

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 26, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 27—The Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park Act

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), that the bill, The Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park Act; Loi sur le parc provincial du patrimoine d'Upper Fort Garry, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Conservation, seconded by the honourable Attorney General, that Bill 27, The Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to rise today and introduce Bill 27. The purpose of this bill is to establish the Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park and provide for the ability for the minister to appoint members to an advisory committee that will make recommendations on the preservation of historical resources, the development of the park and interpretive programming for the park to the minister.

I want to acknowledge the widespread public support spearheaded by the Friends of Upper Fort Garry to reclaim this site as an important legacy for all Manitobans, of great symbolic value to Manitoba's political and social development.

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

PETITIONS

Waste-Water Ejector Systems

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider implementing the prohibition of waste-water injector systems on a case-by-case basis

as determined by environmental need to ecological sensitive areas.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider ordering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

Submitted on behalf of H. Johnson, N. Nault, G. Hayduk and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

In early 2009 the provincial government announced that it was reviewing the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under The Environment Act.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to request immediately replacing the recent changes to the Onsite Wastewater Management Systems Regulation under The Environment Act on hold until

such time that a review can take place to ensure that they are based on sound science.

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

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider offering financial incentives to help affected Manitoba property owners adapt to these regulatory changes.

And this petition is presented, Mr. Speaker, by C. Nicholson, G. Ludlan, L. Gray and many, many others.

Multiple Myeloma Treatments

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by D.M.J. Wilson, M. Keinnai, D.P. Watt and many, many others.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

* (13:40)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by K. Trumbley, V. Vopni, T. Archuk and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

The operations of Mount Agassiz Ski area were very important to the local economy, not only

creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by J.P. McLaughlin, S. Fletcher, J. Fletcher and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Bipole III

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, was signed by K. Batho, D. Wulgosh, G. Williams and many other very concerned Manitobans.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Community-based medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in the Weston and Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by E. Gaschuetz, J. Sololdiuk, J. Saltel and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Supplementary Information on the Civil Service Commission, 2010-2011.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Supplementary Estimates Information for MIT.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2010-2011 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today the following board members and friends of Upper Fort Garry. We have Dr. Jerry Gray, Bob Cunningham, Honourable Gary Filmon, Garry Hilderman, the Honourable Otto Lang, Penny McMillan, Dr. Bill Norrie, Cindy Tugwell and Jim August, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie).

And also in the public gallery we have from Kelvin High School, we have 18 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Rory Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III West-Side Location

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, over the past three years many Manitobans have been raising very serious concerns about this Premier's directive to the board of Manitoba Hydro to go against the recommendations of Hydro's engineers and experts to run the next bipole transmission line down the east side of the province and instead be required to run it down the west side of the province. Those concerns and objections have been based in large part upon the additional added cost of \$640 million of going east versus west.

Well, Mr. Speaker, last month, in March, we received new information and that new information dated March 11th indicates that, in addition to the \$640 million in added cost, there's an additional cost associated with converters of \$1.1 billion to go on the west side versus the east side of the province, bringing the difference in cost to \$1.75 billion going west side versus east side.

I want to ask the Premier: In this time of multiyear deficits, rapidly growing debt and rising hydro rates, Mr. Speaker, how can he justify throwing away \$1.75 billion with his political directive to run the line down the west side?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this question has been canvassed for the last three years and Manitoba Hydro has made it clear that the converter requirement is something that in either case they would likely need. They've made that quite clear.

They've also—through the Farlinger report, it has been made clear that there are significant risks on building the hydro transmission down the east side, significant risks, first and foremost, to the boreal forest in terms of its ability to attract a UNESCO World Heritage designation, and also risks to the Hydro corporation's reputation in its export markets, which could put at risk up to \$20 billion of revenue.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, by that response he's clearly not carefully read either the Farlinger report or the advice of Manitoba Hydro. Mr. Brennan said at committee on March the 8th that the converter stations were only added, quote: "when we decided to come down the west side," end of quote. He also said that conversion equipment was not part of the plan at the time that Hydro was planning to run the line down the east side. He was asked the question: Was it part of the project if you were running down the east side? He had a one-word answer. The answer was no, it wasn't part of the east-side plan.

In addition, the Farlinger report says, and I quote, on page 5: unfortunately, due to its long length, its characteristics make it unsuitable to operate with either of the existing converters requiring it to have its own converters designed to operate with the longer lines.

Hydro just last month came out, they put a number to that requirement. That number is \$1.1 billion on top of the \$640 million. How can he justify \$1.75 billion in waste in this era of multiyear deficits and spiralling debt?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro made it very clear at least three years ago that converters are a likely requirement no matter where the bipole went. He made it clear that they were an essential part of the future growth of Manitoba Hydro for export purposes as well as for reliability purposes inside the province. There's nothing new here, Mr. Speaker.

*(13:50)

The reality is we have to make a choice, a choice that will ensure that we have the best opportunities for Manitoba both on the east side of Lake Manitoba in terms of ecotourism, in terms of UNESCO World Heritage Site, which has cultural as well as ecological assets attached to it, and we also have to make sure that we protect the reputation of our export product in its customers' markets, which are Minnesota, Wisconsin and potentially to the west of us, as well, as we do studies with the government of Saskatchewan and their Crown utility of what additional power needs they will have in the future.

We're developing Hydro in such a way that we maximize opportunities both on the environmental as well as the energy side, as well as ensuring that Manitobans can move forward on reliability issues.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that he's now calling into question the advice and the findings of the Farlinger report, which he's consistently referred to. That report says that, unfortunately, it—there's a requirement for converters on the longer lines which wasn't there for the east side.

And if he looks back at what Mr. Brennan said in committee, the question was whether there were any plans for conversion equipment prior to the 2007 directive; his response was no. I then asked, so were the converter stations added? And he said, and I quote: "When we decided to come down the west side, we included conversion equipment." And he went on to explain that that was because, Mr. Speaker, technically they were required on the west side because of the longer lines, not required on the east side.

How can he justify \$1.75 billion in waste in the current environment of rising debt, increased deficits, rising high rates on hydro rates on Manitoba families? How can he be so out of touch? How can he say, believe me, when all the experts say, look somewhere else for credible information?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, Brennan himself has said, in the public media, conversion equipment is required for the western route. And in the case of the eastern route, it is also required when new generation is required, and it is now very clear that we're proceeding with new generation at Keeyask. We are proceeding with new generation at Conawapa.

The members opposite want to play fast and loose with the truth. They're going to put at risk our

ability to develop Keeyask. They're going to put at risk our ability to develop Conawapa. That will put at risk up to \$20 billion of export revenue well over the next decade, Mr. Speaker. If the members want to roll the dice and play that kind of a game, they're entitled to do that.

Our objective is to build Manitoba Hydro so that we have this export product, which will be for the betterment of Manitoba's economy, and also preserve the opportunity for a UNESCO east-side designation. We look for a win-win. They look for a lose-lose.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Information Request

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, this Premier's—the only lose-lose is the ratepayers of the province of Manitoba. He's putting at risk \$1.75 billion of their money on a likely.

Mr. Speaker, transparency of the west-side bipole costs are an absolute must in order to estimate the long-term cost to consumers. In March of this year, the Public Utilities Board asked Manitoba Hydro to provide the following information, and I quote: Assume all costs for Bipole III are allocated to domestic consumers. Please provide the annual revenue requirement and rate impacts for a west-side route compared to an east-side route. Manitoba Hydro flatly refused to provide this information.

Why is the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro not insisting that Manitoba Hydro provide this vital piece of information to the Public Utilities Board?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I can assure the member opposite that we always encourage Manitoba Hydro and any other Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker, to co-operate with the Public Utilities Board, and that is happening.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the only thing the previous minister of Manitoba Hydro did was encourage Manitoba Hydro to do the wasteful west-side line and not the east-side line.

Mr. Speaker, "transparency" and "accountability" are two words not found in this minister or Manitoba Hydro's vocabulary.

It seems this comparison was available in December 2007. Back then, the Public Utilities Board asked for and received a net present value cost-benefit analysis for Bipole III comparing west side with east side. Manitoba Hydro had the cost

comparisons then, but, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, now it seems Manitoba Hydro cannot do a similar comparison.

Can the minister please tell me why, with all of Manitoba Hydro's resources, it cannot do a simple recalculation of these costs? What are they hiding, Madam Minister?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we know where the members opposite would go. We know that they mothballed hydro. The members opposite never worked on negotiating any sales.

This government has taken a different approach. We want to develop hydro. We want that economic development in the north. We want the reliability for our own source of power, and we want a line so that we can meet obligations for our export sales.

Those are the things that we are doing, Mr. Speaker. Those are the things that we are committed to. And we will continue to work on behalf of Manitobans so we can get those export sales and we can have those \$20 billion in revenue over 20 years.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't get an answer to the question, but I can assure the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro that we on this side want those very same things, only without wasting \$1.75 billion.

In December of 2007, Manitoba Hydro was able to provide cost comparisons based on a 1,341-kilometre west-side line versus an 885-kilometre east-side line. It's no secret, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has been working on the east-side location for 20 years, but now it seems that all that information is lost. Shocking.

Should the minister not be concerned that Manitoba Hydro and its extremely competent engineers cannot perform this simple task, or it is simply, Mr. Speaker, because there is way too much political interference on that decision?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, what we are concerned about is the ability to have the reliability of supply for Manitobans. We're committed, and we want to ensure that we are able to meet our sales requirements.

And that's why the discussion was held in 2007, Mr. Speaker. That's why it was an issue in the election of 2007. Manitobans listened to us when we told them that we were going on the west side of the province, and they supported this party to form government.

And since that time, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has done three rounds of consultation, and they are just about ready to announce the route that of choice, and the line will be built on the west side of the province.

**Manitoba Hydro
Bipole III West-Side Location**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this as opposed to the rhetoric that we're hearing from ministers, none of which is backed up by anybody with expertise in these areas. The reality is this: \$1.75 billion in added costs on the west side, less reliability as they run through tornado alley and the Red River Valley, less environmental friendliness as they waste 40 megawatts of energy and run through 50 kilometres more forest on the west side of the province.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all of those facts, and I know they're greatly worried when they get e-mails from environmental activists, and that's what drives their decision making, but in light of all of these facts, will they stand with engineers at Hydro, will they stand with former Premier Ed Schreyer, will they do the right thing and run the line down the east side?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we will do the right thing when it comes to developing Manitoba Hydro, and we will do it in such a way that we're not ripping up the east-side boreal forests, which is what the members want to do. And we will do it in such a way that we respect the 80 consultation meetings that were done with the First Nations people on the east side, where they expressed their grave concerns about developing a hydro line through that pristine boreal forest.

And I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, to have intact pristine boreal forest protected—southern pristine boreal forest protected—is something you only get to do once. You don't get to build a hydro line's corridor through there and then take it out later on. You'd make the decision properly the first time, and you proceed.

* (14:00)

And with respect to the converter stations, Mr. Speaker. A letter—well—be—and this is a letter that's—there is no fairy-tale additional expense of another billion for a west route. This is a letter that was sent to Mr. McFadyen, and it was sent to him to clarify the terms of this—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even from a—when quoting from—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even from quoting from letters and stuff, members in the House will be addressed by the constituency they hold or ministers by their portfolios. And the honourable First Minister has about five seconds left.

Mr. Selinger: Yes. The member received a letter from professor John Ryan—the member for Fort Whyte—and the letter indicated, very clearly, there is no fairy-tale additional expense of another billion for a west-side route.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the fairy-tale response from the Premier. It's his own Hydro CEO who indicated in committee just last month that it wasn't required. It's the Farlinger report; I guess he's now discarding the Farlinger report in favour of letters from Dr. Ryan, which I guess he is entitled to do if he thinks he maintains a shred of credibility.

But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that \$1.75 billion, which will be overexpended over a five-year period, could build 43 hospitals at \$40 million each. It could build 70 high schools. It could cost 100—they could build 175 new addictions treatment centres like the one that they cancelled in this year's budget because they claim to be out of money.

Why, Mr. Speaker, is it more important for him to waste \$1.75 billion because of the e-mails he's getting from activists than spend money on hospitals, schools and addiction centres for Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member should ask himself what circumstances Manitobans would be in if they forego \$20 billion of revenue over the next 20 years. That is the game he's playing with his reckless approach to developing Manitoba Hydro. That kind of reckless approach not only puts at risk the profitability and the reputation of the corporation, not only does it put at risk the UNESCO heritage designation on the east side, it puts at risk the future prosperity of all Manitobans.

The Keeyask project, well over \$5 billion. The Conawapa project another 7 to 8 billion dollars. These projects promise to lift Manitoba's economy for the next decade. They require a reliable bipole to deliver that energy to market. They require a reputation for the product that will not result in the cancellation of those contracts.

And the member wants to roll the dice, he wants to rip up the east side, he wants to be reckless in his approach, and I tell you, Mr. Speaker, we will take a responsible approach and ensure that those revenues are available for the future benefit of all Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, which would all be fine if they had produced even a single shred of expert evidence to support the rhetoric that he's using in the House today, Mr. Speaker.

But the reality, Mr. Speaker, and I don't—you know, I don't mind if he wants to refer to the opposition as reckless or as rolling the dice. I don't mind that, I don't mind, but what I do take offence to is when he calls the CEO of Hydro and all the engineers at Hydro, reckless people who want to roll the dice. I think it's shameful that he calls Mr. Farlinger and the people who wrote this report reckless people who want to roll the dice.

And I think it's unfortunate that he's referring to former Premier Ed Schreyer as being a reckless person who wants to roll the dice, and even in—even his own caucus member, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who campaigned on reversing the decision in his leadership campaign. Now, Mr. Speaker, if he wants to call us reckless people who want to roll the dice, that's fine but he has to realize that more than half of his caucus lined up with the member for Minto when he was wanting to run the line down the east side.

Mr. Speaker, is he today saying that the member for Minto is reckless and wants to roll the dice on Hydro?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's only Monday, we've already got a meltdown occurring on the other—across the aisle from the member for Fort Whyte. That's unfortunate.

The president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro said conversion equipment would be required for new generation, which is required immediately after. In other words, the bipole on the west side would require conversion equipment. The member knows that. That was stated at committee on October 25th of 2007. The member can deny those facts if he wishes, but that was the record; that's what was put on the record by the president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro.

Now, he wants to wrap himself with all these other individuals. We're only saying he's reckless, not anybody else.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, the Farlinger report made it very clear that the public policy questions raised here required consultation with government. It required government to take a view because of the broad issues that affect all Manitobans. We have taken a view. We have taken a view that we need to ensure reliability and protect the boreal forest.

Bell Hotel Transitional Housing Requirement of Alcohol and Drug Abstinence

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): In what can only be called a positive announcement, federal minister Steven Fletcher and the Minister of Housing announced funding for transitional housing in the old Bell Hotel. This project should be a safe haven for homeless people who are looking to turn their lives around.

The NDP minister is quoted as saying that she is looking at making the shelter less safe by allowing drugs and alcohol at the new Bell Hotel. Was the minister misquoted?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I was delighted to join with 200 community members, the federal and the City, to announce \$6.2 million for the redevelopment of the 104-year-old Bell Hotel.

That hotel has a big history in our city. Lots of hardships have happened there, but what we're doing is we're redeveloping the Bell Hotel. Mr. Speaker, 42 units, where we will have homeless people or at risk of being homeless people come into this safe haven and provided with the support services that they need. We will ensure that they have the mental health, the social services that they need, as well as the addiction services, and that will make a difference.

Mr. Schuler: With homeless people wanting and needing the opportunity to turn their life around, what right or hope will they have to a safe, affordable environment when there are no restrictions on alcohol and drugs in the new \$6-million Bell Hotel?

The Salvation Army Belkin House is dry. Siloam Mission is dry. Even the old New Occidental Hotel, or as it is now called, the Red Road Lodge, is now adamantly a dry facility.

Why does this NDP minister wish to put at risk all the residents of the new Bell Hotel with her refusal to have the Bell Hotel be a dry facility?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What we're talking here is a HOUSINGFirst principle that's new to Winnipeg, which has been tried and true in New York City and in Vancouver, where we are providing housing first to individuals, ensuring that they have a safe place to stay, and as they—as they develop or become physically stronger, then they will deal with the spiritual and emotional issues that they have. This is proven and it's supported by many community residents.

And the member opposite should know, when Minister Toews reported today that the battle—there is no debate, the federal government supports this 100 percent.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is helping to fund this.

However, "homelessness is not simply a matter of living without long-term shelter. It also becomes a way of life. Drug and alcohol addiction, combined with the stresses of living from hand to mouth, rob many people who are homeless of basic life skills." This is a quote from the Salvation Army Belkin House.

What about the rights of those who wish to be free of their alcohol or drug addictions? Will the minister advocate for the homeless who need a safe environment where they will not be faced with the temptations of alcohol or drugs on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The member opposite obviously wasn't listening to the previous answers where we are advocating for homeless people across this province. What we're doing is we're providing the continuum of service, and the principle in which we develop these services are housing first. Let's provide them with a safe, affordable place to live, and as they stabilize, we will provide them with the necessary services that they require to improve and to live a life of recovery. We are there with them and we are supporting them along with hundreds and hundreds of organizations that support this model.

Health-Care Services Rehabilitation Services Reductions

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): A constituent of mine, Ray Parker, is a 25-year veteran of the Canadian Forces. He's desperately in need of rehabilitation services and physiotherapy services after suffering brain damage after a heart attack last February.

*(14:10)

For a time, Mr. Parker was receiving physiotherapy and experienced significant improvements to his condition. However, due to staff shortages, for the last month Mr. Parker has received no physiotherapy, no occupational therapy and no rehabilitation services. Now his condition is once again deteriorating.

Will the Minister of Health explain why our veterans who have sacrificed much for this province are denied access to health services they desperately need and deserve?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I received a letter from her on Friday. We made contact with the family. Today we—I can report to the member that the wife of the person in question is reporting improved care, but there's continued work to be done.

The Assiniboine Regional Health Authority is working with the family to review what the options are to find the best possible treatment for the circumstances surrounding this patient, and Mrs. Parker is satisfied with that, but we're going to continue to work with her.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is saying, good job. How come the family has to go the political route for this minister to react?

This is the second situation that I've had to bring a situation to the minister in the Chamber to get a response, Mr. Speaker. Time is critical in this situation.

Mr. Parker's family have been trying for months to have their husband and father admitted to a facility where rehab and physiotherapy are available. They were denied a bed in Rivers, and despite being one of our country's military veterans, Mr. Parker was also denied access or admission to the Deer Lodge Centre.

Can the minister explain to me why her department is allowing Mr. Parker to remain in hospital without proper care rather than place him in a facility that can meet his needs? That—her answer is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate to the member that we made contact with the family and that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority

continues to work with the family, and Mrs. Parker has reported that there are improvements.

Again, I need to be very clear with the member that when people are being admitted to various facilities, these decisions are made by medical expert and they're prioritized based on need. The regional health authority is going to continue to work with the family. Doctors are going to make decisions, and, frankly, it seems to me she's the one politicizing the issue.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the minister is incorrect. The doctor within this facility was very concerned and so were medical staff, and they've asked the family to get political with the situation. This is the second time in this last few months.

Mr. Parker's family is asking for timely access to care. He's being denied services, Mr. Speaker. He's deteriorating and this minister is playing political games with the political health-care system.

She has six political staff in her office. You'd think that they could handle some of these situations, Mr. Speaker. A letter has been sent to the minister, yes, and we're looking for some answers. This man needs care. He needs to receive care either through Rivers or the Deer Lodge Centre.

Where is this minister's response that's going to meet this family's needs?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, and again, medical experts are reviewing the case, speaking with the—*[interjection]* The member's chirping from her seat that the response wasn't fast enough. Letter received April 23rd, call made April 23rd. It was the same-day service, thank you very much.

But moving on, I can tell the member that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority and the hospital is going to work together to provide service. I can tell the member what we're not going to do. We're not going to do what they chose to do in western Manitoba at the Minnedosa Hospital. We're not going to cut \$1.5 million like they did between '92 and '97. The funding for the Minnedosa Hospital was cut nearly in half during that time. We're going to get care for this patient. We're not going to slash services at Minnedosa Hospital.

Flood-Damaged Farmland Producer Financial Compensation

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 substantially cut spending for agriculture. Showing no increases or failing to

maintain at least status quo is nothing but a slap in the face to farm families. Farmers in the Interlake, West Lake, Lakeside and Gimli areas have been hit for two years with hard flooding. This budget of 2010 promised to have relief for our farm families.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister responsible: When will farmers receive the assistance as promised in Budget 2010?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Unlike many other jurisdictions in this country, Mr. Speaker, we have shown where we do support farmers in this budget, very clearly. And I wish to acknowledge the advice—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Give him a chance to answer.

Mr. Struthers: I don't think they want an answer, Mr. Speaker.

I want to acknowledge, though, the advice that the member across the way has given, good advice, I think, in the case of working with the Interlake farmers. We are—have met with them in Arborg, and we have also, Mr. Speaker, been in contact with the federal minister, who also, I think, is very supportive of the plight of the farmers in the northern Interlake. And I would suggest that he—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, spring seeding is beginning. The government should have known long ago what steps they were going to take to assist affected producers. Turning a blind eye, hoping the problem would go away, is just poor governance. Keystone Ag Producers, MCPA, rural municipalities, the local MP, James Bezan, I and myself and my caucus colleagues have repeatedly asked this government to seek a program under the ag recovery program. Producers need to know what assistance is coming and when.

I ask the minister again: Do the right thing. Announce the program so these farmers can get financial support as promised in Budget 2010.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I'm the first to acknowledge every one of those people that the member has pointed to are people that I've spoken to. I've got some very good advice from the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) as well. He can add the member for Interlake to that, who very early on and very bluntly put together the needs of the farmers in that area, along with the member for Lakeside, who I

wish to thank for his advice, as he—*[interjection]*—yes, there's times in this building that we should be a little less partisan and give some credit to others.

And in that same vein, I want to give credit to the federal minister, who right now is pondering and considering going with us on this program, a program that we have been very clearly saying we're ready to go on. Soon as I hear from his cousin in Ottawa, we'll make an announcement.

Mr. Eichler: I invite the minister to get outside the Perimeter, see what's going on. The farmers are trying to get their seed in the ground, waiting for this government to do something.

Mr. Speaker, this government is good at taking money from farmers, but they're not good at being there for in time of crisis. Look at the back-door taxes they're hitting producers with, such as a \$2 levy on quotas and supply management. I cannot believe how this government hates farmers in rural Manitoba, than to have no one else but on flood-ridden areas as West Lake, Interlake, Lakeside and Gimli, I say shame on this government.

Will the minister do the right thing, correct his wrong, announce the announcement today and get on with the job so the farmers can get their seeds in the ground, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: I'd like the member to show me some evidence that he has said the same kind of a political statement to his cousin in Ottawa, who we are waiting for as we speak to get his part of this announcement together.

Maybe the member is suggesting that I should just go ahead without the federal government. And then, Mr. Speaker, what does that say about some kind of co-operation between governments, some kind of work on behalf of the farmers from one government to the next?

I've been out of—I—*[interjection]* They're just not interested, Mr. Speaker. The member for Lakeside may be, but his counterparts—you know, when they talk about putting less focus on agriculture and then look to me to get outside of the Perimeter, I think you got it backwards.

HOUSINGFirst Initiative Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Housing and Community Development around her announcement

of support for the HOUSINGFirst project at the former Bell Hotel.

And, of course, at that announcement the federal minister of—we've heard Steven Fletcher chipped in that he thought that the whole project was wrongly designed and that it should have been an abstinence-first project and not a HOUSINGFirst project. Then, of course, the provincial Tories are strongly supporting Steven Fletcher.

* (14:20)

But my question to the minister is why has she been so weak in defending the HOUSINGFirst concept, which has been shown to produce dramatic reductions in homelessness, in hospital visits, in detox visits and in other areas.

Why has she waited for three days to stand up and defend her own investment?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I'm not quite sure where to start.

I can start talking about our commitment to housing. In Budget 2010, in the rollout, we have made no less than seven housing announcements that have talked about affordable housing, social housing, and, yes, on Friday, we talked about the announcement for the Bell Hotel, a homelessness strategy which is very, very effective and proven across this country as one of the best practices, and there's lots of evidence that talks about ensuring that we provide a stable, safe, affordable place for people to stabilize and, then, through the support services that we will provide, deal with the issues that they're presenting.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister has been horribly weak and ineffective, and because of her weak and ineffective response to Steven Fletcher and the provincial Tories' ignorant comments on this subject, many Manitobans are now questioning the whole concept of HOUSINGFirst.

Why has the minister done such a terrible job of supporting what should have been a good, positive initiative and what should work.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Well, I get the sense that the member opposite is supporting this announcement, but not really, and so I'm confused.

So what I want to say is that there was a lot of support for this announcement on Friday. The room was filled with more than 200 people from all

different kinds of agencies. Homeless people themselves came and congratulated us for our initiative.

We are working with the community and the other two levels of government to ensure that we provide—that we are trying to provide—we are providing an option, continuum of housing for all Manitobans to ensure that their needs are being addressed.

The Bell Hotel is one of those initiatives; \$6.2 million has been invested and will make a difference.

On-Line Gaming Government Support

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, last Friday in an exchange with the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), I was pleased to hear that she's going to accept the challenge, and we're going to go into the North End and have a good debate on taxation, and I suspect on the May 19th we'll have a lively discussion.

But, Mr. Speaker, part of the discussion we had in Estimates, we talked about Manitoba's Lotteries and the incoming revenue that might be projected over the next number of years, and then over the weekend, I understand that Manitoba Lotteries is now looking at the possibility of expanding, expanding into the whole area of gaming on the Internet.

I'm wondering if the government can tell this House, what is the government's position? What is the NDP position in terms of Manitoba Lotteries moving into the new area of gaming on the Internet, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, there's currently more than 2,000 on-line sites. A number of jurisdictions in Canada have moved to offer an on-line gaming option, a Canadian option, a regulator option. That includes the Atlantic provinces. That includes British Columbia. Québec has announced its intention to move in that direction.

We have made no decision, Mr. Speaker, on whether we would move in terms of on-line gaming, but we're certainly looking at whether, indeed, there should be a Canadian option of which Manitoba's a part which provides a regulator responsible gaming

option on the Internet. That's our current analysis of it.

University of Manitoba Project Domino

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, our government has long been committed to affordable and accessible post-secondary education, including ensuring that students have access to safe, quality, modern housing where they can live in comfort while pursuing their studies.

Can the Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy share with us details about the launch of an exciting project at my constituency, at the U of M Fort Garry campus?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I thank the member for the question.

I was very pleased this morning to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and President David Barnard to announce the launch of Project Domino, the first phase of Project Domino.

You might know, Mr. Speaker, that Project Domino is a \$110-million project, which will—capital—a capital investment in the University of Manitoba, which is supported by \$47 million from the Province.

This morning we announced Pembina Hall, a modern highrise building, which will include 350 rooms for students. Mr. Speaker, the facility has been designed to LEED standard. This is good news for students, good news for Manitoba, good news for our economy. In fact, it was a good news day.

River Hills Railroad Inc. Feasibility Study Grant

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the River Hills Railroad company's been formed by a group of agriculture producers and businessmen in south central Manitoba. The organization was looked to—formed to look at the feasibility of purchasing 63 miles of Canadian Pacific Rail line in south central Manitoba. CP has put the rail up for sale and for potential salvage. This group is looking at the feasibility of operating the line and also looking at the potential fallout from having the line discontinued, and the group was looking for a \$25,000 grant under the REDI program and, to date, the group has not seen—heard any word from the provincial government.

It seems ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the government can find in a matter of days \$115 million to build a stadium, but they can't find \$25,000 for a feasibility study for rural economic development in Manitoba.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? I'll put up our record on rural economic development against theirs any day.

And I found—and I'm finally—Mr. Speaker, it's really nice to see that they agree with me on that.

Mr. Speaker, we've been working very hard with the group that the member for Turtle Mountain puts forward here today. We think that there's a lot of potential in our province, and we've had some good experience working with other local groups in terms of short-line railways.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that there's a lot of work that we can do together with farmers to make sure we get the best product in the world into the market.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Collège Béliveau Haiti Fundraiser

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today with another example of our youth reacting to the world around them with empathy and compassion.

In the aftermath of the devastation wrought by this winter's earthquake in Haiti, two students at Collège Béliveau organized a wonderful fundraiser at which I was honoured to speak. Signe Hanson and Marie-Anna Dufault-Rae, both in grade 12, spearheaded a dynamic event that rolled together live music, a bake sale, a barbecue, a student auction and a silent auction. Ultimately, students in grades 7 to 12 succeeded in collecting almost \$4,000, which was donated to the Canadian Red Cross.

Although Marie-Anna and Signe were the two driving forces behind the event, any successful fundraiser is a community project, and so, congratulations, to all of those at Collège Béliveau who helped make this event a success. And thank you to all the parents and neighbours who dipped into their pockets, many for the second or third time, to give a little more to Haitians in need.

Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned in other cases, I would encourage these young philanthropists to stay engaged in monitoring the Haiti relief effort. Our

responsibility to those in need does not end at the bank, and so it is important to read and watch the news carefully to ensure that funds are distributed fairly and effectively towards real improvement in the lives of ordinary Haitians.

The confidence and capability demonstrated by Signe, Marie-Anna, their friends and schoolmates suggests that I may be preaching to the choir. In any event, to all those who played parts large and small in the Collège Béliveau Haiti Relief Benefit, thank you and well done.

Nolan Thiessen

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Brandon, Manitoba's very own Nolan Thiessen has become a world curling champion. Nolan has recently returned to Canada from the World Men's Curling Championship in Italy with his teammates: skip Kevin Koe, third Blake MacDonald, and second Carter Rycroft. The foursome went into the final game with a record of 10 and two, and was able to beat the Norwegian team 9 to 3 for the championship title.

* (14:30)

Nolan Thiessen grew up in Brandon where he attended Vincent Massey High School and Brandon University. He learned to curl in Brandon when he was 11 years old, and by the time he was 15, Nolan was curling as a competitive men's league in Brandon. A tremendous athlete throughout his youth, Nolan was forced to choose between his two passions, curling and baseball. Nolan decided to pursue his baseball career when he received a scholarship to a Texas university. But later he turned to his roots, Manitoba, and continued curling.

Nolan Thiessen's success as a world champion in curling is not limited to this spring's victory. In 2003, Nolan represented Brandon University at the world university games and walked away with a gold medal with his then-skip Mike McEwen and teammates Marc Kennedy and Denny Neufeld.

Nolan Thiessen moved to Edmonton six years ago where he works full time as a chartered accountant when he is not curling. Nolan currently curls out of the Saville Sports Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, with team-teammates Koe, who he joined in 2006. Nolan Thiessen played particularly well as a rookie in the 2010 Brier, making it as a first-team all-star lead by curling an average of 89 percent through the tournament.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my personal congratulations to Nolan Thiessen for becoming a 2010 world curling champion. Nolan is not only known to me because of his outstanding abilities as a curler, but also because he was friends with my son during their youth. Bill and Debbie Thiessen did an outstanding job of raising Nolan during his formative years. I am extremely proud of his accomplishments and hope that he knows that he has represented his community extremely well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

River East Transcona School Division Powwow

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, this past Thursday I had the pleasure of attending River East Transcona School Division's 2010 Powwow, and I was thoroughly delighted to take part in this meaningful event.

Over 700 students, parents, teachers and staff from the River East Transcona School Division gathered in the gymnasium of Chief Peguis Junior High to participate in this celebratory event. The second-ever River East Transcona School Division Powwow opened with a wonderful community feast that showcased the natural bounties of Manitoba through expertly prepared traditional foods of duck with bannock, wild rice and blueberry pie.

As the dancers prepared for their grand entry, excitement filled the auditorium. The audience stood and watched in awe as the dancers were joined by elders, flag carriers, dignitaries and other powwow participants.

The grand entry was heralded by the rhythms of the drums, which also provided the perfect accompaniment for the dancers. The audience clapped and cheered, encouraging the performers. Mary Courchene, the divisional elder, incanted the ceremony's invocation, a special prayer signifying the start of the powwow. The event continued with an array of songs that told stories of the individuals, fallen soldiers and the different First Nations communities participating in the event.

Coco Ray Stevenson and Shaneen Robinson did a great job reflecting the event's significance to the audience as the masters of ceremonies. Carol Shankaruk, Aboriginal community networker for the River East Transcona School Division was the consultant for the event.

Mr. Speaker, this powwow was an awe-inspiring celebration of Manitoba's First Nations. I would like to thank the students, parents, school and divisional staff, and trustees of the River East Transcona

School Division and, particularly, Chief Peguis Junior High for hosting this spectacular event. A special thanks is in order to the elders and all the wonderful performers, young and old, who shaped this unique event. I would also like to thank the many cooks who laboured on this evening's feast. It was a huge success, and I am grateful to have taken part in it. Thank you.

Manitoba Book Awards Gala

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): All across our province Manitobans know that here in the Prairies there is a unique cultural tradition that is often overlooked. This weekend was an opportunity to celebrate Manitoba's culture by recognizing authors and artists at the Manitoba Book Awards gala that took place on Sunday. These annual awards were presented by the Manitoba Writers' Guild and the Association of Manitoba Book Publishers.

This year was the 22nd time the awards were presented, and there were over 50 authors, photographers, designers and publishers who were nominated for the dozen awards that were given out. Winnipeg author Allan Levine's work, *Coming of Age*, was awarded the McNally Robinson Book of the Year Award. The book, a history of Jewish people in Manitoba, was also nominated in three other categories. Mr. Levine has been a force in Winnipeg's literary scene and continues to write books that tell stories from Manitoba's history. He is a reminder that the arts are alive and well across our great province.

Professors Robert J. Young and Deborah Schnitzer took home awards for non-fiction and fiction respectively.

The Carol Shields Award for the best book about Winnipeg went to *Prairie Metropolis*, edited by Gerald Friesen and Esyllt W. Jones.

Eva Wiseman and Colleen Sydor took home McNally Robinson Book of the Year awards in two different age categories, and Ariel Gordon was named the most promising writer.

Jan Horner was awarded the Aqua Books Lansdowne Prize for her poetry collection.

The award for best book by a Manitoba publisher was given to *Wild West*, published by Heartland Associates, and the prize for Best First Book was given to Michael Nathanson.

Best Illustrated Book was awarded to Gerry Kopelow's visual history, *All Our Changes*.

And the Manuela Dias Book Design of the Year Award was given to the University of Manitoba's architectural-architecture facility's journal *Dead on Arrival*.

We would like to congratulate all of these individuals on their accomplishments. Each day, they contribute to bringing the arts in Manitoba to a new level. These works make all of us sit up and take notice of the cultural work that is going on in Manitoba. And for that, we should be thankful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motorcycle Ride for Dad

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, at Windsor Park Canad Inn, located in my constituency of Radisson, I was happy to kick off the 2010 Motorcycle Ride for Dad in support of prostate cancer research and awareness. First, along with the organizing committee co-chairs, Moe Sabourin and Kirk Van Alstyne, I presented the prostate cancer researcher Dr. James Lau with a cheque of \$69,000, the total amount raised at last year's event. It was also announced that the pledges are now officially being accepted for this year's Motorcycle Ride for Dad.

Mr. Speaker, on May 29th, a police-escorted motorcycle parade will wind through the city before spreading out into the countryside for an on-bike poker derby. Last year, 487 riders collected donations from 9,012 individuals and businesses. As I mentioned, a total of 69,000 was raised and donated to CancerCare Manitoba—a record this year's organizers are working to break. Manitoba's efforts will be matched across the country in 25 cities and towns.

The local committee which brought the Motorcycle Ride for Dad to our province was spearheaded by members of Winnipeg Police Service, the Winnipeg Fire Department and Winnipeg Transit. A handful of local businesses have also been generous in donating some time and money. At last, board—as the past board member of the Canadian Cancer Society, I know first-hand how valuable efforts for the volunteers are in organizing such a, you know, exciting fundraising and awareness initiative.

Mr. Speaker, along with many, many Canadians, we believe that it's important for us to take steps for prevention, at the same time, work towards cure of this deadly disease. To all those involved in the Motorcycle Ride for Dad, thank you. Your work

means more money and research labs, and more have comfort in many homes across the country. I look forward to May 29th.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, on a grievance?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, on a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this government is wasting hundreds of millions of tax dollars. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) have shown that they really do not value how important it is to spend responsibly.

I want to reference three clear examples of absolute waste by this government.

The government continues to say that they will construct a new power line down the west side of Lake Winnipeg, even though there are alternatives that will save well over \$600 million, and their justification for the waste is false.

Two: Contrary to scientific evidence that shows removing nitrogen from water is going to do nothing for Lake Winnipeg, even though taxpayers will pay several hundred million for nothing, the government does not want to be embarrassed, so they will be going ahead.

Three: Recently, the government announced it is purchasing four new water bombers for a total cost of 126 million tax dollars, unlike Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, both of which decided to invest in maintaining as opposed to buying new. Manitoba does not need these new planes. Our current planes could last for many more years.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this purchase has more to do with trying to make the government look good than it has to do with actual need for new planes. Winnipeg's North End needs things like community police officers and more support for community-based health-care services.

My advice to the government is to walk down the streets in Winnipeg and start dealing with the real needs of people and stop wasting valuable tax dollars because of bad decisions. Recognize when you have made a mistake. Your mistakes are costly. Every tax dollar is important, and stop wasting it.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, we have done, over the years, many different types of surveys in my constituency, and the number of those surveys clearly demonstrate what the government could be doing on a wide variety of issues. One of those issues, and I've raised it before in question period, is in regards to recycling things such as the pop cans. This is an issue in which I believe that the government of the day would, in fact, be better served by acting on looking at how it is getting pop cans and other items such as pop cans being recycled.

In the recent survey I sent out, I had made the suggestion that there should be five cents, for example, refundable deposit on a returned container such as a—whether it's a Pepsi or Coca-Cola tin can, and well over—a good solid majority of people, in excess of 80 percent, felt that this is something that the government should, in fact, be doing.

Mr. Speaker, looking at new ideas, thinking in terms of outside of the box and how it is that we can better serve our seniors in our communities, one of the questions that was asked was in regards to providing bus services and the need to make bus services more available and accessible to our seniors. The idea of allowing senior citizens to be able to ride during non-peak hours for free on Winnipeg Transit is something that receives a great deal of support and I would suggest that this is something that we should be encouraging and looking at.

At the end of the day, when you look at non-peak hours and City of Winnipeg transit buses, you will find that, more often than not, that they're riding around virtually empty. Enabling seniors to be able to use that service during non-peak hours, you will find that there'll be more engagement by our seniors. And, by seeing that, whether it's the social value, such as visiting their grandchildren or their children, or participating in the economy such as going to malls, going to coffee shops, and so forth, Mr. Speaker, all of those types of activities, healthy living, participation, those are the types of things that could actually make a difference. And looking in terms of outside of the box of maybe what we would typically normally be looking at, I would suggest that the government would be best advised to be doing things of that nature.

Mr. Speaker, there's the idea, in terms of Eldon Ross Pool, and I was really pleased that Eldon Ross Pool is a pool that has served thousands of people over the years—is a pool that was constructed and, sadly, it's been—it closes—or it's open only for a

portion of the year. The local city councillor working with individuals like Fred Morris have made a difference in the sense that, for the first time, we are now looking at the possibility of having that pool open year-round.

Mr. Speaker, this has, again, the potential to assist people that are living, whether it's in the Tyndall Park, Weston, Brooklands, Garden Grove, and beyond that, whether it's youth clubs, senior clubs, an indoor pool facility can make a difference. And this is something in which I believe that government—the provincial government needs to look at when it starts handing out community placement grants, how it is that we're going to be better able to facilitate and promote year-round activities that's going to make our communities healthier, getting our children participating in more positive programming.

So I would suggest that that, too, is a good thing and I applaud the efforts, in particular, of those that were involved in trying to make a difference for the Eldon Ross Pool, and I look forward to hopefully seeing that place open year-round.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to also make comment in terms of the northwest health centre. Nor'West Health is an organization that has been in existence for many years and has provided excellent health-care services to, literally, thousands of people, tens of thousands over the years, and feel very passionately that this is the type of community health that we need to bring to people, that it's not just an issue of having a doctor. It's more of a comprehensive approach providing health care and social services that is going to affect the lives in a very direct way that will make a difference.

And I look forward—I understand, over the last number of years, I've raised the issue of Nor'West Health with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) even when they excluded it from the Throne Speech, and they seem to be giving a little bit more attention to the St. James Access.

I understand, through discussions inside the Chamber, and, on the side, with the Minister of Health, that it would appear as if we are going to be moving forward in terms of the expansion going at the access centre, and I think that that is a positive thing, Mr. Speaker.

But, suffice to say, if you're going to spend the type of money that the government is spending, there is so much more that still can be done, Mr. Speaker. I would ultimately argue the closure, for example, of

community police offices in Winnipeg's North End, was to the detriment of the community. Those community police offices were being well utilized.

You know, the government has recognized its role in terms of protecting the citizens through policing. That's the reason why, every budget it seems, that there's a need to increase the number of police. In this particular budget, you see that there's recognition of a police helicopter.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the government is wrong not to recognize the real value of community police offices. These offices, again, serve thousands of people in Winnipeg's North End, and the two in particular I'm thinking of was the one on Main Street and the one that was on McPhillips. These offices made a difference and, ultimately, I think that if you were to canvass the concerns of people, in particular in the North End, you will find that they're very much concerned about community crimes; they're very much concerned about people from the outside coming into their communities and abusing children in many ways; they're very much concerned about the home break-ins; the auto thefts; they're concerned in terms of ensuring that there's a consequence. And, when we start to see action such as community police offices disappearing, it shows that the government is not as serious as it likes to talk, because if it was really serious in wanting to make a difference, one of the things that they should be supporting, that they should be insisting upon, is that we have community police offices because they can make a difference. And I know it's an important issue, not only to the residents of Inkster, that I currently represent, I would ultimately argue, to all Manitobans, but in particular to people who live in the North End.

And I think, that as time proceeds, Mr. Speaker, that the government is going to have to look at how it can invest in initiatives such as our community police offices, such as ensuring that we're delivering better quality health-care services through medical clinics, such as looking in terms of what's actually taking place at the Seven Oaks Hospital and how we can improve emergency services by expanding the type of emergency services at least to the point in which it was three, four years ago when the emergency services provided at the Seven Oaks Hospital were far greater.

And the types of services that we have today have been diminished because of the regional health-care authority. As health-care authority and

bureaucracy has grown, we have seen a serious reduction of health-care services, Mr. Speaker. And I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think if you canvass the House, you'd see that there was leave to set aside the Estimates of Finance in Room 255 in order to consider the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, with the understanding that Finance will continue in Room 255 once consideration of the Civil Service Commission is completed.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to set aside the Estimates of Finance in Room 255 in order to consider the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, with the understanding that Finance will continue in Room 255 once consideration of the Civil Service Commission is completed? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mr. Blaikie: At this time, then, I would say that the House will now resolve itself into consideration of the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, orders of the day. We will now move into Estimates, and in the Chamber will be Family Services and Consumer Affairs; in Room 255 will be Civil Service Commission, as agreed; and Room 254 will be Justice.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Justice. As had been previously agreed, questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Chairperson, if I can just put on the record the answers to a couple of questions that my critic asked on Friday morning. There was a question about Legal Aid staff lawyers and I've been provided with a breakdown of Legal Aid staff.

As of today, there are 67 staff lawyer positions at Legal Aid Manitoba. Thirty-three of these lawyers practise criminal law; 20 practise family law; five, they're defined as practising other civil or poverty law; six of those have a mixed-practice family and criminal law, the ones located in rural community law offices. And as of today, there are three vacancies at Legal Aid Manitoba.

There was a question about conflict offices and, with respect to conflict offices, Legal Aid Management Council enacted a policy, back in 2006, outlining that all Legal Aid Manitoba community law offices could serve as conflict offices. The policy was last revised in 2007, and that the conflict policy now allows for Legal Aid Manitoba staff lawyers in different offices to represent co-accused in criminal matters and opposing parties in family law matters.

As of today, the breakdown of staff lawyers in legal matters in Legal Aid Manitoba's community law offices is broken down in some detail. I won't propose to read that into the record unless the member for Steinbach wants me to do so. I can provide this detail to the member for Steinbach.

And, as well, there was a question about Legal Aid duty counsel coverage. I've been given a rather compendious list of where the Legal Aid duty counsel services are provided in the following—in the various courts. So, again, I'll provide this to the member for Steinbach because he probably doesn't want to use up the rest of the afternoon as I read this into the record.

Mr. Kevin Goertzen (Steinbach): I thank the minister for those responses, welcome him back this week, and I know he survived the Police Association ball relatively unscathed, which is good. Others may not have been as unscathed as he was.

We had asked a question about the Probe Research last week and that payment. Is there difficulty in finding that—the answer to where that cheque went?

Mr. Swan: Yeah, of course, I have undertaken to provide that. It's taking longer to nail it down than we might have expected. So, again, I repeat our undertaking to provide that detail to the member.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister indicate what the challenge is? Is it more than one cheque, and so it's a matter of pulling together a variety of different payments, or is there some other sort of a challenge with finding that response?

It seemed to me to be a fairly straightforward request, and I'm just a little maybe surprised by the difficulty in finding the response to that.

Mr. Swan: Yes, so the best information I have right now is that the department doesn't have the kind of detail that the member was looking for.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, just for clarification, I simply asked what the expenditure was for. Is he indicating that the department will not be able to determine what they paid \$17,000 to Probe for?

Mr. Swan: No, what I—the point I was making is that the department doesn't have that information at their fingertips right now.

Mr. Goertzen: But he foresees a response coming in the near future?

Mr. Swan: Yes.

Mr. Goertzen: And I won't further ask for a definition of what near future means. I'll just take that to be the common definition.

Just a couple—and I hate to backtrack; I know it always throws things a bit asunder, but I had a couple questions just related to Corrections, and then I can sort of go back on to where we were when we left off, before I yielded the floor to the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou).

Are there—and maybe—are there certain categories of temporary releases or day passes that individuals can receive from a provincial jail or provincial corrections centre?

* (15:00)

Mr. Swan: And I presume that the member is talking about conditions outside of the sentencing of an individual. For the adult population, the governing legislation, The Correctional Services Act, does enable temporary absences for individuals that have been sentenced to custody. Again, these are only sentenced individuals.

I understand that they're not used very often, and generally the use which is made will be for individuals as they approach the very end of their custodial sentence. And I understand the practice is only in the last five days.

With respect to youth, there really isn't a similar provision for sentenced youth. There are some youth whose disposition under the Youth Criminal Justice Act is for a—for open custody, which means that they, during the day, will be allowed to leave the facility for school purposes or for treatment or for other reasons, but they do have to return to the facility for evenings and weekends.

Mr. Goertzen: I want to ask about the protocol regarding accidental release of prisoners, which we saw happen in other jurisdictions last year. Does the department have a specific protocol in terms of if somebody is accidentally released from a provincial facility? Is there a automatic public notification or how would that work in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: In the event of an accidental release, and, as the member's indicated, there have been some examples of that in other jurisdictions, the Manitoba protocol is that once Manitoba corrections becomes aware of an accidental release the first step is to notify the RCMP or the municipal police service, as the case may be, and law enforcement then makes the determination regarding what form of notification, if any, is needed. In the event that that should happen, as well as an internal review process to bring together courts, staff, as well as corrections staff, to try and determine the cause, and to decide if there are things that should be done to try and prevent it from happening again.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, some of that seems reasonable, certainly about the bringing together of staff to prevent that from happening.

When is the last time that an accidental release has happened in Manitoba, or has there ever been an incident?

Mr. Swan: It does happen in Manitoba from time to time. It's relatively rare, given the number of people who come in and out of the system. The last time it happened in Manitoba—my staff were sort of trying to pin it down. They believe there may have been—it may have happened in the last calendar year but not for several months.

Mr. Goertzen: And I admit that's news to me and maybe that's a pox on my job as critic. I wasn't aware that there was accidental releases in the last year.

How many would there be over the last two or three years? Could the department determine—bring forth that information? Obviously not necessarily the specific circumstances around those, but the minister doesn't seem to be exactly sure himself, and it is a—you know, it is an important issue regarding public safety. If he could provide, even over the last five years, how many accidental releases there have been from a provincial facility, that would be helpful.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, and again, the member for Steinbach shouldn't feel so badly about not noting it because, again, I'd point out that when law enforcement is notified, they determine whether there should be any public notification or, in many cases, law enforcement simply goes out and retrieves the person and brings them back into custody.

I'm told that the department can try to make some efforts to try and find out how many times this has happened over the past five years. I'm told it's a relatively small number, but my officials can go through the paperwork and try and get an answer for the member. It'll take some time to pull that together, but we'll provide that.

*(15:10)

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate that undertaking and also the defence of the work that I do as Justice critic. My boss will be happy to hear that and I'll certainly pass those accolades along. But I do think it's important, you know, more seriously, just because it is one of the measurements of confidence that people have in a system. And I'm glad to hear the numbers are relatively low, and I look forward to seeing that confirmed with the responses from the minister and his staff.

A couple of more questions regarding conditional sentences, and we had this discussion at some point last week, and I'm sorry; I don't remember the exact day. But the minister did indicate the conditional sentences had gone up over the last two years, from an average of 701 people serving conditional sentences on average in a month in 2007-2008 to an average of 804 in 2009 and 2010. And, at that time, we were all sort of mystified about why that number had increased by an average of 100 over the last two years, given some of the restrictions, I think, the federal government had put in regarding conditional sentences.

Is there any more enlightenment the minister can give in terms of why that number has increased fairly significantly over the last two years?

Mr. Swan: I know that the member and I both were interested to deal with this the other day. We don't have any more clear reasoning as to why that may be. We believe it's a matter of some of these cases simply working their way through the system and, in fact, as well, the conditional sentences may last for some period of time. So in conditional sentences, actually, the terms tend to last longer than custodial sentences, certainly for those off to provincial jails. So we believe it's simply matters making their way through the system, and I think I share with the member for Steinbach an expectation that these numbers will decline over time because of the limited availability of conditional sentences now.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it's an interesting point about the expectation of a decline. I guess I might have thought it would happen sooner, but in the absence of other analysis, I guess the numbers just sort of stand as they are.

But the minister will know that last week the federal Conservatives reintroduced legislation that they had introduced last fall, I believe, regarding limitations on house arrest sentences, and this would limit those offenders convicted of serious property crimes and violent offences.

Would he have any indication of, you know, the current make-up of those serving conditional sentences? How many of them would have been excluded as a result of federal legislation, had it been in place?

Mr. Swan: I am afraid I am not able to answer that question.

Mr. Goertzen: And I guess the reason I ask is, you know, with 800 people serving sentences in the community, that's a fair-sized provincial prison, and one wonders how many of those—if there's sort of similar crime patterns in the future and the conditional sentence isn't available, where those individuals are going to be housed. I know that there are some expansions happening within capital in the system, but even if those were all on-line today, I believe the system would still be significantly over capacity.

Does the minister have any thoughts about what impact this legislation—which I believe he supports as well—I've researched enough on conditional sentencing and, not to give too much credit where credit may be due, but I think his new colleague from Elmwood may have actually have voted in favour of

the legislation, or similar legislation, at one point during his parliamentary career.

What impact would this have on our jail population as it goes forward, given the fact we currently have 800 people serving house arrest sentences?

Mr. Swan: It is a difficult question to answer and there's—we discussed this a little bit the other day. There's a lot of different factors that come into play. I mean, the first is the timing, as matters move through the system, and then what those dispositions will be.

In some cases, those individuals who now will show up as individuals with conditional sentences that Corrections monitors in the community, I mean, they may have pled guilty to charges, you know, under the understanding there would be a joint recommendation for a conditional sentence. There are a range of dispositions that courts could issue. I mean, a court, if no longer presented with the availability of a conditional sentence, could choose to simply issue a disposition for probation in the community. The question, I know—I know that, certainly, members of the federal government have certainly put these things out there, you know, with an expectation or at least a hope that they will suppress crime.

So there's a number of different factors that make it very difficult to predict whether there would be any increase in the sentence population or not. So I mean, I believe there is the possibility of it putting more pressure on the corrections system, but I don't think we can simply look at those numbers and determine with any certainty that a certain percentage or a certain number will then become part of the sentence population.

Mr. Goertzen: And I appreciate that the analysis may not be done in terms of determining what percentage of those of the higher percentage of those now serving conditional sentences in the community may have been eligible, may have been ineligible for a conditional sentence had that legislation passed. But, certainly, there's no—in my estimation, there's no downward pressure happening on the prison population as a result, at least in the immediate future, of the change.

Now, we would all hope that with tougher sentencing laws that it may prevent some from committing crime and choosing a different path, but there's also, I think, the fact of the matter is that, even among the federal Conservatives there's a

feeling that, regardless of the suppression effect, that there simply just needs to be punishment for crimes committed, and sometimes ensuring the people who are serving jail time is, in of itself, an end to ensure that there are safer communities because they then are in prison and not some other sort of sentence that's something less than a prison cell.

But, regardless, I think we'll leave the conditional sentencing issue there.

Question—and this is one of those where you, as a critic, you try to separate fact from fiction from the variety of different things you hear from a variety of different sources and the minister will understand that. Can he just give some assurance, there aren't any rewards or inducements provided to those who'd be labelled a level 3 or level 4 car thieves for following their—the terms of their community work? There's—nobody has been provided anything like a video game or anything like that for following their orders as a level 4, or a level 3 car thief?

* (15:20)

Mr. Swan: The term rewards and inducements is pretty broad. So I'll try to give the most complete answer that I can. I understand that within Corrections there has been the opportunity for young offenders who've followed their terms—they've been offered recreation—recreational activities. So that may be an opportunity to go to a baseball game or to be able to go to a swimming pool for the afternoon. I'm also told that from time to time that may include buying a young offender a Slurpee or food or something if they do well. So the way that the member has asked the question, are there rewards or inducements, there certainly are from time to time.

Mr. Goertzen: Just to go a little further, because I—obviously this is a bit of a new area for me. So the minister and his staff can indulge my ignorance, as it is, in some of this—these issues. He identifies baseball games, Slurpees for young offenders. Is there a limitation on the nature of the offenders? Would level 3 or level 4 car thieves be eligible for at least those inducements that the minister indicated—sorry, inducements is probably the wrong word—rewards that the minister indicated might be given?

Mr. Swan: I can tell the member there aren't any limitations. I mean, all young offenders who are engaged are eligible, if I can call it that, for these type of things. I understand, for example, that youth who become involved in the graffiti removal program—I mean, if they put in a day of working to

remove graffiti from our buildings in the city, they will often be fed for their efforts. So no, there's no—it's not limited to any one particular group of offenders. It's a practice that occurs depending on how the youth are doing—are they complying with their conditions, are they making progress.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I thank the minister for that answer. I mean, would it surprise him—or maybe he can suggest to me that it's not the case that—so no youth would have received new shoes or video games or something of that nature for following the orders that the court would have already placed upon them.

Mr. Swan: You know, I understand from my department that there may be occasions when probation officers will buy articles of clothing for young offenders, but it wouldn't be as a reward or as an inducement, as the member's put it, for following an order.

I'm—I understand that does happen from time to time where the probation officer is trying to assist the offender to find employment. So if somebody doesn't have a clean shirt, doesn't have proper jeans or shoes, it would not be unusual for that probation officer to buy those items for the young person to try and get them employed and dealing with things in a more positive way.

With respect to video games, I don't have any knowledge of a situation where a probation officer would buy that as a reward, so to speak, for following a court order, but, as I've said, there are things that probation officers have done, especially with respect to clothing, to help young people move forward and hopefully break the cycle of criminal conduct.

Mr. Goertzen: So there must exist, then, a fund, I guess, that probation officers can access for these sort of things, food, Slurpees, clothing and whatever else there may be. Where would that fall in terms of the Justice appropriations? What funding specifically is set aside for those sort of things?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I understand that the cost of those items would come out of the youth Corrections operating budget. There isn't a particular fund, so to speak.

I'm also reminded by my assistant deputy minister that a number of items were bought out-of-pocket by probation officers and aren't—they may not even put every Slurpee or every doughnut as a claim to the department.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister provide an accounting, then, of how much was expired from that fund for those purposes, to provide these whatever the label might be from Justice to young offenders, as provided by probation officers, the ones that they claim? Can you provide some accounting on how much would be used for that purpose in the last fiscal year or previous fiscal years?

* (15:30)

Mr. Swan: You know, it's a modest amount, I'm told, but it's, I mean, there is an amount being spent, but it's not really—there aren't—there isn't a particular fund or a particular record that would allow this to be found in any way other than somebody spending an awful lot of time and effort going through the claims submitted by each probation officer. And, even at that, there'd be some difficulty in breaking down the different types of items. So I mean, I think we've provided some general information. I suppose we could find more detail, but I would rather have our staff actively working with young offenders and trying to get better results than to have somebody spending a couple of weeks pulling invoices to put this together.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I might suggest that it may be valuable time and, perhaps what the minister might want to do is to look at—as any responsible minister would do to ensure that money is being spent appropriately—he could look at the most common items, perhaps. He may look at the highest value—highest value claims that have been put in. That may give him some initial direction. I'd be interested in that information. But, also, the overall fund that's—and this shouldn't take any information, or any time—the overall fund that's set aside, on an annual basis, to provide these sort of goodies, if you were, to those who the probation officers are watching.

Just as a matter of policy, would the minister not be concerned? He indicated that a lot of times probation officers might be paying for some of these out of pocket. Is there any concern that a probation officer is providing treats for young offenders, at whatever value or whatever the nature of them are—does that breach any sort of policy that the department has?

Mr. Swan: Well, maybe I can answer that just by talking a little bit about the nature of the relationship that we certainly hope is created between offenders and their probation officers. I mean, the role of probation officers is—well, there's a couple different parts to it. I mean, one is to try and build a

relationship with the young offender, to try to turn them away from whatever factors—whatever pressures caused them to offend in the first place. Certainly, their job is to—also to protect public safety, by dealing with these young people and trying to turn them.

You know, when it's a young offender who's 12 to 17, frankly, buying a kid a Slurpee or a Blizzard is not an unusual way to build a relationship. I mean, my wife used to work in front-line social work and it would not have been unusual, in her career with Child and Family Services, to buy a kid a Slurpee or something at the end of a session. You know, when Family Conciliation goes out and does a home assessment, the best way to open up to a kid and get them to talk is usually over a Slurpee or a milkshake, whatever the case may be.

So, I mean, our probation officers are professionals. They do what they do using their best judgment to try and make a difference in young people's lives. I mean, I don't want to leave the impression that these are just goodies, as the member put it, that don't play any role in trying to open up and have the youth participate in changing their lives. So, you know, I think our probation officers work to the best of their abilities to deal with young people, and this is a very small but important part of it.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and the minister may indicate that it's small, but, you know, I know a lot of kids who haven't broken the law, who can't afford to go to a baseball game. And they might not feel that it's such a small thing, those kids who are obeying the law, and who have done everything that they can to ensure that they stay on the right side of the path in society.

So the minister characterizes that it's small, and I'm not sure that everyone would share that characterization, in particular when you're dealing with some very, very high-risk offenders and those who've committed—produced a great deal of victims in our community. If somebody who has had their car stolen or somebody who has lost a loved one understood that the individual who was responsible for that was going out to baseball games and sort of getting some of these—and I'll call them treats, because I'm not sure what else to call them—they might view it differently than the minister does.

You know, I think that there's a broader question about the role of probation officers, which is different than that of a social worker. And, you

know, we had—this is square the circle—we had the issue last week. There was disgust about probation officers not breaching people, young offenders, unless there had been repeated offences. And I understand, from some documentation that I've received, that that was in the neighbourhood of four to six—at least four to six breaches—probation officers wouldn't register a breach with the police unless there is four to six breaches.

And I think the public would look at—and I don't mean to put words in the public's mouth, but they may look at, you know, the relationship between probation officers and these youth and the issue of Slurpees and treats and baseball games, and think, well, you know, maybe this is one of the reasons why these breaches weren't being registered, because probation officers were trying to become friendly with these young people and become their friends as opposed to, to some extent, the authoritative figure that they play a role of, of ensuring that court orders are followed. And maybe that's part of the problem. When you're out buying stuff for kids and buying them these treats, or going to baseball games, maybe that clouds your vision, in terms of where the breaches should happen. Maybe you don't have that separation between what you're suppose to do—because I don't know that the role of probation officers is to be big brother and to be best friend to some of these young people.

But, you know, I'm going to move on to a different line of questioning in the interest of time. I know my colleagues—some of my colleagues have other questions and they'll be coming in shortly with them.

But I think the minister and I may have a philosophical difference on that issue. He may end up commenting on that as I go into the next line of questioning.

I wanted to ask the minister, regarding data bases for gangs—and I understand that Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia announced last year that they would be having a unified—or at least, sharing data between gang data bases and Manitoba wouldn't be a part of that because we didn't have a gang data base that either corresponded to what they were looking at or, maybe, we didn't have one at all.

But can the minister indicate what the western initiative is for B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan on the issue of gangs—gang data base, sorry?

* (15:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, I will take the opportunity first just to finish off on some of the comments that the member put on the record before posing the last question.

I mean the—certainly, the role of probation officers, again, is to get compliance with court orders when people are given a sentence to young offenders given a sentence to be back in the community. They use their professional judgment to build relationships with those young people to try and make a difference in those young people's lives.

We know that many of them have not had the kind of direction, the kind of support, that I think everybody in this Legislature would hope children can receive, and they do their best to build those relationships and try to improve outcomes. And I think what Manitobans expect is—they certainly expect outcomes in terms of moving towards a compliance with a goal towards turning these young people from being offenders to individuals who see a reason to be connected with society and not offend in future.

So I don't think that the position here is different from any other jurisdiction in Canada. Maybe there's a few states in the United States that may have some different perspectives on that, but I don't think most of us would plan to move there any time soon.

In terms of the intelligence on gangs, Manitoba is actually a full partner in something called CISC. It's a Canadian intelligence-gathering service. Manitoba certainly shares information on gangs and gang activity with all of our provincial partners, not just the western provinces.

The member should also know that, I guess, under my predecessor's time as minister, the western attorneys general and solicitors general, where appropriate, began to have regular meetings. I haven't yet had my chance to go to one but I will be heading there and we'll continue to talk about things if there are issues that are important, particularly for the western provinces. So Manitoba already is part of a national program, sharing data and trying to help each other out.

Mr. Goertzen: Which is, of course, different than what's being shared between Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., but you know—maybe I'm going to regret taking the bait here, Mr. Chairperson, but I can't help myself, when the minister indicates that he believes that this is what Manitobans would expect.

And I've learned today—and the reason I asked the question was, you know, I have had people within law enforcement come to me and indicate that some very serious offenders, high-risk car thieves, level 3 and 4, were getting—well, I'll use their words—special treats. This is from law enforcement to—from their probation officers. The minister indicates that that includes Slurpees and food and maybe includes clothing, but he doesn't put a limit on it. He doesn't know what else might be being provided.

He doesn't know because he indicates he would have to bring forward the receipts from probation officers but then also indicates probation officers might be doing some of these things on their own. So he also indicated baseball tickets and other recreation items, and he says that he believes that this is what Manitobans would expect.

I think we're going to differ there, because I talk to a lot of victims and—who call to express their frustration with what's happened in the system, and it's particularly acute with young offenders. There's no doubt about that, that people think that there's a culture of acceptance of some of these crimes that are happening. And if you're—obviously if you're the family member of somebody who has been injured or a family member of somebody who's been killed by a high-risk car thief, you would probably think that any punishment is almost too light.

But to go to the other extreme in having probation officers provide treats to these young offenders, high-risk offenders, when there are many other young people in our society who don't get those, sort of, favours, who are doing their best to avoid the gang lifestyle—they're doing their best to avoid drugs or car thieves and don't end up watching the Goldeyes or watching the Moose and don't end up with new shoes or don't end up with trips to 7-Eleven or to wherever else—and I suspect we're just scratching the surface.

My guess is that, if the minister were to pull these expenses, we'd find a lot of other things that I, frankly, think would offend Manitobans, because I don't think that they believe that the role of the probation officer is to be best friend and buddy, that the role of the probation officer is to ensure that court orders are enforced and to ensure that those things that the judge or whatever judicial official has put upon a young offender are met, and I think that there's a general feeling in society that there's far too much coddling already and that this simply adds to it when these sort of treats are put out by probation

officers, those that have been identified, and I suspect there's even more.

So I think we're going to just simply disagree in terms of how that is held, and, again, I think to square the circle, when you see what happened last week in terms of the number of breaches that happened and then weren't reported to the Winnipeg police, it would cause some to question, is that because probation officers have become friends and have become emotionally invested with individuals, and that clouds some of that professional vision.

And before the minister, because I know he will—will react to saying that, well, you know, you're questioning probation officers, this is an attack on probation officers—this is the direction that his department—that he as a minister, not his department, that he as a minister, has allowed to come forward.

And when police tell me that they have a difficult time getting information from probation officers about the specifics of conditions that are placed upon a young person, that was a surprise to me. It's less of a surprise when I find out that the minister believes that the role of the probation officer is to become a big brother and a close friend of some of these very high-risk individuals by going out for ice cream, baseball games and whatever else there is that we haven't heard about.

So we're going to just—we're going to disagree on that and if he wants to have a public debate about that, and if he believes the public's on his side regarding that issue, I stand to be corrected, and I'll gladly go to the corner of Portage and Main with the minister, and we can have a public debate about that. And if I'm wrong and most people say, no, that's absolutely what should be happening, there should be all of these special treats for young offenders who are putting people at risk, well, then, I will stand to be corrected there.

The issue of the gang strategy that was brought forward last year by the member—by the minister's predecessor, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), he indicated that at that time there would be intense supervision of I believe the top 50 known gang members in Manitoba. Is that established and is that operating currently?

* (15:50)

Mr. Swan: Right. I'm going to decline the opportunity to rise to the additional bait in the member's last question because we may be here for a long time.

In terms of the gang strategy, indeed, Project GRASP, in which we're partnering with the Winnipeg Police Service, indeed, is monitoring on a very intensive basis 50 adult offenders. You know, we've mentioned the number 50. I'm told that program is now fully operational, and we're out there doing the work on that front.

Mr. Goertzen: Those 50 individuals identified, is it the police who bring forward—who they believe should be tracked and monitored?

Mr. Swan: It's a collaborative step between the Winnipeg Police Service and Manitoba Corrections.

Mr. Goertzen: Are there a certain number of officers who are assigned to that particular duty?

Mr. Swan: On the Winnipeg Police Service side, the Winnipeg Police Service Street Crimes Unit is responsible for doing its part under Project GRASP. We've also supported two additional positions for the Winnipeg Police Service with provincial funding. There's funds set aside for a crime analyst and for a crime-suppression support worker, and, as well, there are three staff within Corrections who are dedicated to this project, one probation officer and two community corrections workers.

Mr. Goertzen: In September of 2009, there was a release from the department related to homes that were seized for grow ops, and it indicated—I can't remember, I'm sorry, if there was two or three homes that were seized—and that's good news that those homes were taken by the government. But it indicated that the owners were registered from British Columbia. Was that related to organized crime in British Columbia?

Mr. Swan: No, it's—I've got to answer the question in a bit of a different fashion because, of course, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act uses a civil process to try and achieve forfeitures. And I'm pleased that, thanks to the hard work of the provincial unit dealing with this, we're now starting to see some success, which I think we can all hope will continue into the future.

I can't really give the member an answer with respect to organized crime. I can tell the member that in those cases, we're very pleased the court has agreed with the evidence that we've put forward to suggest that the properties are certainly—were certainly instruments of unlawful activity, and we're very pleased that the court has granted those orders. But I can't really—because it's a civil process, I can't really go forward and maybe connect the dots in a

way that the member would like, but we're very pleased with the way that the act is now being administered, and we are hopeful there'll be more successes in the future.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it just seemed curious to me that the owners of both of those homes—at least two of them, maybe there was three—had come from British Columbia, and, you know, there are some things that are anecdotal and some things that are more substantive that have been raised in terms of questions.

I know the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, when they put out fact sheets each and every year regarding their individual states, certainly, for 2009 they indicated that a good deal of marijuana which is grown in Manitoba is coming from organized crime—and possibly from Vancouver and Manitoba—and that it's coming across the North Dakota border into the United States.

And so it's sort of, you know, just connecting the dots, when there's that sort of a warning from our friends down south that the U.S. border is often used for—the North Dakota border shared with Manitoba is used for bringing across marijuana that is grown by organized gangs from British Columbia and Manitoba, and then you see the fact that these two houses that were seized were from British Columbia owners. It certainly does give one the impression that we may be a staging area in some ways for organized crime and that type of activity, with the growing of marijuana. And the concern, of course, is that what comes back in return, often, are guns, and we know there's a proliferation of guns on the streets in Winnipeg—illegal guns, handguns—and throughout our province.

If the minister—does he have any indication about the increased presence on the streets of OxyContin? And I know there was a recent bust and it was a fairly large one, which is positive, but does he have any indication whether or not this is an escalating problem in the city of Winnipeg—in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: You know, Manitoba, like other provinces, is certainly alive to the risks of OxyContin, which, I understand, actually got its foothold in eastern Canada first and has been making its way across the country.

I can tell the member that, you know, certainly my department has a very good relationship with law enforcement in Manitoba. Law enforcement haven't

drawn it to the Province's attention as a particular concern. By way of a general concern, as the member is aware, there were some regulations passed elsewhere in our government to try and deal with OxyContin, but it hasn't been a big item that law enforcement have asked us, as Justice, to move on.

* (16:00)

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for his answer to that, and, hopefully, that is the case, that it doesn't have—obtain a strong foothold in the province of Manitoba.

What about methamphetamine? Has there been any change in the amount of methamphetamine that officers are seeing on the streets of Winnipeg?

Mr. Swan: Again, as with OxyContin, my officials are in regular contact with the RCMP and also with the municipal police services, and, to the best of our knowledge, law enforcement has not brought forward any particular issues with respect to, you know, any unusual or increasing use or availability of that drug.

We know that it does exist in Manitoba. We're thankful that it's—that we're able to get ahead of where many other jurisdictions in the United States and western Canada have been, but there's nothing that's really been flagged by police here in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Same sort of question regarding the drug ecstasy, whether or not there's—they've seen any sort of increase in that drug in the city of Winnipeg or the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Swan: Again, the same answer. Law enforcement haven't reported anything out of—anything unusual to us with respect to that drug.

Mr. Goertzen: I may regret asking this question, but does the minister know if the Province still owns the former high-security courthouse, which, I think, was relocated on Chevrier Avenue?

Mr. Swan: I'll keep their answers as short as possible. Of course, Justice has not used that building for a long time. Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation were the owner of the building. I believe it's been sold, but I'm actually not entirely certain. But certainly that—the minister of that department can probably give you or your colleagues a firm answer.

Mr. Goertzen: This question is unrelated to the previous one, but I have seen a number of reports in other provinces about Hells Angels' clubhouses

being shut down using the civil remedies act, similar, I think, to what we have in the province of Manitoba.

I mean, is there a particular challenge why the Hells Angels' clubhouse in Manitoba is—it's well known in terms of its location and the expectation of what it's used for. Is there certain things that other provinces are doing that we're not able to do?

Mr. Swan: You know, we're very pleased, you know, at the way that The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and The Fortified Buildings Act have worked in many circumstances across the province. I can't speak to the member's questions, because we're—I'm not going to reveal any particular plans or any particular ideas that the Public Safety Investigation Unit has for the future.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we look forward, then, to its imminent closure and the sale of the Hells Angels' clubhouse.

I want to ask the minister about The Factors Act and the definition of antecedent debt. I indicated to him that when we got to that question we'd be near the end. So I believe we're ready to go forward with the appropriations then, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 4.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$148,293,000 for Justice, Criminal Justice, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$30,555,000 for Justice, Civil Justice, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$164,683,000 for Justice, Corrections, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$49,867,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.5—[interjection] Sorry.

Resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$2,947,000 for Justice, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,583,000 for Justice—[interjection]

Again. Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,783,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Consideration of Minister's Salary. 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.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Swan: I actually have a motion to move.

I move that item 4.1.(a) the Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

*(16:10)

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Justice: I move that item 4.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, \$9,000, to \$37,000. This motion is in order. Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Chairperson, I've put forward this motion on the record to provide some additional clarity. As all members are aware, this reduction of Cabinet minister's salary has already come into effect, but legislation will be brought forward to make this 20 percent reduction law for this year.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly passed.

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,812,000 for Justice, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Shall the revised resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The revised resolution is accordingly passed.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,812,000 for Justice, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

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

The committee recessed at 4:13 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:16 p.m.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL INITIATIVES

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson, and I'm—I'm way too far away from my mike, apparently.

And I'm really very pleased to be here in Estimates. I'm really very pleased to be the Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Minister for Manitoba. And I've been, I think, given a very important job that has to do with a whole lot of people in this province who make a huge contribution to our success as a province, both historically and, I believe, into the future.

And I'm keenly aware of the fact that this department has been around since 1871, barely one year shy of the creation of the province itself. I am keenly aware of the number of ministers that have pictures up on the wall in my office that have contributed public policy and put programs in place that have been of a huge factor in growing the agricultural industry in our province since 1871. And I am absolutely convinced that agriculture will continue to play a big and growing role in our

province's future for decades and generations to come.

I am very appreciative of the advice that I have received as minister since appointed to this job on November 3rd, 2009. My attitude is that pretty much every farmer knows more about their own operations than what I do. I think any politician that makes the mistake of assuming they know more than a farmer pays those consequences, so I really much—very much appreciate the advice that I've got from farmers, whether that be at the Winter Fair or last week at the Capturing Opportunities or hundreds of farmers that I spoke to at Ag Days.

I really much appreciate the advice I've got from a whole number of farm groups, and I know there's still some that I need to meet with. For—I've been the minister between five and six months and I've been trying to meet with every farm group that I can, and it's—we've been working our way through, meeting a lot of people, talking about a lot of issues, building relationships with farm groups, I think, that will pay off down the road.

I also want to indicate that a whole number of my colleagues, whether they be New Democrats or Progressive Conservatives or Liberals, have sought me out and given me advice on a whole number of different issues, and I very much appreciate that. I think nobody knows your rural constituencies better than you do, and right across the board MLAs have come to me with—whether they be very particular issues for their constituencies and their constituents or whether they be advice on the bigger issues, everywhere from trade issues to program reviews that we're doing. I want to encourage people and my colleagues in the Legislature to continue to give me advice.

I do want to say that this is a very good year to give advice to this minister. It's been quite a budget process that we've been through. It's been—there have been lots of debates on the overall budget, and, you know, I think a lot of people understand that it has been a challenge for us to put the—as good a budget together as we have for 2010.

* (16:20)

I want to say that, for the information of this—of the committee, ministers are already receiving a 20 percent reduction in salary as announced in Budget 2010, a year earlier than what is required under the current law. As committee members will note, this reduction is included in the total

calculation of expenditures, and is reflected on pages 8, 9 and 11 of Budget 2010, Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue. The 20 percent reduction will continue if the applicable legislation is enacted by the Legislative Assembly.

I think we've realized that it's a challenging year budget-wise. I think we all have to understand that it's been a challenging year for farmers as well, particularly on the livestock side where COOL legislation, country-of-origin labelling, has been quite a challenge for all of us. Nothing was making me angrier than hearing people talk about swine flu when you tuned in to the news. I wished they'd use the proper term, H1N1.

You know, when you talk about flax and GMO and markets in Europe or Canola in China, a whole number of different big issues that have taken place in the last year that have been challenging, not to mention what Mother Nature throws at us. Whether it's dry conditions in the southwest or excess moisture in the Interlake, particularly the northern Interlake—and it did come up in question period today, and I'm hopeful that we're going to, you know, through working with the federal government, have some positive news about that soon.

There is a review taking place right now of—with the federal minister and all my provincial and territorial colleagues, a review of the business risk management suite of programs that we have in place. I think we can all agree that there've been some big improvements since whatever that very first program was, you know, years and years ago, to where we are today. Ministers across the country understand that we need to always be looking and reviewing and looking for ways to make that better for farmers. That—those AgriInsurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest contributed about \$144 million in payouts last year, which I know helped many, many farmers.

We're looking—in this particular budget we've got some—we've got about 40—we've got about \$47 million in terms of us and the feds working with the Growing Forward program. We're—I think the old days of the environment versus the economy are over and we're looking for ways in which the environment and the economy can come together to work for the benefit of the farmer.

I'm really interested in developing, not just the big traditional markets like the U.S. or new, exciting markets like China and India and Mexico and others, I think we have a local market that we need to be making some serious moves towards and, in terms of

farmers' markets and buying local and producing local, I think we need to do more in terms of slaughter capacity, and we've made some strides in terms of slaughter capacity with Keystone Processors and some different groups, and some smaller groups in places like McCreary and Carman and others. I think we've got to back, you know, projects like you see in the hemp industry, whether it be in Waskada, Gilbert Plains or Dauphin, or the plant that I visited in Ste. Agathe that's doing some great work.

I just want to wrap up quickly, though, with—by saying that I've been the minister since November, and I haven't worked with a group of people that are more connected to rural Manitoba, to rural issues, to agricultural issues than the staff at MAFRI. I can't say enough good things about the work that they do. I depend on them for good advice and I get good advice. They write great briefing notes. They get me set up to meet with all of the farm organizations. They're people who are connected to their communities. They're people who have—in some cases, have degrees and Ph.D.s and Master's degrees as long as their arms, but, at the same time, they seed every year. They run a bunch a cattle every year. They could be involved in a hog operation. It's that combination of book learning and street smarts and that kind of experiential learning that I think is very impressive throughout the Department of Agriculture and the people that work in there.

And I want to just end my brief opening remarks by making sure that all the staff know that I appreciate the work that they do, and I know that the member for Emerson will join me in that, because I know he has also said to me that he's had good experiences with staff in MAFRI. So I want to just end with those few comments, Mr. Chairperson, and I look forward to a good discussion of Agriculture's Estimates.

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

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

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Indeed, I do, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to start off by complimenting the staff that I have worked with over the years in the Department of Agriculture, whether that was in a capacity as a farmer or a chairperson of some farm organizations. I've always had a good working relationship with the staff and found them to be quite knowledgeable on many, many different areas, and

willing to avail themselves of their time when it was required in certain circumstances. And so I, too, would like to compliment the staff.

However, when I take a look at the budget that we're faced with for 2010 and 2011, the budget is not a good budget for producers. It's not a good budget for rural Manitoba.

And, listening to the minister on his opening statement when he talked about the review of business risk management, it's clear in his—in the budget that he's reduced the funding for risk management and credit income support programs like AgriInvest. They're not, perhaps, as important to him in reality as they were in his opening statement.

And I would go back to March 22nd. The minister made a statement at that time to the rural media outlet stating that agriculture will not be forgotten in the provincial budget. And I believe that he may have made an effort. He said that his goal was to eke and to scrape together funds to support farmers. I believe that he did make an effort to do that. However, the word agriculture was not mentioned in the budget. That was very disappointing, and I know that he's a new minister of agriculture, but he has to understand that that word has to be used. It can't be just referred to as a reference. It has to be used. The word isn't difficult to say.

The budget is virtually devoid of any long-term vision or strategy when it comes to agriculture or rural development, and so, as we go forward, we'll certainly be addressing those issues. I believe that the newly minted Minister of Agriculture has the ability to learn. He certainly has asked a lot of questions, and I'm sure that with a little bit of prompting he'll remember the answers.

So, with those few words, Mr. Chairman, I would conclude my opening statement.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered by a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 3.1.(a) and proceed with the consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 3.1.

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 accordance—attendance.

* (16:30)

Mr. Struthers: I am very pleased to be joined at the table by Barry Todd, the Deputy Minister of MAFRI. I'm joined by Allan Preston, the assistant deputy minister for Agri-Industry Development and Innovation Division—that's impressive; Dori Gingera-Bauchemin, assistant deputy minister, Agri-Food and Rural Development Division; and by Marvin Richter, the acting executive financial officer for Corporate Services.

They're here to bail me out when I get into trouble, Mr. Chairperson.

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

An Honourable Member: Globally, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Global discussion. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Graydon: I would like to start off with a question of—all of the—a list of all of the political staff, including the names and position, and whether they're full time or whether they're part time.

Mr. Struthers: I have two political staff, one located here in the building, and her name is Lonnie Patterson, and I have a political staff in my Dauphin office, and her name is Rosalie Pshebylo.

Can I—just before we move on, I—looking to my critic for some advice on this, I know that there will be questions having to do with the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation, and they're located in Portage. There—we don't have staff here today to help with answering questions, and I do want to make them available for whenever we need them. So if there's any way that we can bunch that—those questions up in a place so I can bring the staff in, be thorough, answer all the questions, instead of having them go back and forth between here and Portage, that would be appreciated. I'm hoping we can work something out on that.

Mr. Graydon: Yes, actually that would be a good idea, and I would suggest that if we reserve Wednesday for that day, would that be a suitable day for the minister and his staff? And we'll try and arrange for my colleagues who will also be joining me to ask some questions, that have some concerns

from their constituencies and so on—if that would be suitable, it would certainly suit us.

Mr. Struthers: That's a very good plan. Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: Do you have a specific list of all staff in the minister's and deputy ministers' offices?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, we do.

Mr. Graydon: Would you care to share that with us?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I've already mentioned Barry Todd, the deputy minister. In my office, working as—working very diligently as my appointment secretary is Monique Rowson, R-o-w-s-o-n. In the deputy minister's office is Pam McCallum. In my office again, Anoosh Shinnan. I've mentioned Lonnie Patterson, Rosalie Pshebylo, Chloe Loris, Maven Baltazar in the deputy minister's office, and that would be it.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. The number of staff currently employed in the department, how much has this increased since the end of 2009-2010 fiscal year?

Mr. Struthers: The staff in both the—in both of those fiscal years, this one and the previous one, are the same at 613.23. That is all of MAFRI and that includes MASC, as well, Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation.

We have, since the end of the fiscal year, which was March 31st, '10, we've had 1.4 vacancies since the end of the last fiscal year. That's just a few weeks.

Mr. Graydon: So if the number has stayed the same from 2009-2010 throughout the year, are you saying that there has been no retirements and no hires in that period?

Mr. Struthers: Yeah, I—in the member's first question, he asked about the staffing from the previous year to this year, and so we provided that comparison and there was no change. Within the '09-10 year, of course there were a number of retirements; there was replacements. Our goal always is to try to make sure that we, as quickly as we can, we fill the vacancies that do come up.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that.

So the names of the staff that have been hired and including whether they were hired through a competition or by appointment, could you provide that for us, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Struthers: Yeah, we—there's a quite a long list. The total number of appointments throughout the year from April 1st, '09 to February 1st, '10 was 71. If the member is interested in those names, I can provide that for him at a later date.

* (16:40)

The number of the 30—sorry, the number of the 71 that were filled through competition was 38 and the number without competition or directly appointed was 33.

Some Honourable Members: Oh.

Mr. Struthers: Oh. That sounds ominous until you—until the other shoe drops here which is that if there's a transfer they are a direct appointment. If they're term conversion it's a direct appointment. If there's acting status rolled into—in many cases rolled into a permanent, it's—that's a direct appointment. Any kind of term positions would fall into the direct appointment category.

As minister I want to see, where possible, any—as much competition as we can. I want—I think MAFRI has an impeccable reputation, in terms of the civil service and I want to maintain that. And one of the ways to do that is to—is through as many competitions as we can.

If it makes sense to do a term, I think we should do term—sorry. If it makes sense to do appointments I think we should do those, especially if there's terms and the person has showed a level of competency. That does make sense.

So we want to make—we want to rely predominantly on competition, as the member can see in that—those numbers, but we will direct appoint where it does make sense and where it does work to the benefit of the organization.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that answer and for the explanation, Mr. Minister.

I guess I—perhaps you could tell us then if there were—and there's probably not that many that were just direct appointments—but perhaps you could identify those when you give us the list of names that were direct appointments that weren't in temporary positions or weren't transfers or whatever. I'm sure there's not that many but—and we certainly applaud the program or the practice of open competition.

But you did raise a good point and so there were some reclassifications. Could you give us a

description of any of the positions that have been reclassified?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, I'll give the critic a couple of good examples in terms of the reclassifications that I think worked very positive for us.

One is in the extension co-ordinators. They moved to a paraprofessional status. They went—they were reclassified from AY3 to AG3, which meant they went from a clerical position to a agricultural technician position. It was based on education that they received and there were eight in total, in terms of that reclassification.

Another good example is the Agricultural Crown Lands. Some people who went from—well, nine people, who became farm product—farm production advisers, they went from AG5 to AG3, which, on the surface—

An Honourable Member: G3.

Mr. Struthers: Oh, G3. Oh, I'm sorry. I was going to say, on the surface it sounds like a demotion but it's not—only because the minister got the lettering wrong.

So, from AG5 to G3, from again, a technical position to a more professional position, as farm production advisers, and there were nine of those in total.

So, you know, I think when people in the department have become more educated, they've taken more courses, they've taken more training, it makes sense to get them into positions that actually correspond with that kind of education and, I think, put them in a much better position to help farmers.

Hopefully—to pick up on the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), I hope they don't ever do that for ministers. That would probably disqualify about 57 people that I know, from taking on the job. So we wouldn't want that to happen. *[interjection]* Maybe 56, yeah. Rosann.

Mr. Graydon: Does the staffing level that's identified in the department budget reflect a full staffing complement or a certain percentage of vacancy rate? And, if it's the latter, what is the vacancy rate and is that a normal vacancy rate?

Mr. Struthers: In the department, we're working with a target of 12 percent in terms of a turnover rate. That is higher than it has been in previous years. This minister has committed to make every effort to

not leave vacancies open for any longer than we need to. We know that we're—we know we're pressed for dollars, but at the same time we have programs, very good programs, that need to get into the hands of farmers, and the quicker we can fill vacancies, the happier I will be.

So we don't want to leave those positions open because that reflects a challenge to servicing people out there who we need to service. So we're going to work, that's—the target that we've set, we're going to work to try to beat that.

* (16:50)

Mr. Graydon: There are a number of positions that are located throughout the province. Have any of those been reallocated to different areas, say, from rural to Winnipeg, from south to north or north to south? Have any of the positions been reallocated? In other words, has there been a centralization effort?

Mr. Struthers: No, not—if you're talking about a centralization position from rural to Winnipeg, the answer, very clearly, is no.

Mr. Graydon: So then the answer, then, to the total question would be that there were none from rural to northern Manitoba or from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba or to Winnipeg.

Mr. Struthers: As a matter of fact, not only have—we're not and I'm not intending to move people into the city of Winnipeg. We've actually had some positions that we've moved to Thompson. I think we need to be sure that we're meeting our goals in terms of a northern food program. I think there's a lot of advice that I get saying that that's a good thing to be doing, including members opposite who, I think, understand that we need to have a good program in the north. So there is three positions that were set up in the city of Thompson to act as a hub for northern programming. One of those positions has been filled and we're looking to try to continue to fill the other two positions that we've established there.

Mr. Graydon: So what you're saying is that these will be new positions? They haven't moved from anywhere to Thompson? That these will be new positions, and if you could identify what the positions would relate to?

Mr. Struthers: The one position that we filled in Thompson is a new position, not found—not new to this budget but to a previous budget last year. It was new in last year's budget and we filled that position. The other two positions, we haven't made any

determinations as to where they will come from. We're going to—we're going to use that one position in Thompson to really get, I think, a foothold in the north and then decisions will be made down the road as to how we go about filling those other two positions. My preference—and, I think, in one of those positions we can move a position that is vacant at the time, but we want to do that without the kind of disruption that happens when you move people. We—and I'm not giving up on this—the hope that we could actually get some new—hopefully, new positions in which we could fill them. But there's lots of options in terms of the other two positions going to Thompson, but no decision has been made finally.

Mr. Graydon: So could you, just for the record, indicate what the position is that is filled, what it relates to, specifically, and what the two prospective positions would relate to?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, the position we filled is the position of the northern GO team manager.

Mr. Graydon: The GO team manager, and what are the other two positions supposed to be related to? Is there some type of agricultural industry that you envision promoting in Thompson, and what would the GO team manager's job be at this point, then?

Mr. Struthers: We've established a GO office in Thompson. The position—the northern GO team manager that I spoke of before, along with the two other positions, which would be a rural leadership specialist in that office, and along with an extension co-ordinator in that office as well. That would be very much a technical position, and, you know, a couple of projects come to mind. The—I know some people from when I lived in the north. I know some people who began a project in Wabowden, a gardening project in conjunction with Frontier School Division. Actually, a person who was at Norway House when I was there—is a leader of this project now, who, well before me ever coming along on the scene as Ag Minister, I think, began a very good program, taking some of the research that had been done there years ago, back in the '70s and into the '80s. And they're using that now to, I think, establish a successful gardening program, incorporating kids from the school and some elders, and actually growing food and consuming that food in their community. It doesn't solve all of the problems in terms of food in the north. But I think it's a pretty good start.

The other thing I want to point out is that there is some very good work between the Province and the

federal government. We've signed Growing Forward agreements, which, I think, are only limited by the—only limited by our imaginations, really. I mean, if you can come up with a program and fill out an application form and explain your program and justify it and provide a rationale, show how it meets the criteria that we've established under Growing Forward, it doesn't matter if you live in the south or in Winnipeg or rural or northern Manitoba. If you've got a good project, the federal government and our government have put some money in place to help, in terms of getting those projects up and running.

So we believe that the—that they—we've got a good start in this program coming out of Thompson with the one position being filled, and we look forward to having all three in place and working on more projects having to do with northern agriculture and northern food.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Chairperson, it—I certainly wish the minister well with his gardening in Thompson, but I would suggest that we have a very large agricultural business in all of Manitoba. And I don't know what the potential is and I think—I don't know that we really need to have a GO officer to teach people how to garden. I think that's—there are other ways of accomplishing this but—however—

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

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

* (14:50)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission): Yes, just briefly, Mr. Chairperson.

I would just like to take a few minutes to make a few comments on this department. As we go through the department, you will see that there is some changes. The size of the department has changed, not because there is more—an increase of civil servants, but it's been a realignment of the Human Resources, and this took place after much consultation. And it is a way that we feel and have, through the study, that

we can better deliver and use the human resources within the department.

And, with those few comments, I would leave it to my critic to raise concerns that he might have with regard or advice he might give with regard to the—how the Civil Service Commission is operating or the changes he might see in the Estimates from the previous year to what we are—what is before us this year.

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

Does the honourable opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): No opening statement. I'd like very much if we could get right into the meat and potatoes of the report and go in a global fashion, if that is with the permission of the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the critic for that.

And, yes, the next issue is, how would those involved like to proceed, in a global or chronological fashion?

Ms. Wowchuk: I think I'm fine with going in a global fashion.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. It is therefore agreed that consideration of these Estimates will proceed in a global manner. And the floor is—

Oh, maybe I'll ask the minister if she'd like to invite any staff to come up, to do so.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would, indeed, if they would come forward, please.

Mr. Chairperson: And once they're settled, if they can be introduced to the committee, that'd be great.

Ms. Wowchuk: I'm joined by Debra Woodgate, who is the Civil Service Commissioner; Nancy Carroll, who is the assistant deputy minister, Corporate Human Resource Services; and Nish Verma, assistant deputy minister, Corporate Human Resource Operations.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, honourable minister.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Faurchou: I would like to commence questioning of the minister and her department as it pertains to her opening statement.

Could she elaborate on the changes from last year to this year in the transferral of staff and the rationale behind the changes that she made mention of in her opening statement?

Ms. Wowchuk: During the course of 2009-10, the Civil Service Commission undertook examination of the human resource service delivery across the government of Manitoba and, based on research, focus groups and consultation with colleagues in human resources across Canada, a determination was made to realign Human Resource staff from their reporting relationships in each department to report centrally to the Civil Service Commission.

And this realignment of Human Resource Services and associated budgets will facilitate improved corporate leadership of human resources, greater flexibility to relocate—reallocate Human Resources staff and enhance human resource services delivered in the regions, corporate health—corporate human resource planning that are linked to government priorities, standard human resource processes and practices across—standardizing the human resource processes and practices across all departments, and it will lead to consistent corporate professional development and training for human resource professionals.

Mr. Faurshou: Thank you very much for that response, Madam Minister.

In—as it pertains to the staffing that we are referring to in the booklet of Estimates, would you comment on the full-time equivalency of positions and that of the vacancies that are within the department at the present time? Obviously noted within the organizational chart there is respectful workplace advisor box empty.

Ms. Wowchuk: With the organization chart that the member referred to on page 5 where he said the respectful workplace advisor, there is no name in that position on the chart, but that position is filled.

With regard to—and the individual's name is Anita Thompson. With regard to the reorganization, there was 89.5 positions and then with the reorganization, 193 were added in to a total of 282.5 positions.

But these people are not relocated. They're coming under the umbrella of the Civil Service Commission, but they continue to work in their existing locations. This is a move that has just happened, so there is a—I cannot give the exact number as to whether there might be vacancies or not

because it's a reorganization that has just happened. But I do not anticipate that there would be many vacancies in Human Resources.

Mr. Faurshou: Just working with past experience, though, within the 89, are there any vacancies at the present time?

Ms. Wowchuk: One.

* (15:00)

Mr. Faurshou: With the Estimates, though, you're anticipating a change in the salaries for the various positions. I see it is actually being reduced.

Could the minister explain why the reduction in salaries? Does it have anything to do with the pause that the minister made public as it pertained to civil service salaries, or perhaps not.

Ms. Wowchuk: There's no change in what people are getting paid, if that's what the member is implying there. What does happen is that as people retire, new people come in at a lower rate. So there would be some difference there.

We also anticipate, with the budgetary challenges that we have this year, that there may be a couple of vacancies that will be maintained in order to meet the budget challenges.

So it's a couple of things: the retirement and new people coming in at a lower pay scale, and also some vacancies. When some people retire, they may—their positions may be kept unfilled for a short time to help with budget.

Mr. Faurshou: Understanding that even though there's only one position vacant at the present time, the minister is anticipating some more lengthy vacancies to assist with government budgeting, so my understanding within the Estimates for this year's expenditures, the government is budgeting for a zero salary increase or any changes to benefits or further government expenditures as they pertain to employee employment.

Ms. Wowchuk: The one vacancy that I spoke about in the 89 is someone that recently retired and the position hasn't been filled yet. With regard to the others that are transferring in, we are still looking to—for details, because those numbers are in other departments, and we don't have the exact detail as to whether there might be a vacancy or not.

With regard to salaries, we did say that we are budgeting for zeros this year, and those negotiations will take place, and that's where we're at.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I thank the minister for the response as it pertains to those in her employ within the Civil Service Commission.

I'd like to ask the minister, as it pertains to the Civil Service Commission, and within her portfolio there is the administration of The Public Interest Disclosure Act and wanting to ask the minister, is she considerate of changes to that legislation?

I know that she is very familiar with the situation that occurred when a high-ranking civil servant made it known to her minister that there was what she believed improprieties within the department, and the whistle-blower protection was not afforded her because she made it known to an elected official, and is it not something that the minister herself would not feel proper, that the civil service be protected by way of making it known to the people's representative, effectively the minister of the department, but the legislation does not provide for that at the present time.

Ms. Wowchuk: There is going to be some minor changes brought forward to The Public Interest Disclosure Act, but they are very minor.

And it is my view that there are the appropriate channels through the whistle-blower legislation, through the Ombudsman, and there are various channels that an individual can be protected under. And we are not looking at a change, as the member has suggested.

Mr. Faurshou: Could the minister tell the committee if there have been any referrals to the Ombudsman under the current legislation in the past year?

Ms. Wowchuk: For 2010-'09-10, to date only one disclosure was made, and the department is reviewing the disclosure, and it appears that the matter raised did not relate to wrongdoing under the act. No disclosures were made within government in 2009-10, and, as reported in the Ombudsman 2008 annual report, the Ombudsman completed an investigation of a disclosure of wrongdoing received in 2007 relating to the public schools education institute.

And we have to—we don't have access to information on the disclosure made by the Ombudsman's office other than what is made available in the annual report, and we haven't—that annual report's not made yet.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I thank the minister for the response, and I appreciate her observation that we have yet to see the Ombudsman's report. It almost seems chronic—is chronically late each and every year. I don't know why the department has such a difficult time putting together the report in a timely fashion, and I would hazard to say on the record exactly how it—how late it is, but I'm believing that it's more than a year after the fact before we receive the report.

So I'd appreciate the minister that—look into the potential changes to the act that would allow for a disclosure and investigation to take place through other opportunities.

Also, too, I would like to ask the minister, as it pertains to the act, the liability that a civil servant has when a disclosure is made to the possibility of civil lawsuit, and that other jurisdictions have effectively protected the civil servants that have made disclosures from civil lawsuit pending that the—outcome of the disclosure's validity.

Ms. Wowchuk: First of all, on the report from the Ombudsman, I think the member was saying that we should look at moving on that—getting that report more quickly. That's an independent office and we cannot give direction to the Ombudsman as to how quickly they should put out a report or shouldn't. So, when the Ombudsman is ready, then the report is released, but we cannot interfere in that process.

* (15:10)

With regard to the liability of a civil servant, there is the—there is a clause in the act that says arrangements for legal advice—if the designated official or Ombudsman is of the opinion that it is necessary to further the purpose of this—to further the purpose of the act, he or she may, subject to the regulations, arrange for legal advice to be provided to the employees and others involved in the process or process—proceedings under the act. So there is a clause that—in the act to deal with it and it's handled on a case by case basis.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Chair, in no way, shape or form should my comments be reflective towards the Ombudsman's office to insinuate that they are not independent. I was referring further to resources available to that independent office to make certain that the annual report is provided in a timely fashion.

The clauses that the minister refers to in the act, I do believe, are only pertaining to the disclosure and

not to—provided to the individual if civil litigation is enacted against them outside of the workplace.

Ms. Wowchuk: That would depend on the circumstance. I'm not sure what—where the member is going with this, but, usually, if there's—if it involves the workplace or an issue in the workplace they would be protected. But if the member has something more specific that he is suggesting, then—but my understanding is that, should there be that need for legal advice, it's dealt with on a case by case basis and then it's provided, should it be needed.

Mr. Faurshou: And I thank the minister for her response. And I believe, as it is written and as I have been counselled, that all legal advice and the support for that is limited to the engagement within the workplace, and that if a civil law suit takes place outside of the employee's—for instance, as a defamation of character civil law suit, the legal provisos are not available. And that is where I'd like to leave it.

Could we move on then? Unless the minister has further response, I'd like to move to the most recent announcement by her department on March the 26th, pertaining to overhauls to The Pension Benefits Act. And could the minister provide, perhaps, a time frame and scheduling that she's anticipating for the implementation of regulations that would be required for this modification?

Ms. Wowchuk: The—there's two parts to the pension. If you're—if the member is talking about the changes to regulations that were just made, those were made under the Department of Labour. If the—if you're talking about the changes and the review of the pensions right across the country, that would be in Finance and Treasury Board that we have those. But we could deal with them later. But it's not under the—changes to the proposed regulations are not under the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. Faurshou: Right. Understanding that the regulations are within the Department of Labour, though, I do want to ask the minister as it pertains to the actual legislation which is referred to in the March 26th media release.

Could the minister perhaps elaborate as to why we are lagging so far behind other jurisdictions in the changes? I understand that some jurisdictions have made these reforms as many as five years ago.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I would again encourage the member to ask those questions of the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard). It is in the Department of

Labour that the regulations and changes to the pensions are taking place, but I will also say that they're—here in Manitoba we took a very thorough consultation. There was a lot of discussion with various groups for these changes and, indeed, it's the Minister of Labour—the Pension Commission was asked, under the Minister of Labour, to do the review. That review was done and, as the—you indicated, there was a release put out on March 26th regarding the changes.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I thank the minister for her response, and I will do so.

I was referred to the minister as it pertained to questions I asked earlier on the Securities Commission. The Securities Commission does fall under the purview of the minister, and I'm wondering whether or not at this time I could ask questions of the minister referring to the Securities Commission.

Ms. Wowchuk: The Securities Commission comes under the Minister of Finance. So, if there aren't any further questions on the Civil Service Commission, then we could go to Finance and I can bring up the appropriate staff.

Mr. Faurshou: I thank you very much for the answer, and no, I am not yet prepared to leave the Civil Service Commission. It was—when the minister made reference of transferral of questions from one minister to another, it's sometimes difficult under the restructuring to ask the appropriate questions of the minister.

Under the Civil Service Commission, there is a responsibility of the minister's portfolio to help adjust in the workplace from changes in the workplace. We in Portage la Prairie are experiencing a significant change within Corrections and also Family Services.

I wonder if I can ask the minister why the 10-week training program that the Department of Justice requires all those entering into the Corrections branch employs is not one that the government sees as a supportable retraining program for civil servants.

And I'll be very specific that there is a scheduled—well, perhaps not yet scheduled, but definitely announced—intent for layoffs at the Manitoba Developmental Centre. There also is a announced employment of 45 and a half full-time positions with department of Corrections, emanating out of the 48-bed unit being now constructed at the Agassiz Youth Centre. And a number of individuals

currently employed at the MDC have gone through the screening process and have been denoted eligible for the 10-week Corrections training program. Yet anyone that—and I'm sure the minister can appreciate—will experience significant financial hardship to go without any income for basically three months while in training.

And I'm wanting to ask the minister: Is there not some consideration for persons currently within the civil service that support might be granted in this interim while persons are retrained?

* (15:20)

Ms. Wowchuk: The member talked about layoffs at MDC and I'm not aware of layoffs at MDC. People are—we'd make every effort to redeploy and move them into other jobs.

And, with regard to the training of individuals, the training is offered free by Justice if they're going into the Justice side of it. So they're not—they don't have to pay for their training.

If they are laid off, there is other ways to—I mean, there is insurance if you're laid off until you move into another job.

But we make every effort to make adjustments. But the work force is always changing and the member is right, there are new positions coming out at the Agassiz Youth Centre. I just—I had this fall—winter, the opportunity to tour that facility and saw where some of the new construction was taking place. And the MDC, there—that is a very aging population, and with an aging population, sometimes there's a change in population, and some people will have to be—have to find different positions, but it's one that we recognize is there, and, as I said, it's the Department of Justice that offers that training and, hopefully, transitions can be handled smoothly.

But there are times when there—that there is a gap, just like unemployment insurance doesn't start as soon as a job ends; there's a wait period. But—so in this case, as they're moving to a new job, there could be a wait period, but there could be other sources, as well, where, if you're laid off, where you could get the benefits of insurance, as well.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, I did correct myself in saying that the layoffs at MDC were not announced yet, but it is anticipated. Now, the program to which the minister is familiar with in Justice and, specifically, training for Corrections staff—unfortunately, though, the persons enrolled in that program are not eligible

for EI support. And so we are looking at individuals that will have to sustain three months without any income, and I believe that persons within the civil service should be recognized for their dedication and commitment to service of—to the province. And it's not of their own making that the layoffs are pending and they are taking the initiative to find other employees within the civil service and, most specifically, in Portage la Prairie because obviously, the minister's familiar with relocation and the challenges and stresses that that does bring on.

So I'm asking the minister as to whether or not there is any consideration within her department to recognize the current situation of civil servants in Portage la Prairie.

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, the member talks about pending layoffs. There are no layoffs, but people make decisions. People make decisions that they anticipate that there may be a change in their work force. They make a decision to move into something else. And I know when people make those decisions, they also plan. They don't just say, oh, today I'm going to—I might be laid off, my job might gone, so I'm going to start training somewhere else.

People look around. They make a decision and they do some planning as to how long—and they know—they know that the training is a 10-week program, but if they've made that decision that they want to make a career change, that's something that a lot of people do. They make a decision that they want to move, and I think they plan for it.

I'm not aware of the specific details in this case of the training program, and I'm not aware of any funds that are available to help in a situation like this, where people make a decision that they might want to leave one job and start training for another one.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, where I'd like to leave this particular point with the minister is that is there within her department the willingness to communicate to the federal government and in their—and examine whether or not the training that is—course that is provided by Corrections not be eligible for EI support. There are many, many retraining programs and post-secondary curriculums that are eligible for persons to be supported by EI during this time period. And so, I would like to have the minister's commitment to at least lobby the federal government in this regard.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will certainly forward that to the Department of Justice and get more detail. I cannot

commit to a program that I'm not familiar with, but I'll forward it to the Department of Justice.

Mr. Faurichou: The—I asked the same question of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) last Friday, and the Minister of Justice encouraged me to bring it up here today, that he needs all the support he can muster, because this is one concern that he has, that the program is not recognized by EI, and so therefore I'm enlisting your lobby efforts.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will have a discussion with the Minister of Justice, but that's as much as I can do right now.

Mr. Faurichou: Now, in regards to the civil service and some of the programs that the government has initiated in as it pertains to persons with—that are visible minorities and those persons affected by disabilities. The minister has made significant efforts under various-named programs. I think Gateway was—is one.

Could perhaps the minister update the committee as to the success or lack thereof working within these programs? And I will be a little more specific to the minister, as it pertains to—there—here, we found, on page 33. There is a number of different—Career Gateway Program for Visible Minorities and immigrants, Aboriginal Management Development Program, Public Administration Internship Program for Persons with Disabilities, Aboriginal Public Administration Program, and Management Internship Program, and Career Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities are all within her department.

Could the minister comment on these programs and potentially tell the committee how many people have accessed the various programs and the success rate of the various programs?

Ms. Wowchuk: This is a part of the civil service that I'm very, very pleased with. When I got the responsibility of this department, one of the first things I talked about was what we were doing about internship and visible minorities and people with disabilities and Aboriginal people. And when—I had actually seen the results of the program in a variety of departments and, in fact, in the last department that I worked in, where there were people who had taken the training and had been in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. So, there's a lot of work, and we should be very proud as Manitobans as—of what we're doing here.

This is the brochure that is available. It's—*[interjection]*—I can, certainly. It's called Your Search is Over: People. Purpose. Progress: The Manitoba government offers you opportunity, diversity and a rewarding career. And in that package it talks about all of the different opportunities, and I'll share this with the member and it might provide you with the information that you're looking for. But certainly, there are a variety of programs.

* (15:30)

I can start by talking about the Aboriginal Public Administration Program, where there are currently—the objective is to recruit and introduce Aboriginal people to the system and the processes of government. There is a biannual intake of up to six interns. There have been six intakes up to this point; 35 interns in total; 25 obtained positions with the government; and six are currently in the program. So you can see just from that one that there are a lot of people that are interested and then there is—they do find jobs. It's a two-year training program, and it's—it deals with a wide variety of skills and, then, many people then do fit into the work force. That's an example of one of them.

Mr. Faurichou: Well, thank you very much. I was maybe looking at those very same figures for all of the programs, and rather than take the time of committee to do so, if you would provide, in writing, I'd greatly appreciate.

Now, the commitment by government to see within the civil service an increase of employs, persons with disabilities, I know, has been announced by government. Could we—could give an update as to the civil service as it pertains to persons of visible minorities and those persons with disabilities?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the persons with disabilities is one of the hardest areas to address, and it has been challenging. We've directed the internship program to look at that community and look how we might be able to get more involved.

I could share a couple of numbers with the member with regard to a percentage of employees. When we came into—it's on the employment equity group representation. When we came into office, 49.7 percent of the employees were women. It is now, in 2010, at 53.8 percent. Aboriginal people were at 7.3 percent, and we are now 12.8 percent. Persons with disabilities were at 2.6 percent, and we

are at 3.3 percent. Visible minorities, we were at 2.9 percent in 2000; we're now up to 6.2.

So we set some goals, some benchmarks. For women, the goal was to reach 50 percent, and we've exceeded the 50 percent because we're at 53.8. For Aboriginal people our goal is 14 percent, and we are at—haven't quite reached it. It's 12.8, getting close, but there's still work to be done there. The goal for people with disability is 7 percent, and I said, this is really the hardest one to fill because we're not—we're just about halfway there. And visible minorities the goal is 8 percent, and we are at 6.2 percent. So we're under a little bit.

But we—the other issue in all of this is you have—this is a self declaration by the employees, and it's very challenging to get people to declare. There are people that may have disabilities, but you can't see them, and people don't want to declare that. There could be people, for any number of reasons, they may not want to declare. So our numbers could be different than what is showing up here, but there's no doubt we have to keep on working, and that's why there's a directive for the internship program to continue to work to raise those numbers.

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the minister for the update.

The area of persons with disabilities, the amalgamation or merger, if you will, the Human Resources all under one department, will then that be facilitated for—with greater supports for persons with disabilities coming into the civil service?

Ms. Wowchuk: That's one of the goals. The goal is if you bring everybody together, start looking at different ideas of how people are doing in different departments, we hope that that's one of the goals out of it. And I'm hopeful, and I believe that you will see an improvement by bringing these people together.

And each department now will have to provide their diversity strategy, and they're going to have to set out a plan on how they're going to reach those goals. So, by working together, we believe that this—there will be an improvement here.

Mr. Faurchou: Just as a percentage here, being a white male, it looks like there's going to be a reduced opportunity in the civil service for myself. Maybe, hopefully, I get—continue to get re-elected in Portage la Prairie.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will just say to the member opposite; it's our turn. You've had it for a long time. We're more than half the population; it's our turn.

Mr. Chairperson: Want to continue with that line of questioning, honourable member? Good luck.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, we heard it here. Seeing that 80 percent is already committed, yeah, 20 percent for half the population or maybe not quite that many but, yes.

I would like to ask to the minister as it pertains to persons that have experienced workplace injuries: Could the minister provide for an update as to the number of civil servants now that are on long-term disability emanating from workplace injuries?

Ms. Wowchuk: We don't have the numbers here for the number of people on long-term disability. That is in Treasury Board, and we could get that for you. But we have increased the resources in this—despite the fact that there's pressures on the budget, we have increased the resources here.

Certainly, government's a large employer, and we want to have—when there are injuries, want to be able to work with people to help them to adjust to the work force or make some changes within the whole civil service to try to accommodate people that have been injured.

Mr. Faurchou: And on that very note, within the booklet of Estimates, it is noted that there is reduced resources budgeted as it pertains to counselling services and specialized services to address civil servants that have interpersonal conflict or are feeling the effects of trauma.

Could the minister reply as to the reasoning that reduced resources are being budgeted for this year? Was—in years past, have these not been fully prescribed to or is it just a budgetary constraint?

Ms. Wowchuk: There has not been any reduction in counsellors. There are seven full-time counsellors. There is—there's seven full-time counsellors.

* (15:40)

There are some efficiencies that have been gained where we've been able to save some money there. But, if you look at page 48, if—on our main—of the Estimates book, it shows that there is some recoveries from other departments, and then those dollars would be used for—there would be some recoveries that organizational and staff department—development agencies—so there—those are recovered from other departments.

So there are some recoveries from—I said other departments; it's not from other departments because

the service is free to our employees, but there is services provided to other social agencies, and then that money is recovered so that puts the additional money.

But the—we talked about the reduction that's in that line. It's mostly the efficiencies that have been found and then, as well, there is recoveries from other social agencies and MPI that go into this division so that services are provided for a broader group of people, not only government employees.

Mr. Faurshou: Just for the record and very specifically, you made mention of Crown corporations as one of the agencies. Are, then, the special operating agencies within that purview as well? And perhaps the minister could comment on the agencies that are at arm's length, such as the new Child and Family Services operating within the Métis and Aboriginal communities?

Ms. Wowchuk: We—there are—we don't provide services for everyone. Some have decided to do their own, but I can tell the member that we provide, through this branch, services for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Assiniboine Community College, Brandon University, community economic development and the Food Development Centre, industry technology centre, Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, Manitoba agriculture services corporation, Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, Manitoba Gaming Commission, Housing Authority, the Liquor Control Commission, Manitoba Museum, MPI, Osborne House, Parkland Crisis Centre, Peak of the Market, Red River College, Society of Manitobans with Disabilities, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Teachers' Retirement Fund, the University College of the North, Winnipeg Art Gallery and YM-YWCA.

So those are the ones that we provide services to, others—and then there's a recovery. Others will provide their own services.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could just go back to the first part of the conversation that the member from Portage la Prairie had with respect to the Human Resources reorganization. There was a reorganization. The minister, I believe, said that there was consultations within the Civil Service Commission, there were some reviews that were done with respect to the reorganization. They looked at other jurisdictions, if I recall the minister's comments.

I wonder if you could just expand on that a little bit as to the reports. Which reports do you refer to and which jurisdictions did you look at with respect to this. And I assume it's a central HR function now as opposed to a function that was provided through all the different departments. So maybe we'll start off with that question.

Is it a central HR function now and, if not, why is it that they're all being incorporated into the civil service?

Ms. Wowchuk: It's not centralization. It's central leadership that we have here now with a view to strategic and regional provision of human resource services. So they all report to the deputy of the Civil Service Commission, but it was to bring some more continuity than we have right now. We found that there were certain challenges that were—there wasn't consistency, so this realignment addresses those kind of challenges, addresses the inconsistency of human resource practices, differing human resource levels, difficulty adapting human resource services to change in government organization.

There is also a challenge with insufficient regional human resource services. There was a lack of co-ordination of departmental human resource plans to corporate priorities. So we just saw that there was—what was happening and we wanted a little bit more consistency. This is the same thing that's happening across other jurisdictions as well to try to streamline and get more efficiency out of the Human Resources.

Mr. Borotsik: I understand your explanation, but your explanation seems to define centralized policies with—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: They're all one department.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, I've got one nodding and one going this way, so I guess the question is centralized policies would be a cornerstone of the reorg of the Human Resources department. Is that not correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: It's centralized policy. It's centralized policy, but the human resource people are still in all of the departments, but it is to better streamline it to get better policies and better continuity across all departments.

Mr. Borotsik: Okay, I understand that—that, physically, Human Resources will be in the different departments, and individuals in Human Resources, but as you've just indicated, because of the

continuity, we would like to have the same policies in place for all of the departments and all the Human Resources so that staff are getting the same training abilities, staff are getting the same ability to look at upward mobility and change of positions within the government. I mean, like, that's good, but you can't have it both ways.

It is, in my opinion, a centralized policy for Human Resources right now. And you also said, Madam Minister, that there will be one individual who all of the Human Resources departments will now report to. So that, to me, just in my small little mind, is a centralized system, so how can you argue against the centralized system if in fact that's what it's going to be with a central policy and a central individual?

Ms. Wowchuk: It was—there always was—the goal was to have the same kind of services, all of the same things across government, but that wasn't happening. Everybody was reporting to different—they were reporting to four or five different deputy ministers. There was not the continuity between different people, so it is—the policy now is one policy.

The human resource people are in the different departments, but they do report back to the deputy minister of the Civil Service Commission so that there is continuity and the same kind of opportunity and treatment for people right across.

* (15:50)

So it is—I think—I said the people aren't centralized because they aren't under one—under the Civil Service Commission. They still stay in their departments, but they do follow—there is more of an emphasis to be sure that—what was always intended, was that there would be the same kind of policy across all the departments, that it does happen now because it wasn't happening. So this is a change after a lot of review, that this was a change that was made so that there is more continuity and consistency across all the civil service.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Borotsik: I asked, in my first part of the question, if there was, in fact, reports that were available, that were studied, that looked at the organizational change for Human Resources, to bring them in. And I'm still going to use this centralized Human Resources, even though the minister doesn't agree with me that it is centralized. Even though the bodies are in different departments, they don't

respond or report to that deputy minister; they respond and report to a deputy minister of Civil Service Commission. So they're employees now to the commission.

Could the minister tell me what reports and which surveys, and which studies were looked at when looking at the reorganization of the Human Resources department?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Chairman, and, again, the human resource people still work with their deputies on a day-to-day basis in the departments. So they are still in the departments. They still work on a day-to-day basis. They do report centrally.

You know, there was internal services that looked at this. There was meetings with the deputy ministers. There was meetings—there was—they—the staff surveyed various jurisdictions to see how they were handling these kind of issues. The—here, the member's asking for a specific report or a summary. We don't have a report here, but we can give you a—further information of all the jurisdictions. We can share with you which jurisdictions have this kind of model that we have gone to, and I can bring that back, but I don't have those numbers here.

But, certainly, it was—this was—last year, we dealt with classification. So, there was continuity, better continuity, on classification. And, through the deputies, there was a frustration about the inconsistency of practices in Human Resources, differing human resource levels, lack of services in some areas. All of these issues had been identified, and this was an attempt to improve those services and bring equality across the system.

Mr. Borotsik: Yeah, and, don't get me wrong; I think it's an admirable task to take on. Having a central Human Resources department, where you've got the same policy dealing with employees throughout the whole civil service, makes a lot of sense. You don't want to have different policies for different departments and, if that's what was happening, then there would be inefficiencies. And there would be, certainly, I would imagine, in some cases, some employees who didn't particularly like that, if they were going to be treated differently in one department and not in another department.

In saying that, then, you must have identified that there were some—there was some redundancy, there were some duplications in the departments with human resource staff, with human resource policy. In the report that you brought forward, did you find any

of those inefficiencies, redundancy and duplication of tasks?

Ms. Wowchuk: I'm told that when we—when this was reviewed and when we looked at the private sector, our level of Human Resources staff is much lower than in the private sector. In fact, one of the issues that came up in all of this discussion is that we weren't—we aren't providing enough staff for Human Resources. So we're not looking at increasing it, but we've—but there—but we are reviewing it. This just came into effect on March 1st, so we will continue to work at it to see where there might be improvements. But the message that we are getting is that our human resource staff is pretty thin right now.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, can the minister tell me who's giving that message? You're getting a message that your Human Resources staff is less than what—and, by the way, that wasn't my question with a comparable between the private sector. But that's fine. If you have those comparisons and if you have those reports I'm sure that the minister would be more than happy to table them and show that there were some inconsistencies with the private sector and the public service. But that wasn't necessarily my question.

When you did your review, did you find any duplication of—I mean, like, when you've got different departments handling human resources there's going to be some duplication. There has to be some duplication. There's policy development. There's reporting systems that are put into place. Did you not find any of those inefficiencies and duplications coming, and bringing them all together, do you not feel that there would be some efficiencies?

Ms. Wowchuk: We aren't bringing people together. They're staying in their departments. In fact, what we have is clusters right now. Various departments share Human Resources. I believe that, back in about '95, every department had Human Resources. Then they were brought together and there—so there's—departments share their Human Resources staff. So what's happening now is not a reduction, it is—and because—and, as I said, there have been concerns within the departments that might be in a cluster that there actually is not enough Human Resources staff. We're not looking to build on that. But we—what we're doing now that we've got this central reporting that—there—we will look at each one of them to see where there—what changes might be made. But that isn't the goal of this right now. The goal is to bring a

better method where there is fairness right across the board.

Mr. Borotsik: Again, I go back to, you've been told and there are reports. Is the minister prepared to make available those reports that have indicated that there should be a reorg of the Human Resources?

Ms. Wowchuk: If the member is asking whether we brought in consultants to do this, no, we didn't do it. So there's—nobody wrote a report. Somebody didn't come in and say that this is what you have and you have to change this. This is work between the executive of the departments looking at how we could get better services for our—and fairer treatment for the people. But, if the member is asking for a report, is—a report is written by somebody who reviews the system and says where's the—where can you make some efficiencies. This is—was an internal working, working internally with all human resource people, working with the executive, working with deputy ministers to see how we might make improvements.

Mr. Borotsik: But you did say that there were some comparisons made between the private sector and the civil service. You did say that, and you were told that. In fact, I'll read *Hansard*. But I think your comment was—is that the human resources function in the civil service was perhaps less than what was being provided in the private sector. That had to come from somewhere. That had to come from a report in some direction. Do you have that information available?

Ms. Wowchuk: I mean, we—the department looked at data, and certainly we can provide you with the data that we looked at as to the ratio of the human resource staff in one sector versus the ratio in ours. We can provide that for you.

Mr. Borotsik: More so than just ratios, you would have to look at the job function of those individuals in those HR departments, what they were providing. So, if, you know, if the ratio was higher in the public sector—or private sector—and lower in the public sector you'd also have to make a comparison of what the job function was of those individuals in order to make a true, apples-to-apples comparison. Did those reports also look at those comparables?

* (16:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: The point I was trying to make is that—the member asked whether we had found any efficiencies, and what I was saying is that, when you look at government, in comparison to the private

sector, that government Human Resources is quite lean. But that's not what we were looking for. What we were looking for was looking at how we could address the issues that were raised by the executive, issues that were raised by deputy ministers with regard to the lack of consistency about how human resources were being delivered in government. That's what we were looking for.

I was the one that said, you know, we look at the numbers in the private sector. This is—this review is not—was not about comparing to the private sector. It was about how we could address the issue that was being raised by executive and how we could bring—address the challenges, whether it would be differing ways of—in each division, of how human resources were being handled, how you would handle some of those inconsistencies, training, what's done in one—so it was a matter of how to make those improvements.

I used the example of the level of human resources in the private versus the public sector because we were—you were asking about whether we were looking to find efficiencies. I took that to mean that you wanted to see whether we looked at how we could reduce the number of people involved in Human Resources, and, in fact, that reduction took place some time ago when the departments were put into pools of several—or a couple department using the same human resource team.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, thank you. And you're right. My question did deal with redundancies and inefficiencies within a department, and I take it from your answer that none were identified and simply a better policy development process is better.

Of the 282.5 positions, 193 are being transferred in, and I assume their costs are now being incorporated into the Civil Service Commission. Prior to that, those costs were allocated to the individual departments, I assume. And, again, I apologize, I'm—this isn't my forte or my bailiwick, but I assume that there will be a substantial reduction in those other departments, where those costs were being allocated, now being coming into the Civil Service. Is that a fair assumption to make?

Ms. Wowchuk: That's right. If you look at every department there will be a line on the reconciliation statement of what it would've cost that department earlier. But, again, I want to go back to—we talked about whether we would find redundancies or efficiencies—that—if there are any, they'll be identified as—this moves on because, again, this just happened. The change came in March and people—the work will

be done. We'll—the commissioner and staff will be looking at how human resource services are delivered—and will there be changes? We will know after we're into this process for some time. Maybe next year when we're talking about this we can talk about—in the first year, what happened, was their changes that were made.

Mr. Faurchou: Mr. Acting Chair, perhaps a question I should've asked at the outset: What is the current number within this civil service and, maybe, if—you use the '09 versus '99 comparison time and time again, perhaps maybe we could use that timeframe again as to the civil service number?

Ms. Wowchuk: The—in 2000—what year did you want, David?

An Honourable Member: '99 versus 2009.

Ms. Wowchuk: In 1999, the number was 13,305. In 2010, it is 14,890. And most of those increases have been—have taken place in—just in—there's a new Department of Water Stewardship, in Justice, additional protection officers, Family Services and Housing, and Health and Healthy Living is where we have seen the increases. And it's based on the number of people on the payroll at that point in time; it doesn't mean that that's all full—it's full-time workers, just full-time equivalents to a point in time.

Mr. Faurchou: I thank the minister for that number.

The various areas and branches, departments in government that are experiencing vacancies, does the Civil Service Commission red-flag any particular areas or do they have the monitoring ability to do so, to potentially get at a department that may be just dysfunctional and experiencing high vacancy rate or high areas of delinquency or—I shouldn't perhaps say delinquency—absenteeism due to illness or need for counselling? Is—does the department have that capability?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, the member talks about a vacancy or problems of vacancy, that's what the—that's the job of the human resource staff and that's why they're so important. They're the ones that try to move people around, help them with—if there are challenges to move into different areas. The—with regard to sick leave, that's a different area, and in—certainly in—there are people that help there.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

There's the employment—Employee Assistance Program that can be of help to people. The human

resource people also work in that. And then there is a central group of—out of Treasury Board that also works on these issues to fill positions.

Talk about government-wide vacancy, the government-wide vacancy right now is about 6.5 percent and there's always a vacancy rate as people retire and it takes a while to fill some positions. So—but that's where it's at right now.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, and the second part to my question was, does the Civil Service Commission and, now, the merged Human Resources department have the ability to red-flag particular branches or sections within government that are experiencing higher than normal vacancies or persons away for various reasons from their employs?

*(16:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: If there are issues, the human resource people work with the managers and if there is a particular area that can't be filled, if there's a challenge, some issues in there, yes, the human—the commission, it would be able to work with them as would human resource people be able to work together. But they have the ability to raise an issue if something like that would arise.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, having the resources to deal with an issue and identifying an issue, they're two different things.

And I'm asking of the minister: Does her department have the ability to identify and red-flag situations that are causing concern and, perhaps, if that is the case, then maybe it is management within those sections that might be the party to which the situation is emanating from?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, each department would handle that. Each department has the ability with—through their human resource team to address an issue like that, should it arise. They would be able to identify and manage it.

An example of that is in Corrections, through—there was an issue identified. They had to move people around in order to address the issues in Corrections, and through this system we're working under one centralized policy there's a better ability to address that.

Mr. Faurshou: Yes, well, I asked the question because I believe that the—that there needs to be more scrutiny and, now, with the centralizing, merging Human Resources department that this might be an added ability, but I'm aware of a situation where a

casual employed civil servant was approaching their 150th hour of employ in a two-week period when they were injured on the work site. To my understanding—and this, the reason for the amount of overtime that this casually employed individual was receiving was because of the 'enormacy' of the vacancy in that particular branch. And it is a concern to myself, and should be to the minister, when a vacancy rate is in excess of 25 percent, and persons are being asked to work this amount of overtime that there is, indeed, an accident waiting to happen.

And that's why I asked the question as to whether or not you have the ability to oversee or screen or potentially red flag a particular workplace, and address it before something does indeed happen.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the member has some specifics of a particular incident, I'd invite him to give me that information and we could certainly investigate for it.

Mr. Faurshou: I do have the very specifics of the issue, and would very much like to sit down with the minister and discuss this more fully, because the further of questions I ask the more identifiable the workplace is. And just to try and resolve this issue right now before it gets even further out of hand, which I understand is—I will say, though, that the Civil Service Commission is investigating at this time, and it is Anita Thompson that is familiar with the situation. So I will leave that, though.

Asking the minister, though, a procedure as to privatization of formerly positions occupy the civil service—how does this take place? Is each department able to identify sectors that could potentially be contracted out?

And I'm going to be very specific to the rather sensitive security control centre for the Province. The—I understand that there has been a move to a private contractor of the responsibilities that were formerly or—I won't say it's actually taken place just yet, but the—my understanding is that there will be a conversion of employment to that of the private contractor once the upgrades and the technology has been installed.

Ms. Wowchuk: I can provide the member with the full detail of this particular issue, but I want to assure him that there are upgrades taking place. Nobody is losing their job, but during this time of upgrades there is a need to maintain the system, and the existing people weren't able to do that. So they—once the system is maintained, they will have their jobs again.

But I will—[interjection] But they're not working—[interjection] So, again, those people—nobody's lost a job. They've been—they're doing—while this system is being renovated, upgraded, they are going on to other different responsibilities. But while the contract was being done, there needed to be other people in doing the upgrading and the maintenance of the system, so people who are there—there is no privatization. It's an upgrade of a system, and I can get more details for you.

Mr. Faurshou: Yes, well, there's two schools of thought on this one that concern me. One is that the personnel that are effectively installing and currently monitoring are individuals not in the employ of the government, and they are accessing the most sensitive, most high-security information of the Province—and want to be assured that this information is, indeed, handled by individuals that have the highest of security and clearance.

I also though—wondering, though, with the improved technology that is going to be installed, are the civil servants that are engaged in this particular worksite, are they receiving the training to be redeployed in their previous positions with the understanding of the new technology, or there are other individuals that are currently being trained for this responsibility?

Ms. Wowchuk: Most of the work that is being done here is improvements to the workplace. So the end result will be a healthier environment for these people to work in. That's what most of the work is.

But there will be improvements to the technology that is being used there, and it's a contract by MIT, and with any contract, if you—if there is sensitive material being handled, there is all of the scrutiny that goes into it before anybody gets a contract. So there is—I can get more detail on this and provide it for the member, but—and that's what I'll do.

* (16:20)

Mr. Faurshou: Well, I thank the minister for her assurances, but I do want her to make certain that the employees of the contracted entity do meet the highest of government security clearance because of the sensitivity and the exposure to all information throughout government.

On the securities branch of government, there is wide-ranging responsibilities, not only for the building in which we sit, but to areas of Manitoba Public Housing and other government—either owned or leased—premises.

I'd like to ask the minister the vacancy rate of that particular branch of government, and whether or not there is ever a consideration by government to evaluate the, not only the staffing numbers to particular venues as compared to other jurisdictions, and also, though, a comparative wage schedule to other jurisdictions with the same duties and responsibilities.

I know the government has announced that they are going to be very frugal in the wage negotiations with civil servants this year, but there does, indeed, the time and place, when effectively, there is a realignment of duties and responsibilities, that have need of adjustment.

And I'm asking the minister for her consideration and evaluation of government securities branch, as to whether or not their expanded duties and responsibilities are being remunerated in comparable fashion to other jurisdictions?

Ms. Wowchuk: There is the ability to reclassify if somebody has been given new responsibilities. I think the member is saying that these people have taken on new responsibilities and he's concerned about their level of pay. Then there is a reclassification that they can apply for, and, if it's warranted, then they will have a reclassification or an increase of pay. But we are asking everybody, this year, to take a zero—I've said that many times and I've said it in the House.

But if the member is talking about some specific areas where he feels that the security officers have changed responsibility and are not being properly compensated, there is a process for them to go through to have their responsibilities reviewed to see if there has to be adjustments.

Mr. Faurshou: I know the minister is very cognizant of the changes of the level of security in the advent of 9/11, and there is much that has changed in the world, and, coming back to Canada, we're not immune from having to make those changes, and although there is a balance always to be struck between public access and the security of individuals that are employed within the various departments of government. So I do, though, know that there is a stepped-up level of security having been initiated by government. We know it first-hand even walking into this building now. There was never a stop and request for identification prior to coming in. Although formal presentation of identification is required to enter this building, there is a request that persons identify themselves and sign

in. So even that relatively minor change in procedure, again, is something that I believe the minister appreciates. And the personnel that now are administrating that, again, when persons are—I use the word cautiously—confronted to request for—to be identified, there's always another element of potential risk. And so these are some of the things that I leave with the minister's consideration.

With that, if the minister has no further comment, I would like to move to the Securities Commission.

Ms. Wowchuk: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to these particular Estimates.

I'll now call Resolution number 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,439,000 for Civil Service Commission for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,000 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission and we will now entertain discussion of the Manitoba Securities Commission. *[interjection]* No? Under the Department of Finance.

An Honourable Member: We have to call Finance first.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, okay. all right.

FINANCE

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): To clarify, we will have the Committee of Supply now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance. *[interjection]* So you can't go from Civil Service Commission straight to—we're now resuming consideration of Estimates for the Department of Finance.

A quick reminder: As it's been previously agreed, these Estimates will be proceeding in a global manner and the floor is now open for questions.

Mr. David Faursehou (Portage la Prairie): I would like to ask the minister, in the area of the Securities Commission there has been movement to harmonize, through legislation and regulation, all provincial jurisdictions so that when a company applies for approval by the Securities Commission here in Manitoba, effectively, they are granted what has been termed a passport, so, therefore, persons in other jurisdictions are effectively able to offer those securities.

Could the minister provide an update as to the progress in that endeavour?

* (16:30)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): The passport system is in place and is working.

Mr. Faursehou: I understood that there was nine of 10 jurisdictions that had signed on to the passport program, Ontario being the exception. Could the minister elaborate?

Ms. Wowchuk: That is true. Ontario has not signed on, and all the other jurisdictions are—have signed on. Ontario would prefer to have a national Securities Commission, and there are those discussions that are continuing, but in the meantime the other jurisdictions have agreed to the passport system and that is in place now.

Mr. Faursehou: Though with the absence of Ontario within the program, obviously the bulk of our securities brokerage services are centralized in around the Toronto Stock Exchange, and the—Ontario not participating, I know that the federal Finance Minister, Mr. Flaherty, has encouraged the national adoption of the passport system, but failing that, he is quite prepared to table federal legislation that would basically dispense with our—the necessity of individual provincial securities commissions and only basically have a branch office of a federal securities commission effectively.

Could the minister provide any comment as to whether or not—the federal minister's suggestion as it pertains to Manitoba's position?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Flaherty, when he was minister in—with the Ontario government, held the position that there should be a single national regulator. He is now federal Finance Minister. He is still of the same position that there should be a single national regulator. That's his view and right now there are people that are challenging that view. It's a view of the federal legislation and there's—it has to be dealt

with. There's a court case in Québec and Alberta and the federal minister—what's he going to do? *[interjection]* And the federal minister intends to refer this to the Supreme Court of Canada.

So there are a few things that are happening right now that would—that have to be dealt with before we can move forward on this.

Mr. Faurchou: So do we have any active potential intervenor status active in this pending court case?

Ms. Wowchuk: The two that are active right now are provincial, so we would not intervene at the provincial level, and we will then make a decision—when it's referred to the Supreme Court, we will make a decision on what our position will be but we are—right now there are a few court—a couple of court cases that have to be dealt with.

Mr. Faurchou: Perhaps, then, could you describe the current situation as it pertains to a share offering here in Manitoba being available to the brokers in Ontario. Does that opportunity exist or does the company that is provided the securities offering here in Manitoba having to go through the whole entire process of prospectus preparation and disclosure prior to share offerings in Ontario?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member knows that we have—we've supported the passport system and we continue to support the passport system. We would, if there's going to be a national system in place, we would want it to be one where the passport system is recognized, but we have to wait and see what happens with the various events that have to transpire, but we would—we believe that you could continue to—our preference would be to continue to have the passport system.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, hypothetically speaking, if we had another share offering provided for by MTS Allstream, they would have to duplicate the process in Manitoba and then again in Ontario if persons were wanting to offer those shares for sale in the two respective jurisdictions.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, it's obvious as to the cumbersome nature of the current situation, and I would hope that it would get resolved in the not-too-distant future so that that would not have to be the case.

In the—in Manitoba, this—could we have sort of a 40,000-foot observation of the Securities Commission operations in the past—as to the number of

prospectus that have been completed, or is there a particular company investigations, just basically the activity of the commission?

Ms. Wowchuk: With regard to how cumbersome—the member talks about how cumbersome it is. It is far less cumbersome than it used to be and a lot of progress has been made in 10—nine jurisdictions. We hope that there will be progress made in the last jurisdiction. With regard to the specifics that the member is asking here—for here, we—the Civil Service Commission is—I mean, sorry, the Securities Commission is not here, and I can't answer those specific questions.

Mr. Faurchou: Well, is there going to be another opportunity to which we could ask questions? Because I would like to have for the record the ongoing number of investigations the Securities Commission is—has undertaken. Also, most—of most interest to Manitobans is the Crocus investigation and its status now then that the legal court proceedings have been concluded, it is something I'd like to ask questions on.

Ms. Wowchuk: If staff is available, we'll try to have some here tomorrow.

* (16:40)

Mr. Faurchou: I want to say I appreciate the minister's responses to the questions I provided for her this afternoon and look forward to the information that she would—said that she would provide. And, if the minister could have the Securities Commission personnel available for tomorrow, we would like to entertain a line of questioning as it pertains to that area of expertise.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you and, if that isn't going to work out, I'll let you know in the morning.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Chairman, now we can get into something perhaps that I do know a little bit more about, and I would, first of all, thank the minister for the flexibility that she showed at the beginning of the session.

We're going to finance, and I'm going to go to debt. I'm going to debt repayments. I'm going to borrowings. I'm going to taxation, and I'm going to go to equalization. *[interjection]* Oh, no, no, no, no. Actually, the deputy minister has all the answers. I know he does. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Brandon West has the floor.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you. I guess the first question that I will ask the minister, and I know the minister has the answer. She doesn't need staff for this one. Over the five-year plan, which is identified in the page 10 of the budget, we're looking at the forecast deficit of 555 million for the year 2009-2010. Then we look at projected deficits of some 545 million, 448 million, 345 million and 146 million. If you add up all those numbers, Madam Minister, that comes to \$2.039 billion. Those are operating deficits. Those are deficits of less revenue than expenses. Can the minister tell me how the government is prepared to pay those operating deficits of \$2.039 billion?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the deficit will be paid through the annual borrowing payment that we have. As I indicated when I tabled the budget, we will be drawing down the stabilization fund, and we will be paying over \$600 million down on the debt and interest until we return to balance. And we will be leaving \$200 million, about \$200 million will be left in the stabilization fund. So we will—we have—our plan says to pay down more aggressively than is required under the existing legislation, using a drawdown from the stabilization fund and, at the same time, making the investments and fulfilling the commitments that we make in the five-year plan.

Mr. Borotsik: Okay, let's call a spade a spade, Madam Minister. There's going to be \$2.039 billion that's going to be required to borrow in order to offset the projected deficits over the next four years, including the fifth year, this year. So there's going to be \$2.039 billion that has to be borrowed to pay for operating deficits. The total fiscal stabilization account balance right now is \$675 million. So, if you're borrowing \$2 billion and you only have \$675 million in a fiscal stabilization fund that you tell—you say you're going to use to pay down the debt, in reality, there will be an additional \$1.4 billion in debt going forward for the next four years. Operating debt.

Ms. Wowchuk: That's true, and that's a decision we made. We made a decision that we were not going to cut front-line services. We were not going to do what happened in the '90s where people were laid off, there was no investment in stimulus, and it took years to get over that. We made a—our approach is different. We are going to invest in people. We're going to invest in education. We're going to invest in stimulus. We're going to grow the economy and, yes, we are going to borrow money to do that—we are. Nobody has said we aren't going to do it, but we also have a plan on how we're going to use the

stabilization fund to pay down over \$600 million of it.

Will there be some that's not paid off? Yes, about \$1.4 billion that will have to be paid off over time, but I consider that a sound investment in keeping front-line services going, investing in stimulus to build infrastructure, to build communities, to train people, to invest in research and development, to invest in apprenticeships and all of those things. I feel that that's a good investment.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, Madam Minister, I'm not going to argue your policy decisions. That's your—in fact, your prerogative. What I want to deal with is semantics. You can't simply say that you're paying down \$600 million worth of debt when, in fact, you are going to incur a \$1.4 billion in debt, because there's going to be 2 billion required. You're going to use 600 million that's there right now.

So semantics are you're not paying down debt. You're just incurring less debt, because you have a \$600-million bank account that you're going to draw down, but you are, in fact, going to incur \$1.4 billion more in debt. Regardless of what your policies are, regardless of what your priorities are, regardless of what you want to say about 9, 10, 15, 25 years ago, the fact of the matter is is that your government will incur, in your own projections, a \$1.4-billion additional operating debt over the next five years.

Ms. Wowchuk: I haven't tried to deny that. I have said that over the next four years, five years, we have a plan. Yes, we will spend more money—yes, we will spend more money. We will make investments. Yes, we will use the money we set aside in the rainy day fund. We set that money aside and we are putting in place an aggressive payment schedule of over \$600 million that will be paid—that will be used to pay down our borrowing.

Will we still have additional borrowing after the five years? Yes, we will. I don't know what the member's talking about semantics. I have said we are borrowing money to keep the economy going, to make investments in people, to keep front-line services going, and we will borrow money and we have a plan to do it.

We said this year we will borrow money, next year we will borrow money, and we'll borrow money the year after in order to keep our economy going, and, yes, we will have to pay it off over time, but we are not destroying front-line services. We're keeping hospitals open. We're making investments, and we

are training people. We're not shutting down, reducing the number of doctors in training. We're not firing nurses. We have a different approach, and, yes, we will have to borrow money to do it, but that's a decision we've made.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, I guess that's where we disagree. The semantics are is that you're not aggressively paying down the debt. The semantics are is that you're actually aggressively putting another \$1.4 billion onto the operating debt.

And you're not—you're not—aggressively paying down the debt, because in previous legislation there was a requirement for the government to pay down \$110 million per year on an annual basis, the debt. That legislation was changed to zero. It was then amended to \$20 million in the last not-so-balanced budget legislation. And this year, as I see in the 2010-2011 draw-down from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, it's going to be \$96 million.

So there was an aggressive pay-down of debt at \$110 million. There wasn't such an aggressive pay-down of debt at 20 million, and now it's been increased to 96 million. So how can the minister say that that's an aggressive pay-down of debt for two reasons: No. 1, you're incurring an additional \$1.4 billion in debt, and, secondly, that's less than what it used to be under the old balanced budget legislation.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I know that we differ here. If—from what the member opposite is saying, Manitobans should know what would happen if he was in power. We know that he would have—to meet his goals, there would have—you would have to cut services dramatically.

* (16:50)

We are following the same path as other jurisdictions are. The federal government is borrowing money for investment. Other jurisdictions are borrowing money in order to keep the economy going. Manitoba has made that same decision. We had said, we were not going to take the kind of action that we saw in the '90s, which you would have to do under the existing legislation. And that's what I—the message I get from the members opposite, that they would keep the existing balanced budget legislation, they would cut services, they would lay people off, in order to balance budget—balance the budget. We have a different attitude. We're prepared to invest in people. Yes, we're prepared to borrow some money. Yes, we are prepared to add to the

deficit—to the debt, I should say. We're prepared to add to that because we believe that investing in people, in front-line services and stimulus is what the public wants right now. Just as the federal government is making those kinds of investments, just as every other jurisdiction in the country is investing in stimulus to keep their economies going.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, I—it's a broken record, and I'm not going to debate policy at this time. All I want the minister is to admit that there will be additional debt of \$1.4 billion, based on her own numbers, and I want her to admit that, in fact, her government is not aggressively paying down that debt. You can't aggressively pay down a debt and have an additional \$1.5 billion in debt. It's a contradiction in terms. So please, Madam Minister, all I want you to do is admit that you're incurring more debt, which you've already admitted, and that you can't, in fact, aggressively pay it down if you've got an additional \$1.5 billion. It's like having a credit card balance of a thousand dollars. If you pay a hundred dollars on that thousand dollars and take the balance down to \$900 and then put another thousand dollars on it, you now have a balance of \$1,900. You can't say that you've aggressively paid down your credit card debt. Will the minister—all I'm asking for is an admission that there is not an aggressive pay-down of operating debt. Quite the opposite. There is an aggressive incurring of operating debt over the next four years.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, we could go back and forth on this forever, but if the member opposite wants to have his way of thinking about this, I'll have mine. We are both entitled to our opinion, and my view is that I'm prepared, and we brought a budget forward that was investing in people, investing in stimulus, and this is what people said. They said they wanted to keep working. Yes, they were prepared to make some investments, and we have a plan. We have a plan where we are using the stabilization fund to bring down the amount and we are paying down the deficit—the debt at a rate of over \$600 million over this time of coming back into balance. We may disagree on how we're doing it. I wouldn't want Manitobans to see what the member opposite would do because I think he would do something very different. Our plan is to invest in people and, yes, there will be an additional \$1.4 billion of investment in people and in stimulus to keep this economy going as we come through this difficult time.

Mr. Borotsik: Yes, my answers would be a lot different, certainly, if I were asked that same question, so we will agree to disagree. On page B10,

and I apologize if some of these questions have been asked before, but for my purposes it's rather interesting material. On B210 is the borrowing requirements. As you will notice on the sheet itself that the total borrowing requirements are going to be some \$3.4 billion, of which 1.2.87 is going to be refinanced and 2.457 is new cash requirements. Can the minister please tell me at what interest rates the department is looking currently at not only the refinancing of those particular notes, but also the new borrowings, the new cash borrowings?

Ms. Wowchuk: The last borrowing we did was at about 4.2 percent, the last issue. Some of the ones that are coming due are coming—are at between 5 and 7 percent, and, as they come due, we will see where we can borrow at. But it's anticipated that it'll be lower than that.

Mr. Borotsik: Anticipation is a wonderful thing when you're looking forward to an evening with someone, but anticipation's not so wonderful when you're looking forward to paying additional interest rates.

We do know that Mr. Carney from the Bank of Canada has indicated that probably sooner than later that those rates are going to increase. We know now that rates are increasing currently on long-term notes. Perhaps rather than just anticipate, is your department not doing some sort of a flow chart at the present time to indicate what those real costs are going to be when you're going to refinance and borrow new cash requirements? Just simply anticipating, in my opinion, Madam Minister, is not good enough.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, the member's anticipation of an evening with whatever his imagination will take him to are probably quite different than my anticipations of an evening.

But having set that aside, I can say to the member that the department is quite comfortable that, as these loans come due, that we will be able to refinance at about 5 percent.

Mr. Borotsik: Five percent for new cash requirements as well as refinancing. The minister had indicated that they were going to—on the refinancing—they were going to flip, obviously, some borrowings. Now, did I take it that the minister said that those borrowings were at five to seven points at the present time and that you're now going to refinance at probably somewhere around five points?

Ms. Wowchuk: They vary at that rate. Some are over, a little bit over seven. Some are about five and we anticipate that we'll be able to refinance at about five.

Mr. Borotsik: Of the new cash requirement's \$2.4 billion, Manitoba Hydro is about \$816 million, on the other—it goes from other general purpose borrowings of 500 million, and 626 million for capital.

Are those terms over a long term for the most part, or does the department look at a shorter term borrowing, or is it a five-year term? Is the long-term capital for Hydro and capital investment for infrastructure taken over a longer term, a 20-year or a 25-year term? Can the department tell me exactly—can they tell me what their anticipation is for their financing over the next year?

Ms. Wowchuk: Our general preference is to have long-term borrowing, and that could be for 30 years, but there is the ability to make adjustments if—depending on interest rates.

Mr. Borotsik: I have a number of other questions, but I know that you're going to gavel me real fast.

The—on page No. 20—

Mr. Chairperson: The committee has been gavelled. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

FAMILY SERVICES AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

*(14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 79 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): On Friday, we had a significant amount of discussion around the Gage Guimond report and several other issues. And I wanted to go back to the report that was done on Gage Guimond and ask the minister, whether, in fact, the proper process was followed when, normally speaking, it would be the director of Child and Family Services that would undertake a review, but that these powers can be delegated in writing to

another person or an agency at the discretion of the director.

Can I ask whether the process was followed and whether the director of Child and Family Services, in writing, delegated authority for the review, and who that authority was delegated to in writing?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): One of the fundamental principles of the devolution and the authorities legislation that put it into force was to have shared—a greater shared responsibility for oversight of the child welfare agencies in Manitoba. So, in the legislation, the authorities act—I'm advised that the responsibility for conducting such reviews are indeed shared or perhaps, more accurately, allow for the child welfare authorities to conduct reviews.

As well, the director of child welfare retains the power to conduct reviews. That's my understanding.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, but it says right in the report, the review by the reviewer that these powers may be delegated in writing to another person or agency at the discretion of the director. This was the comment that was made and is articulated right in the report.

So my question is, did the director delegate, in writing, authority for the southern authority to conduct the review? Was that put in writing as is required by legislation?

Mr. Mackintosh: In the review, at page 12, it says there, under subsection 4(2)(c) of The Child and Family Services Act, CFS act, and under section 25 of The Child and Family Services Authorities Act, the director or an authority has the power to conduct inquiries and carry out investigations with respect to the welfare of a child dealt with under the CFS act.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Then on page 21, 22 it indicates—no, 22 and 23. It indicates that the terms of reference for the review allowed for the request of specific information that was considered to be relevant to this review. As a result, internal reports and various official correspondence related to the investigation were disclosed by various staff members. The powers that set out under section 4—a section 4 review—see the terms of reference—included the following, and they require any person, in the opinion of a director, is able to give information relating to any matter being investigated by the director. And there's certain information that was to be furnished and these powers may be delegated in

writing to another person or agency at the discretion of the director.

So, if the minister is saying that either the authority or the branch, the director could undertake a review, is he indicating then that there would've been something in writing from the southern authority to the external reviewers that were hired to do the review?

* (15:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: We just want to make sure that the role of the director is referring to the same issue here. As I said out in my earlier comment, there's a question as to whether this is about a director empowering an authority to get information from various sources, whether it be care facilities or other persons that may have access to certain information that would be relevant in a review. So I think to—the safest way to answer the question then is to provide the member with the consents or authorities that may have been entered into, along with an explanation as to under what section of the legislation those authorizations are being made.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I'd just like to ask the minister: When was he first made aware that the Children's Advocate's office was involved with the Gage Guimond file, when the decision was made by the agency to move Gage Guimond from the foster family that he had been in for a year and had been doing well in? When was he first made aware that the Children's Advocate had been asked to look into whether the move was appropriate or not?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeah, I would have to check the records and determine whether there was any information to the minister's office about the role of the Children's Advocate, and when.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It's my understanding that the minister was informed early on, after the death of Gage Guimond, that the child advocate's office had been involved, had been requested to look into the situation of the agency moving Gage Guimond from his safe foster family to another home. And I would think that the minister shouldn't have to ask his staff that. I would ask him directly. Was there any presentation to him by anyone that would've indicated that the child advocate was involved?

Mr. Mackintosh: I would have to check the record, the file records, as to whether there was a note to myself. That would be the only fair and accurate way of responding at this time to that question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But if the minister can't tell me exactly when he knew, can he tell me today that he did know and does know today that the child advocate's office was involved in the file, that there had been a request for the child advocate to look into this issue and that a file was opened on Gage Guimond in the advocate's office?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeah, I'm advised by the ADM here that the Children's Advocate had been contacted before the death of Gage Guimond with concerns, I understand, by the foster family, and—but the extent of what notes—I think the question was before—was it before the death that the member was asking about?

So we'd have to check to see if there would be any notes to that extent to the minister's office, and we can provide that to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It certainly took a long time for the minister to get that answer back to me. Was there any direct representation to him? I'm not asking what the notes in the department would say. Was there any direct representation to him from the foster family, or anyone else, that the child advocate had been contacted prior to Gage Guimond's death, before his placement with extended family?

Was he aware personally or was there any representation to him? Did anyone speak to him personally about the child advocate's office being asked to review the situation?

Mr. Mackintosh: We'll have to check records to see if there were any communications with my office or not and where those went if there was anything on—with regard to this matter.

I did meet directly with the foster family after the death of Gage Guimond, some time after. That was a direct contact that I had with both foster parents.

* (15:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, again, I'm not asking for communication with the minister's office. I'm asking for the minister's recollection directly of discussions that he had that would have indicated that the child advocate's office had been contacted before Gage Guimond died, and was he made aware of that personally?

It's just a simple yes or no answer. I don't think he has to check any files or any records in the department. This would have been a conversation that was had with the minister, and I guess I'm just

asking whether he can indicate to me whether that any discussion ever took place with him personally.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeah, the records would have to be canvassed to determine if there was any correspondence or any other communications that may be relevant, and that's the only, I think, way to discover if such a communication exists.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I find it unbelievable that the minister would have to check records for communication on what was—might have been discussed with him. I'm not sure that he takes minutes or notes. Are there minutes or notes of every discussion that he has with individuals in his office?

And I'm rather disappointed, and it's quite telling, to have the minister hesitate, spend several minutes trying to get an answer from his officials when those officials, I don't believe, were in the positions that they're in today, that there would have been a different ADM and there would have been a different deputy minister at the time of Gage Guimond's death. And so I'm not sure that those individuals would have even been in his office, and I just think it's rather passing strange that he would not recollect something of such significant importance that might have been discussed with him.

And so I would hope that he would come clean and just indicate what happened and what discussion happened, because it's rather passing strange that the child advocate's office wasn't involved in any significant way in this investigation, because they have been involved in most other investigations of child deaths in a pretty significant way.

And it appears to me that the minister may have known—and he can correct the record if I'm wrong—may have known that the child advocate's office was involved prior to the death of Gage Guimond. And it's very interesting, too, that we would have a newspaper clip from Tuesday, July 24th, 2007, right after the death of Gage Guimond, where it indicates, and I'll quote from the newspaper article: that Billie Schibler, the provincial child advocate, said, anyone concerned about Gage's death and the handling of this placement can ask her office to look into the case.

And that, I don't think, has ever been the kind of comment that the child advocate has put on the record in any other death. I think the child advocate has been very quick to get into the investigative process and look into the circumstances surrounding any death of a child in care.

And so I'm wondering if the minister might just comment briefly on why the child advocate's office was surpassed—or passed by in this instance, and who gave the directive, then, when it's in delegation of power, right in the part 1 review, that it was understood, in this particular instance, the reviewers would submit the section for report of Gage Guimond directly to the Southern First Nations Network of Care.

That's a very unusual process and I guess I would ask the minister whether there was any direction from his office or his department that the report go directly to the Southern First Nations authority.

Mr. Mackintosh: The legislation that we spoke about earlier allows either the director or the authorities to exercise a mandate to do such reviews and, in this case, the southern authority proceeded with the review, and, in terms of how that unfolded, the southern authority followed the course of its mandate.

It would appear from the outcome—I might also add that the Children's Advocate's ongoing and formal legislative role now with regards to child deaths, I think, came after the death of Gage Guimond.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But that last comment was irrelevant because the question isn't who does the investigations and who doesn't now, the section 10 reviews, the question was: Did the minister have any communication with anyone that would have indicated that the child advocate should not be involved in the review or did he send a directive as a result of a discussion?

Did he indicate, clearly, that he would ensure that the child advocate would not be involved in the review because of her previous communication or her previous discussion around the issue of moving Gage Guimond from a stable foster family to a questionable placement?

* (15:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that after the death of Gage Guimond, the department had become aware of—that the Office of the Children's Advocate had been contacted, I understand from—by the foster family, the original foster family. So there had been a previous contact.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I want to thank the minister for finally clarifying that, but I guess my direct

question is he indicated that the department had become aware; was he aware?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's why we'll have to check the record. As I said earlier, we'll undertake to do that, to determine if there was any, you know—communications or correspondence with my office, whether there was anything even cc'd or not. That's something that we could make inquiries about.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the minister is evading the question. I'm asking the direct question: Was he personally aware—not correspondence to his office, not records that may have been written down.

I'm asking the question: Was he personally aware that the child advocate had been involved with the Gage Guimond case before he died? This isn't a question that he needs to ask his staff about. This is a question that he needs to answer, and he needs to answer it for the sake of Gage Guimond. Now, I'm asking him the direct question: Was any—did he have any discussion at all with anyone that would have, and this is personal discussion, may not have had notes taken, wouldn't have been communication to his office, was there personal discussion with anyone that would have informed him that the child advocate's office was involved with Gage Guimond? It's a simple yes or no. And if—I mean, the minister, I guess, can say I don't recollect having any conversation, but I'm talking about direct conversation with anyone. It's a simple yes or no. It's not something that any of his staff can answer. It's something that he has to answer for personally and in respect to the family and to the office that he holds.

Can he answer that question directly?

Mr. Mackintosh: The usual course when individual or specific case matters or concerns are directed at the minister's office is that those communications are sent directly into the child welfare branch of the department. And whether anything was brought to my personal attention is something I would have to check any available records to determine.

An Honourable Member: That's bizarre.

Mrs. Mitchelson: My colleague says that's bizarre. This is absolutely unbelievable. And the minister is evading the question. He's avoiding the question and I believe that I might understand why because—and, again, the minister can indicate if he thinks I'm way off base—but the reason the child advocate was not asked to be engaged in the process of the review was because the minister knew that the child advocate's office had been involved prior to Gage Guimond's

death and that he directed that the review take a different form.

I would like to ask the minister directly: Did he know? And did he direct the review to take a different path than what a review of a child death in care would normally take?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the—what's normal today is under the current legislation where the Children's Advocate does have a role with regard to the death of children in care, that was not in place at the time. But the member full-well knows that the Office of the Children's Advocate is resolutely independent, and that is how she has operated, both under the law and in practice.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thanks and, again, Madam Chair, the minister didn't answer the question. I had asked him whether he had given any direction that the review take a different course from any other reviews that had taken place as a result of his knowing. And I believe he knew. He just is not wanting to answer the question, and I think that's unfortunate when you've got a minister responsible that has had information provided to him and is, for some reason or other, not prepared to put a simple yes or no on the record. And it's unfortunate because I think it does a great disservice to the whole investigative process that gets undertaken from time to time when we have the unfortunate situation of a child dying in care. And this is one that I don't think that we can let go.

I guess I would ask the minister why, in fact, when the reviewers, external reviewers, had delegated authority to look at all the records, why there was no comment in the review and the recommendations about the role of the child advocate's office. Why was there silence, completely, on the role that the child advocate's office may have played? There was certainly questions around practice in the agency. There was questions around the authority. There was questions around what the branch did. Why was there no comment made about the child advocate's office and the role that they may have played in trying to ensure the safety of Gage Guimond?

Mr. Mackintosh: Reports like this are independent from the minister. That's why they're written outside of the minister's office. And I can't direct what's in the—in this particular report, and I wouldn't.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I hear the minister say he wouldn't. But I want him to say on the record today

that he didn't provide direction to the department or to the southern authority that his branch would not take the lead. Did he or didn't he give any directive from his office that he wanted to hide somehow from and/or distance himself somehow from the death of Gage Guimond by having the southern authority do the review and have it reported directly to the southern authority?

Did he give any direction from his office that that should take place as the result of him knowing that the child advocate's office was involved in this case?

* (15:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm not sure if the member is suggesting that there are some particular shortcomings in the approach or the content of the review, but it is the—it is contemplated in the legislation that the authorities have a role, a very important role, in overseeing the work of agencies. And it was one that historically rested almost wholly with the branch, and so, whether it's the branch or the authority or external people, what's important here is that there be a fulsome reviews of what went wrong and eyes on the case management practices as well as the financial practices and governance of these agencies. But that is the practice that now has been well developed over the course of several reviews of agency operations, and we're going to see that as a very usual course of conduct over the next couple of years as all of the agencies in Manitoba will be subject to operational reviews. And we're uncovering shortcomings, and that's very important.

It's also very important for the federal government to know that and to see the INAC more involved, because, for some of these agencies, the majority is federal dollars. But for the federal government to see the authorities, this new method and model of oversight taking place—so, in this case, the Sagkeeng child welfare agency was examined in depth by the southern authority with the involvement of—with some contractors to make sure that there was a good, independent view of what this agency had been up to.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And the minister hasn't, on the record, denied that he gave any direction on how this review should be conducted. So I would venture to guess that we haven't got all of the full and factual information on how this minister handled the whole process of the investigation of Gage Guimond, and that's unfortunate. And I guess that's maybe one of the reasons that it would be nice to have the minister

under oath providing the kinds of information that should be provided to get a clear understanding of the process that was undertaken.

But we do know that the child advocate's office was involved. The minister has confirmed that. He thinks there might be something—after many questions—that the department knew or was aware of, and we do know that, from the Chief Medical Examiner's report, the child advocate's office was involved. And that was back in December of 2007 when the Chief Medical Examiner sent the report over to the child advocate's office. So we've got two-and-a-half years later the child advocate's office having been asked—and there were concerns raised in the Chief Medical Examiner's report about the conduct of the child advocate's office and the process that they followed when they were alerted that there was some concerns around the removal or the moving of Gage Guimond.

And the Chief Medical Examiner at the time recommended certain things that the child advocate's office do and recommended a written report back from the child advocate's office in December of 2007. And we see in the progress report on Gage Guimond that that recommendation is still pending. And I know that the minister indicated that all of the recommendations in the report would be followed through on.

I would like to ask the minister today where is this at, and how can we be assured that there aren't other children within the system that are in the same situation as Gage Guimond that were in loving foster families and someone has made a decision to move that child? The child advocate's office may have been called and asked to get involved. How can we be assured that the checks and balances have been put in place in the child advocate's office when this recommendation is still outstanding two-and-a-half years later?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, it certainly was a clear finding that the system had failed Gage Guimond, that there were very, to put it mildly, poor practices and, indeed, worse than that. There was nepotism, incompetence on this—on the—with the dealings with Gage Guimond, which are so tragic in their consequences.

In terms of the recommendation that was directed at the Children's Advocate, it is directed at the Children's Advocate and, of course, the Children's Advocate is responsible to the Assembly through the Legislative Assembly Management

Commission. The Children's Advocate is not accountable—responsible to the minister and, in fact, that's the watchdog of the department. The member full well knows that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I do full well know that. But I also full well know that the minister has responsibility for all children in care under legislation in the province of Manitoba, and when something goes so terribly wrong, as it did in the case of Gage Guimond, ultimately, the minister has to be accountable and responsible for what gets done in his system and what doesn't get done in his system to ensure that these things never happen again.

* (15:40)

So the minister can talk about who's responsible to whom. But I'm asking a question today on, is he satisfied that the system that he has set up to protect children is working to protect children, and is he satisfied that there is no other child in the system today that could be placed in the same circumstance as Gage Guimond? And I need to ask that direct question, and I would like a response from the minister. Is he satisfied that children are being protected and that there aren't other children that could fall through the cracks like Gage Guimond as a result of the same kind of circumstances, children being moved from loving foster family homes into unsafe situations? Is that happening today?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member knows that tragedies in child welfare have, most unfortunately, happened for too long and different approaches have had to be brought to bear to reduce the risk of children, as she says, falling through the cracks, and in some places, I think, more than cracks as in the case of the death of Gage Guimond. But that's why the overhaul has been launched and Changes for Children launched. And that's why there's action on recommendations with regard to Gage Guimond.

But it's also why the operational reviews have been launched, which go beyond many of the recommendations that have been set out in other reports. In other words, it's not a matter only of system-wide approaches and, you know, better training, stronger standards, a move to more preventative approaches, more foster families, higher rates, it's also a matter of what the financial human resource case management practices are of the agencies. I think, actually, in the—in my tenure in this position, I'm seeing some tremendous advances in terms of how the agencies are operating through the operational reviews that hold out at least as much

promise as action on the recommendations about practices generally in the system. So every time that dollars are diverted, whether it's excessive travel claims or per diems, it's money, and I don't care if it's federal or provincial, in terms of the impact on children. Any time dollars are diverted by adults away from child services it impacts on the ability then, of agencies to fill—to fulfil their mandate that's expected by both the House of Commons and this Legislature.

So the systematic reviews and action on those reviews was an important step forward, but it also—I look back to the AJI-CWI, that was a commitment by Aboriginal leadership to better govern their agencies and to have rigorous oversight of agencies by the new authorities. And what I'm seeing, and I saw it in the Gage Guimond matter, is where the authorities have taken this responsibility very, very seriously. I'm also seeing they want to be able to be accountable publicly. They—well, we all know the buck always stops in the Legislature or in the House of Commons. It's very important that the authorities as well, be allowed to do what they have asked for and that is to account publicly for their actions and for their oversight.

So it's about making efforts to manage the inherent risks that are attendant to the—with the child welfare system and making changes in this province, recognizing that these challenges have been faced all across jurisdictions whether in Canada or beyond. But in Manitoba, the system was found to be broken. That's how bad it was. That was the conclusion; it was broken before devolution. And so first with devolution, then the Changes for Children initiative, the other reviews and now the operational reviews, we're seeing a sea change in how oversight is exercised and how there's accountability developing in the system that for too long was—did not have a light shone in many of the dark places.

So that work has to continue. We have to continue to respond to concerns where they are discovered.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I'm glad to hear the minister put on the record that the system was broken before devolution and that he's fixed it all now. I think there might be many out there within the Child and Family Services' system that would disagree with the minister.

I guess I'd just like to ask him if he could provide for me—and he may not have it at his fingertips—but, if he could provide for me when the

consultants were contracted—the two that did the part 1 review, case management review of Gage Guimond? Could he indicate when they were contracted with by the southern authority? When did that review—the part 1 review start?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first of all, the member is putting words in my mouth. As I said very clearly, and I'll always say, is that we have to continue to deal with challenges in the child welfare system. It is a system that always must be in need of improvement, and action is ongoing with regard to recommendations. There's work that lies ahead and much that is behind, but we have made significant progress and what that has been recognized outside of the department and even the government, but clearly there remains more to do, and we'll remain vigilant.

In terms of the dates when the contractors began, we'll have to undertake to provide that to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I would ask the minister whether he could make a commitment to me to have that information for me by the time we get into concurrence, and that's probably a week or so away.

Mr. Mackintosh: We'll make all best efforts to do that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chair, I just want to go back to a question that I asked earlier and I didn't get an answer to. And I guess my question would be: Can the minister indicate to me—and it should just be a yes or no answer—whether, in fact, he in any way directed how the review into the death of Gage Guimond should happen? Was there any directive from his office?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as I advised the member, I think that's the same question that she had asked earlier, and I've undertaken to look into any records that could be available with regard to what might've been brought to the attention of my office.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: At the same time that he's looking at notes for recollection of what happened in his office, could he indicate or could he—and probably his officials could answer this question or help him answer the question today—could he indicate whether his department in any way directed what the review into the death of Gage Guimond should look like and who should do it and what the reporting structure should be?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, based on any available documentation, we can provide that information to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think this might be just one last question, at this point in time.

Can the minister try, after he's had maybe half an hour in here to think about it, can he try to give us a straight answer, because there isn't anyone in this department that would know? There wouldn't be any minutes that would indicate any discussions that he might have had behind closed doors in his office? Is there any way that he could recollect, in his own mind, whether, in fact, anyone spoke to him about the child advocate's office being involved before the death of Gage Guimond? And could he, you know, could he let us know today?

I mean, if you can't recollect, maybe he could just put on the record that he can't recollect. If the answer is a no, maybe he could just indicate that it's a no. Or is it a yes? Did anyone have direct communication with him that indicated to him that the child advocate's office was involved in this case before the death of Gage Guimond?

Mr. Mackintosh: The whole point of providing accurate answers is to ensure that the record is checked so that I can provide a fulsome and accurate response, and that's what I've undertaken to do.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I have some questions for the minister about the situation in a number of communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Can the minister give me the number of children in care for communities like Bloodvein, Berens River, Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi?

Mr. Mackintosh: There is information available publicly about the number of children in care for a number of the—or for all of the east—the agencies. But perhaps the member—does he want something like, current—like, over the last month or two, or does he want—like, would a earlier annual report, for example, or the latest annual report suffice to give that information?

Mr. Gerrard: I'm interested in what the current numbers are and whether the numbers have gone up or down in the last ten years.

Mr. Mackintosh: The data is available by agency, and I think it's currently available for about three years back and, of course, all part of a trend across the country of an increasing number of children in

care. That's been a phenomena that is not unique to Manitoba, but that's the overall trend. In terms of numbers we can certainly provide that to the member, and I don't know if we can do all 10 years, but we'll certainly make best efforts to provide a robust response to the question.

Mr. Gerrard: I was surprised when I was visiting a number of the communities about the relatively high number of proportion of kids in care, and I wondered what the minister is doing in regard to the situation with where you've got too many kids in care.

Mr. Mackintosh: The member, I'm sure, is aware that the provision of child welfare services in First Nations community on reserve is federally funded. And there is a very important and critical shortcoming with regard to the adequacy of that funding that's been the subject, I think, of a fair bit of public discussion and debate, and, more recently, even a human rights complaint that is of national importance.

In terms of dealing with that and recognizing that the discrepancy could be as much as 25 percent between provincial funding and federal funding, we have, in a united way with First Nations leaders, made representations repeatedly in writing and face to face with federal officials and, indeed, the federal minister. And we had a, I think, a very good meeting with the federal minister not long ago, and I understand that he is very keen to have this discrepancy, this two-tiered child welfare system, addressed in Manitoba.

Whether the federal government will announce enhancements this year, we will have to await their exercise of their financial discretion, but we certainly had hoped that it was going to be announced last year. It was not, despite the fact that officials had worked very diligently on a new funding model that would extend to all children in care in Manitoba.

The importance, particularly, though, of enhanced federal funding on reserve is to increase the availability and responsiveness of preventative efforts, and that goes to the heart of what the member was asking: How do we make better efforts to keep families together that are healthy and safe? And that is why the federal contribution is so important.

I might want to just add that the federal government has indicated that it is indeed their preference that enhanced dollars do go to prevention efforts. So we have some high hopes in that regard

and—as does Grand Chief Evans and Grand Chief Harper and, well, SCO and other leaders.

* (16:00)

So that, I think, is the systemic issue that's at play here, and I think can go to help to address the concerns that the member is raising.

Mr. Gerrard: Just to further that, what sort of specific efforts is the minister himself and in partnership with the federal government proposing to take to try and reduce the number of kids in care, or needing to be in care?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the first job is to obtain the agreement of the federal government to address this long-standing, financial inequity and, as I said, it's being sought on a number of fronts, and nothing, I think, is more important than that.

The second is to have developed a funding model and a prevention framework that is called family enhancement, and then that is based on the experience in some other jurisdictions under a model of child welfare called differential response. The first province in Canada to have a differential response approach was Alberta, and they were able to get federal funding to assist with that initiative on reserve. The other components of the strategy, though, have to embrace suicide prevention and FASD strategies.

As well, and very importantly, sexual exploitation strategies that have been developed over the last—what?—two or three years, I think, alone, really, although the sexual exploitation strategy was initially launched in 2002. Well, we're now into phase 2 with Tracia's Trust. And so I think, you know—I've set out a number of components that are now holding out a promise of a stronger model, because I think that the model of child welfare is one that has to change. You cannot have a model that really relies on solely interventions in families after there has been abuse. It's important that there be interventions at the time of the early signs of abuse and that they be available locally, and not just available in the major urban centres.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the minister, in acknowledging the need for change, is he saying that the current system under his watch is broken?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, outside reviewers have said that child welfare in Manitoba was broken before devolution. You might not have been here for that discussion. But child welfare has to be improved.

And I think everyone agrees that it has to move to a more preventative approach to help ensure family enhancement and family safety has to be done in a way that recognizes that safety is still the No. 1 priority and nothing can ever get in the way of child safety. If there has to be a child taken to an out-of-home placement, then so be it.

But I think that it's been recognized all across North American and way beyond. I can name many countries where it's been recognized that there has to be efforts made in a concerted way to enhance prevention services, whether it be addictions, mental health, whether it be parenting skills, whether it be with regard to sexual exploitation, those are all examples of the kinds of efforts that have to come to the fore now and that Manitoba is—has launched investments in. And we need the partnership now with the federal government, and I remain hopeful. I had—certainly, we had a very good hearing from the federal minister. I was very impressed with his understanding of the issue, but it all comes down to what the final decision is.

I might also say that the recognition in 1991 that child welfare had to be more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people, that greater control had to be given to Aboriginal people themselves about their families, it was critical to the journey that we're on to strengthen the system.

And so, finally by 2005, when we saw the transfer of cases, we have, as I think the Children's Advocate and Ombudsman have said, a new promise now of fixing a system and putting in place the mechanisms that can only strengthen child welfare. And, in fact, we're seeing that whether it's because of the number of new foster homes that we've been able to recruit, whether it's getting the hotel use down to a minimum, whether it is the oversight of the agencies by way of the authorities conducting quality assurance reviews. And I think just even the empowering and engagement of Aboriginal peoples and then stronger standards is very important.

But I think what we have to do, as part of this new model, is ensure that local communities have more resources available, and I don't just mean foster resources or out-of-home placement resources. I mean the ability to deal with the challenges of addictions, for example, mental health and so on.

Mr. Gerrard: In terms of being able to have supports for the change that you're talking about, to have improved prevention, improved parenting, part of that role is provincial as well as federal.

What specifically is the minister doing in this respect?

Mr. Mackintosh: One example of the prevention initiative that has shown great success around the world and, in fact, is recognized as an international best practice is Triple P parenting, Positive Parenting Program.

It began in Australia and is now being implemented worldwide, including, notably, in Manitoba. If you look at the range of initiatives that have been shown to actually make a difference, Triple P will usually show up on the list. That allows parents to provide an environment that is supportive of children while setting boundaries in a positive way.

The other best practice that's recognized around the world that is also an initiative in Manitoba is the Healthy Child initiative that has been known as Families First, where there are visiting programs and interventions and particular supports for moms at risk.

So those are two examples that extend, of course, way beyond the child welfare system, as it should, because child welfare is part of a Healthy Child strategy that Manitoba has entered into several years ago. I might want to say that the public education system in increasing investments in it, as well as a stronger early learning and child-care system, are the great levellers in terms of opportunities for youth and, as well, healthy child rearing.

So we're looking at how child-care centres can be grown in terms of their numbers as well as their inner strengths and working with the child-care community in that regard. But it's really—comprises a systemic change, and Healthy Child is a big part of that.

My understanding is Manitoba has been recognized, increasingly internationally, for its efforts through Healthy Child Manitoba, and it's now the subject of legislation that passed this House.

So it's trying to get ahead of challenges rather than just reacting to them.

* (16:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell me whether Triple P parenting and Families First are available in Bloodvein and Berens River and Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeah, I'll take that under advisement as to whether those particular communities have access to those two programs, and training for them.

Mr. Gerrard: I will look forward to the minister's response. And, in terms of a number of Aboriginal communities have Headstart programs, which is the Headstart Program in Aboriginal communities which is primarily federally supported—but, for example, I don't believe Pauingassi has a Headstart Program, which would be important in terms of early childhood education.

Has the minister had discussions with his federal counterpart with regard to early childhood education in these communities?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Province is acutely aware of and is concerned about education on reserves and has begun some very productive dialogue with the federal minister. You know, like, I can think of the leadership shown by Oscar Lathlin, for one, in this regard, but it has led to a framework for how the Province can help with education even on reserve by way, for example, of enhanced training for educators. And we're going to continue to explore that.

As well, I can tell you that—I can tell the member that the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs is also very concerned about this one and has dedicated some dollars now in the federal budget that was recently announced for education on reserves. Whether that amount is adequate, I won't address except to say that there has to be increasing recognition of the need for a fair investment in education on reserves. I understand, like, not unlike child welfare, the federal funding for on-reserve education is significantly less than any measure of how the Province funds education off reserve.

Madam Chairperson: Order. Just before recognizing the honourable member for River Heights, I just want to remind all honourable members that we do have a loge. If they would like to have private conversations, I suggest they take advantage of that.

Mr. Gerrard: Now another community that I visited was Poplar River, which still has a number of children in care, although not quite so many as the other four. And my question to the minister is this: With communities like Poplar River, in particular, what is the minister's plans in terms of trying to work

with people in Poplar River to improve the situation there even more?

Mr. Mackintosh: One of the recommendations that comprises the Changes for Children agenda is to engage the federal government so that we can begin to address in a more consistent way, on and off reserve, the needs in communities, as the member gives, you know, one example of.

So the discussions with the federal officials and more recently, at the political level, or shouldn't say more recently, there were very early discussions after Changes for Children was launched with federal officials. We remain hopeful that we're going to be able to have a funding model that better works for all Manitoba children whether they're on or off reserve.

So we'll continue down that path, and we do not have an announcement from the federal government, at least as of yet—but, knowing that there is some funding in the provincial budget for child welfare, we certainly have made it known that Manitoba is in line for enhancements.

I think, too, which is just with the devolution of itself, we've enabled to allow the First Nations child welfare agencies to deal with children not only in the reserve communities but when they leave the reserve communities. And I think that's been a very positive development that helps to provide the potential of—that are approaches for families that may even have one child in care in the community and another child in care out of the community but provide a more consistent approach. But that really has to be backed up then by the financial commitment of the federal government.

Mr. Gerrard: We will go to line by line.

Madam Chairperson: The last item to be considered for the Estimates—so are we agreed we will go line by line? Resolution by resolution. Agreed? [*Agreed*]

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,051,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$671,800,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Disability Programs and Employment and

Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$477,625,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Child and Family Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$126,905,000 for the Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Community Services—Community Service Delivery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 9.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,366,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:20)

Resolution 9.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,409,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department is item 1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 9.1.

At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Mackintosh: I move that item 9.1.(a) Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved that item 9.1.(a) the Minister's Salary be reduced by 20 percent, or \$9,000, to \$37,000.

The floor is open for debate. Question?

Seeing no further debate, all in favour of the motion?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Madam Chairperson: Agreed.

So we will now move to the revised Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,686,000 for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Revised resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates for Education.

Shall we recess briefly to allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates?
[Agreed]

We will be recessed for a short period of time.

The committee recessed at 4:23 p.m.

—————
The committee resumed at 4:26 p.m.

EDUCATION

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Education.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Madam Chair, I'm pleased to be here in my first Estimates as the new Minister of Education. And I'd like to welcome the MLA for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) as the new critic for Education, and I look forward to working with him.

Our government has demonstrated its commitment to education by helping to meet the needs of parents, students and taxpayers across the province. Our funding announcement for the year 2010-2011 continues to be a priority area for us because, once again, we exceeded our commitment to fund public education at the rate of economic growth with a 2.95 percent increase to public schools funding. This increase was made during very difficult economic times, and I think it reflects a

co-operative work with school divisions. We worked very co-operatively with officials in my department, encouraging restraint in order to ensure that expenditures are managed carefully and property taxes in support of education remained affordable.

This year's budget sees every school division receiving at least a 2 percent guarantee, which is very important to us. And I've heard a lot of positive comments from the school divisions and stakeholders in regards to how important that 2 percent guarantee was this year. A couple of highlights from this year's funding increase was \$17.2 million in equalizations payments, particularly to those school divisions with the low tax base; a million-dollars increased funding for English as an additional language and \$25 more per pupil to help preschoolers get ready for school.

We can see that stable and increased funding for education pays dividends over time. Steadily increasing rates of high school completion demonstrate the social and economic benefits that can result from consistent investment in education. Increased resources to support the hard work of teachers and administrators, trustees and parents in partnership with the provincial government have helped improve graduation rates and helped to evolve more alternative approaches to increased student success.

School and community partnerships provide a wide range of innovative programs to engage, encourage and mentor students, ensuring that schools are safe and accessible places to learn. Schools collaborate with many partners to support those who are underrepresented in our system, working closely with immigrant, war-affected and Aboriginal students at risk of dropping out of school. These combined efforts have seen Manitoba's graduation rate increase from 72.4 percent in 2001 to 80.9 percent in June 2009.

Relationships between schools, families and communities have evolved greatly over the past decade. Today, Manitoba schools welcome family and community representation for effective student, school and division planning. Family, schools and communities who work and plan together meet the shared goal of improving education for Manitoba students.

Our department is continuing to provide funding to support parent and community involvement, the teaching of Aboriginal languages and culturally relevant programming. It is continuing to participate

in partnership agreements with First Nation education authorities, Manitoba's First Nation Education Resource Centre, which is commonly known as MFNERC and Indian and Northern Affairs, INAC. The Aboriginal Education Directorate provides leadership through an Aboriginal Education Action Plan to co-ordinate all departments on matters related to Aboriginal education and training.

I have outlined a few of our initiatives, and it's exciting to know that Manitoba Education's overview plan is now available on our government Web site. This overview identifies our mandate, mission, vision and overarching goals and priority action areas for education in our province. This action plan and this vision statement were—we consulted on it broadly with our education stakeholders, and I'd just like to thank them for the advice that they gave us. And I think that it's important that we have this available, for the first time in the history of the department, on our Web site. It's information that's important, because it shows how we align our policy to practice with respect to current to future directions for education in our province.

*(16:30)

I'd like to thank my department for the work that they do every day in public education in regards to providing me with the support that I've needed as a new Minister of Education, and I know that many of the stakeholders out there in the community speak highly of the staff in my department in regards to the excellent working relationship that they have with them.

So we look forward today, and for the new few days, as long as it takes, to have an important dialogue about public education here in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

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

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Madam Chair, and I, too, want to welcome the new minister to the Education portfolio. I'll certainly wish her good luck in her endeavours over the next period of time, probably 18 months or so, I would expect, anyway. Time will tell on that statement.

I certainly looking forward to our discussion over the next few days on education, and I hope we can have an open dialogue about some of the issues around education. I certainly have some—quite some things to learn, actually, about education. But, having said that, I certainly, having students gone through the public and currently involved in the public school system, I understand some of the issues there. And, as well, having married to a spouse who is a teacher, middle-years school, who's had quite some experience in all aspects of education, I do hear from time to time, usually on a daily basis, some of the issues in the classroom. And, also, I have a sister who has spent quite a few years as an educator as well, and who has had quite a number of years of experience in northern Manitoba on some remote First Nations communities, so, interesting to hear some of her comments there and her experiences in those locations.

The minister knows we do have a lot of stakeholders involved in education around the province, and I certainly look forward to having a dialogue with the teachers, the principals, school superintendents, all the staff that are involved in educating our students and, of course, the parents, which, I think, can play a very important role in educating our youth as well. And I think we have to get that group probably more engaged in education and the process of education than what we have. We've had, what I would think, a bit of a change in society in terms of where—what parents, their expectations, I guess, have with the school system. And I think we have to get back to an important part where parents are playing a more important role in education and in the lives of their children.

And, I think, certainly we on this side of the House view education as being very important, and very important for the future of Manitoba. And, if you listen in on some of the dialogue in the previous Estimates in Child and Family Services, you know, we're certainly hoping if the education aspect for our youth here is addressed—I know it's a big challenge—but if we can keep our young people and our youth on the right path in terms of education, hopefully, we can divert them from some of those issues that comes in Child and Family Services. I know it's not going to happen in all cases, but certainly we should be working forward to that end. And, obviously, when we get the youth educated here in our society, they will play a valuable role in society down the road.

I, too, want to acknowledge the staff within the department. I know they're working diligently, and

they have certainly high regard for what they're doing. And they're working hard to help our youth and assist all those stakeholders within the province.

So, with those few comments, I, too, am open and looking forward to a dialogue on education.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the critic for his comments.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber and, once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Ms. Allan: It is my pleasure to introduce to you today the Deputy Minister for the Department of Education who has joined me today, Gerald Farthing, and Claude Fortier, who is with the Financial and Administrative Services branch, and Steve Power, who is the—with the Schools Finance branch, and Rick Dedi, who is with the Public Schools Finance Board.

Madam Chairperson: Well, we thank the minister for those names, and, at this time, does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mr. Cullen: With the minister's willingness, I'd like to provide—proceed in a global fashion.

Madam Chairperson: That agreed? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Cullen: I guess, first of all, there's the usual general questions we have, and, I guess, in a lot of these cases if, down the road, if your staff could provide some of this information, I would sure appreciate it.

And, I guess, the first thing would be a specific list of all staff in the minister's and the deputy minister's office, if you could provide that to me at some point in time.

Ms. Allan: Agreed.

Mr. Cullen: With that, the political staff too. If you could indicate who the political staff are and if you could indicate what political staff you have in your

office at this point in time, and is there any political staff in the deputy minister's office?

Ms. Allan: There are no political staff in the deputy minister's office and there is one political staffperson in the minister's office and that's the special assistant to the minister, and that's Kaila Wiebe.

Mr. Cullen: How many staff are currently employed in the department?

Ms. Allan: There are 410, and that includes STEP students—oh, no, they've changed their mind. Just a moment. No, it doesn't, so it's 410, not including the STEP students.

Mr. Cullen: I guess that's a couple questions. STEP students, you—could you explain that term to me please?

Ms. Allan: When we used to be the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth we used to administer all of the STEP students for all of the departments, but now that has—for all of the departments or—yeah, and—but now that has gone over to the Minister of Healthy Living, because it's gone over with the Citizenship and Youth part of the department.

* (16:40)

Mr. Cullen: So what is the term STEP student? What is that particular classification? What does that person do?

Ms. Allan: They're students that are part-time that are hired through these program and they're hired through the summer.

Mr. Cullen: I know the 410 was the number of position listed in the Estimates booklet. How many full-time equivalents do you actually have working at this point in time? I guess, the question is: How many vacancies do you have at this point in time?

Ms. Allan: We're going to look for that information and get it back to you in a couple of minutes. So, if you'd like to ask another question, then we'll—I'll come back to it.

Mr. Cullen: Okay, I guess in the same vein then. Are you looking at filling those vacant positions or what's the thought behind those vacant positions? What are you looking at in the future?

Ms. Allan: As of March the 31st, we had 19.95—to be specific—vacant positions, and the majority of those positions will be filled over time.

Mr. Cullen: Would the minister be able to provide me the names of staff that have been hired over the past year, 2009-2010? And if the minister could indicate whether they were hired through competition or any that were hired through appointment.

Ms. Allan: Yes, we would certainly be prepared to provide you with that information, but we will probably need some time to pull it together for you, but we will get that information to you.

Mr. Cullen: Along with that, I'm interested in any positions that have been reclassified. I know there's been a restructuring in terms of the department. I'll get into the battle in a few minutes, but, you know, if it was a result of that, or maybe as—if there has been any reclassification either as a result or not of, in terms of your department.

Ms. Allan: There haven't been a lot of—I'm informed by my officials that there hasn't been a lot of reclassifications. There has been none because of the reorganization of the department. There's just been a few because of the nature of the work changing.

Mr. Cullen: And I thank the minister for that. The other question, I guess, at the same time, wondering about positions that have been relocated. If there's been any positions relocated, rural, southern, northern, in and out of the city—if there's been any of that that have happened over the course of the last year and why those relocations may have happened.

Ms. Allan: There's been no movement of people around. Actually, my deputy tells me that it's been pretty stable in our department for quite some time now, people—because people just love working in the Department of Education so much.

Mr. Cullen: Well, that's certainly encouraging to hear. I guess, the other thing for—maybe more for my perspective as any—I know the 400 positions we have, I'm just wondering where they're allocated around the province. If they're, you know, somewhat centralized in Winnipeg or if you have other offices around the province where, you know, have a certain program or something set up, and different areas—if you could supply that information.

Ms. Allan: Well, we have an office, the Department of Education is on Portage Avenue. It's the old Fletcher Building, isn't it? Yes, on the Fletcher Building, and then we have a branch out in St. James, and all I can tell you is it's right beside Lee Valley Tools. And every time I go visit there, I get to shop at Lee Valley Tools. So I really like going out

there to visit. And then our Aboriginal Education Centre is on Selkirk Avenue, and am I missing another one? Oh, of course, and the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

And then in rural Manitoba we have some staff in rural Manitoba in Russell, Rivers, Winkler, Souris and Dauphin. And I haven't visited all them yet, but I'll get to it, hopefully.

Mr. Cullen: Sometime down the road if the minister could just explain what those specific rural locations are responsible for, if there's a certain program or a certain area of expertise. I know, for instance, Souris has the text bureau there. What's going in Rivers and those other—Russell, those other communities? If you could provide that to me sometime down the road, I'd sure appreciate that.

Ms. Allan: Yes, that would be—that's something that we could provide to you in writing if you would like. Yes, we'll do that.

Mr. Cullen: I would appreciate that.

The other thing I'm wondering about, secondments from various, I guess in the most part, from the school divisions. But if there's any other positions or how many positions are being seconded by the department either from school divisions or any other agencies or other departments within government? I'm just wondering, and I guess the other thing would be if there's any federal employees that have been seconded as well.

I'm also interested in what roles or what programs that those secondments might be involved in, and why they're involved in those particular programs?

Ms. Allan: We're going to—we want to have a look at the secondments. We don't think there's a lot but, you know, we don't have that information quite handy. So we might perhaps bring it back and provide that information to you over the next little while.

Mr. Cullen: Thanks. I would appreciate that very much.

The other term, the other issue, is in terms of contracts. Does the department do much contracting out? And what's the process behind contracts and the nature of some of the—an example of some of the contracts the department might be looking for over the last year?

Ms. Allan: Well, most of the contracts that we would do are specialized contracts around people

with certain expertise, quite often around curriculum. And they're—or distance ed, perhaps, maybe some training, and so they're usually small contracts, not a lot of them. But that's—it's specifically around those kinds of issues, and then if there are larger contracts, we would tender for the goods and services wherever possible.

* (16:50)

Mr. Cullen: I'm wondering at what level, then, a contract is tendered. Is there a certain dollar figure, then, the department goes to a tender on?

Ms. Allan: In regards to goods and services we tender, most of the smaller untendered contracts are under \$1,000 and they were for translation services. And, in accordance with The Financial Administration Act, departments—we will make information available. If we have an untendered contract that is less than \$1,000, we have to make sure we know the name of the contractor, the purpose of the contract, the value of the contract and the date that the contract was signed.

And, in regards to around about \$5,000 worth of goods and services, some of the—most of those contracts are tendered, but not always. Because sometimes if it's a contract with somebody who, perhaps we've been using for 20 years and they're a sole-source provider and we know that it's specific to something that has been ongoing work, that contract wouldn't be tendered.

Mr. Cullen: Does the department have a written process or criteria that it follows in terms of the tendering process?

Ms. Allan: There is a process for untendered contracts and there is criteria and the deputy minister scrutinizes those contracts very, very closely, and staff do as well in regards to those untendered contracts. And in regards to the tendered contracts, there is, actually, a procurement branch in the Department of MIT, and we follow the criteria that are set out in those rules.

Mr. Cullen: Would the minister be able to supply me their process for the tendered contracts and also the guidelines to determine when a contract was not tendered?

Ms. Allan: So, just to confirm, you would like to know what the rules are around MIT's procurement, and you'd also like to know what the criteria are around our untendered contracts. If that's what you're asking for, yes, we can get that to you.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much. That would be greatly appreciated.

Does the department have a—allow an expense for advertising within its budget?

Ms. Allan: Very little. It would be negligible.

Mr. Cullen: If it's not too much trouble, I'd appreciate it if the minister would provide the information in terms of how much advertising money was spent in last year's budget and if there is a budgeted amount for this fiscal year going forward. I don't need that today, but just sometime in the future, I'd appreciate that.

Ms. Allan: Yes, we will get that information back to you. Just so you know, most of it will be around advertising for the Manitoba Text Book Bureau so people know, you know, what's available, what the new texts are and those kinds of things and—there's—and we do communications around the courses that are available through distance ed. So it would be those kinds of items that we would be communicating. So that's what the money is, kind of, mostly targeted for.

Mr. Cullen: That's exactly the kind of information I'd like to get, you know. What kind of money is being—what is being spent on advertising, and what area it's being spent on, and why it's being spent. So, if you could provide that, I'd certainly appreciate that. Again, end of the last fiscal year and then anything that you see in the budget this year in terms of advertising dollars.

Ms. Allan: Yes, we will get that information gathered up for you.

Mr. Cullen: Yeah, and just to follow up to—what media you're using to advertise, you know, whether it's radio, television, mail or whatever that process would be—so a bit of a description in terms of actually how you're doing your advertising.

Ms. Allan: Yes, we will get that put together for you.

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

I do want to refer now to the Estimates booklet and some of the, you know, the detail that the Estimates booklet goes into there, and get the minister's perspective on some of the issues that were raised in there.

I guess the first thing and we talked about it briefly here earlier, was the change in Education in

terms of the department. And I want to get a sense of why we were back to Manitoba Education, you know, why that change was made. And I know time's not going to allow for a full description of how we got involved in this and we can probably carry that on tomorrow, but, you know, just in brief terms why the change back last fall.

Ms. Allan: Well, it's interesting that you have that question, because so did all of the stakeholders when I met with them, and so we were able to have a good dialogue about it. Obviously, you know, the new minister, Minister Rondeau, is the minister responsible for Healthy Child—

Madam Chairperson: Order.

We refer to members by their constituency and ministers by their titles.

Ms. Allan: The new Minister of Healthy Child, citizenship and youth was the first—he was the first minister that was—one of the first ministers responsible for the Healthy Child portfolio. And it actually came—the reorganization and the restructuring came about because a lot of work had been done at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet in regards to, you know, everybody knows that early intervention with young children is absolutely critical in regards to their success in schools. And a lot of the programming that has been done at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet in conjunction with, you know, five ministries has really been about taking programs and services and co-ordinating those programs and services to young children, so that they can succeed and be ready for school.

And lately, in the last couple of years, in our discussions at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, we've—we realized that we're really moving beyond the preschool-age children, and we're starting to talk more and more about children that are in the early years in school and moving into the middle years. And we actually are doing quite a bit of programming in that area.

So we thought it was appropriate to take that part of the department and move it over to Healthy Child where there is that intersectoral capacity at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to really focus on youth and to really focus on citizenship and have more of a—more capacity with that.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

CORRIGENDUM

On Thursday, April 22, 2010, page 1256, first column, fifth paragraph, should have read:

Mr. Goertzen: The debate around—the minister may remember—photo radar tickets in construction zones where there are no construction workers, resulted in regulatory changes in terms of the—where those units could set up. And if I understand correctly from my memory, the restriction was that they now can only be present at construction zones where there are no construction workers, if the construction area itself poses a danger to the drivers. Is that correct? Is my memory failing me, or is that correct?

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 26, 2010

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Oral Questions	
Introduction of Bills		Manitoba Hydro	
Bill 27–The Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park Act		McFadyen; Selinger	1354, 1357
Blaikie	1351	Borotsik; Wowchuk	1356
Petitions		Bell Hotel Transitional Housing	
Waste-Water Ejector Systems		Schuler; Irvin-Ross	1358
Eichler	1351	Health-Care Services	
Maguire	1352	Rowat; Oswald	1359
Multiple Myeloma Treatments		Flood-Damaged Farmland	
McFadyen	1352	Eichler; Struthers	1360
Ophthalmology Services–Swan River		HOUSINGFirst Initiative	
Driedger	1352	Gerrard; Irvin-Ross	1361
Mount Agassiz Ski Area		On-Line Gaming	
Briese	1353	Lamoureux; Ashton	1362
Bipole III		University of Manitoba	
Borotsik	1353	Brick; McGifford	1362
Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area		River Hills Railroad Inc.	
Lamoureux	1354	Cullen; Struthers	1362
Tabling of Reports		Members' Statements	
Civil Service Commission, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review–Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2010-2011		Collège Béliveau Haiti Fundraiser	
Wowchuk	1354	Selby	1363
Infrastructure and Transportation, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review–Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2010-2011		Nolan Thiessen	
Ashton	1354	Borotsik	1363
Advanced Education and Literacy, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review–Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2010-2011		River East Transcona School Division Powwow	
McGifford	1354	Braun	1364
		Manitoba Book Awards Gala	
		Driedger	1364
		Motorcycle Ride for Dad	
		Jha	1365
		Grievances	
		Lamoureux	1365

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Justice	1367
Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives	1377
Civil Service Commission	1383
Finance	1396
Family Services and Consumer Affairs	1400
Education	1411

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

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