanced resources there for teachers, students and parents to assess where they

can usefully improve student success and outcomes in the areas of numeracy and literacy.

Of course, we have placed an important amount of emphasis simply on the notion of focusing on fundamental skills. And so, within the department, we created a quality unit led by Tia Cumming, who has worked extraordinarily hard with school divisions in order to improve planning in the area of quality and to ensure that the very best curriculum that we can develop to ensure the students are conversant with numerate and—with numeracy and literacy certainly happens there. We'll see that show itself up in the short term in terms of school division plans, and then over the long term, I believe we'll see it in terms of outcomes.

We want to, of course, provide more supports, as I said, for parents and students, and then we want to ensure greater accountability overall across the system, and that begins with me, and I conceded that—conceded at that media briefing that that does, in fact, start with me. I am the Minister of Education; I am, indeed, accountable for our performance and took it, as I said, at that time, as a personal challenge to improve those outcomes.

In addition to those elements that I've described, of course, we've had very important conversations with experts, including Dr. Anna Stokke and the folks from WISE Math about the things that we can continue to do within our curriculum to ensure better student success in those areas. We're going to continue those conversations. This is not a defence of the status quo but, in fact, a proactive plan to ensure the kind of results I think both you and I would like to see.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the things which was of concern was that, you know, not only were there some issues in numeracy and literacy, but more recently, that when problem solving was assessed, that our students were found to be lower than we would like. And I wonder whether the minister is addressing this area as well.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, I thank the member for the—for that question.

You know, in my view of the issues and the way in which student success evolves, I think it—of course, it begins with the focus on the fundamentals so that there is a solid foundation there for our children in relation to numeracy and literacy. And in our view, then, that evolves into the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that we certainly want our

children to have to be full and comprehensive students.

And I think what we are trying to do in the Department of Education, because as you—the member knows, we're now responsible for kindergarten all the way to career—to try to ensure that throughout the continuum of education, there's a foundation, a strong foundation there, and then from there, an evolution into the problem solving and critical thinking.

And then as one—a child moves his or her way through the education system, then we're also advancing job skills and, of course the amount of investment in building new shops, apprenticeship programs, co-op programs, dual credits, first year now. All of these things are combined from the foundation through on to critical thinking and problem solving and then on to skills training so that by the time a student is finished grade 12, then they're—find their way into college or university program in order to develop those skills further and then ultimately to develop themselves for a good, professional career, be it in the trades or be it as a professional, a lawyer, doctor or whatever profession you might—architect or a planner, for that matter, or a teacher, if it came to that.

Now, to answer more directly on the question, of course, what we tried to do as well is make sure that there's a proper balance in that focus on fundamentals with both skills, and that's the conceptual understanding that's required. Dr. Stokke has—I'm sure the member's had a conversation with her—talks about the architecture of learning math, about the—and building that architecture from a solid foundation up. So we want to make sure that we have a proper balance with the conceptual understanding. We certainly want to make sure that when a child is understanding math that they have a good procedural thinking as well, because it is a laddering kind of a process for mathematical equations, and then, finally, of course, is the very nature of solving the problem in the last instance, and that's engaging and understanding and resolve from—resolving a problem situation where a method or solution is not immediately available.

So, as you can see, I think we've worked very hard to create a pathway through our K-to-12 system that makes sense for students: foundation, focus on foundation, and numeracy and literacy, followed by problem solving and critical thinking, adding on job skills at the end, and then making sure we have

affordable, accessible post-secondary system for those students to go and follow the program of their dreams.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I have just one more question, and then I will pass it over to the MLA for Lac du Bonnet.

This has to do with the recognition for a number of years that there really is a need and an advantage of having a speech pathology and audiology training program here in Manitoba, and I just wondered if the minister could provide an update on where this stands.

\*(14:50)

**Mr. Allum:** Well, I thank the member for that question. He and I, I think, share a mutual friend who is a speech pathologist. I know she's come to see me and I'm certain that she's also had a good conversations with him about this very subject matter.

We remain open, of course, to programs that are submitted by the institutions. To date, to my knowledge, no program of that kind has been submitted, and when I was speaking to our mutual friend I had suggested to her that the pathway through is through the institutions first, through their various bodies, and then on to the advanced learning division for evaluation, discussion, program improvement if it came to that, and to date we haven't received that kind of submission to my knowledge. We'll check, and if there's a change in that I would certainly let the member know.

We, of course, in Manitoba send a number of our students to professional programs. In this case, I believe, it's to North Dakota, but I stand to be corrected on that, but that is one, and then, I believe, there's a school, maybe, in Ontario, as well, that offers that particular program that he's describing. But I think he will know that our veterinary students go to Regina, I believe, for their programming. So it's not unknown for us to have those kinds of relationships, but, as I told our mutual friend in the past, we're open to that kind of submission from one of the institutions, probably—quite likely U of M in this case, but I wouldn't want to prejudice that—and then see where it goes from there.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

And if I could ask you to introduce the staff that have joined you.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The staff that's joined me today is Mr. Brad Salyn.

I'm just asking the minister if he could put on the record the graduates—the number of graduates from each post-secondary institution that he promised that he'd be bringing forward today.

**Mr. Allum:** I'd certainly like to welcome Mr. Salyn to the Chamber. He and I spent a number of years at City Hall together on opposite sides of the—not on opposite sides of the political spectrum, but on—I was in the admin side and he was in the political side, and it's good to see him here and welcome him to the Chamber today.

The—so, I had endeavoured to provide some information to the member, and I would like to be able to do that now. And, so for 2014 the member had asked about the number of undergraduate degrees. And, so, for the University of Manitoba in 2014 that would be 4,148; for the University of Winnipeg that would be 1,700; for Brandon University that would be 495; and for UCN that would be 37 for a total of 6,380; and then, for Université de Saint-Boniface would be another 154. And then—I beg the member's indulgence here on graduate degrees. For the U of M, that would be 930. For the University of Winnipeg, that would be 55. For Brandon University, that would be 52. And that—for a total number of graduate degrees of 1,037. Then add another 17 for USB.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and the minister for the answers.

So, with those numbers, what are the percentage increases or decreases per post-secondary institution?

**Mr. Allum:** So the percentage changes from 1999 to 2014?

**Mr. Ewasko:** No, just for 2013 to 2014.

**Mr. Allum:** So for the University of Manitoba, this is on undergraduate degrees, this would—it would be the percentage change from '13 to '14 is minus 3.7 for the U of M, plus 5.9 for the U of W, minus 4.6 for Brandon, up 2.8 for UCN and up 10.8 for USB. And then on the graduate side of the equation, it would be up 18.3 per cent for the U of M, up 5.8 per cent for UW, minus 20 per cent for Brandon and up 13.3 per cent for USB.

It is worth noting, while I'm at it, though, Madam Deputy Chair, that from 1999 to 2014, the increase has been 22—on undergraduate degrees has been 22 per cent from 1999 to 2014. For the U of W,

the increase from 1999 to 2014 has been 86 per cent. From 1999 to 2014, it has been up 11 per cent for Brandon University. Overall total undergraduate percentage increase from 1999 to 2014 is 34 per cent, and then if you add in USB on their own and in—the percentage change for undergraduates has been plus 10.8 per cent and an 88 per cent increase at USB from 1999 to 2014.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, just looking back in Hansard from yesterday, and I had asked a few questions in regards for the minister to table or to basically cite some of the research that was developed or that he had read or looked into when he came up with the 20 cap size for—classroom cap size for K to 3. And pretty much the answer is he kept saying, well, as the member knows, as the member knows.

Well, I know that it's not necessarily the numbers; it's actually composition, as being a teacher myself, and I'd just like the minister to cite or to put on record the numbers or the variance—various reference materials that they had cited to put the cap size as 20. And, basically, why the number 20, and we know that—well, we know that there's not actually any research showing that it's specifically the number 20 is the magic number.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, thank you. So it's an interesting question. And, of course, everything this government does is evidence based in how we do it.

I can tell the member that it's—that no one was talking about a magic number yesterday in any sense. I think the literature suggests that somewhere in between 17 to 20 is the probable magic number. This government landed on 20. I don't see that as a—anyway out of the ordinary for the kind of initiative that we intended to have to make sure that there was one—more one-on-one time between a teacher and a student, not simply for instructional purposes but quite, in fact, for a relationship purpose. And those two things result in productive student success, and we're proud of this initiative.

\*(15:00)

But I can tell you that in reviewing the literature, we looked at—and the deputy minister and I had a number of conversations about this in the past and talked about it again yesterday—the Scottish Executive Education Department, or SEED, commissioned the Scottish Council for Research in Education to review the literature on the effects of class size on styles of teaching practice and on pupil behaviour and attainment.

There is also sufficient evidence, mainly from American studies, to show that reductions in class size are associated with improvements in pupil achievements. Major benefits accrue from reductions in class size to below 20 pupils to one teacher. Most researchers are agreed that the benefits of class size reduction are more marked in the early stages of child schooling, that is, kindergarten to grade 3, which—or the five- to eight-year-olds, and that's exactly the area that we're talking about.

The STAR Lasting Benefits Study shows that the initial advantage gained from early exposure to small classes are still evident at grade 10, age 16, and that talks—speaks to the continuum of education that I was referring to for the member from River Heights in earlier questions. And most studies report that teachers believe that class size affects their teaching practice, in particular the way they organize within class groups and amount of time that they can devote to individual children, which is what I just indicated.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society, in 2001, indicated that the tipping point does seem to be between 19 and 20 students. Small classes—and these are the findings of the Teachers' Society; I know the member was once and probably still is a member of that august society.

The—that particular review went on to say that small classes seem to be particularly important for students in the early years, kindergarten to grade 4. We're—so 19 and 20 students, early years, we're certainly in that vein. Research has also shown, according to MTS, other benefits beyond academic achievement that are influential in school success.

I think the member probably does know about Tennessee's Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio, or otherwise, the acronym is STAR. In each year of the study, some of the benefits of small classes were greater for minority students than for non-minorities—this is an evaluation that was done on this program—and greater for students attending inner-city schools than suburban and rural schools. No differences were found among students across class types on the motivational scales, yet students who had been in small classes were rated as expending more effort in the classroom, taking greater initiative with regard to learning activities and displaying less disruptive or inattentive behaviour compared with their peers in regular-sized classes. So that goes to show you not only the instructional benefits but also, as I said, the relationship benefits.



California, as he probably is aware, engaged in a small class size initiative. California provided \$971 million in incentive funding in the late 1990s for school districts to voluntarily reduce K-to-3 classes to 20 students per class. The findings that were done—the evaluations were done on that particular program show that the increased performance for students as they went along the educational continuum, less time spent on discipline and more parent-teacher interactions.

Wisconsin has also engaged in a student-teacher achievement guarantee in education. That project reported that students in the program at all three grade levels achieve significantly higher test scores than students in comparison schools in mathematics, reading and language arts as a result of their class size initiative.

So while he might suggest that the literature is inconclusive on this matter, I think that there's been, in fact, significant success in relation to the small class size initiative in other jurisdictions.

We can tell him, based on our discussions with principals, with school boards, with teachers and with parents, they are all solidly behind the K-to-3 small class size initiative, and we're going to continue that initiative to—through to its completion, and we're going to continue to make sure that our students have that most important one-on-one time with their teacher.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The minister's on record saying that school divisions have received enough funding and should not have to raise property taxes. Why do school divisions believe otherwise, Minister?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, thank you again for the question.

Since our government was elected by the people of Manitoba, and four times over, they have told us that investment in education is a priority for them. And as the member knows, we've increased the investment to our K-to-12 system by the rate of economic growth or better during our time in office and have increased funding to post-secondary institutions at very significant percentage increases year over year, sometimes, if memory serves, reaching up to 6 or 7 per cent, more recently 12 and a half per cent over the past three years.

So the government investment would suggest to me that we have a well-funded education system, but we—I don't defend the status quo—we're going to continue those investments on into the future. And so there is a significant investment in education right

now, school boards do receive year-over-year increases where warranted based on enrolment, they also have the funding guarantee so that they never receive less than the year before. There's an equalization component to the funding formula also to ensure as much equity as we can drive out of the system. And I know the member would support that as well.

And so, in my view, there is a sufficient amount of investment in the system that's been invested by the provincial government, and then you add that equation to the ability of school boards to have taxation power and raise revenues on their own. We consider that a very fundamental feature of the education system in Manitoba, unlike other jurisdictions across the country that feel—that have taken education taxes off property taxes and have maintained 37 school divisions in this province which have taxing authority and the right to raise revenue.

We believe that there is a sufficient amount of resources within the system right now to continue to do the job and—but the essence of that is continued investment in the education of our young people. I know our government's going to do it, I'm not sure that the member opposite can say the same.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Although the—certain school divisions have increased their property taxes within my general area, so Sunrise School Division, the Interlake, Evergreen, Lord Selkirk School Division. Interlake, Evergreen and Selkirk School Divisions have received cuts in funding.

Now, with that being said, we've gone from, as the member—as the minister continues to say, you know, he always talks about the '90s and all type of these type of things, we've gone from a leader in the country when it comes to literacy, science and numeracy and now we're absolutely last. How can he ensure that the quality of education remains at a standard that was once seen in the '90s, in the late '90s where we were a leader in the country when it came to math, science and literacy, and with cutting these various school divisions?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, I'm hard pressed how to figure how the member can talk about cuts to certain school divisions; that doesn't actually ring with reality. The fact of the matter is that the funding formula is a—while complicated, does a good job of making sure that school divisions are sufficiently resourced based on enrolment. And in addition to that as I said just a moment ago, built into that, into the formula is a—is

the formula guarantee that says you'll never get less than the year before. And we have maintained that practice to ensure that school divisions, and especially rural school divisions, have the ability to continue to offer a quality education.

\*(15:10)

The member opposite I guess is referring to, when he talks about last, is referring to the sample test known as PISA and PCAP, and I appreciate that while it looks on some charts that it's—you know, he likes to characterize it as last, in fact the percentage difference between ourselves and fifth is microscopic, but, of course, politics doesn't allow him to say that. But the truth of the matter is that 86—what those tests have demonstrated is that 86 per cent of our kids are meeting or exceeding expectations. While he wants to brag about the—how Manitoba was performing in the 1990s, I can tell you, I moved here in the 1990—in the mid-1990s; I can tell you our schools are way better off now than they were when we first moved here.

To my knowledge, PISA only began in 2001, so I don't believe there was the kind of indicator that he's suggesting that there was. But if we want to look at the long haul, 80—our graduation rates have increased from 71 per cent to 87 per cent now from about 2001 to 2015. And enrollment has never been higher at our post-secondary institutions, which tells me that the continuum of education at the—what we've tried to establish is working and working very well.

In addition to that, we concentrate on indigenous education in this department and continue to work with our indigenous partners in order sure better outcomes for indigenous students after they were long neglected within the education system. I was just out at the U of M just in the last couple of hours to launch the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, in which the act passed by this Legislature created an archive that helps to retain the indigenous memory in our country and how important it is.

As the member knows, we've also had a very, very successful immigration program here in this province. Our population has increased by 125–130,000 since we came into government. These issues present new and interesting challenges; the diversity of our provinces only makes us stronger. And, as I said, 86 per cent of our kids are meeting or exceeding expectations, and graduation rates have increased dramatically, 16 per cent during our time,

and enrollment in our post-secondary institutions is as an all-time high.

But when it does come to those particular tests, those—one example of what he's trying to say, I guess—I will say that we do have an obligation to respond. We do need to do better. I would never defend the status quo in that respect. We do 'nood' do—to do better. That's why we stood with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, with the Manitoba association of school boards and with Manitoba Teachers' Society more than a year ago, where we made a collective, sectoral commitment to improve quality outcomes in our education system.

And we have, at that point, unveiled a five-point plan that I just referred to for its member from River Heights, but it includes enhanced teacher training. We work with our education partners, the post-secondary education partners at the U of W, U of M and Brandon U to enhance teacher training in numeracy and literacy, and that focus on fundamentals or providing more online supports for parents and students to ensure that they have an understanding of the curriculum and—in the first instance, and how they can go about improving the performance of their own children. We're working with students. We're working with parents. We're working with teachers.

In addition to that, we've established a quality unit within our department, as I just mentioned to the member from River Heights, to ensure a more in-depth, profound commitment to quality education in our K-to-12 system. And I'm quite confident that by working together in collaboration with our partners all across the education system, and that includes parents and teachers and students, that those results that he wants to say are the only measure of our education system, which I don't agree with him about, I have no doubt that those results will improve.

But I can tell him that I am proud to be Minister of Education; we work every day to improve the performance of our education system. We work collaboratively to do so. And I have to say that when we talk about better, that means better classrooms, better teachers, performance, more teachers, better schools. Our government has a record of doing all those things and that's what we'll continue to do.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I appreciate the minister putting on the record that yes, in fact, a—we, in—here in Manitoba,

unfortunately, are sitting last when it comes to those couple of assessments that are national and international assessments. And, yes, in 2001, when PISA did start, we were in the top three here in Manitoba, and those students who had acquired their education—who wrote that test in 2001—had their education provided solely by a Progressive Conservative government. And now, after 16 years of the NDP being in government, we are actually dead last. And I'm just wondering if the minister could put it on the record, as he said how 86 per cent of the students in PISA score better than average, I would like him to put on the record a couple examples in his own words.

What does that mean—86 per cent of what? And I do believe that it's a—that it's a level 2, but what does that mean, and can he give me a couple examples of questions that might be asked on that test that he's bragging that 86 per cent of the students are achieving that?

**Mr. Allum:** Well, I think the member should know, but it's okay to put it on the record. level 2 simply means at grade level and that's a reasonable understanding of the concept of level 2 or better, and 86 per cent are meeting or exceeding expectations.

As for his question about the actual questions that are on a PCAP or a PISA test, those are primarily confidential, but I believe that there are samples around that we could get him if he hasn't seen them before. It surprises me, but if he hasn't, I'll be glad to share what we have, but those are kept confidential and they're kept confidential for the security and privacy of the test itself. I would remind the member, again, that it's a sample test, that it's not a standardized test across the province. It's a sample test that is done at one time on one occasion and, in fact—and this is an important factor, because of Manitoba's incredible diversity, we have as many students in Manitoba writing that test as Ontario does, even though proportionately their population is considerably larger than our own.

The only other thing I would mention about those particular tests is that we realize that, when parents—and I'm a parent; he's a parent, when I brought home—when my kids brought home their report cards, and I might add that's another thing that we've undertaken is a parent-friendly report card that we'll be utilizing very efficiently and effectively in the future, not only to ensure that parents get the kind of information that they need, but from a data assessment point of view as well—just one of the

many innovative things we're doing in the department. But, when parents are concerned, when there are questions about our public education system, of course, we have a responsibility to respond and respond in a proactive, positive and collaborative manner, and that's exactly what we did at the time where I stood with MASS, and Manitoba Teachers' Society, and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, as well as the parent council association. We did that as a sector. We stood together. Everybody recognized that we were going to attack this problem as a system together, shoulder to shoulder, and I was proud to have done that on that day.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I'm glad that the minister brought up the report cards because, in fact, Manitoba Teachers' Society is absolutely—did a report on their displeasure of the new report cards, and it is going to be interesting moving forward on exactly how those teachers throughout this great province of ours are actually giving feedback on those report cards.

\* (15:20)

And, in regards to the PISA scores, I very much know what the questions are like on the test, and it proved to me again that the minister does not know what the level 2 means; and level 2 does not mean that they're meeting grade levels, and he couldn't provide a sample of those questions because he does not know, Madam Chairperson. And it just shows that the minister is wanting to politicize a lot of these various different topics that we talk about here.

And instead of making changes and policy decisions and being a leader within this province and helping our No. 1 stakeholders in this province, our students, fostering their education, growing their wealth of knowledge, he would rather be sitting with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and making various promises. And he's, as I've mentioned before, going across the province and having a promise-and-spending spree, especially when it's getting in time for the upcoming election.

So what's upsetting to me is that the minister knows that we're sitting last. Then create something to have some sort of measure to see how we're doing. He says that we're doing better but he has no stats. He balks at the PISA scores and the PCAP scores, but yet he's got nothing to back that up. It's just the fact, Madam Chairperson, that it's just a tool. Those test scores are just tools and, unfortunately, under his government's reign, we've gone from a leader in

those tools that are small sample size but still proves that we've gone from a leader to now last.

And it's upsetting, Madam Chairperson, because I still have students within the education system and I know it's not the teachers, as the minister has put on the record many times, that they've gone and they've taken a look at teacher training. I believe the teacher training really has not overly—I mean, there's been some great program advancements and that within the universities for teacher training, but at the same time it really hasn't changed leaps and bounds from those '90s, as well.

So the minister's trying to blame the teachers for this, but I do, in fact, believe that, as you see something is going in the wrong direction, such as our results on those scores, you maybe should make some changes. And I think some of the changes that they've tried is tried to put different Education ministers into the portfolio and I'm not certain that that's actually going to be serving them well either.

So I am looking forward to a change this coming spring. I know that we're going to be hearing a Throne Speech probably in the next couple weeks that'll be tabling many, many various promises again. And then maybe there's going to be a budget, maybe there's not, we're not quite sure, because I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) has said, yes, there is going to be a budget. Well, maybe we're just going to, you know, do an estimate, and then there's not going to be a budget, so we're not quite sure on how that's all going to work out and especially when it comes to funding our education, as well, in this province of ours.

I—it was interesting that when we talked about, I believe it was the springtime, we spoke about allowing the cameras on school buses and drivers who are acting illegally within school zones and that. And I do applaud the school zone speed limits, but I'm going to ask the minister, why has he not taken it upon himself, as the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum), to make sure that the speed zones and the limits are consistent throughout the province? Because, in my view, all of our students are precious and it seems that the zones and the speed limits are sort of—they're really inconsistent throughout the province. And I'd just like to know if the minister is going to be embarking on some sort of policy changes or adaptations to making sure that those speed zones and signage and timing and all that is a little more consistent throughout the province.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, I have to appreciate the member took a few detours to get to his question there, but that's all right, that's all part of the process here. We look forward to him putting any kind of agenda—any kind of plan on the agenda for Manitobans of what he actually thinks is a quality education system because, to date, we haven't heard anything from him on that score except that he does not believe in investing in new schools, he doesn't believe in investing in new science labs, he doesn't believe in investing in new gyms, he doesn't believe in a K-to-3 education small class size initiative; in fact, you voted against—the member has voted against it every single, as has members of his party, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, for him to suggest that he can have it both ways—have his cake and eat it too—is simply not accurate. The fact of the matter is that every time we invest in education in this province, whether it's the K to 12 or in the post-secondary system for colleges and universities, his—he himself, as long with every member of his caucus votes against it. Because they don't believe in the very investments that are likely to not only create 21st-century classrooms in this province, because I know he really wants to go back to the 1950s when it comes to the rigid way in which education was administered at that point; we don't believe in that, we're never going to go 60 years back in order to get into the future, as the member would have it. And, in fact, our record on education is second to none across this country, and very happy, and very proud to be part of a government that's made education a priority for Manitoba families from the moment we were first elected until today, until the future when we're re-elected again.

As for his specific question on—he knows that this is The Highway Traffic Act, not The Public Schools Act, so he might more properly direct his questions to my friend from MIT, as opposed to myself, but the reduced speed zones—the regulations within that sets out the process by which traffic authority or local government entity—that is—let me reiterate that. The traffic authority or the local entity can designate school zones, set speed limits, periods of enforcement, and approve traffic control devices.

The way in which this government works is in a collaborative manner with our partners, be they in education or in municipal government. We believe that the local governments have the knowledge to set the speed zones in a manner that reflects their own geographical area of the province. We're comfortable with that. We've set the requirement through The

Highway Traffic Act and set the overall policy objectives within it, and then work in partnership with our local municipalities who we empower to make those very kind of decisions. We're comfortable with that approach to governing, one which is collaborative and in partnership. If the member approves a more authoritarian view of these things, then I invite him to take it.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Some of the things that the minister put on the record right off the bat, I never did actually say, so it's very interesting that he would put such things on the record. Especially when he's the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning and we have students within this province that possibly, at times, want to look up to him, so it's just unfortunate that he would put such things on the record.

That being said, the—in regards to the speed zones, I didn't really ask if he was actually going to physically or personally go and change the laws or policies of the various governments. But I was just going to ask—I just had asked if he was going to advocate so that some of the rules and the regulations and the speed limits and that are a little more consistent. Because I know when you're travelling—even through the City of Winnipeg, Madam Chairperson—that the inconsistency of the various speed zones and limits are quite different from area to area. And, when you have people driving through the city and visiting various areas, I mean, some of the signage and the dates and the speeds and all that seem to vary a little bit.

\* (15:30)

So that's all I was asking, is if he was going to advocate, and what he does is, he passes the buck on to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), and that's sort of typical what I've been seeing, Madam Chairperson, from this government.

And I mean, I know today we're seeing the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum) has received the portfolio of Education and Advanced Learning again from his predecessor, the member from Gimli, Mr. Peter Bjornson, who's now retired. But that was due to the rebellion, and today, it just so happens to be the one year anniversary of that, and, so, you know, within his caucus, I mean as far as when he talks about advocating for people and collaboration and these types of things, I think he should be looking at his caucus first before he starts looking at the rest of Manitoba because it seems like they're in a bit of a

disarray, Madam Minister—Madam Chairperson, sorry.

Over the past quite a few years, we've heard the unwritten rule, I guess, of the no fail policy, and I just want to know if the minister can put a few words on the record in regards to his views on the no fail policy. I know he mentioned the graduation rates have gone up. I know that we've gone from 28 credits to 30 credits to graduate high school. We've also changed the credit system within the high school and I, you know, I'm sure the minister is well versed in that. Over the years, we've also increased the way that students can get credits in high school. So it actually has become a little bit easier to graduate, Minister, in the province of Manitoba, so I would hope that the graduation rates would have gone up.

So back to the no fail policy, it seems that teachers are feeling pressured, and I'm assuming from the leadership of the minister's office, to make sure that those students get the—those passing grades and that the teachers are discouraged from actually marking, or giving grades or giving feedback to students on how exactly they are doing, and then passing that information along to parents.

**Mr. Allum:** First of all, just on the one point made by the member, he should know that when you vote in this House and when you vote against increases in investment to education, you are on the record. You are saying that very thing, he is saying that very thing, so he should remember that when he votes in this House, that's his expression of his political position on whether there should be no—whether there should be more investments in education, and every single time in my experience, Mr.—Madam Deputy Speaker, the member has voted against the very investment, so he is on record for the positions that he's taken.

As to The Highway Traffic Act and speed zones, if he has issues with that, he might want to consult with the City of Winnipeg, they'll have a bylaw to that effect. He might want to talk to council Lukes about it, as I believe it may fall within her purview. But we're happy to work with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and we're happy to work with the Manitoba School Boards Association when, in fact, issues or concerns are raised with us, but to date, there hasn't been a whole lot of feedback, and seem—it would seem to me that the member is, as usual, making a mountain out of a molehill.

As with respect to the no fail—so-called no fail policy, that is an invention of the member opposite, and an invention of the opposition to try to, as they usually try to do, to denigrate and degrade our education system, and, in fact, there is no such departmental rule or regulation that talks no fail, and I defy him to go find it within this government's materials. In fact, he should know as a teacher that in kindergarten to grade 8, promotion decisions rest with the principal who consults with teachers, parents and other specialists as appropriate. He should know that as a teacher, as a matter of course. In grades 9 to 12, the final decision on whether or not to grant credits rests with the principal who consults with teachers, parents and other specialists as appropriate. As a teacher, I think he would—he should probably know that.

And, if a student does not submit the necessary evidence of learning to be granted a credit in a course, then the student may be, at the discretion of school authorities, assigned a failing grade or permitted to continue the course in the following term or school year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an invention of the member. It speaks to the very right-wing politics of education that he so proudly carries forward. Why doesn't he put his agenda for education on the table so Manitobans can have a look at it, because all's we can see right now are significant cuts to public education and I really don't know how he's going to defend that?

**Mr. Ewasko:** I guess the only last comment I have, Madam Chairperson, is to stay tuned; it's coming. And Manitoba students and parents, teachers and all stakeholders are going to be very happy with those plans, and so with that being said, there is no further questions. Thank you.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the member for that and thank the minister for his participation here.

We're going to move on to consideration of the minister's—we're going to move on to resolutions.

So we'll start with resolution 16.2. Now, very soon, I am going to ask the staff to leave the room, so—not yet, but I'm going to, so if you wanted to start packing up your stuff, this would be the moment.

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,621,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, School Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,563,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$356,308,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Education and School Tax Credits, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,321,059,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$675,697,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Advanced Learning, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$38,306,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Manitoba Student Aid, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

\* (15:40)

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$75,050,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,434,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 16.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 16.1.(a) the minister's salary, continued in resolution 16.1.

At this point, we request that the ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item. And thank you for your help and assistance here today.

The floor is open for questions. Seeing none.

Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,393,000 for Education and Advanced Learning, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Education and Advanced Learning.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

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

We'll recess and reconvene at the call of the Chair.

*The committee recessed at 3:43 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:46 p.m.*

*Mr. Dave Gaudreau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** The Honourable Minister, please proceed.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Thank you so much everyone, and it brings me pleasure to provide opening remarks on the department's Estimates of Committee of Supply for 2015 and '16.

Agriculture's an economic driver and contributes 8 per cent to the provincial GDP. It plays a vital role in the lives of Manitobans. It creates jobs, food, raw materials, consumer products and economic prosperity. It provides a livelihood and feeds us all.

Manitoba is a home to 18 million acres of farmland. That's 19,000 farmers representing an investment of a 31.5 billion in land, building and equipment. Farm receipts for 2014 were estimated to be at \$5.9 billion. Agriculture and agrifood provides employment for over 34,000 Manitobans.

The work my department does supports the livelihoods of farmers, food processors and rural entrepreneurs. We develop the rural economics that make Manitoba a world leader in agriculture innovation.

This budget gives the department the tools it needs to meet the 'envolving' needs of our industry. We are focused on food, agri-production, development and especially functional food and nutraceuticals. We will continue to deliver front-line services through our go centres, providing 'ecrinomic' advice and pathfinding services to rural Manitobas across the province in the communities where they live.

We are committed to ensure the protection of human, animal and plant health. We are dedicated to building capacity in our rural communities to lead sustainable, economic development and we are committed to support young farmers through Growing Forward 2, who we have provided over 400,000 to projects targeting producers who just started out in agriculture.

My department provides rural communities with information to help identify opportunities. Two thousand-two hundred and sixty thousand in funding was approved through partners for our growth, Partners for Growth program, and \$225,000 in grants

to hometown Manitoba projects. We continue to support the delivery of the 4-H programs and educational infrastructure grants for ag societies. Applications to the Growing Forward 2 as a whole have been approved for a total of \$84.1 million as of September 14th, 2015. We are building a network of a strong economical and diverse communities on our rural landscape.

Recently my department announced the launch of a steering committee focused on co-ordinating and building co-operation amongst stakeholders with the goal to develop a rural economic development strategy for Manitoba this fall. The steering committee will consult with stakeholders and draft a rural economic development strategy with actions of plan. The draft will identify the needs and opportunities to create a road map for economic development in rural Manitoba.

\* (15:50)

The department actively supports the development of functional foods and nutraceuticals industry in Manitoba. In 2015 and '16, through Growing Forward 2, we will provide \$496,000 to the Manitoba ag health research network for research and development, \$1.6 million for the purchase of nutraceutical lab equipment at the Richardson centre and CCARM. We will also work with the industry to update our functional foods and nutraceutical strategy to help grow the sector.

We convey the small-scale food group at work in Manitoba, increasing public awareness of the small-scale food production and processing sector, developing a food processing manual and business training for small-scale food entrepreneurs, addition to two MAFRD staff focusing on small-scale production and processing, promoting of benefits of small-scale food to both consumers and the economy, providing \$250,000 for small-scale food marketing and distribution and \$100,000 for commercial kitchen-commercial community kitchen upgrades and listings.

(4) Protections of human and animal, plant health. Our farm food safety and biosecurity are priorities for all Manitobans.

We have launched the 2015 rural veterinarian task force. The veterinary task force will review 'curten' rural veterinarian requirements across the province, emphasizing the best practices for biosecurity and on-farm food safety.

We have invested \$4.8 million in 604 on-farm food safety projects to take place on hog, beef, dairy, poultry and bee operations. We have committed \$2.4 million to enhance biosecurity practices, working closely with commodity groups to assist on on-farm biosecurity training, post-farm biosecurity assessment to safeguard the health both for the Manitoba crop and the livestock industry and the health of Manitoba rural and urban population. Mitigation biosecurity threats will protect-protecting trade and economic opportunities.

(5) Primary agriculture industry development. 'Satregic' investments drives innovation and helps producers and processors become more competitive in the world markets.

The Manitoba Grain Innovation Hub has secured Manitoba's place as a world leader in research and in development in the grain industry. The Province has committed \$12 million to the extraordinary facility, and the federal government's contribution of an additional \$8 million. To date the provincial expenditures total \$3.3 million, including the following investments: \$1.9 million to the Canadian International Grains Institute for grain processing equipment; \$380,000 to the University of Manitoba for the grain and 'ethamology' research equipment. The federal funds that my department have leveraged for the grain hub amounted to \$2.7 million, including \$1.3 million to the Manitoba Corn Growers for the corn development research, \$400,000 to both the Manitoba ag health research network and the western Canadian feed wheat co-operative.

We also continue to co-op with our federal counterparts to address the unique transportation issues that Manitoba producers face. Through Growing Forward 2, we have provided \$85,000 per year for three years to the ag transportation coalition. Data is now collected on over 90 per cent of the grain related to rail traffic, and we will invest \$1.2 million in personnel operating costs, in addition to \$1 million in new equipment at our diversification centres. In agriculture, where the federal government has sole jurisdiction over market access negotiation, Manitoba has supported Canada's efforts to achieve outcomes that balance the export interest and while protecting our orderly marketing systems.

We have the best system of government sponsorship field research in Canada. The R & D we support find ways to get added value from commodities and primary agriculture sector producers.



The Food Development Centre has developed 46 new food prototypes and provided incubation space for 22 clients, generating over \$200,000 in net income from our fee for service revenue.

We are also building capacity for market refinancing by providing farmers with both financial and non-financial risk management tools.

The ag meteorologist is expanding its monitoring network including 90–nine-zero weather stations across Manitoba. Data collected at these sites supplies the industry with timely treatment, recommendations, potentially reducing yield losses due to weather conditions, disease and blight.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** One minute.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Manitoba continues to have the highest participation in ag insurance, covering 90 per cent of annual crops delivered at the lowest administrative costs of any across the province of Canada. This year as a promise, is budgeting \$600.4 million for mass programs, and \$36 million for farmland school tax rebates.

The agricultural risk management review task has announced the Premier's (Mr. Selinger)—will be—was announced in Premier's Throne Speech last year. The task force is focusing on mitigating risk posed to ag industry.

Last, but not least, and a number of other things to be said, this year was announcement of \$1 million towards a transitional funding of a three-year program with associated Manitoba community pastures organizations. We will assist the takeover of the responsibility community pastures from the federal government, and we value the agricultural community resources will continue to be there in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my pleasure to open comments.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Thank the minister for the comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any comments?

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and very briefly I just want to thank all those hardworking men and women that are in the agriculture department throughout the province, and we look forward to the potential that's in Manitoba in terms of not only in crop and livestock production, but further processing and whether that includes

local food or refined food, if I can call it that, and there's a lot of good things happening out there, and I would—I look forward to asking the minister a few questions about the department.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Thank the critic from the official opposition for his remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 3.1.(a), contained in resolution 3.1.

At this time, we invite the ministerial and opposition staff to join us in the Chamber, and when we arrive we ask the minister and the critic from the opposition to introduce the staff in attendance.

Would the minister please like to introduce his staff?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes, thank you Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce our deputy minister, Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, and across from Dori is Mr. Neil Hamilton, president and chief executive officer of Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. And to his left is Mr. Jim Lewis, vice-president, finance and administration—here we go, administration and Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. And across from Jim is Mr. Craig Thompson, vice-president of Insurance Operations, Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Thank you, and the opposition's staff will come at a later time, and he'll introduce them.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes, and when my staffer comes, I will certainly introduce him at that time.

The minister mentioned the round table on—that he's conducting across the province, can—first of all, who is on that round—what makes up that committee? Let's just start with that. Who makes up the committee?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Just a point of clarification, Mr. Chair. I would assume that is the crop insurance committee?

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Member for Midland, did you want to?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes, the crop insurance round table.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** The individuals include Mr. Bill Uruski who's the chair; Frieda Krpan, as the—as we know, is the present—Frieda Krpan, the MASC chair

presently; Goldwyn Jones is a producer; John DeVos is a producer; Doug Chorney is a producer; and Mister—Dr. Derek Brewin is from the University of Manitoba.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So what is the status of this committee right now? How many meetings have they had? How many more are they intending to do? And when is it supposed to produce its report? And who does it report to? And is that a public document? If you catch all those questions.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I think there was a number of questions so I'll try and minimize the numbers here but, basically, the tentative draft will supposedly be delivered to my office by December at the latest of this year, and we're hoping to provide a final documentation just going into the new year.

Now, there was a number of other questions, so pardon me for the asking it again on the questions.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'll slow down and do them one at a time. How many meetings have you had so far?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** First and foremost, the task force had meetings on May 19th, the 20th and June the 2nd. And they were with various commodity groups such as the Keystone Agricultural Producers, Manitoba Corn Growers Association, the Manitoba Beef Producers, the Manitoba Pork Council, the National Farmers Union, the Manitoba Canola Growers Association, the Keystone Potato Producers Association, Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association and the Manitoba soybean and pulse growers.

Also there was—there were seven locations around the province in July and—which represented about 72 producers and organizations and represented by 50 staff and four press individuals. Meetings held on September the 10th and 16th featured invitation subject matters expected to inform the task force deliberation. So I think that's kind of a 'summaration' of the meetings that took place.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Will this report be made public after—you were talking about a first draft in December and then a final draft in January. Will it be made public then?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** We will definitely condense the recommendations and reports that the task force has put forward. As member opposite can appreciate, there will be a number of data that will be condensed, and a lot of it will be repetitious material

that our intent it is to summarize it and to make it a document that will be available for—once it's been condensed, of recommendations moving forward.

We also have to consider the fact that we'll be talking to the federal government, as you know, member opposite, that in moving forward with discussions of data with the new Ag Minister, whoever she or he may be, that we're prepared to sit down with them, as we met numerous times at the FPT meetings and indicated, as the Province of Manitoba, we'll be bringing forward some documentation to share what the federal government has.

We move forward towards to enhance the business risk insurance program to the best of our knowledge. And we'll be glad to share that with the condensed version of the documentation based on the summary that's been done by the task force.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So just to be clear, you will be sharing the condensed version. I understand you're going to have to condense it because there'll be some repetition. It will be released to the public?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** We'll share that public document of the condensed material from the report.

**Mr. Pedersen:** When is the summary of profit-loss on crop insurance, when is that available, made available to the public?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Obviously, the report has been tabled, and it's on—it's available on the website for the 2014 and 2015 documentation that the member opposite is asking.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I am more concerned about or asking about 2015 crop year. So when will those be made available?

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I'm sure, to the member opposite and the members that are sitting across from us, obviously, as you know, that the 2015 information is still coming in. Obviously, as you know, producers have until the end of November to file their crop production and yield potential and losses or scenarios. So it would be, you know, premature to give you an estimate right now, because actually all the figures probably has not come in from all producers. So—but we continue to have a—hopefully in the new year have a fairly rough draft. And the final audit, traditionally, is done by September of 2016 for the 2015 crop year.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Just before I recognize the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), when we were going through the staffing thing, I kind of missed a line here. So I'm just going to say it seems to be that we're doing it right now, but I want to ask, does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates in chronological or a global discussion?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Global.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Global discussion it is. Thank you. And does that—agreed to by the minister? *[Agreed]*

So please continue, honourable member for Midland.

Oh, and if you want to—sorry, honourable member for Midland, if you want to introduce your staff and then you can proceed with your question.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Joining me is Michel Trudel, policy analyst for agriculture for our party.

Does MASC or crop insurance right now have a preliminary cost on these spring reseeders? There was considerable reseeded in canola this spring because of a late frost. So is there an estimate as to the cost to the corporation for that?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes, staff have informed me that cost of, predominantly because of the frost events that took place, it was a \$64-million expenditure that took place. Estimation cost was around 93 per cent of that was canola and the rest would be probably various other types of crops. About 3,300 acres—or claim—pardon me, 3,300 claims were submitted, and what we did do, just to assist the producers, we allowed the opportunity immediately following the May 30th frost event, MASC implemented a process that allowed producers to reseed canola back to back prior to the seeding deadline without having to wait for an adjuster to inspect the crop. So it was a decision made by the department, and I thought it was a wise decision simply because of time was of the essence and it was very key.

And just to share some opportunity to share this story is that talking to a number of producers in the valley, Swan Valley area, were very much appreciative of that, just given the time element and the staff numbers, that producers actually said their crop production of the reseeded canola almost seemed to have done better than the original seeded canola. So it's—was a major windfall for a large

investment of a crop that we all know is very expensive to reseed. And they really complimented the department on the great work they done and the staff that worked with them to make it happen and a great success story at the end of the day. Thank you.

**Mr. Pedersen:** MASC makes direct loans for land purchases and other farming activities. What's the expected budget for direct loans for land purchases and other farming activities for this current year?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question, and I think we're quite fortunate to have a lending institute as MASC when we see the importance of agriculture. So, when we talk about all direct loans, and the question being that what was the net interest of profitability and the innovative taking to the department where we've now expanded our—not only for agricultural stock or loans and also majority of this being real-estate-borrowed money, we're—anticipated is in around the \$5 million of net income.

**Mr. Pedersen:** You said \$5 million of net income? I was asking how much money you would be lending out this year.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I guess my interpretation of the question asked prior to that was kind of net loans. But the money that was lent out through MASC for various loans, agriculture direct loans, in 2014 and 2015 was the sum of \$155.1 million.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, again, you're talking about 2014-2015, which you actually lent out. What I'm asking is what is projected to be lent out for direct loans on land purchases and other land—and other farming activities for the fiscal year 2015-2016? What is your projected loan portfolio?

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Mr. Chair, for the budgeted 2015-16, our budgeted allocation at this point in time is \$115 million. We know that we're probably going to have to change that figure, but that is our budgeted line for 2015-16—one hundred and fifteen.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I am dealing in the 2015-2016 departmental Estimates book, page 59, it talks—you have Expected Results—about halfway down the page, paid \$3.1 million in wildlife damage compensation. Now, wildlife compensation is paid out through MASC, as I understand this. How is this—3.1 is what you're expected to—\$3.1 million is what you're expecting to pay out in this current year.

How does that compare, then, to what you paid out in 2014 and '15?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** So, based on the booklet, the member opposite is looking at, the 1.657 is the provincial share, right, and the total allocation in 2015 and '16 was 3.6, whereas the federal government pays that difference on the total amount.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So you paid out 3.6 in the past year; now you're projecting to pay out \$3.1 million this year.

Just a question on this, now: First of all, is the major cost of wildlife depredation, is that from wolves on the cattle industry?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** To be specific on the breakdown of the wildlife claims, the 'predation' is predominantly in the figure of about \$1.3 million, is predominantly majority, that is, of the compensation on damaged livestock due to timber wolves or coyotes compensation.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Has this problem been expanding, are you getting more claims than previous years?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Definitely, we know that the problem does exist, but I do have some statistical information I'd like to share with the members opposite. We go back to 2012, 2013; we had a total number of claims that were about 2,000, just over 2,000; 2013 and '14 we had a drop of approximately 800 claims which is around 1,824 to be exact, and 2014 and 2015 the claims are around the 1,827, so basically an increase of three claims from the previous year.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I believe the Manitoba beef producers have been asking for a bounty on wolves. Is the department considering that at all?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Mr. Chair, obviously, the situation is quite familiar in my previous occupation in just talking with a number of cattle producers in the area. Obviously, I think members opposite is quite familiar with the fact that this kind of falls in the helm of conservation and opportunities. The program in my knowledge is that—continue to work conservation where they are identified as a problem species that's causing some issues. So the registered trapper is called in and try to harvest the problem herd, or the problem pack, whether it be timber wolves or coyotes.

\* (16:30)

To my knowledge, that continues to be done in the Department of Conservation, and I understand there's also enhancement in some form of additional financial support of harvesting of timber wolves in designated areas where there may have been a high number of incidents of animals.

**Mr. Pedersen:** The minister mentioned community pastures, their being the last remaining community pastures that were federally run and are now being taken over by the Province, I guess is what it is, and then turned over to the local groups. Is that program run through MASC or is that directly of the department?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** And I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing up the topic, which I think members opposite really agree with the importance of community pastures. And, you know, when it was instituted, I think, in the southwest area of the province, was probably one of the first community pastures going back in the 1930s. And the importance of the community pasture, not only for the grazing sector of the livestock industry, but also the importance of the ecological goods that brings the importance of community pastures in designated areas.

I know in my own backyard, where I've seen numerous tributaries that have overflowed the banks, and the community pastures were specifically designed as a temporary retention pond area to withstand overland flooding in designated area and actually probably worked out well for the natural vegetation of the grass that's grown in those areas.

So the community pasture program, as members opposite know, that was the wishes to disband the operations through the federal government and provincial partnership historically. And through a consultation with the departments and government and Treasury department, we were able to work with Growing Forward 2 with the federal government to obtain about a \$1 million over three-year pilot project to sustain the momentum and put together a— an organization that has done very exceptionally well as far as stakeholder groups from different factions to continue to carry this legacy of community pasture.

And you're right, member opposite from Midland, that, as of next year, it will be the devolving of all the community pastures in the province of Manitoba to the community pasture organization.

One of the things that was quite noticeable when it started off of the segregation of the community pasture, there was a number of about seven to start with, and, as we started to inherit in partnerships, we found out that a number of the—the first number of community pastures were somewhat financially challenged to sustain existence. So, in consultation with the producer groups, we—it was noted that maybe rather than do it over a 5-year period, we felt it would be very important to possibly accelerate the movement of all the community pastures sooner than later, because it really became more financially attractive to inherit the other community pastures rather than delay the process.

So, without a doubt, the Association of Manitoba Community Pastures, as a non-profit group who have been very instrumental of—working very hard with cattle producers and with the pasture managers and the staff that worked on a number of these community pastures.

So 24 community pastures are being divested, so we look forward to our further involvement, and actually, I think, and for the betterment of the livestock industry and the ecological goods and wildlife habitat, this is—this was one important—of number of components that we feel within this government that was a necessity to maintain its importance.

And I think, as the member opposite is quite familiar with, that the cattle industry who went through the BSE, and a lot of the producers—experienced producers—made choices to exit the industry. And I think, when we talk about the upcoming experienced ones or the young-generation producers in the livestock industry, the community pasture really is a tool that I think that producers that maybe have some financial challenges trying to obtain dollars to buy deeded land and do the necessary preparation to put it into pastures, I believe the community pastures definitely fit this component very well. And I'm very honoured and pleased that the government chose to do this.

So we will be taking complete operations with the volunteer group, I guess I'd call them associated Manitoba community pastures, for the betterment of the cattle industry come next year.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So you advance the group \$1 million over three years for the initial pastures. Now you've taken on more pastures. Is there an additional loan guarantee investment that needs to be done in order

to take on the remaining pastures for the coming season?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I forgot to answer the question first posed by member opposite. Basically, there was a loan through MASC from the associated Manitoba community pastures. They have paid off that loan, and now they continue to work self-sustaining to a point. And basically, because of the 1.05 through, going forward, \$2-million grant, they continue to function with the dollars through that dollar allocation.

**Mr. Pedersen:** That's good news for the cattle industry.

Farmland education tax rebate—what's the cost of administering the program?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Based on the historical administration cost over the years we were at approximately 1 per cent of the rebate dollar total as far as administration cost. Obviously, in the 2013 year of the change of the program we was approximately at about a 2 per cent, maybe just above 2 per cent. But, ever since then, we've seen a reduction in the administration cost related to the total dollar allocated of about one, 1 and a half per cent.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'm going to try and ask questions more precisely.

I asked: How much—how many dollars did it cost to administer the farm education tax rebate? That's not a percentage, that's a dollar figure.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** The administration cost for 2013 and 2014 was \$791,000; 2014-15 the administration cost was at \$613,248.

**Mr. Pedersen:** How many producers are now capped at the \$5,000 limit? Number of producers.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Basically, the number of applicants paid in 2014 was 27,890. The number of applicants capped at \$5,000 were 1,829.

**Mr. Pedersen:** How many claims—the number of claims that were outright rejected?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Mr. Chair, 2014 number of applicants was 230 who were rejected.

**Mr. Pedersen:** All right. Then you've got the number of producers that were capped. You've given me that, the number of producers that were capped.

You've given me the number of claims that were rejected.

What's the total value of those two had those producers not been capped and including the claims that were rejected for either—for whatever purpose?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** So, in the equation of the number of applicants that were 238 that did not apply, obviously the application, the financial application process was not brought into. So the majority, which are the late applications, were 230, were not somewhat devolved whatsoever in the dollar amount, as you may be referring to, you may be asking to.

The amount of—rebate amount not paid due to the capping is, I think, is the question—is being brought forward—was \$6,867,000.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So that number will continue to grow this year because of higher assessments and higher school taxes?

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Basically it's—you know obviously, the price of farmland in the province of Manitoba, as the member opposite is well aware of, increased; land values continued to rise, and I think based on research data, the value of farmland in the province of Manitoba is probably nearly doubled in the last 15 years and probably in geographical areas.

I think the other thing that resonates in the subject is the fact that, you know, schools in the rural continued to maybe have numbers—the struggle with and we continue to work with the rural schools and opportunity to maintain the importance of education in the rural landscape, and the opportunity of depopulation in designated area. And I think members opposite would somewhat support the importance of schools in the small communities and continue to support that, or the importance of it in moving forward for the enhancement of the producers and the young generation in rural communities.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Is there an appeals process for late applications or any other circumstances or any appeals process?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** In the year of 2013, the—there was the, we call it the internal review of application in the first year, in the year of their transition. As far as the years after the fact, there is no appeal mechanism that's in place and basically there was circumstances that dealt somewhat with Crown lands which I believe was dealt with based on the timing of

submissions and payment structure that were somewhat challenging. But I think that's been addressed through Crown lands and leased land opportunities that has worked through the process, but for the years 2015, there is no appeal mechanism at this point in time.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Is there a deadline extension at all for the applications for the education tax rebate?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** In the similar comparison, as I just indicated, an example being the Crown lands where you're waiting for another agency to submit a bill for taxes unpaid for that's related to an education tax component, there is a 90-day appeal process that if you did not receive—or the agency didn't allow you 90 days to submit your invoice for taxes unpaid—then the education school tax rebate may have some exception to the rule. But it's only based on where the tax notices are coming from. They're allowed 90 days of some administration problems. They can, obviously, have a 90-day window of grace.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Does that include amalgamated municipalities who were late in getting their tax notices out?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes.

**Mr. Pedersen:** That's good, because it's in the BITSA bill that we're supposed to pass this week.

How many out-of-province claims have been—how many out-of-province claims are now ineligible due to the rule changes to your tax rebate?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** We don't know, but based on the—because, obviously, the applicants are not applying, knowing full well they're non-residents, they don't qualify.

But in 2014 we did have 36 applicants that did file that were not qualified because they were non-residents.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Has your department or your staff at MASC—because obviously they get the applications, or were getting the applications—has this affected rental rates on land that is not owned within the province because now they're not eligible for a—where they were eligible for a tax rebate before, they're not now?

Has that—has there been any anecdotal evidence that this is reflected back in rental rates on farmland?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I think the member opposite has a valid question. Obviously, staff within the

department with MASC or the ones handling the school tax rebate—I think that's just a discussion that, traditionally, does not come forward with staff and even within the department.

So I think that that question may be, kind of be, question that staff can't relate to.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, they should be able to relate to when it's tax rebates that they were eligible for before, just—then asking the minister to give an opinion on that.

Does he think that will affect rental rates on farmland?

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 3, 2015

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>		<b>Petitions</b>	
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416	
Interprovincial Migration		Eichler	2841
Smook	2829	Pedersen	2843
Kildonan-East Collegiate Girls' Club		Applied Behavioural Analysis Services	
Braun	2829	Schuler	2841
Children in Care		Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability	
Wishart	2830	Ewasko	2841
Earl Grey Community Centre		Bipole III Land Expropriation—Collective Bargaining Request	
Howard	2830	Graydon	2842
Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre—Event of the Year Award		Request to Reduce Speed Limit along Road 9E, La Salle, Manitoba	
Friesen	2830	Martin	2842
<b>Oral Questions</b>		<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
Untendered Contracts		<i>(Continued)</i>	
Pallister; Selinger	2831	<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Winnipeg ERs		<i>(Continued)</i>	
Stefanson; Chomiak	2834	<b>Committee of Supply</b>	
Hydro Development		<b>(Concurrent Sections)</b>	
Eichler; Robinson	2835	Justice	2843
Infrastructure Projects		Mineral Resources	2854
Helwer; Ashton	2835	Conservation and Water Stewardship	2863
Violence against Women		Aboriginal and Northern Affairs	2871
Goertzen; Mackintosh	2836	Education and Advanced Learning	2879
Proportional Representation		Agriculture, Food and Rural Development	2889
Gerrard; Selinger	2837		
Trans Canada Trail			
Altemeyer; Kostyshyn	2838		
Assiniboine Valley Flood (2011)			
Cullen; Ashton	2838		
Infrastructure Department			
Pallister; Selinger	2839		



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

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