

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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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.
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BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 39—The Grieving Families Protection Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 39, The Grieving Families Protection Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill proposes tough new sanctions, penalties, for cemetery vandalism, including significantly increased fines, the introduction of imprisonment and, as well, restitution.

It also provides new consumer protections for purchasers of prepaid funeral plans, including a 10-day cooling off period. It includes the requirement that payment for such plans be made directly into a trust account rather than to the funeral home. It creates new offences to guard against undue influence and pressure. It introduces a code of ethics for these plans and strong new penalties as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

PETITIONS

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

The operations of the 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 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 L. Murray, T. Casavant, R. Flower and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Dubiel, D. Dubiel, D. Jennings and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by M. Milljour, L. MacDonald and J. Howarth and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Providence College—Name Change and Expanded Investment Powers

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Providence College and Theological Seminary, the college, operates an educational and

training facility in Manitoba, having as its principal mission the education of students as Christians at a university level to think, live and serve in the church and in society.

The objective of this petition is to clarify the nature of the college to those students around the world who are or who contemplate studying at its facility and to those with whom the college's graduates will be in professional contact, since the term "college" can mean high school to some people, technical school or university to others.

The insertion of the word "University" in the name of the college would be as an adjective, implying teaching at the university level.

An additional objective of this petition is to broaden the college's investment powers so as to improve the college's ability and opportunity to increase its available financial resources, by which it may further its principal mission.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the name of the college be changed to Providence University College and Theological Seminary.

That the investment powers of the college be expanded.

And that the college's act of incorporation be amended accordingly.

Signed by A. Konkel, Ph.D., President.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2011-2012 Revenue Estimates—Supplementary Information for Legislative Review.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House. I'd like to update the House on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton).

Over the weekend, strong winds battered the south basin of Lake Manitoba, prompting a voluntary evacuation of Delta Beach residents. Water levels on Lake Manitoba continue to rise, and for residents,

cottage owners and producers, the flood fight is far from over.

Today, as a part of the Flood 2011 Building and Recovery Action Plan, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced financial assistance and additional flood-proofing support for those around Lake Manitoba who are facing an immediate and long-term challenge.

In addition, today's announcement includes a three-part strategy to build for the future, strengthen communities and help families and producers. As Manitobans, we know well that investments in permanent flood mitigation pay off over the long term time and time again while also alleviating stress and hardship for Manitobans. We are building on our strong tradition of flood protection investments in Manitoba with further significant investments in the Assiniboine River basin right from the Saskatchewan border to Headingley, including a commitment to enhance Brandon's flood protection up to one-in-300-year flood levels. We're also committing to study alternatives to enhance capacity of the Lake Manitoba flood control systems, including options to increase outflows from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

In addition to look into the future, we have announced compensation for families in the controlled release area and financial assistance for residents, cottagers and producers around Lake Manitoba. We're also working with communities to ensure that they come out of this flood strong by offering large disaster financial assistance advances and grants to promote community economic recovery.

In addition to the immediate steps outlined in this action plan, we will be thoroughly reviewing the experiences of the 2011 flood to look for other ways we could improve our flood fight for future years.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, on a solemn note, I would like to recognize the tragic passing of a Lake Manitoba cottager. A heart attack took his life after he volunteered selflessly to protect properties on the lake. Our thoughts go out to his family.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation.

The provincial government has made a number of announcements today about flood compensation in different regions, including the dike breach area, the Lake Manitoba area and the Shoal lakes area.

People participating in the compensation programs will be looking for the aid to flow in a timely fashion. We hope the government has the mechanisms in place to ensure smooth program delivery.

Several initiatives related to future flood mitigation strategies have also been announced. We would encourage the government to engage in ongoing discussions with stakeholders about these flood mitigation strategies to ensure they are as effective as they can be.

While we were talking today about compensation and future flood protection strategies, it's important to note that this spring's flood fight is far from over.

This weekend's poor weather conditions, including rain and high winds, proved challenging for many still working to protect their properties, especially around Lake Manitoba. For example, there were voluntary evacuations for a number of people in the Delta Beach area due to the road access issues. The RM of Alonsa also issued a precautionary evacuation notice for some of its residents along Lake Manitoba, especially in the Reykjavik area. On a more positive note, 112 residents of Peguis First Nation have been able to return home.

We would like to thank all the government and military personnel and the countless volunteers who continued their work on the flood front over the Victoria Day long weekend. As always, those efforts are greatly appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to pay tribute to the Lake Manitoba cottager from St. Laurent who passed away from a heart attack after spending many hours helping various people in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention the passing of a 21-year-old from the Lake St. Martin area who had been evacuated and who apparently passed away by suicide. It's not entirely clear that this was related to the evacuation, but it is a tragic death, and it certainly maybe was linked into the flood situation and the dealing with it.

Certainly in St. Laurent, where I was yesterday for a bit, the situation is very serious. They are very

thankful to the military personnel, to many, many volunteers who have come in there in dealing with a very difficult situation. People at Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin are also dealing with a very tough situation and hoping for, you know, with so many people evacuated, for permanent solutions to both communities which will allow them to move forward given that the flooding of many years has taken away the livelihood of many from cattle and other reasons.

I also want to mention the situation at Delta Beach where access was lost yesterday morning, and I have been receiving quite a bit of comment from people there of the need for some professional help in dealing with the situation and clearer communications. There was communications that there were super sandbags installed, but this was, in fact, not the case, partly because the type of help they needed for that was not there and, of course, the military were not there. So they have felt a little bit left out.

But they are—a tribute I want to pay to all the volunteers and the many people who've come from various places to help them in their efforts as well.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today, we have His Excellency Matthias Brinkmann, who is Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union; and Mr. Rafal Lapkowski, who is the Second Secretary.

And also in the public gallery we have with us today from St. Norbert French Immersion School, we have Jasmine Sleno and Gabrielle Pereira, who is the granddaughter of the honourable member for the Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), and they are the guests of the honourable member for the Lakeside.

And also in the public gallery we have from Beausejour Early Years School, we have 48 grade 4 and 5 students under the direction of Shannon Neustater. This school is located in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet.

And also in the public gallery we have from Sunflower Valley Christian School, we have 12 grade 7 to 9 students under the direction of Matthew Goosen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Services Bureaucracy Increase

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, 11 and a half years after promising to end hallway medicine and improve health care, we have a government—[interjection] I recognize members opposite are focused on other things, but in the area of health care that matters to all Manitobans, this is a government that has built up bureaucracy at the expense of front-line care, a government that built a new headquarters downtown even as it was closing emergency rooms around the province, a government that put in place a whole new area of bureaucracy just to stifle dissent within health care, a government that fired doctors like Dr. Larry Reynolds for speaking out rather than putting the emphasis where it needs to be, which is on better care for patients.

Mr. Speaker, 11 and a half years and all these broken promises: I want to ask the Premier whether he'll acknowledge today that bureaucracy within health care is out of control, and will he acknowledge they have failed to deliver on the promises to Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, here's what we know for sure, that there's less numbers of RHAs now than there were when the members opposite brought them into creation. There's 11 now—there are 11 now; they created 13. We have reduced them.

We also know that we have over 2,200 more nurses now than we did when the members opposite were in office, and we didn't fire 1,000 nurses like they did.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that we have over 405 more doctors now than we did when members were in office, and we have over 180 specialists that didn't exist when the members opposite were in office.

And we have a whole new fleet of ambulances all across Manitoba right now, Mr. Speaker, and we've rebuilt emergency rooms and paramedic dispersal stations all across Manitoba, and the Manitoba health centre for co-ordination of services in Brandon is a state-of-the-art facility using GPS technology to dispense ambulances. Even during this flood, they were making all their benchmark requirements for responding to people in rural Manitoba.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the only people who think they're doing a good job in health care are the members opposite. The reality is that we're hearing from doctors, we're hearing from nurses, we're hearing from patients, we're hearing from other health-care professionals about the fact that bureaucracy is growing, front lines are being ignored, patient care is suffering under this government.

In fact, they built a brand new headquarters for the health authority complete with a rooftop patio, Mr. Speaker, at the same time as they're leaving patients waiting and ambulances having to drive miles to get care, and they have set up a joint operating committee in order to stifle dissent from doctors because they put spin doctors ahead of real doctors.

And I want to ask this Premier if he'll acknowledge today their failure in delivering better care for Manitobans. We know they can spend money. We know they can build up bureaucracy. Why have they failed to take better care of Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there is dramatically improved care for Manitobans. The access centre, the downtown headquarters he talks about, he doesn't mention that that's an access centre for the most disadvantaged Manitobans living in the inner city. That is a place where they can go to get comprehensive health services, something that did not exist when they were in office, right on Main Street, one of the areas of Winnipeg that we are working hard to redevelop.

It's a big commitment to that area. It provides additional nurses, additional nurse practitioners, additional doctors, additional social services and additional help to all the people in that area, while redeveloping Main Street.

The member opposite has no commitment to the downtown of Winnipeg or the inner city of Winnipeg. We do, and that commitment includes investments in health care.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be convincing if some of the patients he was talking about had access to the rooftop patio, for the fact is they're building rooftop patios and they're building new office towers at the same time as they're stifling front-line care.

The front lines of health care, the doctors and the nurses and the other health professionals and patients and their families know about parking lot medicine. They know about hallway medicine under this government. They know about the ambulances waiting 15,000 hours in order to discharge patients into emergency rooms.

Will the Premier not acknowledge today that they've put the buildup of bureaucracy, the control of bureaucracy ahead of front-line care, Mr. Speaker, and that that approach to health care is hurting the delivery of front-line care for Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think the preamble to the member's question shows the difference between the members opposite on health care and us. He wants them to have access—his objective for health care is to give people access to a rooftop patio. Our objective is to give them access to nurses, nurse practitioners and doctors through an access centre right on Main Street in one of the highest need communities in Winnipeg. The member opposite completely ignores that dimension of what has been developed there.

Part of the redevelopment of the inner city is good quality health care available to people on a timely basis. That's why we have more nurses in Manitoba. That's why we have more doctors. That's why we have more ambulances. That's why we have more specialists and that's why we make a concerted effort to provide for the health-care needs of all Manitobans, including those in the inner city, which the member would never do because he would never build it, he would never staff it and he would never finance it.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Directives to Pediatric Physicians

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

Well, the Premier seems to be in denial about the massive buildup in bureaucracy and the damage to front-line care, so let me just provide him with a very current example of how that's hurting patient care.

Mr. Speaker, we've obtained a letter, which I'll table, signed on behalf of 21 doctors in the city of Winnipeg, here in the province of Manitoba. These doctors, who are pediatricians, the people who care for newborns in the province of Manitoba, have

written a letter to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) just a number of days ago. And what the doctors have learned is that they'll be blocked from admitting patients to Winnipeg hospitals. They're being blocked from admitting babies to intensive care units, and the letter—[interjection] Well—oh, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is calling these 21 doctors liars.

Well, here's what the letter says. The letter says: It is our strong belief that what they are doing will have a negative impact on patient care, impede the therapeutic alliance formed between families and physicians and disrupt the continuity of care.

I want to ask this Premier: Why is he taking steps that these 21 doctors say will hurt babies, will hurt mothers and will hurt patient care in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the only additional [inaudible] doctors we have in Manitoba are pediatricians. The member needs to know that. Those are people that did not exist when they were in office. We will work closely with them to provide the services they need. We will work closely with them to provide the services they need and Manitobans need when it comes to pediatrics, and that's why we're making a record investment in health-care facilities. Not only do we have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little order here.

Mr. Selinger: Not only are we proceeding with the new women's hospital close to the Health Sciences Centre, which the members opposite have never supported in the budget—it's a major commitment to redeveloping a health facility for women in Manitoba—not only do we have more doctors, including specialists, which include pediatricians, not only do we have more nurses, but we are doing it in a way that we bring those resources together to maximize service to patients.

The member opposite talked about bureaucracy. In the '07 election they said they would want to keep the bureaucracy and the WRHA to 3 per cent. I can tell the members opposite today the amount of bureaucracy in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is now less than 3 per cent—2.98 per cent. We've met and exceeded that target by moving care to the front lines to serve all Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the 2.98 per cent that the Premier's talking about have issued a

directive to front-line care providers that bars them from admitting children, their own patients, to the Children's Hospital. It bars them from—banning community pediatricians from the T1 nursery, the neonatal intensive care unit at Children's Hospital, the intermediate care nursery and the intensive care unit at St. Boniface Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, they have said it will disrupt the continuity of care. It will hurt the bond between parents and their physicians. It will get in the way of providing a continuity of care for babies, the most vulnerable people in our province.

Why is this government going ahead putting the power of bureaucracy ahead of the needs of babies, doctors and families in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate it when our doctors raise issues of concern to us about providing care to Manitobans' families and young children. We appreciate that, and that is why the WRHA has made a commitment to work with them to ensure continuity of care.

Those issues that they have raised will be addressed. We don't sweep them under the carpet. When we have an issue that's raised with us, we address it. We work with them to address it. When we have a critical incident, we publish the results of that. When we have any issues with respect to emergency rooms, we put that on the Internet and on the website so there's transparency and accountability.

This is a stark contrast to what the members opposite did when they were in office. They took everything, they put it behind closed doors, they swept it under the carpet, and they denied it.

When these professionals raise an issue with us, we will work with them to address that issue because quality health care to all Manitobans, including young families and children, is a priority for us, which is why we've invested in it, which is why we've increased the enrolment in medical school from 70 to over 110. That's the kind of commitment we make to doctors in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the doctors concerned have been trying for a couple of years to work with this NDP government to resolve the issues. What then happened on May the 5th was that the health authority issued a directive to these community pediatricians that they'll no longer have access, that the government will dictate who these parents and their babies will see within hospitals.

They've built a wall of bureaucracy between patients, between babies and the physicians that they choose in the community, a wall of bureaucracy between community pediatrics and the hospital functions under the control of the WRHA. They're taking choices away from parents. They're interrupting the continuity of care.

Mr. Speaker, why does this NDP government want to deny parents? Why do they want to deny mothers the right to choose the doctor in charge of the care of their children? Why do they think they know better than mothers and doctors about what's best for babies in the province of Manitoba?

* (14:00)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, again, when our professionals, including our specialists who are pediatricians, raise an issue of continuity of care, it's something that we pay close attention to, and the people that are running the system in the WRHA are fully cognizant of their concerns; the minister is fully cognizant of their concerns.

We will work with them to provide continuity of care and efficient delivery of that care. We want both. We want effective continuity of care. We want efficient delivery of continuity of care so that we can provide more front-line services to children and their families. It's about efficiency, it's about effectiveness, it's about a continuity, and we will work through those issues with those people involved, including the specialists, including their families, to ensure that we get as much quality care to families and children as possible.

That's our commitment. We will follow through on that. We won't reduce the enrolment in medical school. We won't drive doctors out of Manitoba. We won't fire nurses. We will ensure that there are more of those people to provide more care on the front line to Manitobans, including in the inner city.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Directives to Pediatric Physicians

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): The Premier neglected to mention that over 1,500 doctors have left under their watch.

Mr. Speaker, community pediatricians are rightly concerned about losing the right to admit their patients to Children's Hospital. They will also lose their right to admit patients to the T1 nursery, the intensive care nursery and the pediatric ICU.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Is she comfortable with these top-down bureaucratic changes, changes, I would note, that are being made, according to these doctors, without any consultation with them. Is she happy with this top-down effort that is going on under her watch?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): And what I am happy with is the fact that there has been an agreement made in consultation with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the intensive care unit doctors. A lot of work was done to come to an agreement on remuneration. Doctors Manitoba supported that.

We have had some concerns raised by pediatricians—this is a fact—and there is an effort by Dr. Rockman-Greenberg, head of Pediatrics, to work with these doctors on the issues that they've raised concerning continuity of care and remuneration, may I say.

We are absolutely committed to provide the best possible care for mothers and babies in Manitoba. Our commitment on that is clear in our investment in the new women's hospital, the birthing centre and the net increase of 405 doctors in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the pediatricians have called this WRHA decision autocratic. It is happening from top down. They said it is also going to have a very, very negative effect on patient care, on physician-patient relationships, and it is going to remove parental choice in who parents choose for their pediatrician.

We know that they have shared these concerns with the Minister of Health by letter, and I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Is this her intent, to ignore the concerns being brought forward by these 21 pediatricians? Is she going to favour the WRHA bureaucracy over these 21 pediatricians?

Ms. Oswald: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We're going to work for the children and families of this province like we have committed to do every single day since we took office.

Mr. Speaker, as I can say again, there has been an agreement reached with Doctors Manitoba concerning the practice, the performance and the remuneration for intensive care unit doctors, a critically important component of some of the most ill children in Manitoba. Some pediatricians have come forward and raised an issue concerning

continuity of care and their desire to be a very important partner in the care, ongoing, for that child.

I fully support that model. This is why Dr. Rockman-Greenberg has committed to work with these pediatricians and others to amend the process accordingly, whether it's through the process and remuneration or other ideas that they have.

But, again, Mr. Speaker, new women's hospital, 405 new doctors, 2,500 more nurses, new birthing centre, not a half-a-billion dollar cut as proposed by members opposite.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask this Minister of Health if she will cut the rhetoric and tell the 21 pediatricians from the Manitoba Clinic whether or not they are going to lose their admitting privileges and whether she will reverse the WRHA's heavy-handed decision and also give parents back their choice.

Is she finally going to stand up for front-line workers instead of the bureaucratic nightmare that she has created?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, they created 13 RHAs; we cut it down to 11. They created too much bureaucracy; we've driven corporate costs down to under 3 per cent, a target that they set for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, during the last—during the recession that the members opposite had to endure during government, they fired a thousand nurses. During our recent recession, we hired a thousand nurses.

Mr. Speaker, it's exceedingly clear, as is—I said in my first two answers, that there will be work going on with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, with Dr. Rockman-Greenberg and these pediatricians to work out these issues of continuity of care.

I welcome the member's questions on health care. I would answer them all day.

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

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

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, more information has come forward on parking lot medicine and ambulance off-load times, and the numbers are staggering.

According to the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, last month more than 400 ambulances were forced to wait upwards of 90 minutes to off-load patients.

So can the Minister of Health tell us, when those 400 ambulance are stuck at the ERs, what happens to the hundreds of patients who call 911 because they are in an emergency situation and they can't get an ambulance? What happens to those patients, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I would like to caution the member, of course, by putting information on the record that will frighten people and it—in its falsehood. The same member said that Grace Hospital was going to close. This never happened. It was very frightening to seniors in the area at the time, and to suggest that people can call 911 and not get emergency service is patently untrue.

I can say to the member that there have been many—*[interjection]* I can say to the member that there have been a number of initiatives in place to deal with the EMS off-load issue, a challenge here in Winnipeg and, indeed, in centres across the nation.

We know that the WRHA and the City worked in consensus to build the current model that they have. Chief Brennan has said it is the right direction, and I'm certainly going to listen to what Chief Brennan has to say.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, all of this information is from Chief Brennan, so if she'd pay attention, she would know that.

Mr. Speaker, instead of answers, we continue to hear desperate attacks from a desperate and tired government.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Jim Brennan said, and I quote: At any given time, one-third of the fleet is tied up and unavailable for the next 911 call. End of quote. He also said that the problem has gotten worse in the last five years under this Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of tired and desperate spin from this Minister of Health, but I want to ask her: Why has she failed so miserably to deal with this issue? Why does she keep her head buried in the sand and not pay attention to what's happening?

Ms. Oswald: But, by the member's own making of statements, two-thirds of the fleet is available to answer an emergency call. That's point No. 1.

Point No. 2, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that just last week we made an announcement from Budget 2011 that the City of Winnipeg would have two additional ambulances during peak times, which is going to help with the off-load issue.

We're also investing in a new innovative care model at Health Sciences Centre that's going to allow ER capacity to be freed by adding additional hospital space, which would be in stark contrast to what the member said in 2001 about the debedding of our system being a good thing.

We've funded 24-7 paramedics at the Main Street Project, Mr. Speaker, and Chief Brennan says this is the right direction.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has nothing to offer but desperate attacks.

The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service is now billing the WRHA for the government's abysmal failure to address this problem. Chief Brennan said that it was the only way to go to get this government's attention because they weren't listening. Last month they charged \$60,000 to the WRHA. In a year, that's going to amount to three-quarters of a million dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have one level of government having to charge another level of government because this minister's massive bureaucracy can't get the job done.

So will the Minister of Health admit that she has failed, that her bureaucracy is choking our ERs and that the only option for this City is to levy fines against this government?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, I'll say to the member opposite, this model was created, by consensus, between the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the City of Winnipeg. We have seen this model introduced in other jurisdictions, like Vancouver. It has dramatically dropped off-load times, but it wasn't done in isolation. It was done with other initiatives in place, Mr. Speaker.

And I might just add that it's pretty cold comfort coming from the members opposite, this advice that is coming from the same members that thought their best idea on emergency care was to close all the community hospital ERs overnight when they had their hands on the wheel and to close one emergency

room, Misericordia, entirely. That was their model for emergency care, Mr. Speaker. Now, I ask you.

Agriculture Industry

Flooding Financial Compensation Information

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I'd like to recognize that the government has announced a program for producers affected by the flooding in the Shoal Lake area. We have been raising this various issue with the government for some time. As they say about any program, the devil is in the details.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture please outline the compensation that will be paid to producers for loss of income, hay, pasture, in 2010, 2011, and how will the transportation component work? How quickly can assistance flow?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Assistance will flow very quickly on this particular announcement with the Shoal lakes, just as it will with all of the announcements that we made this morning, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there are farmers in different parts of our province who have their backs against the wall, who've been struggling with excess amounts of moisture right through our system. So our commitment has been very clear, that we would have a special comprehensive package that we brought forward, which we did, and that we would make sure that it covers off everything from transportation to voluntary buyouts to a transition to help people who decide to voluntarily buy out, Mr. Speaker.

This has been done in consultation with farmers in the area, and I do want to recognize the member for Lakeside for his participation in that.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this program also contains a voluntary buyout program. Again, producers who are considering participation will have many questions about how this will work. Is this a permanent buyout? Will producers who will take the buyout be allowed to resume farming when lake levels are drawn down? Moreover, if producers decide not to participate in the voluntary buyout, they will want to know if they will be excluded from future aid programs. These are just some of the questions producers will be raising about this program.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture provide additional details of how the buyout program

will work? Producers will need to know as soon as possible.

Mr. Struthers: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, producers will need to know as soon as possible. They can be making phone calls to our offices, our MAFRI offices, this afternoon if they wish. And members of our—of MAFRI are up to date and are experienced in this area. They'll be more than happy to deal with the constituents of the member for Lakeside. We want this package to meet the needs of farmers in that Shoal lakes area.

To that end, I do also want to pay particular attention to the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), who—very much a leadership position in this announcement and, Mr. Speaker, sometime, to the jealous chagrin of members opposite, shows that in this House.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we're very encouraged about the details being outlined as quickly as possible. While this program will offer some help to producers still trying to maintain their operation, some livestock and grain producers have already lost the fight with the rising Shoal lakes.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture explain if this program will recognize the losses sustained by producers whose operations have already been taken out of production by the flooding, and, if so, how will this program work?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, what we announced was a program that covers off loss of hay production, loss of hay land, transportation cost either to get cattle to feed or feed to cattle. We're doing that for this year and last year, so we are making it retroactive to last year because we did speak to producers in his constituency who asked for that.

We did respond to some of the producers who said to us that they'd had enough of dealing with that kind of water and that they were at the point where they wanted out. So that's why we included a voluntary buyout with a transition amount of money to help them do that.

Mr. Speaker, we want these programs to reflect the needs of farmers. That's why I would encourage all members to make sure that their constituents contact our MAFRI offices and get some of the detail. We're committed to getting money into the hands of pocket—into the pockets of farmers as quickly as we possibly can.

Livestock Industry Flooding Financial Compensation Information

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): The area around Lake Manitoba has been especially hard hit by this government's flood management strategy, and the effects will be felt for many months to come. We recognize the government has now come forward with an assistance program. Livestock producers are very anxious to learn more details including how quickly the aid will flow.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture explain whether the \$100 maximum payment for a cow-calf pair is expected to cover all costs associated with maintaining that pair; that is, any feed costs the producer has already incurred, the cost of pasture rental, the cost of moving animals to new pastures and back again?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, this government said from the beginning that we are dealing with unprecedented amounts of water throughout the system and particularly in the Lake Manitoba area and those farmers who are trying to make a living along the shores of Lake Manitoba. We've said that it's a special compensation package that'll go with that, a comprehensive special compensation package, and that is what we've announced today.

Certainly, the—what the member for Emerson has put on the record is part of what we've come forward with. We want to be able to continue to work with farmers to make sure that we understand what all their needs were, what all their expenses were as they fought this flood.

We intend to get them back to pre-flood conditions, Mr. Speaker, so we'll work with them to make sure that happens.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the government is now coming forward with a program to help producers with flood mitigations measures for their properties along Lake Manitoba. We're pleased that the government has listened and is not applying a deductible. However, we have no doubt many of these producers would have preferred to have seen better management of lake levels by this NDP government so they did not have to protect their properties in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible explain how quickly aid will flow for producers who

have been installing dikes and other barriers to try and protect their property from the rising level of Lake Manitoba?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think people need to remind the member for Emerson what a special circumstance we've been dealing with in terms of the amount of water that is coming into our province and making its way through our system, and it is causing grief along the way. That, I think, we all understand and we've all recognized.

What we've done as a government is recognize that through a compensation package I think that covers the bases for farmers, we are committed to making it flow as quickly as we can. That's why we've set up a special unit within the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation to make sure that any of these applications—and farmers, by the way, only have to fill out one application, not a number of them, but one application—that they'll be taken care of by that special unit within MASC, and we are committed to getting money into the hands of farmers as quickly as we can.

*(14:20)

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the government's program for producers around Lake Manitoba makes a number of assumptions. One of them is that this is a short-term problem and that livestock operations will be back to normal next year.

Thousands of cattle are being moved out of the area around Lake Manitoba. Many producers fear they will not be able to return their cattle to their farms this fall. They're concerned that their pasture and their hay lands will be out of production for at least one year or longer.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible explain what this government's long-term strategy is for producers around Lake Manitoba whose operations could conceivably be out of production for one or two years? They need a long-term strategy.

Mr. Struthers: Sounds to me, Mr. Speaker, like a long-term strategy that they wouldn't get from members opposite, and if the member for Emerson had been listening more carefully this morning, he would understand that that's exactly what we're doing, is we're taking the long-term approach. We've been clear all along; we're working in a very

short-term way with farmers to do practical things to get feed to their cattle or cattle to their feed.

We've been looking—now you can see more of a medium-term approach in terms of compensation, multi-year compensation, Mr. Speaker, which is clear in the announcement today, and we're working—continue to work with farm leadership and farmers themselves to make sure we make good decisions to manage that water right from one end of our province, right through the watershed, to the other end, so that there is a long-term position in place. I would encourage members opposite to support that.

Child Welfare System Children-In-Care School Graduation Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, with over 9,000 children in the Manitoba child and family services system, a troubling statistic was released by the Canadian Journal of Education in the last few months. According to the Academic and Social Outcomes for High-Risk Youths in Manitoba report, 42.8 per cent of kids in child and Family Services care did not graduate from high school.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister of Child and Family Services explain to this Chamber why this number is so high?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, all over the modern world, and certainly North America and Canada, it's been recognized that amongst the most vulnerable populations are those children who have had to be protected from abuse and neglect in their families, and despite often the best work by foster parents and, indeed, other workers, they have vulnerabilities as they leave the foster care system.

In Manitoba, we do have foster care available for our children to age 18 versus, for example, in Saskatchewan where it's to age 16, and there's been new findings there by a review that there should be an overhaul of their child welfare system with that change in mind.

But, as well, we've taken steps in Manitoba to make sure that those who are leaving child welfare are equipped to face the challenges that lie beyond the foster home.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the study allowed a child seven years beyond grade 9, and yet, still, only 42.8 per cent of children in Child and Family Services care graduated from high school.

Manitobans know that the cycle of abuse and neglect in families is a major issue and that education is a key to breaking this cycle, and yet school attendance and getting an education continues to be a big issue among kids in provincial care in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister admit that this government has done a poor job of breaking this cycle of abuse and neglect and that the government is failing kids by not ensuring that the educational opportunities are there for kids in care?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first, just to note some initiatives that are going to work for children leaving foster care: First of all, an initiative called MY TEAM is ready to be launched that brings together many social partners—Ma Mawi, the Department of Housing, EIA—to make sure that we try different approaches to envelop or provide wraparound services for high-risk youth that are leaving foster care.

Second of all, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the number of extensions of foster care beyond age 18 from about 19 in 1999 to about 326 last year. That's a phenomenal increase that the Children's Advocate has commented very favourably on; in other words, looking for those who need that continuing care, those perhaps that are living with FASD, those that need to finish their education.

Those are two examples of changes that are afoot for the good of Manitoba families and particularly our children, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this government has been in power for almost 12 years, and yet nearly half of all children in care are still not graduating from high school. This is very troubling.

When will the Minister of Family Services start doing his job and make sure that kids in Child and Family Services can excel as adults, make sure they have the same educational opportunities as all other Manitobans?

Mr. Mackintosh: And the third initiative I'll talk about is, of course, the relentless work and the efforts of Manitoba Education working with our partners in education to increase the graduation rate of Manitoba schools. And there have been both targeted and general applications of new supports for schools, and, in fact, I ask the member to look at the Education budget for this year and see where the enhancements are being directed.

I also will advise the member that I have asked my officials to drill down even to a greater extent and come up with a strategy that looks at the educational outcomes as being one of the objectives of child welfare, that it's not only about child well-being and safety, it's also looking at well-being in the general sense of the word. It means educational achievements.

And I've asked the department to look to see what can be done in Manitoba to focus on that. For example, Mr. Speaker, moving a child when there's a placement change, can we not change the school the child is attending to ensure greater outcomes, and, as well, are we adequately sharing educational information with new schools that the child has transferred to? Those are measures that are also afoot.

Selkirk Municipal Transit Funding

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), he recently appeared in a TV ad, and he said that there's nothing to celebrate in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* There we are, see? Well—*[interjection]* He's too easy, Mr. Speaker.

But perhaps the leader should visit Selkirk where there's many good things to celebrate, Mr. Speaker. For example, today the City of Selkirk celebrated the launch of its public transit system, and my question to the Minister of Local Government: What role did our government play in making this community dream a reality?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): It was a great day to celebrate in Selkirk, Manitoba, with the MLA for Selkirk, the mayor of Selkirk, many people on their volunteer board, and today we announced that the Province will be covering 50 per cent of their costs with regard to public transit.

And what it means, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is that now people with mobility issues, people who don't want to take a bus, who don't have a vehicle to get to their job, senior citizens can access transit and aside from the greenhouse gas emissions that'll be reduced because of people leaving their vehicles at home.

Mr. Speaker, today was a tremendous day to celebrate with the MLA for Selkirk and many, many of the volunteers that were there.

It's a great province to live in, Mr. Speaker. Selkirk's a great city to be in. Thank you.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Brandon Flooding Community Response

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Flooding in Brandon has led to street closures, disruptions for area schools and business, and the evacuation of over 1,300 Brandonites from their homes. Today I would like to focus on those who have contributed their time towards protecting the city from further devastation. The community came together, neighbour helping neighbour, and perfect strangers pitching in when help was needed.

I'm very proud of the work that the City of Brandon has been doing in preparation for this major flood event and the work that continues. Municipal staff have worked tirelessly to organize volunteers, build dikes and co-ordinate the largest evacuation in Brandon's history. Thank you to mayor and council who made the right decisions at the right time and implemented a communication strategy that kept everyone informed on a timely basis.

A special thank you, Mr. Speaker, to Brian Kayes, the director of Emergency Management, and the members of the Brandon Emergency Support Team. Planning for this type of event doesn't just happen. This emergency plan has been developed over the past decade and implemented effectively when needed.

A special shout-out, Mr. Speaker, to the staff of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation; to Ross Thompson and the reservists of 26 Field Regiment; the Canadian military; the Red Cross; the United Way; and numerous service organizations that answered the call. Their professionalism and work ethic has contributed tremendously to the community, and from my constituents I thank them for their efforts.

*(14:30)

Brandon's flood of the century has taught residents a great deal about preparations and allowed them to grow in a short period of time, none more than the students of Kirkcaldy Heights School. In a matter of days, Kirkcaldy Heights students have gone from elementary school to Brandon University, where they now attend regular classes. They grow up so fast, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, residents of Brandon are hoping that the worst of the flood has ended and that the crest is now past. However, there is still work to be done in the battle against the Assiniboine, and area residents, neighbours, friends and strangers will continue to work to protect the city.

I would like to offer my most sincere thank you to all of those who have helped to protect Brandon during this epic flood.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TJ Constant

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a young person in my community who was an outstanding—who is an outstanding role model for our kids today. TJ Constant is an exceptional athlete. He grew up in The Pas and has always played for Opaskwayak Cree Nation Blizzard in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League.

Upon starting with the Blizzard as a 16-year-old rookie, it wasn't long before TJ became a top scorer and was noticed by other teams. He was called up by the WHL's Prince Albert Raiders and is training with them this summer. TJ was also among 41 players who took part in Canada West evaluation camp for the 2010 World Junior A Challenge.

But TJ's talent is not only—not the only reason that he is being noticed. He's a young athlete that takes nothing for granted. He works hard and his determination really shows.

Just this past year, the Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Council awarded TJ the Tom Longboat award for hockey. As many of you will know, this honour represents more than just an athletic award. Tom Longboat is one of Canada's most celebrated and accomplished athletes. Throughout his life and career, Longboat spoke of his First Nations heritage with pride and his good spirit helped him get through the good times and the bad. His leadership and energy made him a headline attraction wherever he raced, drawing huge crowds and a widespread following.

We can see many of these same attributes in TJ. Mr. Speaker, TJ credits his family for his success and thanks them for their support over the years. With both a younger sister and brother, he's a great role model for them and for other young people in the community. He has the talent to be a star in junior hockey and beyond. And I know that both his head

and heart are in the right place for it. It will only be a matter of time before TJ's career takes off and I look forward to seeing his future success. Well done, TJ.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Melissa Smith

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): The YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards program is an inspirational and exciting celebration of talent, achievement, imagination and innovation. The awards honour Manitoba women who have made a unique and exemplary contribution to the development of others in our community.

Today, I would like to take the time to acknowledge one of my constituents, Melissa Smith, who is a young woman of distinction. Melissa is a grade 12 student at Miles Mac Collegiate who was nominated for the 2011 Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award of Promise. This award is in honour of Gerrie Hammond, a former colleague of mine and Cabinet minister in the Gary Filmon Progressive Conservative government. This award is presented to a young woman graduating from a Winnipeg high school in 2011 and is based on the contributions she has made to her school and community.

Melissa was nominated for the award along with 22 other female grade 12 students from Winnipeg. She was one of three students nominated from Miles Mac Collegiate.

Melissa Smith is very involved in her school and in our community in northeast Winnipeg. She participates in a number of community and school programs including the Kids Can Curl program, where she teaches youth about the roaring game. She's also involved with the Winnipeg International Children's Festival, Teddy Bears' Picnic and she is a peer tutor at her school.

The annual presentation of this award is part of the YM-YWCA's commitment to increase public recognition of young women who have earned our respect and admiration for being involved in their communities and are committed to making the world around them a better place.

Mr. Speaker, Melissa Smith is a very accomplished young woman who shows great promise. And I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating her for being nominated by her peers for this prestigious award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nor'West Access Community Health Centre

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, our health-care system is broader than fixing a broken bone or screening people for disease. While these are vital services, often people can be better served with a range of community health services.

That's what the new Access Nor'West Co-op Community Health Centre sets out to do. This new centre will provide northwest Winnipeg residents with easier access to health as well as social services. Access Nor'West is building onto the existing Nor'West Co-op Community Health Centre, of which I've been a member since 1980, which has embraced collaborative, multi-service health care since it began in 1972. Now the access centre will be a one-stop centre for a wide range of services. By integrating many different types of services into one centre, it will be much easier for patients to improve their whole lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, many of the new programs at Access Nor'West are tailor-made for its community. These include diabetes education and support; nutrition counselling; foot care; family violence counselling; Aboriginal health outreach; daycare co-ordination; and immigrant women's counselling.

Construction of this new access centre on Keewatin Street is under way. This will be the fourth access centre in Winnipeg. Access Nor'West is being built with a vision in mind—one of preventative medicine and healthy lifestyles on top of emergency care. These kinds of projects build safer and healthier neighbourhoods for our families.

I'm very pleased that the northwest Winnipeg neighbourhoods will have another resource to improve their quality of life.

Heather Bishop

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour an outstanding Manitoban, Heather Bishop, my constituent. Ms. Bishop is being awarded an honorary doctorate degree from Brandon University. She will be receiving a Doctor of Laws for her numerous accomplishments and there are many. She's an accomplished musician, singer, songwriter, social activist, keynote speaker, visual artist, author and tradeswoman. Her latest CD entitled *My Face Is a Map of My Time Here* was released in the spring of 2009.

Last year, Ms. Bishop released a hard-covered coffee table book of her art work interwoven with stories about the inspiration behind the paintings. She is probably best known for her achievements in the Canadian music industry, having 14 acclaimed folk and children's albums.

Heather Bishop was bestowed with two Juno nominations, a Western Canadian Music Award in 2006, the Parents' Choice Gold Award and a National Parenting Publications Award.

Ms. Bishop has also said—has said she always believed that music is one of the most effective tools for change and has dedicated her career to addressing the issues facing our society that need improvement. She's a fervent advocate of women's rights, racially—racial equality, same-sex rights and environmental awareness and protection.

With all of her accomplishments, it's of no surprise that she is a recipient of both the Order of Manitoba and the Order of Canada.

Currently, Ms. Bishop is a director on the Board of Manitoba Film and Sound. She also sits on the Order of Manitoba's Advisory Council.

Heather Bishop will be presented with her honorary degree at one of Brandon University's four convocation ceremonies on June 3rd and 4th at the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium.

Heather Bishop is an extraordinary Canadian, an exceptional Manitoban, and well-deserving of this recognition. I would like to extend my congratulations to her for this great honour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

I would like to table the list of ministers to be called for concurrence for Wednesday, May 25th, and they are Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie), Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), Minister of Manitoba

Infrastructure and Transportation and Emergency Measures Organization (Mr. Ashton), Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), Minister of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Struthers), and Minister of Education (Ms. Allan). And minister—these ministers will be questioned concurrently.

I also will call the Minister of Culture and Heritage (Ms. Marcelino), the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh), and the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross), should those not be completed this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: The ministers that will be called in the future for concurrence has just been tabled.

Okay. Now we'll continue on with House business.

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

* (14:40)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that, pursuant to rule 31(8), the private member's resolution that will be considered next Tuesday morning will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). The title of the resolution is Sexually Exploited Youth.

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

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: We're ready to move into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

CAPITAL SUPPLY

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

We have before us consideration of the resolution respecting Capital Supply. The resolution reads as follows:

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,419,028,000 for Capital Supply, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

The floor is open for questions.

Resolution agreed to.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted the Capital Supply resolution.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The honourable Government House Leader—it has been moved—oh, sorry.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I move that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012, which have been adopted at this session by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Motion presented.

Madam Chairperson: On May 17th, 2011, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning and debate on the concurrence motion: the Minister for Family Services and Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the

honourable Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'd like to ask a number of questions of the Minister of Culture this afternoon, and a number of my colleagues will also be asking some questions. We seem to have run out of time in Estimates to do that, so we're bringing those questions forward here.

And I just want to go back to one of the discussions we had in Estimates about Travel Manitoba and their promotion campaign that is coming up. Can the minister just confirm for me that Travel Manitoba is the entity that is using the slogan It's Manitoba Time and that is a slogan that is going to be used in all of this advertising that will start soon?

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): That is correct, Madam Chair. Travel Manitoba will use the slogan It's Manitoba Time for its marketing campaign.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister give us an update in terms of when the spring advertising will take place?

* (14:50)

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have—Madam Chair, I don't have specific time here, but it's for its 2011 campaign. The campaign created underwent focus group testing already in Winnipeg, Grand Forks and Saskatoon, and they were tested extremely positively. I will find out the specific timeline and let the—and convey to the member opposite.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether the summer ads that will be running and the fall ads that will be running for Travel Manitoba, are going to be different from each other or will they just be the same ads that are going to repeat themselves in each season?

Ms. Marcelino: I will let the member know if that would be the case. I don't have that information right now with me. We'll inquire from Travel Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: In Estimates, the minister had indicated that it was \$2 million budgeted for these travel ads for Travel Manitoba, and that it was a high-volume campaign budget of \$2 million. Can the minister indicate, is that normally how much her

department would authorize in a year for Travel Manitoba advertising?

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Chairperson, the out-of-province contract represents only \$200,000 or 10 per cent of Travel Manitoba's \$2-million, high-volume campaign budget, and is only about 2.5 per cent of the agency's overall marketing and development budget. Most of the contracts associated with the campaign and with the Travel Manitoba's other promotional initiatives have been awarded to Manitoba-based companies.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister just indicate if she was saying that the \$200,000 is then targeted for out-of-province ad buys and, then, where would the rest of that \$2 million be spent. Is it within Manitoba?

Ms. Marcelino: No, that \$200,000, or the 10 per cent of the \$2-million budget campaign, was only for the out-of-town contract. That is not the ad campaign itself. It was just the contract to the out-of-town agency.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how much money is going to be spent within Manitoba to advertise Manitoba?

Ms. Marcelino: I would provide the complete figure or the exact figure to the member opposite. All I have right now is that only the rest of the \$2 million will be awarded to Manitoba-based companies. If it were to be used exclusively for Manitoba alone, I would have to find that out.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister also indicate when we can expect to get some of the answers that she wasn't able to answer in Estimates? Can she indicate when we can expect written responses to them as promised in Estimates?

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Chairperson, I know that the details of the 2010-2011 advertising expenditures will be forwarded to the critic very shortly. About the FIPPA annual report, it is to be finalized and we expect it to be tabled very shortly as well, along with the details of the contract for the Waabanong Anishinaabe interpretive centre costs.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, since Estimates—she'd indicated that the cost for the interpretive centre had gone up quite substantially. Has it again increased since that time?

Ms. Marcelino: I have not been provided the answer to that question yet.

However, I do know that, with respect to the cost of the interpretive centre, the figures cited in both the press release and my Estimates speech reflect class D estimate, which is an estimate prepared at the conceptual phase of the project and is an order of magnitude estimate and—which provides the lowest level of precision. It is characterized by a level of accuracy of approximately 20 to 25 per cent, and that figure referenced in my remarks to the Committee of Supply included the allowance for this variable.

Class estimates are widely used by architects, engineers and project managers in the public works and commercial building construction industry, and relate to increasingly precise cost estimates and not to changes in the project's scope. Four classes of construction project cost estimates are quite common, usually designated class A, B, C and D, paralleling the increasing level of detail required and developed as the project moves forward. The increasing precision of each class level provides the opportunity to adjust the project, but is—it is very common in the construction industry for the estimated costs to change as the project proceeds, and the department will provide the details of the project cost.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether or not there was a change of scope in that particular project or if it has remained identical to what was conceptualized at the beginning?

Ms. Marcelino: I'm not very familiar if there were changes to the scope. I do know, though, that the plan is now to upgrade it to Platinum LEED status. Now, whether that necessitated or precipitated the increase in cost, I'll inquire and let the member know.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister give an updated summary, I guess, of Homecoming 2010 and indicate whether or not there were positive numbers and results that came out of that? Did it meet the goals that were established?

* (15:00)

Ms. Marcelino: Yes, Homecoming 2010 events had positive impact on many communities across the province, with strong attendance at new signature events. Over 81 per cent of Manitobans were aware of the Manitoba Homecoming initiative, with nearly one in five having attended a Manitoba Homecoming event.

Mrs. Driedger: I am sorry if I missed it; can the minister indicate the total number of people that attended different homecoming events and how many events were actually held?

Ms. Marcelino: Sorry, I don't have the figures with me right now. I saw it—I have it somewhere, and there is the number of—there's figures for the—for all of the events and all of the places which hosted events. I'll provide that to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: And I'm sorry if I missed this or not, but can the minister indicate whether Homecoming made any money, or was it built as a break-even type of a situation?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have the figures if it was a revenue-neutral activity for Travel Manitoba. I'll try and secure that information, but what I can say is the goodwill and the promotion and publicity generated by events and activities related to Manitoba Homecoming definitely had economic impact on all of Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, is there a final report that was developed after the event that was provided to her that actually was an analysis of the event itself? Is there an actual document that was given to her?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't—I wasn't given any document, only a report by Travel Manitoba, not a—a narrative report on the particular activity.

Mrs. Driedger: Now the minister has indicated during Estimates and also in a news release that the eastern boreal forest offers tremendous global tourism potential. Can she indicate what she meant by that in her news release? What types of tourism is she talking about?

Ms. Marcelino: As we all know, the east-side region contains unique and outstanding examples of flora and fauna native to the area, including habitats of rare or endangered species of plants and animals. And these are—also the region contains historic travel routes of First Nations people and continues to be home to a number of active sacred sites maintained by Aboriginal elders, and development of attractions and services are carefully balanced with environmental and ecological sustainability.

And research by the Canadian Tourism Commission has shown that visitors to Canada are looking for authentic experiences of nature and culture, and visitors also demand high quality, accessible support services. And our department has

been engaged on the east side of Manitoba to support the activities of East Side Aboriginal Sustainable Tourism Inc. to develop Aboriginal tourism—the east-side region of the province. And these efforts are aimed toward the 19 First Nations communities within the east-side region. And east-side inc. is helping communities construct local tourism plans, beginning with an inventory of assets, such as attractions and existing services. In the area of marketing, EAST Inc. has developed branding for east-side tourism attractions, including a website, brochures and logo. As well, EAST Inc. also represented the region at trade shows in the US and Germany.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Then, based on that last answer the minister gave, there's a tourism initiative being done. How do you foresee these tourists getting into visit this area—accessing the area?

* (15:10)

Ms. Marcelino: As our government has planned to, in addition to the all-weather road, but I need to get more information on this to—that would be very helpful in accessing all these beautiful places in the east side of the province as well as—yes, I think I will ask my colleague about the transport routes to it, but right now I have to take that question and report—and answer later.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, as part of your—and I am assuming you're going to give a written answer back then, if that's what you're implying, and that would be great, but you could also include in there how tourists will access this tourism area. How will camps be built? Will tourism lodges be built in there? How will—what is the long-term plan for these tourists? Is it day trips you're going in or is it—obviously, it's a lot of distance here we're talking about—staying over there? Where will they be staying? How will development happen? Will it be private development? Will it be government development? And also the numbers of tourists that you expect to see in this area over the next, let's say, 10 years, or—in your development, in your development plan, how many years are you planning to do this, and what are the number of tourists that will be in there?

And if you could include that in a written answer, I would very much appreciate that.

Ms. Marcelino: Certainly, we'll take that up in consideration.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate who actually makes a bid for the UNESCO World Heritage status?

Ms. Marcelino: I will refer the—I will inquire from my colleague the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie). I think that department is the lead department for the UNESCO World Heritage site application.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the minister know if that application has already been made?

Ms. Marcelino: I'm sorry I didn't catch the question. Can you repeat?

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether that application has already been made?

Ms. Marcelino: First Nations are leading the way to bring a World Heritage site to Manitoba and Ontario. And Pimachiowin Aki Corporation is a non-profit organization working to nominate 40,000 square kilometre of the boreal forest in Manitoba and Ontario as the UNESCO World Heritage site. They expect to complete the nomination document this year. And, on December 22nd, 2009, Bloodvein First Nation joined the UNESCO World Heritage project. This development will expand the area to be nominated for World Heritage status and shows the strong support for our vision on the east side.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what government's role is in that application, because, obviously, government must have a strong role in that, you know, according to all the past history and comments that have been made. Can she just indicate what government's role is in that application?

Ms. Marcelino: I would have to inquire from my colleague the Minister of Conservation since they have the lead role in this application.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what role her department has in this, as her department is Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and it was actually she, herself as the minister—and there was no other minister mentioned—it was just her news release recently that talked about the Province supporting east-side tourism initiatives, and it is certainly something that she should be fully aware of, it would seem to me, especially if she's putting out news releases.

So can she just indicate what her role is in the whole issue of the movement towards the UNESCO World Heritage status?

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member for River East, on a point of order.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): But we have the Minister responsible for Healthy Living and Seniors that's trying to answer the questions for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

I would ask him—maybe he would like leave from this committee to take over and answer the questions for Culture, Heritage and Tourism or—*[interjection]* Madam Chair, I think he's somewhat out of line, and maybe you could call him to order.

Madam Chairperson: The—for the information of the honourable member for River East, that is not a point of order.

* * *

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to say that the designation of UNESCO World Heritage Site not only would be very good for the environment as it would protect the boreal forest which is considered the lungs of the earth but would also be a very good site for international tourists to see, because besides the natural boreal forest there are plans to put up a site that would enhance the tourism potential of the area.

As for the specific plans for the area, I would have to provide that to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how many sites are being developed for tourism for this area?

* (15:20)

Ms. Marcelino: For a detailed plan of the area, I would have to provide that to the member as well.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the minister be prepared to make that commitment and provide it tomorrow?

Ms. Marcelino: Not at the moment. I will have to inquire from the department if that plan is already in place and if it's available.

Mrs. Driedger: Can I ask the minister whether or not she's had any briefings on this whole issue of the UNESCO World Heritage Site development?

Ms. Marcelino: I have notes but not—no verbal briefing. I was just provided notes.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us whether the all-weather road runs through the UNESCO site?

Ms. Marcelino: That is something our department is not privy to it. That would be more the area of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and the—Transport, MIT.

Mrs. Driedger: Has the minister asked of those departments how tourists will be able to access sites throughout the UNESCO site? How are tourists supposed to get around? I mean, the minister is talking in her news release about all these opportunities for incredible tourism through this site. How are tourists supposed to get around the site to see it?

Ms. Marcelino: I believe the all-weather road has a component of reaching those sites, but I don't have the exact location of those roads, so I will have to provide that info later on.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister aware, through her notes, of whether or not there will be offshoot roads that come from this main all-weather road? Will there be smaller roads that would then take tourists to the sites, because I understand there could be a significant number of sites from the last time we had Estimates a year ago. Is that the intent, that we would see smaller roads break off from this major road?

Ms. Marcelino: Again, I will have to inquire from my colleague what the—where those roads are—the planned all-weather roads—and whether that would be going through all those planned tourist sites.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate the—what she meant in her news release when she said that her department was providing assistance to entrepreneurs as they work to develop this UNESCO World Heritage status? So, this is obviously something that's coming out of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, some type of assistance to entrepreneurs, so can she indicate what type of assistance her department is providing and who these entrepreneurs would be?

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Chairperson, our department has launched a new conditional grant program to support the development of tourism product on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Conditional grants of up to a maximum of \$15,000 will be provided for development or expansion of qualifying tourism-related business on the east side of the province.

Delivery of the conditional grant program includes intensive one-on-one consultation with

applicants and recipients. Two grants were approved in 2010-2011 with the department and EAST Inc. working with additional applicants to develop their project proposals.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate who those two groups were that were given grants and give us some detail about their projects?

Ms. Marcelino: The projects developed through the 2010-2011 EASTIP include East Side Voices and Landscapes: Interviews with Elders Initiative. It was by IDZ Productions [*phonetic*], and this production company filmed a series of interpretive vignettes which promote the Aboriginal culture, heritage and traditional lifestyle of the Anishinabe people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg region.

Also, Madam Chair, the Bloodvein eco-yurt initiative is a—was a project supported—the project supported an Aboriginal lodge operator to develop a new nonconsumptive product featuring—including the installation of a portable insulated yurt. Product development consultation, including project proposal and application assistance was provided by EAST Inc.

As well, Madam Chair, Poplar River eco-yurt initiative, EAST Inc. continues to provide product development consultation project proposal and application assistance to an Aboriginal business operator to assist in the expansion of their existing operation.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how those particular products have rolled out? Are they actually completed and how are they being used?

Ms. Marcelino: These were recent projects by these organizations, and our department has not received any report yet from the project proponents.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, was she referring to the East Side Tourism Investment Program, EASTIP, is—or is she making reference to a different group?

Ms. Marcelino: I am referring to the 2010-2011 EASTIP.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether or not those \$15,000 in grants have flowed through to the two groups and when they flowed through?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have the date when the funds were given to the applicants, and I'll get that information and share it with the member.

* (15:30)

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether those were grants—or that money was given in last year's budget and is now completed, or is there also further grants in this year's budget flowing through to those two groups?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have that information handy and will report back to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what the intention of those—intended use of those products were meant for? Were they something for television or was it something to be used locally or who was the—who are the grants targeted towards in terms of audience?

Ms. Marcelino: We'll obtain that information for the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate who approved those grants?

Ms. Marcelino: The two grants were approved with the department and EAST Inc., working with the applicants who developed their project proposals.

Mrs. Driedger: Madam Chair, can the minister indicate, when she talks about tourism for the eastern boreal forest, if the intent of her department in supporting entrepreneurs is only for Aboriginally run entrepreneurs, or is it open to RFPs from anybody else? Like, who determines—or what are the criteria in terms of those grants or any tourism opportunities?

Ms. Marcelino: EAST Inc. is a non—not-for-profit corporation, whose membership is open to any individual, company or organization with an interest in the development of Aboriginal tourism on the east side. EAST Inc.'s efforts are aimed toward the 19 First Nations communities within the east-side region. EAST Inc. has been meeting with community leaders and tourism interests to discuss local tourism development. And EAST Inc. was also helping communities to construct local tourism plans, beginning with an inventory of assets such as attractions and existing services.

In 2009-2010, the organization assisted tourism planning in seven communities: that of Poplar River, Berens River, Bloodvein, Black River, Hollow Water, Brokenhead and Sagkeeng.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My first question to the minister: In the minister's opening statement, she talked about the tourism figures for 2009, but, of course, there's been a year since then. Does the minister have tourism figures for 2010?

Ms. Marcelino: I have some figures—thank you, Madam Chair. I have some figures for the member.

January 2010: We had—in Manitoba, we had a total of—from US residents, same-day visitation, 9,196, and overnight, 6,711. For January 2011, again from US residents, we have the same-day figure as 7,975 and overnight figure of 6,662.

For overseas residents: for January 2010, same-day, we had 25, and overnight, 494; January 2011: same-day, 6, overnight, 474.

As for Canadians returning from the US: in January 2010, we had the same-day figure, 35,697; overnight, 54,099. And January 2011, we had 38,143 for same-day, and overnight, 56,193.

As for Canadians returning from other countries: direct, for January 2010, we had 19,736; via the United States, we had 3,753. For January 2011, direct, we had 19,525; via the US, 3,766.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister. Now, I note that the minister and Travel Manitoba are now working with Manitoba time. Does that mean that Friendly Manitoba and Spirited Energy are slogans of the past?

Ms. Marcelino: A clear, well-differentiated brand is critical to market Manitoba effectively. For its 2011 campaign, Travel Manitoba's positioning will be based on the call to action of It's Manitoba Time, a call to potential visitors to experience an abundance of nature and culture, all within easy reach.

The campaign created underwent focus-group testing in Winnipeg, Grand Forks and Saskatoon and tested extremely positively.

Mr. Gerrard: With the coming of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, one of the hopes is that this will stimulate people to come for the Canadian museum but that they will then visit other places in Winnipeg or around the province.

So I would ask—let me give you an example. For—in western Manitoba, there's a very famous location from the fur trade at Fort Ellice and whether the minister has any plans to try and make such a famous location a tourist attraction.

* (15:40)

Ms. Marcelino: The department is quite excited with the prospects of the Canadian Human Rights Museum being in full operation, along with the Assiniboine Zoo Conservancy, and with it will bring local, national and international tourists. And I would

think that all tourist attractions would be carefully considered and evaluated, because we want to give our tourists the best travel experience they have. And we have so many sites and places that we're proud of. So I believe all the wonderful attractions and sites will be considered.

Mr. Gerrard: I note that we've got, of course, a large number of festivals in the summer and the winter. Sometimes, when looking at the timing and the nature of the festivals, there could perhaps be better co-ordination of the timing so that you would attract more people.

Is that the job of your department or of Travel Manitoba to work with different festivals to provide a greater co-ordination and a greater opportunity for people to visit Manitoba?

Ms. Marcelino: Festivals—festival dates are the purview of the communities or the organizations—the proponents of the festival. I'm pretty sure Travel Manitoba would want to see a well co-ordinated play-out of dates, and we'll certainly—I'm pretty sure they have the dates in mind when they're putting out their magazine for—the Travel Manitoba magazine. But I don't think it's for Travel Manitoba to dictate what dates the festival or an event should happen, but it should be the community or the organization who is hosting it.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister. It sounds as if the—neither the department nor Travel Manitoba are going to be involved in talking to different community festival organizers to, you know, about whether there could be any improvements in co-ordination.

Ms. Marcelino: I will check with Travel Manitoba if that is part of their plan and to see if there are conflicts in dates that would negatively affect attendance to those events.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I have some more questions for the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

I'm just wondering if the minister is familiar with the operation at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum.

Ms. Marcelino: Yes, I have some information on the Manitoba Agricultural Museum.

Mr. Cullen: Has the minister had the opportunity to visit the museum first-hand?

Ms. Marcelino: Unfortunately, not yet, but the summer isn't over yet and if there's an opportunity, I would certainly want to visit the Agricultural Museum. I've been to so many but not the ag museum.

Mr. Cullen: Well, for the minister's information, the museum was first formed in 1951 and is located just adjacent to the town of Austin. And they held their first Threshermen's Reunion in 1952, and that event has been going on ever since.

And the site of the ground has expanded from 50 acres to 320 acres over the years. And, in fact, the museum is home to Canada's largest collection of vintage equipment, with over 500 pieces on the grounds. And the—and, certainly, the village has expanded; there's over 30 buildings there and thousands of artifacts located on that particular premise. And, certainly, the museum is not just a museum, but they also undertake various activities throughout the course of the year. So thousands of Manitobans and thousands of visitors from outside of the province also visit the particular—that particular museum throughout the course of the year.

And, hopefully, the minister will understand that this operation for the most part is run by volunteers from across Manitoba, and it is a non-profit corporation. And as such, the museum has been—had the ability to receive grants from the Province of Manitoba over the years, and I think it goes back, actually, to in the area of 1962 where the operation has been partially funded by the Province of Manitoba.

Does the minister know what funds were allocated to the museum from her department last year?

Ms. Marcelino: My information is this museum was transferred to our department in 1986, and, yes, I appreciate the member's information about it. And the ag museum is categorized as a Signature Museum, and—with the exception of the ag museum, Signature Museums receive \$55,800 in annual funding support. Due to a unique historical situation from the transfer from MAFRI, ag museum receives operating support in the amount of \$75,800, for a total funding of \$131,600.

Mr. Cullen: Does the minister have the actual dollar figure that was paid from her department for the past year?

Ms. Marcelino: In December 2010, the ag museum was notified that funding for 2010-2011 has been

suspended, and the ag museum requested reconsideration of the decision, and subsequently, the department restored \$65,800 in funding for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Mr. Cullen: Can I ask the minister why the full amount of the \$131,000 was not turned over to the museum?

Ms. Marcelino: Given that the Signature Museum Program has been operational for over 10 years and periodic review of grant programs is normal procedure, a review of the Signature Museum Program was initiated in July 2010 by Historic Resources to ensure consistency and best fit with grant eligibility criteria and policies.

Mr. Cullen: Will the minister undertake to forward to me the new criteria under the Signature Museum policy?

Ms. Marcelino: Yes, we'll be happy to provide that criteria document to you.

*(15:50)

Mr. Cullen: Does the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism receive any funds transferred from the Department of Agriculture for the operation of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have that information with me, and I will inquire from the other department if such a transaction did occur.

Mr. Cullen: Will the minister then provide me that response in writing?

Ms. Marcelino: Will do.

Mr. Cullen: In terms of the funding then for this year, the 2011-2012 grant year, what is the arrangement that has been made with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in terms of funding?

Ms. Marcelino: Based on the review findings, funding for the 2010-2011 fiscal year was false in response to ag museum's March 7 letter requesting reconsideration. The ag museum was advised that a one-time payment of \$65,800 to the museum was communicated on March 16, 2011, was warranted, reflecting two quarterly payments for the time period prior to the completion of the review based on program guidelines.

Going forward, the ag museum has been invited to apply to the Signature Museum Program for support for the next two years, 2011-2012 and

2012-2013, and to reconsider pursuing additional resources of up to \$10,000 related to the Threshermen's Reunion, through the department's community festivals and events program.

Mr. Cullen: Will the minister then confirm that no further funding for the 2010-2011 year be provided to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum through the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism?

Ms. Marcelino: As I previously mentioned, funding for 2010 and 2011 fiscal year was false, but a one-time payment of \$65,800 was communicated on March 16, 2011, as it was warranted.

Mr. Cullen: Is the minister aware of the letter sent by the Manitoba Agricultural Museum to her office, whereby the museum indicate that the funding cuts has become so serious as to threaten the operation of one of the rural Manitoba's premier attractions, and requires immediate, ministerial intervention? Is the minister familiar with that particular letter sent back in March, 2011?

Ms. Marcelino: Yes, I'm—I have seen the letter.

Mr. Cullen: What undertakings is the minister going to proceed with, now that she has seen the letter?

Ms. Marcelino: The department is undertaking an ongoing review of the grant support to this agency.

Mr. Cullen: Well, clearly, we're into—well into the second year, the year 2011-2012, and, obviously, they—the busy season is coming up for the Manitoba Agricultural Museum, and, obviously, they have a budget in place, based on historical numbers they have received from the Province. When can the board of directors there expect some resolution to this particular situation?

Ms. Marcelino: I will inquire from the department as to the status of this review. And I would like to mention—I don't know if the member is aware—that the museum has an accumulated—had accumulated over a five-year period a substantial and growing surplus fund of \$128,600 and—yes, that's the figure that this museum has as surplus.

Mr. Cullen: I think the minister would be aware there's probably some prudent budgeting going on there in terms of the board of directors looking at expanding this particular facility, and they certainly have done a lot of work there in the last few years and, you know, as I mentioned going back, a lot of this work is being done by volunteers. When you enter into a capital project, certainly \$120,000 doesn't go very far these days, as, you know, the

minister for Infrastructure could attest to. So I recognize that, luckily, the board has done their diligence and has actually saved a little bit of money over the years, recognizing that \$131,000 has been cut out of their budget. You know, in relation to that, \$120,000 doesn't look too significant.

So I would appreciate if the minister could get back to the board fairly quickly on this very urgent matter because, as I said, decisions have to be made in terms of capital projects for this year, and not only capital projects but, certainly, ongoing operational projects, and, as well, they're gearing for the annual Threshermen's Reunion, which certainly takes a lot of investment till you get that thing off the ground. So when will the minister be making the final assessment in terms of the—this current year?

Ms. Marcelino: I will endeavour to get back to—and respond to their inquiry, mindful of the oncoming Threshermen's Reunion.

Mr. Cullen: Well, just in closing here, I—and I read some comments from the board of directors here that say that the communication with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism has been horrible at best. So I certainly hope that the minister will endeavour to, hopefully, get discussions back on the rails so that, you know, the good work being done by volunteers over there at the museum will continue, and if we don't have the co-operation of the department, certainly the volunteers, you know, may be finding other things to do with their very valuable time.

So I hope the minister will endeavour to do that. And in terms of communication, I sent the letter—a letter to the minister myself back in November 25th of 2010, and to my knowledge I have not received a response from the minister's office in regard to this issue. So if the minister could endeavour to have a look at that, I would certainly appreciate a response to that letter as well.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the comments. We'll look into that.

*(16:00)

Mr. Cullen: Yes, there's one other issue relative to this that I would like the minister and her department to have a look at, and it goes back historically: the commitment made by the Province to fund the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. And I would like the minister to review the legislation that pertains to that—and I believe it could be through The Ag Societies Act—or any other relevant information

pertaining to the funding of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum, to see, first of all, the original intent of the legislation, and then, second of all, to see what changes were made to that particular legislation and the impacts that it has for both the Department of Agriculture and, as well, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

So I'm asking the minister and her department to undertake an investigation of the legislation pertaining to funding of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and thank you to the member. We'll endeavour to look into that.

Mrs. Driedger: It's brought to my attention that the sum of \$12,000 was given to two people to spend on promoting an ice fishing tournament on Lake Winnipeg. This money was supposed to have been used to advertise the event, which was held on January 9th of this year.

These two people, I am told, didn't really follow through, I guess, with the advertising. The person that was making me aware of it indicated that the advertising was abysmal to say the least, according to this person. And the general idea had to—the general idea had been to encourage teams of two persons per team to come up from the States and elsewhere and make it an annual event. They were anticipating 300 teams. However, only 30 teams were entered, of which two are from the States, two are from Saskatchewan and the remaining 26 teams were Manitobans.

So for \$12,000, according to the person that was in touch with me, they felt that—and this is this person's word, that the event was a total flop. And they were questioning—or they wanted me to put forward a question to the government, and that is: Are there any controls or checks in terms of how money like this is given out? Madam Chairperson, \$12,000 is a substantive amount, and there certainly wasn't the type of follow through by the people that had been awarded this money.

Can the minister indicate what type of controls or checks there are when money is given out to ensure that people are—you know, have a good case that they bring forward, that they can actually substantiate that they're going to be able to use the money properly, and that they've done their homework, and that they're going to achieve the

goals that they set out, because it certainly look like this did not happen in this case?

So can the minister just indicate in a case like this, you know, what controls or checks are in place before money is given out for such requests?

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to recognizing the honourable minister, I want to remind all members that there are loges if they wish to have private conversations.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and I thank the member for bringing it to our attention. Certainly grants—there are strict guidelines for grants, strict reporting required of grant recipients, and all these have to be reported. And if that were the case, this would be a serious breach of the grant guidelines. So we'd certainly look into that.

I'd like to know if it was through Travel Manitoba. Okay.

Mrs. Driedger: My understanding through a freedom of information that we directed to the minister's office, was that it had been a grant that had been for, you know, approved and sent through from Travel Manitoba.

Ms. Marcelino: Again, I thank the member for bringing it to our attention. We'll look into this—these are not acceptable.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This is for the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). Just to follow up on some discussion that we had in Estimates and a question that I asked in question period the other day around the new website that's being developed called Parent Zone in the Department of Family Services.

The minister indicated that Lissa Donner, who is the head of his Policy and Planning division, was the lead in his department on this, and also indicated that he had a briefing not many weeks before and that there was a roomful of people.

I wonder if he might indicate to me who else would have been at that meeting from his department and maybe from other departments across government to brief him on this initiative.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, just to confirm, the website is in development. There have been discussions in a number of quarters with other departments, including with Healthy Living, and I recall a meeting several weeks ago on this that involved individuals from my department, but, as I

recall, as well, there was representation there from the technology people that are outside of my department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister indicated in Estimates that there was a roomful of people, so I guess I might just ask him who those people were. He seemed to be able to recall the meeting and who the representatives were from I guess IT in his department, if I understood him correctly in his last answer, and what other departments would have been involved given that this is a cross-sectoral initiative?

Mr. Mackintosh: There was representation from Policy and Planning in my department, but I believe there were—well, I shouldn't just go by recollection. I can find out who attended from other departments, but I think it was—as I recall, I think it's ITM representation was there, somebody from the department that has a lead on technology.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And the cost for this website is \$250,000. Can the minister indicate how much of that \$250,000 is developmental costs?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'll check the record. I thought we had this conversation before, but if we didn't provide that information, I can look at that and get back to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And could the minister indicate to me that before concurrence is over he could get that information to me because I know that we'll probably be calling him more than once on successive days. So if he could have that information and provide it to me, I would like that commitment today.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we'll make best efforts to get that information. It may—I may not be able to get it immediately, but I'll certainly make best efforts to get it on a timely basis.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I have no idea what the development of a website cost might be. I'm not sure that it would be \$250,000, so I guess I would like a breakdown of the dollar figure that is being spent, and I would ask the minister whether there's any money in that number for a communication strategy.

Mr. Mackintosh: I believe there are development costs and, you know, awareness costs in there.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I guess the awareness costs would be communication strategy, and I'd like the

minister to indicate to me what the cost of communicating the new website will be.

Mr. Mackintosh: If we didn't provide that the other day, I can get that for the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, given that this is a new initiative and it's \$250,000, which is a significant amount of money when I know the minister has had to tell a lot of external organizations that there's not going to be any increase in their funding this year or a minimal increase in their funding, and I know that there are families out there with some real needs, some of them already have been very interested in what this minister's priorities are, and, as I communicate to them the new initiative that this minister has placed a priority on rather than funding real needs for children that have severe needs—and there are families out there in crisis—I know that they're very interested and wanting some answers from the minister on what this new initiative is.

And I would ask him: What is going to be included in the new website that is under development that isn't already available through other government departments?

Mr. Mackintosh: The member, I would suggest, should consult with the budget, where there have been some important and strategic and, in some places, very significant increases to investments in families and the well-being of those the department is committed to serve.

And, indeed, there is an overall 6 per cent increase in the Department of Family Services and Consumer Affairs. When it comes to the outside agencies that are providing social services, supports for vulnerable Manitobans, there are increases, both in terms of the types of services, but, as well, to their basic operating expenses this year, as the member canvassed with us in Estimates.

In terms of the member's position that information for families is not a real need, we certainly take issue with that. It's important that families know the services that are being made available to them. It's also important for families to have that easily accessible.

One of the things we heard very clearly from families over and over again is the need to be better informed about how they can access services and supports for their families and for their children in particular. That has been a constant theme in consultations that have taken place with stakeholders and with parents. And, indeed, the department has

been making some very notable improvements in how it communicates its services, and it has to do even better, particularly given the advent of new technology.

So, as we are developing information for the public about the services available, we have to also keep in mind that there has to be an emphasis on co-ordinating that information and providing a portal that is readily usable by busy Manitoba parents.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, as I look to the website that already exists under Healthy Child Manitoba, I see that it indicates, right up front, that putting—that it puts children and families first and that every child should have the best possible start in life. And Healthy Child Manitoba is the government of Manitoba's long-term, cross-departmental strategy for putting children and families first. With its community partners, the Province of Manitoba has developed a network of supports and strategies for children, youth and families. And there are pages and pages and pages of information on what services and supports government provides to families through Healthy Child Manitoba.

So, I guess I would like to ask the minister: What's different, and why, now, is government changing its focus away from Healthy Child Manitoba and moving the focus to the Department of Family Services rather than just continuing? I mean, is the government moving away from the Healthy Child initiative? And why, now, is this minister the lead on providing information and supports and services for healthy families and healthy children?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member appears to have some misunderstanding about what Healthy Child Manitoba is all about. It's a co-ordinating department. It's—Healthy Child Committee, for example, is where ministers get together and talk about the strategies, strategies we often have in common. There are many strategies in government that operate outside of Healthy Child that, of course, serve families and children and that remains. Most notably, of course, if the member's description of Healthy Child was acted on by any future government, she would have Education and Family Services within the family—within the Healthy Child portfolio which, of course, was never the intent. It was, instead, to develop some common approaches to look to determine what new leading edge initiative should be introduced to Manitoba. But the delivery of services to children and families happens across many, many departments and, in fact, all of the

ministers on the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet are, in some way, delivering services to families and to children.

So her idea that Healthy Child was to be a consolidation of program delivery is wrong. It is not that. Some programs are delivered from Healthy Child Manitoba and, in fact, we've seen some very good, effective programs introduced, directly administered by Healthy Child. But other departments not only provide child and family programming, but there are new initiatives under the Healthy Child initiative—or Healthy Child Manitoba umbrella that are developed in different departments and delivered in different departments. For example, in Justice, we had initiatives there that were under the Healthy Child umbrella. I think of Turnabout, for example. I think in terms of Family Services, Family Choices, the child-care initiative, is under the umbrella of Healthy Child Manitoba. It is not delivered by Healthy Child Manitoba administratively, but it is done in co-operation and in a co-ordinated way.

So that doesn't detract at all from the important role of Healthy Child Manitoba putting children and families first. It's up to all of our departments, as we serve children and family, to look for better ways to deliver services and make sure that the information about those services is readily available for modern families.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the last time I looked a website did not deliver services. A website linked the services that are provided right throughout government, through Healthy Child. And, I guess, I'm just asking the question today, and, I mean, I'm not stupid, and I do know that there are many government departments and we would never have one government department that deals with children, and we know that there are services and supports to children right across government departments. But the reality is that this government talks incessantly about Healthy Living and Healthy Child and how the focus is to try to ensure that there is a link, interdepartmentally, across departments that provide services and supports to children. That is done through Healthy Child in numerous places on the Healthy Child website.

* (16:20)

So, I guess I'd like to ask the minister, because he seems to think that I don't understand, what services and supports this new website is going to

provide? What programming is this website going to provide?

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Chair, I believe the—an answer to an earlier question there—I believe there's a representative from the business technology and transformation office, Innovation, Energy and Mines, that attended the meeting to answer that.

The member wants to make a case that a parenting-help website isn't a service, and I fail to understand how she can make that case that providing information awareness, access to services, access to tips on parenting is not a service. That's just extraordinary to me. And I know that the member doesn't think that providing supports for struggling families may be helpful, and she can take that point forward if she wishes. But it is a tough but extremely, in fact, arguably the most important job, to provide effective parenting, to raise upstanding children, and sometimes it seems like parenting is not getting any easier. It sounds to me like the member wants to keep it that way.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: I'd just like to quote from the website that is already here from Healthy Child that talks about Healthy Child Manitoba, and it talks about how it works to support children within strong communities. It talks about the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet that co-ordinates everything. It talks about the vision, missions and goals that the—indicate that the best possible outcomes for all Manitoba children is part of the mandate of Healthy Child Manitoba. It talks about programs and supports that are in place. It talks about Families First and how to, if you're expecting a baby, if you're a parent or if you are the parent of an infant or pre-school child, Families First may help you. It talks about the FASD strategy. It talks about having a baby. What is the Healthy Baby program? What is the importance of breastfeeding?

All of these things are already available on a government website. So I'd like the minister to try to explain to me what's going to be new on this website that is under development, and why isn't the lead for this under Healthy Child Manitoba? Why, now, are we moving some of the focus away from what is already existing on government websites?

I've got pages and pages, so maybe the minister could tell me what's new about this to warrant spending a quarter of a million dollars of taxpayers' money when we've already talked about families out

there that are in crisis, families that are needing a little more support in real services for their children. Why is this quarter of a million dollars a priority for this government and this minister, and why is the focus being moved away from Healthy Child Manitoba to the Department of Family Services?

Mr. Mackintosh: First there's been involvement of Healthy Child, Healthy Living in reviewing possible contents and links for the website. Of course, the provision of family services is an important job of the Department of Family Services. And, in terms of a focus, the respective departments are always looking for ways to better communicate what they are doing, make it—make the services readily available, but, as well, to make sure that it's made easy for parents, in this case, to access information that can help them in their parenting duties.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But that information is already available under Healthy Child Manitoba. It's there. It's in black and white. It's on the website. There are pages and pages and pages of information. I want to know what's new.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member wants to make some decisions or make some judgments about a website that she hasn't even seen, that has not been fully constructed yet. So I would urge the member to make that determination when she actually sees the content, and the approach, and the relationship, that is—that the website concludes with other websites and information about departmental services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I might ask the minister, rather than a wait-and-see attitude, why wouldn't he just take the quarter of a million dollars, \$250,000 that was buried in a line within his department, probably hoping that no one would discover it—why wouldn't he just take that money and put it into real services for families that need that service?

And I know that I've heard from many different communities, and organizations, and parents, that are scrambling to try to find the resources to deal with really significant, troubling issues within their families and they can't get that support. And this minister and his department have said that there's no new money for these kinds of things.

I mean, if the website hasn't been developed, I might just ask him whether he would consider redirecting that money into real programs and real services for families in need, because they are out there and I hear from them on a daily basis.

So I would just ask him today if he would reconsider because he hasn't been able to give me any concrete answer today on why \$250,000 in taxpayers' money is going into development of a new website when the information, it already exists. And if he can explain to me what's new about this today then maybe he could satisfy me and satisfy Manitoba taxpayers and families that need supports. But, if he can't justify that to me today, I'm going to ask him to reconsider spending that money in development of a new website, when all they need to do is take a look at what already exists.

And I know that the minister talked to me in Estimates about how it would give parents tips on why it's important to breastfeed; that information is already there on the Healthy Living website. He indicated that families needed to know about bullying; that information is already there on a website in the Department of Education.

The information is there. Why would this minister and his government be wasting a quarter of a million dollars when there are families that need that kind of support? And I'd just like him to try to answer that for me, and tell those families that are asking me, that are crying out, that are in crisis, and that are being told that there's no new money in government. Could he just try to explain to those families, maybe, and justify the reason or the need to build a website to include everything that is already on the website under Healthy Child?

*(16:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first of all, when the member is saying there's no new money in government to help families, I refer the member to the Estimates and to the budget that they voted against for some recollection as to the new investments that are being made and, in particular, for struggling families, with services.

In terms of the member's statement that this would be a waste, you know, there are a lot of books in the library, but you have to know where to find the book that can help you out, and as websites have proliferated it's important that busy families know where to find the website that works best for them, where there are trusted answers and trusted advice, so that is a part of the underlying approach here.

It's also, of course, to recognize that, despite what the member says, that information or awareness isn't a service, one of the most important services is to make sure that Manitobans know what

investments are being made to help them so that they can access that and put it to work so they can raise healthy, upstanding children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, but this government has spent significant amount of resource focusing families on Healthy Child and the Healthy Living department within government to get the information that they need. What now is this government going to do to try to redirect them to Family Services to get that kind of information?

Mr. Mackintosh: You know, I can recall even meeting with the parents of children with disabilities and hearing loud and clear, as their most important and immediate concern, that being access to the services that are available to assist them in raising a child with a disability. I often hear a surprise from stakeholders, when I meet with them, at learning of the services that are in place that taxpayers fund and that governments deliver, whether it's provincial government or other levels of government, as well as non-profit organizations and others. There—it is a constant theme that I hear from the public, and from parents in particular.

I think it's unfortunate that, historically, public services have not been communicated perhaps as plainly as we would like and, in fact, we know that the whole need to plain-language documents doesn't just start and end with statutes. We've discovered over the last number of years how government publications that were meant to explain services are not written in language that is clearly accessible for those who would benefit from the services themselves. So there's a lot of work that has to be done to communicate what is available, what help is out there, what the best ideas are to assist those that we have pledged to serve.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And the minister indicated in Estimates—when I asked him why the quarter of a million dollars fell under supplies and services in the Early Learning and Child Care budget line in the department, his answer to me was, and I quote: "I'm advised that the department had to park the investment somewhere in the Estimates."

Well, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I wonder if he could just expand a little bit on that, and, I mean, how many other things have been parked in the department's departmental Estimates somewhere because they don't really fit? I mean, he's indicating to me that this initiative doesn't fit anywhere within his department and it had to be parked here.

So what's the justification for it even being parked in this department? Why isn't it parked in Healthy Child Manitoba where it rightly belongs? If it's a website that is going to talk about services and supports to children across government, why is it being parked in Family Services under the Child Care budget line?

Mr. Mackintosh: The initiative fits, of course, entirely within Family Services because that's what it is; it's a family service.

In terms of where it is displayed in the Estimates, the dilemma was it bears on all divisions within the department, so it had to go somewhere, and the placement of it was one that the department thought was appropriate in all those circumstances.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And is it going to link to Health?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, there are links.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And is it going to link to the Department of Education?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, there will be links to Education as well.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What other departments will it link to?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I can provide further information on that one, and I should advise the member that it's not concluded, but when I said it crosses all divisions, I meant divisions within Family Services and Consumer Affairs, arguably, except Finance and Administration. But it—the services provided by the department, of course, are essentially services to families.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So is the Parent Zone website only going to be related to services that are provided by the Department of Family Services, or is it going to be linked to services that are provided to children through the Department of Health?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's right.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And it also will be related to services that are provided to children through the Department of Education?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's right.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And it also will be linked to services that are provided under Healthy Child and Healthy Living, within that department?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I thank the minister for being straight up and forthright with those answers, but I guess, then, the question becomes, if it is intersectoral, if it is crossing departmental lines, if it's talking about supports and services to all government departments that support children, why isn't it located under Healthy Child?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Department of Family Services provides family services. That's where the development staff are located in concert with other departments, including Healthy Child.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the minister has just made my case. The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet bridges departments and governments and together with the community works to improve the well-being of Manitoba's children and youth. And that comes right off the website on Healthy Child Manitoba.

It's already there. It's in black and white. You can push a button on your computer and you can link to what Healthy Child Manitoba does, and it brings the Department of Family Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and every other department within government together under Healthy Child.

So the minister has made my case. This isn't a Family Services initiative. It was an initiative that had to be parked under Child Care, hidden, buried in a line within his department, and, Mister—or, Madam Chair, I have now just—

An Honourable Member: She's just discovered.

*(16:40)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, no, I haven't just discovered, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) says. Maybe the Minister of Finance should have been a little more diligent at Treasury Board when this initiative came forward, and maybe she should have asked the same kinds of questions that I have asked today, because we now have the bureaucracy within the Department of Family Services creating something that already exists within government, and we've got \$250,000 of taxpayers' money that is being spent on the development of a website that already exists within government. And I know that the organizations that the minister supports will be very interested in knowing where his priorities are, and his priorities aren't necessarily in supporting the families in need, because I've heard from some of

those families that aren't getting the support that they need.

So I will be very diligent in sharing with families and organizations out there the kind of priorities that this minister has, and we will move on from that. But I know that the minister hasn't heard the last from me on this issue because I know that there will be further questions as parents and families and service providers look to this government and see that the increase in support hasn't been there for them, hasn't been there for the families in crisis, but it's there to do a feel-good ad campaign, and I'm sure there'll be a significant ad campaign.

And I look forward tomorrow to getting the information, or when I get the minister back in concurrence in the next day or two, for the detailed information around the \$250,000 because I know that any new initiatives that have to go through the Treasury Board process, so they would have been taken to Treasury Board, they would have been approved.

And so the detail and the proposal for the new program should be there, and I'm hopeful that the minister will be upfront and will indicate to me what the plans for the expenditure of the \$250,000 in this budget line are. And I look forward to getting that information.

I don't know if the minister wants to respond or maybe I should just move on to another area that I have some questions and concerns with.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the Department of Family Services is bound and determined to make sure that the provision of services to families is enhanced, including awareness of services and supports and ways to make parenting easier. We see that as a core function of the department and one that is being developed with Healthy Child and other departments of government. So we're not going to abandon family services in the Family Services Department, even though we do have a leading edge co-ordinating effort through Healthy Child, because this is co-ordinated through Healthy Child as part of that structure.

But, Madam Chair, the member is certainly—I find it interesting—making certain judgments and determinations about a website that has not been launched and is in development stage. So she might want to reserve her comment and criticism until she sees what that website can do for parents, recognizing the proliferation of websites out there

and the need for a way for parents to get their answers quicker and easier.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I guess once I find out how much the communication budget is for the Parents Zone website, I may be able to then make some further comment. But my sense would be that—and the minister can prove me wrong by bringing back different information—that there's going to be a significant amount of that \$250,000 spent on communication to make the government look good, when that \$250,000 could be spent on actual programs for individual children that need the kind of support that they're not getting from this minister. And I know that some of the supports that aren't being provided are intersectoral supports where we have two different government departments sending different messages to families that need support.

So I will move on and look forward to getting the detailed information on how much is going to be spent on communication and what the communication strategy is for the website.

Madam Chairperson, I want to just ask a few questions. I don't know whether the minister has had any complaints or any concerns raised with him from foster parents who are indicating that agencies are significantly behind in providing the special needs support for children that are in those foster families.

Has there been any comment? Has he received any letters or any communication from any families that are saying that, you know, they've paid for child care and they haven't been reimbursed for months, that they've had transportation costs to take their foster children to appointments and that agencies are significantly behind in reimbursing those foster families for those kinds of supports?

Mr. Mackintosh: I expect that those complaints would more commonly, if, in fact, they're arising, be directed at the agencies themselves or perhaps the authorities. But I'm not aware of a pattern of complaint, but that doesn't mean we haven't had concerns raised. I can check with the department to determine if any pattern of complaint has been recognized or if there's anything recently developing in terms of that—of such a pattern.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Madam Chairperson, and I have had concerns raised and I was just wondering whether the minister had heard those concerns. I usually tell them or direct families to contact the department, because I think it's important that the minister know, because I know there's been a

significant energy and recruitment of foster families. And then, when foster families don't receive the kinds of supports that they should get, I'm afraid that we may lose foster families as a result.

I know the minister wouldn't want that to happen or I wouldn't want that to happen either. But, if it's the agency that is behind in payments to foster families, I guess I would just like to ask the minister what he would suggest these families do if they have attempted to get the proper reimbursement and the agency fails to provide that. What is their recourse and what would he recommend that families do?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, assuming that these concerns that the member's heard about aren't related to a dispute about the amount that's owing or documentation that the agency may be expecting or requiring, I certainly would share the member's concern that payments should always be timely. The importance of foster parenting can be reflected in such a timely payment approach, and I certainly would support that there be action to move along payments that are significantly overdue.

So perhaps as a start, if the member could provide any circumstances that have come to her attention where there is a delayed payment, and then I can ask the officials in the Child Protection branch to take the necessary steps to deal with the agency or the authority in question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and because there is now with the whole new process of agencies and authorities and department, there's a, you know, another level of bureaucracy that sort of isolates the minister from a lot of these issues. And I mean—I guess I'm just asking the minister because he is in charge. If the foster family doesn't receive satisfaction from the agency, where should the foster family go? What is their next step?

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: The next step is usually, and, in these circumstances, would be the authority. But, again, if the member has some—a case or some cases where there is a delayed payment, I would be happy to have my officials look into it, and they can work with the authority.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Because I'm just—I'm struggling a little bit, because I know I've had instances where I'm not really sure what the chain of command is. Maybe the minister could explain to me what role the director within the department has. Because I do know with the whole devolution process and the

authorities act that delegation of the director's powers, I believe, have been given to the authority. So I—is the director, in his department, the ultimate authority, or are there people within the general authority, the northern authority, the southern authority and the Métis authority that have delegation of powers that the director would have? I'm just wondering if you might clarify that for me.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, nothing within the devolution structure detracts from the obligations of agencies to be responsive and timely in the payment of amounts that are outstanding, that are owing to a family, a foster family, that may have made proper claims for whether it's travel or respite costs and so on. The agencies are the front line for the payment of those kinds of claims and, as I say, nothing changes.

The authorities oversee the agencies, and the agencies are, of course, accountable to the authorities, and the authorities to the Province, but, as the member knows, the Province is dedicated to working with the parties and finding resolution to issues that come to the attention of the branch. And that really is based on the relationships that have developed and continue to develop with the new structure.

So, if the member does have some concerns in this regard, as I say, I certainly will pass it on to the officials, and they can make the necessary efforts to have the matter resolved. And the other benefit of the matter coming to my attention and to the attention of the branch, when it comes to timely payments, is to determine if, in fact, there is any pattern of concern or complaint or if there's any breakdown that might be happening. It—maybe it's one agency or not. So I think that that information would be useful. We always want to make sure that if there are developing trends that aren't in the interests of the foster parent support system, we would want to hear about that and we'll take the necessary steps to deal with the proper officials.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I want to thank the minister for that, but I guess there's still a question that I need clarified or answered. Does the director of child welfare in the branch have ultimate authority through legislation over the—all of the authorities which have responsibility for accountability of the agencies? So are—do the authorities then—are they on a level playing field with the director? Has the delegation of power of the director been given to the authorities, or does the director of child welfare in the minister's branch or office have ultimate authority? Can his

office, through his director of child welfare—what's the word I'm looking for—have ultimate control over the authorities? Are the authorities accountable to the director and, ultimately, to the minister?

Mr. Mackintosh: The authorities are accountable for provincial spending and for provincial standards to the Province. That's the legislative scheme that the member is also privy to.

But, in terms of, for example, the payment for outstanding claims by foster parents, that's an issue that the director would not likely directly get involved with but would raise the issue with the authority, asking for accountability in terms of the timelines and what the policy is that might be in place. It may be that as a result of that information it's discovered that there are widely varying approaches or policies in place in terms of the payment of monies to foster parents, which would be I think of interest to the government because we do have a policy in place to support foster parents and attract them to opening their homes for children and so it may be a broader interest.

So, using that example, my history with the department has demonstrated, has shown that the director does have the ability to work with authorities to strengthen approaches and, you know, in particular cases, of course, can take a direction—a direct action if, in fact, that is required to protect a child. But the devolution has worked in a way that has enabled some good relationships to be built and we want to see that continue.

So that's why it's important not to let a matter fester like this one. If there is information available that an agency, or maybe more than one, may be delinquent in payments, then I think we should have the information so we can act on it, and I trust that the director can take the necessary steps to do whatever is necessary.

In some cases there have been directives issued when it came to—when it comes to administrative matters. I shouldn't say that if a late payment is a unique case—there is an action if, in fact, it looks like there may be a pattern that undermines our ability to support foster parents across Manitoba. We have seen administrative actions or policies, or lack of policies, at agencies dealt with by way of a directive and a notice to authorities, and whether that would be the case here, we would have to look at the complaints that the member is talking about.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member for River East, for a short question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just a short question.

I think we need to move away from the whole payment to foster parents issue, and I guess I'm just looking for accountability and structure.

And the minister may not have time to answer my question today, but I guess I'm wondering if, in fact, there is a significant concern around protection of a child, if there isn't a response from the agency or from the authority, does the branch, through the directorate, have the ability to direct that a child be dealt with in a different way?

Does the directorate have the ultimate authority or are the authorities on a level playing field with the directorate?

Madam Chairperson: I have to put something on the record here, so I'm not going to be able to give the minister the opportunity to respond.

Just prior to rising at 5 p.m., will the opposition please indicate on the record whether questioning is completed for the Ministers of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Family Services and Consumer Affairs and for Housing and Community Development, or will questioning of these ministers continue the next time the committee meets to continue consideration of concurrence?

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, the ministers will be asked questions again tomorrow.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 24, 2011

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