

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon. | St. Vital | NDP |
| ALLUM, James | Fort Garry-Riverview | NDP |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | NDP |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon. | Thompson | NDP |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon. | Gimli | NDP |
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| BRAUN, Erna | Rossmere | NDP |
| BRIESE, Stuart | Agassiz | PC |
| CALDWELL, Drew | Brandon East | NDP |
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| DRIEDGER, Myrna | Charleswood | PC |
| EICHLER, Ralph | Lakeside | PC |
| EWASKO, Wayne | Lac du Bonnet | PC |
| FRIESEN, Cameron | Morden-Winkler | PC |
| GAUDREAU, Dave | St. Norbert | NDP |
| GERRARD, Jon, Hon. | River Heights | Liberal |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin | Steinbach | PC |
| GRAYDON, Cliff | Emerson | PC |
| HELWER, Reg | Brandon West | PC |
| HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon. | Fort Rouge | NDP |
| IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon. | Fort Richmond | NDP |
| JHA, Bidhu | Radisson | NDP |
| KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon. | Swan River | NDP |
| LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon. | Dawson Trail | NDP |
| MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon. | St. Johns | NDP |
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| MALOWAY, Jim | Elmwood | NDP |
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| MARCELINO, Ted | Tyndall Park | NDP |
| MELNICK, Christine, Hon. | Riel | NDP |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie | River East | PC |
| NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom | Interlake | NDP |
| OSWALD, Theresa, Hon. | Seine River | NDP |
| PALLISTER, Brian | Fort Whyte | PC |
| PEDERSEN, Blaine | Midland | PC |
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| REID, Daryl, Hon. | Transcona | NDP |
| ROBINSON, Eric, Hon. | Kewatinook | NDP |
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| ROWAT, Leanne | Riding Mountain | PC |
| SARAN, Mohinder | The Maples | NDP |
| SCHULER, Ron | St. Paul | PC |
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| SELINGER, Greg, Hon. | St. Boniface | NDP |
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| STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon. | Dauphin | NDP |
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| WHITEHEAD, Frank | The Pas | NDP |
| WIEBE, Matt | Concordia | NDP |
| WIGHT, Melanie | Burrows | NDP |
| WISHART, Ian | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | Morris | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 9, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, colleagues. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no bills, we'll move on to petitions.

Any petitions? Seeing no petitions, we'll move on to—

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Second Report

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on September 5, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel)/Loi modifiant le Code*

de la route (sécurité du personnel d'urgence et des agents d'exécution de la loi)

- **Bill (No. 31)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*
- **Bill (No. 34)** – *The Property Registry Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'Office d'enregistrement des titres et des instruments*
- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Emergency Measures Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence*
- **Bill (No. 40)** – *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation*
- **Bill (No. 208)** – *The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act/Loi sur le dépistage systématique des déficiences auditives chez les nouveau-nés*
- **Bill (No. 211)** – *The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act/Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. ASHTON*
- *Ms. BLADY*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mrs. DRIEDGER*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GAUDREAU*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Hon. Mr. RONDEAU*
- *Mrs. ROWAT*
- *Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS*

Your Committee elected Mr. JHA as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. BLADY as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during committee proceedings:

- *Mr. EWASKO for Mr. EICHLER*

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following nine presentations on **Bill (No. 31) – The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail**:

Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU

Dave Sauer, Winnipeg Labour Council

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Cory Szczepanski, The Brandon & District Labor Council

Choele Chapple, Manitoba Association for Rights & Liberties (MARRL)

Rob Hilliard, UFCW

Clint Wirth, Private Citizen

Michelle Balina, Vice President, Manitoba Hydro, Cupe Local 998

Marty Dolin, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 37) – The Emergency Measures Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence**:

Kenton Friesen, IAEM - The International Association of Emergency Managers – Canadian Council

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 40) – The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation**:

Marianne Cerilli, Winnipeg Social Planning Council

Lynne Summerville, Private Citizen

Gordon McIntyre, Winnipeg Rental Network

Brian Grant, Private Citizen

Josh Brandon, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 208) – The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act/Loi sur le dépistage systématique des déficiences auditives chez les nouveau-nés**:

Andrea Richardson-Lipon, Private Citizen

Dr. Sharen Ritterman, Private Citizen

Maureen Penko, Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association

Diana Dinon, Private Citizen

Darren Leitao, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 2) – The Highway Traffic**

Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel)/Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité du personnel d'urgence et des agents d'exécution de la loi):

Doug Dobrowolski, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 31) – The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail**:

Ben Kolisnyk, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 34) – The Property Registry Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'Office d'enregistrement des titres et des instruments**:

Peter Currie, Ontario Association of Professional Searchers of Record

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 37) – The Emergency Measures Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence**:

Doug Dobrowolski, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

John Lindsay, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 2) – The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel)/Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité du personnel d'urgence et des agents d'exécution de la loi)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 31) – The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 17(5) of the Bill be amended by replacing the proposed subsection 40(13) with the following:

Training of committee members

40(13) The employer or prime contractor must ensure that committee members are trained to

competently fulfill their duties as committee members.

THAT Clause 18(2) of the Bill be amended by replacing the proposed subsection 41(8) with the following:

Training of representative

41(8) The employer must ensure that the representative is trained to competently fulfill his or her duties as a representative.

- **Bill (No. 34)** – The Property Registry Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'Office d'enregistrement des titres et des instruments

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 37)** – The Emergency Measures Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 40)** – The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 11 of the Bill be amended in the proposed subsection 160.2(5) by striking out "five" and substituting "seven".

THAT Clause 12 of the Bill be amended by striking out Clause 12(2).

- **Bill (No. 208)** – The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act/Loi sur le dépistage systématique des déficiences auditives chez les nouveau-nés

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 1(2) of the Bill be amended by striking out "the most recent recommendations of the Canadian Working Group on Childhood Hearing with respect to infants" and substituting "the regulations".

THAT Clause 4 of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Regulations

4 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) designating classes of persons as health professionals for the purpose of the definition "health professional" in subsection 1(1);

(b) for the purpose of subsection 1(2), respecting the manner in which screenings for hearing loss must be conducted.

THAT Clause 6 of the Bill be amended by striking out "the day it receives royal assent" and substituting "September 1, 2016".

- **Bill (No. 211)** – The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act/Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Jha: I move, seconded by the honourable member from Kirkfield Park, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports? Seeing none—

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): It's my pleasure to table the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography in Manitoba: Cybertip.ca's 2012-2013 Annual Review.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none—

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Ms. Sandra Horyski, who is the guest of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Impact on Manitobans

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it's been a long, hot summer sitting here in this Legislature, and I want to say I have been really proud to be part of a team that has worked really hard on behalf of Manitoba families. We've asked this NDP government and we've said to this NDP government, enough wild spending, enough tax grabs, enough breaking the law, enough bullying and enough disrespect.

I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Has he listened?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Our Premier's listened very carefully to Manitoba families who said don't cut health care, don't cut education. We've listened very carefully to Manitoba families who have said invest in infrastructure, invest in hospitals and invest in schools. They've told us to invest in roads, they've told us to invest in bridges, and that's what we're doing.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have a right to fear this tax-and-spend NDP government. They've been gouged at every level, and who knows when and where the next tax hit is going to be.

This NDP government promised not to raise taxes in the last election. They promised not to raise the PST. This NDP government lied to Manitobans in the last election and raised the PST, and now, two months after jacking up the PST, this NDP government has taken \$50 million out of the pockets and purses of Manitoba families.

So I'd like to ask this Premier to stop his tax grab and put that money back into the hands of Manitobans. It's their money. It's \$50 million. Will he do that?

Mr. Struthers: I suppose what Manitobans should fear is the official Leader of the Opposition, who wants to, Mr. Speaker, cut deeply into services that really count for Manitoba families.

The member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) has been very clear. He wants to cancel the school that we announced for Sage Creek. He wants to cancel the school that we announced for Amber Trails. He wants to cancel the school in Waverley West.

That doesn't help one single Manitoba family and that does nothing to build our Manitoba economy, which is what we've been doing for the past number of years.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Cutting 192 spinners is not going to hurt Manitoba families. Cutting the vote tax is not going to hurt Manitoba families.

What's hurting Manitoba families is this NDP government, who doesn't know how to stop spending. Even a presenter at public hearings said that they are spending like drunken sailors. The problem, however, is that it's going to be Manitobans that are going to be left with a hangover after this government gets done with all its spending. This government keeps spending more and more and more, and they gleefully do it.

I would like to ask this Premier: Will he reverse their poor decision to illegally jack up the PST or at least will he call a referendum and give the voice back to the people?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Another sector that Manitobans are very concerned about is health care, when the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) stands up and commits himself to a two-tier system of health care, for-'pri'-profit, private health care, Mr. Speaker.

And if we want to talk about presentations that were made to the Legislature, a Mr. John McDonald said he was a good Conservative Party member because the Leader of the Official Opposition endorses two-tier health care. That's the Conservative position, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, Conservatives across the way, they want to close the Mental Health Crisis Response Centre. They want to close the access centre—NorWest Access Centre. They want to shut down QuickCare cancer clinics—

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend many Manitobans were signing up for various programs and extracurricular

activities for their children and for themselves. Due to the—due to the 14 per cent PST increase, Manitobans are going to have to do with less.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Finance Minister feel Manitoba's money is better off in the government's chequing account than hard-working Manitobans'? Do the right thing, pull Bill 20 and call a referendum.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, doing the right thing does not include cutting from health care and cutting from education, as members opposite have been very clear on.

Further to what I have mentioned already, personal-care homes in places like Winnipeg and Niverville—I wonder if the member from Morden-Winkler agrees with his leader in terms of cancelling the personal-care home in Morden-Winkler that we've announced.

Mr. Speaker, a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase to the PST is going to be invested in those exact kind of things. It's going to be invested in the priorities of Manitoba families. It's going to be used to grow our provincial economy, and I think we can all agree it's a good thing to grow our provincial economy.

Impact on Families

Mr. Ewasko: With the 14 per cent increase—14 per cent PST increase, the Johnson family from Beausejour are going to see \$2,400 leave their account this year because of this increase. They have enrolled their four boys into hockey. Before they even step on the ice, they are shelling out almost \$2,800, which does not include any gas, equipment or any other activity for this coming winter. They're going to have to make some real tough decisions financially this coming winter, Mr. Speaker, to watch their bottom line.

Why does this government feel they can continue spending hard-working Manitobans' money without having to be financially responsible or accountable themselves, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, that same family that the member for Lac du Bonnet references will also see the benefits of \$622 million for building and repairing roads in this province. That same family in the Lac du Bonnet area will see the continued benefit of more RCMP officers in rural Manitoba. That same family will see investments in child-care spaces, Mr. Speaker, in that very region of the province.

So our intent has been very clear. We've been open and accountable to Manitobans. We have said

exactly where the 1 cent on the—increase would be going, Mr. Speaker. And we will stand in this House and report on that back to Manitobans, according to Bill 20.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Referendum Request

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, this government is raking in \$500 million due to their 14 per cent PST hike. And each member of the NDP caucus are taking \$5,000 per member each and every year from the vote tax. This is all after the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said in the last election he was not going to raise taxes.

The Johnson family is spending \$2,800 this year for hockey registration, without getting into any of their other expenses, Mr. Speaker.

Why is this government forcing the Johnson family and many other hard-working Manitoban families to make tough decisions at their dinner table, Mr. Speaker? Pull Bill 20 and call a referendum.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, that Johnson family in his constituency is living in one of the most affordable provinces in this country. And the household disposable income in Manitoba is forecast to be plus 3.8 per cent; that's above Canada's 3.4 per cent.

We understand how hard Manitoba families work to earn their money. We get that. And it's not an easy decision to raise by 1 cent on the dollar the revenue that we need to invest back into roads and schools and hospitals.

But this side of the government—this side of the House—this government understands that we have a responsibility to keep building our province and investing in health care and investing in education, investing in roads and bridges—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Tax Increases Employment Rate

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, job numbers are out for the month of August, and Manitoba is once again at the bottom of the barrel thanks to the NDP. This government's high-tax policies have led to a lower participation rate, less

people employed, less people looking for work in the province.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government chasing people out of the province, and when will they turn this economy around, drop the PST?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is this side of the House that has said we're going to invest in training programs for young Manitobans. And it's this side of the House that has said we're going to invest in infrastructure in the province of Manitoba.

Members opposite talked about families making tough decisions; 3,100 people left the province every year. Imagine the decisions being made in the no-growth '90s, when they said, there is no future in this province, we're going elsewhere.

Our population is 1 million, 277 thousand strong. It's grown by 135,000 in 10 years.

We're the party that's building the province. We're not the naysayers in the Chamber opposite.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the people are leaving the province in droves today. You would think that talk is cheap, but apparently it costs 14 per cent more with the NDP.

Less people looking for work in this province means one thing: Workers are leaving this economy to work somewhere with lower taxes. Business owners are struggling to afford the employees because there's no business.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government doing everything short of filling up the gas tanks for people to get out of this province? When will they drop the PST?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the only people I see leaving the province are the Rider fans after yesterday's great victory.

But I did engage many of the Rider fans when I was there cheering on my true blue team yesterday. And what did they say? They said, wow, what an amazing stadium you have here. And who voted against that stadium? Members opposite did. Mr. Speaker, 33,500 people were really, really loud yesterday, especially about 33,000 of us; the other 500, not so much. But we invested in that stadium. We built that stadium.

We're building Manitoba. We're going to continue to build Manitoba. We're going to continue

to train tradesmen to continue to build this province, and I'm going to speak about that in my next answer, Mr. Speaker, about the good news about building permits here in the province of Manitoba.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, there's two things that are shrinking here: the usefulness of the NDP talking points and the economy. It's time they woke up to both.

With fewer people looking for work in this province and higher taxes all around, Manitoba business owners are getting less and less competitive every day. Employees are leaving and the Manitoba economy is struggling.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister start believing the facts, stop with the rhetoric and keep business and employees in this economy? Will he call a referendum on the PST, give Manitobans a voice?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would appreciate Stats Canada's speaking points, building permits for July indicating that Manitoba has experienced an increase of 60.9 per cent year over year, an increase of 36.9 per cent month over month. Both residential, non-residential were up over last year at 7.7 per cent and 169 per cent, respectively.

And who is going to be building these buildings? That would be the tradespeople that we're investing in.

Members opposite want to cut funding to education. They want to cut a whole bunch of infrastructure projects. I mean, I was flabbergasted to learn what the member opposite suggested, that he wants to cut the school in Sage Creek, the school in Amber Trails, the school in Waverley West, cancel the quick 'clare cinics'—clinics. All—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Student Financial Aid Information System Project Costs

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the Minister of Advanced Education allocated \$14.3 million for a new student financial aid system. Today, that number is well in excess of

\$15 million, and post-secondary students are still using the pre-existing system.

My question is simple: Why does the minister refuse to disclose the full cost, and where did more than \$15 million go?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): The member is right: The students are using that system, and when they're on it, they're getting bursaries, something they couldn't do when they were in office.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when you have to renew things. We're renewing roads in these province. We're building hospitals. We're building personal-care homes, and we're also renewing the student financial aid system.

Now, that's a complicated thing to do, and we knew going into it would be, but that's not enough for us to say, put the brakes on spending. No, we're going to make sure that students have access to bursaries in this province, they have access to grants in this province, and we do have an online system that they're using, in fact, in record numbers. We've got more students going to the University of Manitoba this year than ever before.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the minister still refuses to answer the question.

More than \$15 million has been spent under her watch and she has nothing to show for it; they're still using the pre-existing system.

The NDP government has 18 ministries. Advanced Ed has misspent over \$15 million.

Considering the poor fiscal management of this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), would he disclose whether there are similar levels of waste in other departments?

Ms. Selby: Well, Mr. Speaker, investing in education isn't considered a waste by this government.

I guess, Mr. Speaker—did you know that they considered investing in post-secondary systems or post-secondary institutions a waste? And I guess that's why they cut or froze funding to post-secondary institutions for five years straight while they were in office. I guess, also, they consider making an affordable and accessible system a waste, and that's why they raised the tuition fees by 132 per cent while they were in office.

We don't do that. We're also not cutting the bursary system, which is the other thing that they did.

Mr. Speaker, our students are accessing an online system right now. Phase 1 went in on time and on budget, and we are doing the review of the system right now because a complicated system like this with personal information should be—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, what we don't do is waste \$15 million on one department. Over \$15 million wasted in Advanced Ed. Could you imagine if 18 ministers had lost \$15 million apiece? That would be equivalent to the 14 per cent PST increase.

I ask again: Where did the more than \$15 million go in Advanced Education?

Ms. Selby: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to cut \$550 million in services to families. That would be pretty much the entire budget to post-secondary institutions.

So I guess that would mean we wouldn't only have a two-tier health system, we'd have a two-tier post-secondary system as well, because when you cut out the bursaries, when you raise tuition by 132 per cent, you're basically are telling people only a certain group of population gets to go to school; for the rest of you, forget it.

Well, on this side of the House, we believe in affordable tuition, which is why we have a tuition cap in place. It's why we also make sure that there are bursaries available so when students go online they will find bursaries, they will find grants and they will find funding that is the best in the country for universities across this country.

Brian Sinclair Death Reassessment Nurse

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, details continue to surface from the critical incident review committee's final report into the death of Brian Sinclair, who died after waiting 34 hours in a Winnipeg ER without being attended to, and new information now reveals that the reassessment-role nurse that was supposed to be in the ER to check that patients were waiting safely was reassigned to other duties because of a nursing shortage.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister: Why was the reassessment nurse not in place in that Winnipeg ER the night that Brian Sinclair died?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for the question.

Certainly, our primary concern is ensuring that a critical incident like this never happen again. That is why, of course, we fully support—[interjection] That is why we fully support the inquest taking place. That's why we fully support—[interjection]

I took the member opposite as his word, Mr. Speaker, that he's deeply interested in answers to a very serious question. I wish his caucus would share that feeling.

Mr. Friesen: Let's be clear. The reassessment-role nurse was one of the 49 recommendations in 2004 by the Emergency Care Task Force.

Now, on May 28th in this Chamber, this minister said that the recommendations of the emergency task force have been followed through on almost in their entirety except for some IT. So unless the minister believes that somehow the provision of the reassessment nurse is related to IT, it is clear that she's incorrect. There's numerous instances in which the reassessment-role nurse is not functioning in that role.

My question for the minister: How is that four years after the recommendations of the task force Brian Sinclair could languish 34 hours without a reassessment nurse making sure that he was waiting safely?

Ms. Oswald: I was—as I was endeavouring to say earlier, certainly, the function and the role of this inquest will be to get to the bottom of what happened in the tragic death of Brian Sinclair. We fully support that investigation. And issues such as staffing levels, the roles and responsibilities of all nurses, reassessment nurses, triages and all of that information is going to be brought before the inquest, and we support that.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in September of 2008 there were 325 filled nurse positions in Winnipeg ERs and today there are 384 positions, 59 more nurses than five years ago. Any advice that comes from the inquest we're going to take very seriously, but I want the member to know and this House to know that immediately following the tragic death of Mr. Sinclair we set about going to work to improve the system.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

ER Service Improvements Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And yet no reassessment nurse for the night that Brian Sinclair died.

Mr. Speaker, the—after the emergency care force tax—task force recommendations, after Brian Sinclair's death there were additional recommendations to improve Winnipeg ER services, and among those recommendations included communication to take place with each person in the waiting room at least once every four hours. Another recommendation called for the roles of all ER staff to be clarified, and that would apply to the reassessment nurse.

So, clearly, again, there are recommendations, and this minister has said the recommendations were implemented. So the minister is not being clear.

Why is that when she says they're implemented, they're still somehow not in place?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can say to the member that in the days after Mr. Sinclair's death, as the inquest is going to hear at some length, the WRHA publicly released the staffing levels during that time in the ER, specifically, Mr. Speaker, that 87 per cent of the nursing shifts were filled overall on the Friday, that 97 were filled on the Saturday, and in the month after the death I confirmed these same numbers in the House.

What I can tell you is that any information contained in the critical incident review is available to be reviewed at the inquest and, indeed, I understand that many of those that were interviewed at that time are going to be testifying at the inquest.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, we know that we have to continue to invest in our emergency rooms and we're going to take those recommendations from the judge—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is really this, that she says that recommendations are implemented and yet Manitobans find out they're somehow not in place.

Bonnie Guagliardo suffered head trauma. She went to ER. She waited for six hours without being

seen and she left and she died. Now, the 2004 emergency task force also said left-not-seen follow-up should take place to make sure patients who left ER would get a contact at home. No one contacted Ms. Guagliardo, and yet the minister said on the 28th of May that Health Links is in place to follow up on those who leave without being seen. Again, the minister says the recommendation's implemented, but it is not in place.

I ask the minister again: What's the difference between implemented and in place? The minister's assurances that changes have been made are hollow and give no assurances to Manitobans or to the Guagliardo family.

Ms. Oswald: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be very clear with the member opposite. We know that triage nurses, according to the Canadian Association of Emergency Medicine, conduct reassessment of patients. There have been additional hires at our Winnipeg hospitals, dedicated nurses for reassessment.

Mr. Speaker, there are Emergency Care Task Force recommendations, as the member has cited, all of which have been implemented minus some issues that are ongoing with IT. I can tell the member that the recommendations that came from the critical incident review concerning the case of Brian Sinclair have also been implemented.

Certainly, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and all of our RHAs are tasked with reviewing their staffing models, but these are the requirements that are currently in place.

*(14:00)

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it's clear this minister is quick to tick the box that says implemented. She's not quick to tick the box that says in place for the safety of Manitobans.

This weekend, I had the chance to talk to the family of Dorothy Madden, who died in a Winnipeg ER of a heart attack after waiting six hours without being seen, and I tell you that Mr. Madden, the son of Dorothy Madden, talked about the heartbreak of family members sitting there with their mother, who exhibited all the signs of a heart attack, and asking when would someone see her. The family expressed deep disappointment to me that 10 years after the system improvements were promised to save families the heartache and loss that they experienced, nothing is done.

If the minister won't give us clear answers about the difference between implemented and in place, would she give those answers to the family of Dorothy Madden who contacted the minister a week ago and haven't had a reply?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I will say to the member as clearly as I can we have steadily added more staff to ERs across Manitoba, including in Winnipeg.

In 2009, we invested over \$5 million to add 60 front-line staff to Manitoba's busiest ERs. This 2009 investment does include \$3.8 million for the 45 additional positions in Winnipeg ERs. It includes funding for overnight reassessment nurses at HSC, the busiest in the province, as well as more overnight nurses at Concordia, Grace, St. Boniface, Seven Oaks and Victoria.

Mr. Speaker, the members' opposite answer to emergency care was to close the community ERs at night. Really?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, with a final supplementary.

ER Services Staff Absence Plan

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And yet, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans continue to fall through the cracks of this minister's system.

The 2008 critical incident report on Brian Sinclair says that when a role is absent for any reason, there is no plan for how the absence will be managed.

Mr. Speaker, this minister can say all she wants that the recommendation has been implemented, but it wasn't in place for that 65-year-old woman who waited five and a half hours with a heart attack in ER. It wasn't there for Bonnie Guagliardo. It wasn't there for Brian Sinclair. It wasn't there for Dorothy Madden.

Five years after that report, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve to know: What's the minister's plan for mitigating the risk associated with an absence, for instance, like a reassessment nurse? Where is the backup plan?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the member that the critical incident review that was done after Mr. Sinclair's death came forward with recommendations. Those recommendations have

been implemented. There are additional staff that have been hired to the busiest ERs here in Manitoba.

We're going to continue to listen to the testimony that takes place at the inquest. If there are recommendations about further augmenting the staffing models or the levels, we're absolutely going to take that into account.

What I can tell you that we will not do is make a decision to close our community ERs at night just to save a buck like members opposite did.

Minister of Health Resignation Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today the CBC has been highlighting even more problems in Winnipeg's emergency rooms. This month marks 14 years that this government has been promising to sort out health care and has not. The problems in emergency rooms have gone on and on and on. This morning a nurse told CBC that the situation is so bad, I quote: We leave every shift defeated day in and day out.

Manitobans are at the mercy of this minister's flawed health-care system and they have lost confidence in her.

I ask the minister when she will admit she has failed and resign.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): That was cheerful.

I would say to the member that we know that nothing is more important to Manitoba families than the safety of their loved ones in an emergency situation. We know that to be true. We care deeply about that, which is why we support this inquest going forward and why, Mr. Speaker, that we took many steps in the days, weeks and months following Mr. Sinclair's death.

Certainly, if any individual in our community has additional information that they think will be salient and prudent for the knowledge of everybody at the inquest, then they should take it forward to the inquest counsel. The judge, of course, makes determinations about evidence that's admitted, and I invite any Manitoban that has further information to bring that forward.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the emergency room, which is the linchpin of the health-care system, is not being looked after properly under this minister.

She has not been listening to ordinary Manitobans. She has not been listening to nurses in the ER. Indeed, in seven years under this minister, and including this year, we've continued to have people dying as a result of waiting too long in emergency rooms. The public's been ignored. As a nurse said this morning, Manitoba emergency rooms, and I quote, are a Brian Sinclair incident awaiting to happen still today.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has not caught many passes lately. I ask the minister: When will she admit that the problems continue and that it's time for her to resign?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite suggests that I'm not listening, but I listened to him when he said a few weeks ago that our family doctors are the linchpin of the health-care system, which is why we have made a commitment to all Manitobans that everyone that wants a family doctor shall have one by 2015. And by augmenting access to primary care to work very hard—as the member as a physician well knows—very hard on prevention and promotion of good health, we can assist people in avoiding having to go to the emergency room.

We know that primary care is a critically important step on the continuum of care for all Manitobans and we take that very seriously.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, whether it's family doctors or whether it's the emergency room, problems continue that should have been sorted out.

The CBC reported last week that Manitoba's emergency rooms were so bad that the death of Brian Sinclair could have been predicted and, I might add, should have been prevented. The report notes that there's been one death after another because Manitoba's emergency rooms continue to have major problems. As the CBC story said, and I quote: Nurses will continue to be set up to fail. From a lack of hospital beds to chronic staffing shortages to poor morale, the situations in ERs remain unacceptable.

I ask the minister: When will she recognize that the problems have not been fixed and resign so that somebody else can take over and do a better job?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Ms. Oswald: Not a moment too soon, Mr. Speaker.

I would say to the member very clearly that we know that we want to do all that we can to assist families who are in emergency situations. We can do

this by augmenting primary care, by providing access for families to a family doctor. We also know, Mr. Speaker, we can do this by adding additional staff to our emergency rooms. We know that we can do this by adding alternatives for those individuals that need to seek care after hours but know that an emergency room isn't the right place to go, and we're doing this with our QuickCare clinics and after hours for physicians.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is a wonder that the member can stand in his place today and make such criticisms and then vote against every investment that we've put forward in our budgets. Why does he do that?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

**Villa Youville (Ste. Anne)
Affordable Housing Units**

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) attended the unveiling of a new affordable housing facility in Ste. Anne which reflects our commitment to providing much needed affordable housing for Manitobans.

Can the Minister of Housing and Community Development please tell us more about this important announcement and our overall commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing for all Manitobans?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, there was a celebration in Ste. Anne on Friday, a celebration of a government's commitment to affordable housing for seniors, a commitment to working together with community, with all levels of government, and the development of 24 new units for seniors in Ste. Anne called Villa Youville. This is a project that has been extremely important to that community for a very long time and we were very proud of the work that they've accomplished. We invested \$8.5 million into these 24 units.

* (14:10)

We are committed to providing more affordable housing across the province. That's why our government made a commitment in 2009 for 1,500 more affordable housing units, and that's why in Budget 2013 we made a further commitment for 500 more affordable housing units and 500 more social housing units. We will continue to provide good quality housing.

**Fox Lake Gathering Centre
Project Update—Language Centre**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I have a document to table for the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, \$3 million was committed by this NDP government for the Fox Lake gathering place, a Fox Lake gathering place that the minister has admitted is not going to be built.

Two hundred thousand dollars was supposed to be spent for Cree language program to be held in the Fox Lake gathering place.

My question to him is: Where is the Cree language program now going to be held?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): You know, Mr. Speaker, the member has a habit of putting inaccurate information on the record.

Two weeks ago, he talked about no water and sewer and asked that the depart—that Hydro be building water and sewer. In fact, that's the responsibility and under the direction of the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

After that, Fox Lake—he attacked—last week, he attacked Fox Lake and said, why wasn't that \$3-million centre built? Well, the Fox Lake chief and council asked that that money be used for housing and infrastructure. What has he got against housing and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker?

Project Update

Mr. Schuler: In the photo tabled for the NDP member for Kildonan, the Minister responsible for Hydro, for his photo album of shame, perhaps when he was up there, did he talk to the Fox Lake First Nation about the Fox Lake gathering place and the fact that it was meant to be for alternative justice program, for a hundred thousand dollars, that was supposed to be held in the gathering place?

When he was up there talking to them, did he mention to them that that's why it was going to be built, and where would they now hold that program?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, funding was provided to that community for infrastructure and for decisions made by those communities. The community wanted a gathering centre. They decided subsequently they would rather have the money that's still in the account and not spend—contrary to the kind of information put on the record by the member, who has no respect for that First Nation—contrary to

that, they decided they want to have housing and infrastructure.

If the member had the courtesy to talk to the chief, to talk to the council—the new chief and the new council—he would find out that that's the direction, rather than making 'scurious' statements and accusations day in and day out in the House indicating he has no interest in the future of First Nations in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. Paul, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, I had the courage to make 10 phone calls to the Fox Lake First Nation. But thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, \$3 million committed by this NDP for the Fox Lake gathering place which was supposed to host a \$2.7 million nine-year program for lateral violence and where-do-we-go-from-here program.

Now, we know, as by the minister's own admission, no Fox Lake gathering place. Thus, I guess we can assume no Cree language program, no alternative justice program, no lateral violence and where-to-go-from-here program.

Mr. Speaker, what exactly is the Fox Lake First Nation going to get from this NDP, other than nothing?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as part of northern flood agreements and other agreements that were entered into between the Province, the federal government and First Nations, money was put into a fund to be utilized by the council and chief.

Now, the member has not had the courtesy to talk to TCN. He's attacked it viciously in this House day after day after day, and publicly, Mr. Speaker, and he hasn't had the courage to talk to the chief or to talk to council. And now—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): You know, Mr. Speaker, we have rules in this House about reflections on other members, shown up in the Bosc and O'Brien.

We have been cautioned by you, and I think rightfully so, Mr. Speaker, about a respectful workplace. And I've appreciated those cautions and I

think other members have appreciated those cautions as well.

We've heard the Minister responsible for Hydro now talk about members attacking others in this province, attacking First Nations. We've heard him in the past—and he repeats it again. We've heard him—he repeats it off the record just as he repeats it on the record. We've heard him in the past. June 13th, he talked about why members are against First Nations. He's talked on August 7th about why members attack First Nations. He's talked on August 6th about attacking First Nations.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we're all honourable members working for Manitobans. We're just simply asking the member—the Minister for Hydro—if he doesn't want to answer the questions, well, that ultimately is a reflection on the record for him to defend.

But it certainly is not within our rules on reflections of members, nor is it within keeping the spirit of your ruling on making this a respectful workplace, which we agree with, for him to continue to use that type of language.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I appreciated the words from my friend across the way. I do take seriously your words to us in trying to achieve a better tone in this House, and I think all members have worked hard to do that.

But I also take seriously our responsibility, and the members of the opposition's responsibility, to hold members accountable for the positions they take and the words they say. And I think that's what the member for Kildonan was doing. He was doing it with passion, which is his right and his role. And I would hope that he is passionate about this issue.

But I heard nothing unparliamentary in what he said, Mr. Speaker. I think what he said was passionate, and I think it was holding to account members opposite for, frankly, a historic position that they've taken with regards to First Nations people.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader—and I thank the honourable Government House Leader for advice on this matter as well—I usually listen pretty closely to the comments that are made, both in questions and in answers to the questions. And just to ensure that I am

absolutely certain what has been indicated here, I'm going to take this matter under advisement and I'm going to review Hansard proceedings of today to determine that parliamentary language was, indeed, used during this part of question period. And then I'm going to bring back a ruling for the House.

But I want to, at this point, indicate to members I really, really appreciate the work that you have done over this last three weeks to ensure that we've adhered to the decorum of the Assembly. I really appreciate that, and I'm sincere when I say that. And I hope that we can continue with that effort through the remainder of this session because I think it leaves us with the appearance, at least in the public's mind, that we're not only serious about the work that we do here but we can act in a respectful manner as well.

So I'm going to take this matter under advisement, and I will bring back a ruling for the House.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, to conclude his answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I even offered to have the member come to my office and phone that community to discuss what was going on, and the member has not taken the courtesy on one single day to even phone that chief, phone that council to see what's going on in that community. That, to me, is a real lack of respect for First Nations in those communities, particularly because almost every day he makes allegations concerning that community that are not accurate.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Provincial Nominee Application Centre Update

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Over a month ago, I asked the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism whether she could provide an update for me on the Northgate provincial nominee application centre that was promised during the last election campaign.

Could she today, a month later, stand up—because she couldn't answer the question then—can she stand up and answer it today?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): It's good to get a question on immigration in the House here, just a—just to remind members that we do include the 125,000 newcomers who have chosen Manitoba in our stats on population on this side of the House.

We committed to expanding immigration services in northwest Winnipeg, and we've done that. We thought that we would originally need an additional office, but because there have been many changes in the funding of immigration and in the organization of immigration, we found a more efficient way to deliver services by putting together a one-stop shop where we are co-locating with an adult learning centre nearby.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But, Mr. Speaker, there's a common thread of waste and mismanagement throughout this government. What's a million dollars here or \$15 million there? Doesn't really seem to matter.

Mr. Speaker, office space was leased a year ago. There was money spent on leasehold improvements. The office is sitting there empty in the Northgate Shopping Centre. So the minister can try to make all kinds of excuses, but the reality is they were moving ahead on a centre and they've cancelled that service and support to northwest Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister stand up and tell us how much she has wasted on space that has been sitting vacant for over a year?

*(14:20)

Ms. Melnick: Well, I'll remind members opposite that it's the federal government that now makes decisions on settlement services. And they stood up and voted to have settlement services taken out of the control of the provincial government. They did not even offend—they did not even defend their own agreement, the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts in this.

Services are available in a co-located location. And nobody lost their job. No wonder members opposite can't understand that. We didn't send a chill through the system. We worked with people to provide services, to make sure we're co-locating to save money and to make sure that we continue to encourage people to choose Manitoba over everywhere else. That's what we're doing with it.

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

It's time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manohar Performing Arts of Canada: 20/20 AfterImages

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Manohar Performing Arts of Canada. Manohar Performing Arts of Canada, Inc. is a Winnipeg-based dance-art theatre company. Established as an independent, non-profit organization in 1993, Manohar uses both traditional and modern aspects of Indian and Canadian culture through dance and drama.

As an active organizer, supporter and participant of various multicultural and artistic events, Manohar is a great asset to cultural fabric of Manitoba. Dr. Krishnamurti Dakshinamurti and Dr. Ganga Dakshinamurti, who are in the gallery today, are pioneers of Indian classic music and dance in Manitoba and Canada.

On September 28th, 2013, Manohar Performing Arts of Canada will be presenting 20/20—AfterImages, celebrating the 20th anniversary of Manohar dance. The multimedia celebration from dance, poetry, colour and movement is bringing people from across the province and the country together.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that in 20 years, Manohar has produced 20 original productions, three dance festivals, which have brought performance and established partnerships and performing groups all across the globe. Their dances mix stories from Hindu mythology older than 200,000 years—2,000 years, sorry—2,000 years, without—current narratives they are relevant to young and old audiences alike.

Dance, Mr. Speaker, is an ancient form of natural art. We look at the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal dance and it is amazing to see the fundamental similarities and expressions of emotions to the form of dancing poses called mudra in Sanskrit. We all look back past 20 years of excellence in dance by this great art group. We must also look forward. We know that their future will be just as bright as the—these artists are.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all those who have organized, danced and contributed to Manohar Performing Arts of Canada throughout the years. I

invite all members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in wishing you all the best in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fall Suppers

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend marked the start of the fall supper season. This is the time of year when communities get their best cooks out to prepare some of the finest meals available. This is done to attract as many people as possible to come out and support these fundraisers.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Community halls, clubs, church groups and others use fall suppers as one of their major fundraisers. Fall suppers play an important role in the financial well-being of many communities. For some communities, it is one of their only fundraisers for the year and helps keep—and it helps to keep community events and activities going in times where money is tough and government funding is minimal.

Each community seems to specialize in something different. Some serve turkey, some serve beef, some serve chicken, but the one thing I do know is that I've never been to a bad fall supper. Communities take pride in what they serve, and it shows in each and every fall supper that I've had the honour of attending.

La Verendrye is a large constituency with over 80 communities and a lot of fall suppers. I look forward to attending as many of these as possible, encourage all members of this House to attend fall suppers in their communities or wherever they may find one and help support these worthwhile causes and experience some fine dining.

I would like also to thank all the volunteers who help at these fall suppers. It takes a lot of help to serve anywhere from 200 to 1,500 meals, and each of these communities has a strong group of volunteers to see that these events come through. Every fall supper in the province has a great group of volunteers, and it's truly a great meal experience, wherever you go.

Thank you.

Cuthbert Grant Memorial Marker

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I rise today to commemorate a historic occasion for Winnipeg and

Manitoba, as a long-awaited project finally comes to fruition. This month, a memorial marker for Cuthbert Grant will be unveiled at a ceremony to be held September 28th in the cemetery of the St. François Xavier Roman Catholic Parish. Sandra Horyski, the driving force behind the project, is in the gallery today.

Many west Winnipeggers hear of Cuthbert Grant while visiting Grant's Old Mill, a replica of the 1829 flour mill he built on the banks of Sturgeon Creek; however, the history of Cuthbert Grant involved much more. A revered Metis leader and one of the founding fathers of St. François Xavier, originally named Grantown in his honour, Grant was instrumental in forming the North West Company and establishing Manitoba's fur trade. He was a leader in the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company and was later named warden of the plains by the Hudson's Bay Company after the two trading companies merged.

Today, Cuthbert Grant's ancestors can be found across Canada, and yet it is unknown where this key figure in Manitoba history is buried. As the Sept Steward of the Clan Grant and the family's official representative in Canada, Sandra has worked to promote Grant's legacy. She has been fundraising for a black granite memorial marker to be placed in the church cemetery next to the headstones of Grant's daughter, Maria, and her husband, and I'm very excited to attend the unveiling ceremony. Sandra is also planning for a celebration at the cemetery next July to mark the 160th anniversary of Grant's death.

As we look to our province's bright future, it is also critical that we remember our past. Cuthbert Grant and the Metis people form an essential piece of Manitoba's history, and Sandra and her family's hard work is helping to promote and preserve Manitoba Metis heritage. I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to making this milestone event a reality.

Thank you.

Pembina Threshermen's Reunion Days

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I rise today to congratulate the Pembina Threshermen's Museum on their annual Reunion Days.

On September the 1st, Saturday, my daughter, Gwendolyn, and I attended Reunion Days and enjoyed a wonderful afternoon along with dignitaries, the mayor of Winkler, the mayor of

Morden, the reeve for the RM of Stanley and the mayor of Altona.

The first of many events started in 1966 as a threshing bee; five men organized the first reunion fair with an old steam-operated threshing outfit along with contests like nail driving, potato peeling and sheaf tying and pitching. Their dream was to preserve the agricultural and cultural heritage of the Pembina Valley for future generations with displays of antique machinery, tools, household effects and accessories in architecturally age-appropriate buildings used by the settlers in the Pembina Valley.

The museum is comprised of many heritage buildings dating back to 1878 with the Reimer House, the 1906 CPR railway station, a one-room schoolhouse from 1909 and, including their newest building on the property, the Haskett Store. The uniqueness of this museum comes alive when you visit. You experience a range of events through the summer months showcasing life on the prairies. Hands-on activities and demonstrations give guests the opportunity to grind their own corn, make their own rope, watch threshing the old-fashioned way, run a sawmill and enjoy the antique tractor parade and blacksmith demonstrations. We also enjoyed a superb meal by the Harvest Maids.

The museum is on 12 acres of land, on Highway 3 between Morden and Winkler, and, of course, volunteers are vital to the functioning of the museum and to these annual events. Without them, the museum would not be able to provide the learning activities for out-of-town guests, local residents and schools each year.

I congratulate President Mel Hoepfner; his board of directors; Kim Streamer, the manager; and the multitude of volunteers that made the Pembina Threshermen's Museum Reunion Days such a special event again this year.

Thank you.

* (14:30)

ManyFest

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Over this past weekend, 30,000 people walked, biked, ran and sometimes even danced down Broadway. And, no, they were not here for the Bill 18 committee hearings; they were here for the third annual ManyFest.

ManyFest is downtown Winnipeg's largest festival, converting the north half of Broadway from

Osborne all the way down to Main Street into a giant three-day celebration. Organized by the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ and sponsored by Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, ManyFest brought people of all ages and all backgrounds together.

Some of the activities this year included an outdoor movie, the 10 and 10 race in support of Winnipeg Harvest, the Big Dance and the Lights on Broadway parade. One of my favourite parts was the great Farmers' and Artisans' Market which sold both local foods and handmade goods. A brand new feature this year was the Food Truck Wars at which festival goers were able to try the culinary genius of local food-service entrepreneurs. They were also able to quench their thirst nearby at the Wine & Beer Festival in Memorial Park.

On Sunday, the featured event was Ciclovía, as thousands of people hopped on their bikes and rode down to Broadway for an eco-friendly celebration of healthy living. Throughout the day there was bicycle polo, basketball, boxing, free bike tune-ups, a soapbox derby and some incredible local music.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at ManyFest, there truly is something for everyone. Organizers are always thinking of ways to make next year's event bigger and better. I'd like to thank ManyFest's numerous organizers, sponsors and volunteers, who have made the festival such a wonderful experience. Their dedication and hard work brings people together to see first-hand the incredible revitalization now well under way in Winnipeg's downtown. I'm sure I'm not the only participant who is already looking forward to next year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* * *

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

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In accordance with rule 78(4), I'm tabling the list of ministers to be questioned in concurrence tomorrow. The ministers are to be questioned concurrently.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the Opposition House Leader.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Grievances.

Seeing none, we move to—

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business, I'd ask—I'd like to ask if there's leave that tomorrow morning during private members' hour the House sit from 10 to 12 to consider second reading in the following government bills: Bill 5, 17, 29, 35, 13, 19, 24, 30, 32, 39, 47, 7, 22 and 4, and the rule regarding speaking times would apply as normally on second readings, that being that members would be allowed 30 minutes and leaders unlimited time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave that tomorrow morning during private members' hour the House sit from 10 'til 12 to consider second reading of the following government bills: Bill 5, Bill 17, Bill 29, Bill 35, Bill 13, Bill 19, Bill 24, Bill 30, Bill 32, Bill 39, Bill 47, Bill 7, Bill 22 and Bill 4, and that the speaking time for such be no longer than 30 minutes—that it be 30 minutes and unlimited speaking time for leaders?

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Howard: On further House business, I'd like to ask if there's leave that Thursday morning during private members' hour the House sit from 10 to 12 to consider second reading on the following government bills: Bill 6, 27, 41, 42, 9, 12, 14, 15, 26, 11, 43, 44 and 46, and, again, the regular rules on speaking in second reading would apply 30 minutes per member, unlimited time for leaders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave that tomorrow morning during private members' hour the House sit from 10 a.m. 'til noon to consider second reading of the following government bills—correction: that there be leave that the House sit Thursday morning during private members' hour from 10 a.m. until noon to consider second reading on the following government bills: Bill 6, Bill 27, Bill 41, Bill 42, Bill 9, Bill 12, Bill 14, Bill 15, Bill 26, Bill 11, Bill 43, Bill 44 and Bill 46; and that regular speaking times of 30 minutes apply and unlimited time for leaders apply.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Howard: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you please resolve into Committee of Supply.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

Will the assistant deputy speaker please take the Chair?

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

CAPITAL SUPPLY

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

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

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,952,495,000 for Capital Supply, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

In accordance with rule 76(3), as the 100 hours allotted for the consideration of supply have expired, there will be no debate on this resolution.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): I heard a mixed response.

We'll ask for a voice vote.

Voice Vote

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): All those in favour of the resolution, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): All those opposed to the resolution, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): In my humble opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recognizing the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): On division, duly noted. Thank you, sir.

The resolution is accordingly passed, on division.

The Acting Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Committee rise and call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Acting Chairperson): The Committee of Supply has considered and adopted the Capital Supply resolution.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers), that the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Wolseley, seconded by the honourable member for St. James, that the report of the committee be received.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed? I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of adopting the motion, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On division.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the chair. My pleasure.

* (14:40)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, 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, 2014, which have been adopted at this session, whether by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chairperson: On September 5th, 2013, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning and debate on the concurrence motion: the honourable Mrs. 'marce'—the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino); the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard); the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers); the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Kostyshyn); the honourable Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux).

The floor is now open for questions. The ministers are to be asked questions concurrently.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to start off with asking the minister for cultural heritage and tourism, in regards to the difference between the work of the Tourism Secretariat and Travel Manitoba, if she can explain that, please.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I beg your pardon, please, honourable critic. Can you please repeat the question?

Mr. Ewasko: The question was: What is the difference between the work of the Tourism Secretariat and Travel Manitoba?

Ms. Marcelino: I thank my critic for the question. The Tourism Secretariat is a body within—or a department within Culture, Heritage and Tourism, part of the department, and they are civil servants, the members of the—or the staff of that department, and the—and Travel Manitoba is an arm's-length Crown corporation of the Province of Manitoba tasked with promoting travel and tourism to Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: Are the Travel Manitoba employees, are they not considered civil servants as well?

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to take that question under advisement, if indeed they're—under the Civil Service Commission or under civil service department.

Mr. Ewasko: That's—I will wait for, I guess, that answer. I'm not sure what the timeline can be. If the minister can give me some sort of timeline as far as when she'd get back to me?

Ms. Marcelino: I would endeavour to respond to the question in a day.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay. I thank the minister for that and I'll wait for it for—'til tomorrow.

Since we're chatting about Travel Manitoba, I'd like to also know how many staff are employed through Travel Manitoba, and if we can get a list of the positions as well, please.

Ms. Marcelino: That would be provided to the member also tomorrow.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay. I thank the minister for that answer.

Can the minister explain what is happening in terms of trying to draw more tourism from the various regions? I know that there has been a push to try to amalgamate some of the tourist regions within Manitoba.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the question.

This is—we're into very exciting times as far as tourism is concerned. As the member knows, Manitoba is a beautiful province and we have so many tourist attractions in almost all regions—the six regional tourism regions of the province.

A week ago I was just in Pine Falls-Powerview and then travelled further south to Lac du Bonnet, and found the place so pretty, a very beautiful area.

And our regional tourism associations are very busy sharpening their pencils, making plans and programs to attract more tourists to all the regions of the province.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, so then can the minister allude to some of the initiatives that are going on by some of the regional tourist associations, please?

Ms. Marcelino: First, I would like to share with the honourable member that the Province continues to

provide over \$8.5 million to Manitoba's tourism sector through programs and grants.

Also, our Manitoba's Tourism action plan is realigning tourism resources to better position the industry for continued growth, Mr. Chairperson. And Budget 2013-2014 has been reallocated—has reallocated \$155,000 to support regional tourism associations, provincial industry associations and destination organizations.

Mr. Ewasko: At the end of July we learned the NDP government's department—your department, Madam Minister—had cut funding for three prominent Manitoba book awards: the Alexander Kennedy Isbister non-fiction award, the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction and prix littéraire 'lue' Deschambault.

These awards were established by a provincial department to promote excellence on our local writers and increase public awareness of the quality and diversity of Manitoba books.

The minister knows that funding for all three awards is \$8,750 annually. Can the minister answer why were these book awards cut, after she had just finished stating how many thousands of dollars had been dedicated to various other organizations?

* (14:50)

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the honourable member for the question.

I have spoken to several stakeholders of our 'awar'—of those publishing industry—our stakeholders in the publishing industry and have, over the past few days and also a month ago, came across some of them during the time of the festivals, such as Folklorama, and I had a very good discussion with them about what's happening in this particular file. And they understood that our department has redirected—has been redirected to ensuring—has redirected some funds to ensuring support to arts and organizations and community-based activities. And these awards, as we speak, are being—we are working with our partners in the industry to explore other opportunities for continuing this awards funding. The department has supported all these awards since 2000, and, as I've said, we're exploring sources of funding to continue with these awards, and I've spoken to several of these stakeholders, as I've mentioned, the last two or three days.

Mr. Ewasko: Can I ask, then, when the committee was told that they were going to have their funding cut for this year?

Ms. Marcelino: I believe communication was sent to our partners in the industry sometime in June.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, according to your previous answer, we can look forward to these awards being reinstated for 2014?

Ms. Marcelino: As I've spoken to the—our industry partners over the phone, our department is exploring opportunities to continue funding these awards.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, minister, is that a yes, it will be—they will be reinstated for next year?

Ms. Marcelino: We are exploring funding for these awards, and as soon as sources of funding are pinpointed, we will be communicating directly to our industry partners.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, so when we're talking about pinpointing certain funds, we do have—I do have to go into the couple issues that we've been talking about here since April, and that is the 14 per cent increase in the PST. When we're looking at \$500 million being sent into the NDP's credit line, and I'm just wondering how come some of those funds maybe were not thrown into your department or, in fact, were you there at the time when—to discuss that at the Cabinet table, as far as some of the cuts that you're seeing in CHT?

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to share with the honourable member that our government believes in the value of the arts, and our department continues to provide over \$30 million annually to Manitoba's arts, cultural and heritage organizations. And, in particular, our department contributes over \$1 million annually to the publishing industry, including \$520,000 for the book publishing tax credit, which is equal to 40,000—40 per cent of eligible Manitoba labour costs.

Mr. Ewasko: Then how can you—Deputy Speaker, through you to the minister—how can she then justify the cut of \$8,750 to the book awards?

Ms. Marcelino: Those are figures that the member probably—those are the figures for the awards. But, as the member knows, there are also grants to many organizations, the festival grants, or grants to the theatre and music that were not cut, or heritage projects that were not cut. The only ones that were cut were for those awards, and, as I have mentioned,

we're exploring ways to continue funding those awards.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, I will also, since I did bring up the PST increase, I'll also bring up the vote tax and the fact that it is coming out to about \$5,000 per member on your side of the House.

And I know, as I'm sure is happening on your side of the House as well, that I'm getting many emails and phone calls in regards to the vote tax, the \$5,000 per member on your side, in addition to the \$500 million in the PST increase.

So are you, as well, getting those—getting some of those complaints, or at least concerns coming to your office?

Ms. Marcelino: Interestingly, none of such—none such calls or emails have come to our attention, to my constituency office in particular. And even, from my knowledge, other—a few of my colleagues in their constituency office have not received such calls. However, we did receive some concerns or some—I don't know if we could call it complaints, but some concerns that the members opposite have plans of cutting about half a billion in front-line services to—should they have the opportunity to govern. Those were the concerns that we've received, but none over the minor cuts to the awards that were done by our department which, as I've mentioned, are certainly temporary in nature.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, the fact is today, Madam Minister, is that the government is pulling in \$500 million on top of—with the fee increases, the rate increases from last year and the widespread taxes on various other amenities that Manitobans are sharing in and having to participate in. And then with this PST increase we're looking at \$500 million. So the fact is that that's there today, right now, and you're speaking about something that, you know, is not necessarily factual right now.

So I'd just like to know: Were you there at the Cabinet table speaking for your constituents? And it's interesting to hear today you put on the record that you really haven't had any phone calls or many emails stating that people aren't concerned about the PST increase.

Ms. Marcelino: I reiterate I have not received phone calls or emails complaining about a 1 per cent PST hike. However, on my own I did go out in my community, visited my constituents. I—there was one, and he's not a member of my constituency—I know

that because I know the guy. He was against the 1 per cent PST.

* (15:00)

But in my visit, in my door knocking, people appreciate that this government would—they understand that this government is raising the 1 per cent PST because of critical infrastructure projects and programs that would enhance the services for education, health care and infrastructure, roads and bridges and flood protection, and I didn't hear any complaints when those expenditures were shared with them.

Mr. Ewasko: A few months ago I was asking questions into—in regards to the Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Learning Centre up by Hollow Water, and I know that the minister was up in Powerview-Pine Falls for the parade. And I was wondering if—how that project is going up just south of Hollow Water.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you for the question.

I meant to visit that site, however, I didn't find the road to go to that site, and instead the trip took us to Lac du Bonnet and Pointe du Bois, which I didn't regret. But I know I will have another chance to visit the Hollow Water site.

And back to Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretive Learning Centre, our department is committed to working with community members to ensure that the intention of the centre is fulfilled. We want that place to be a place for Aboriginal teachings, a focal point for eco-cultural tourism in the region and the gateway to the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site.

Mr. Ewasko: Now, the interpretive centre, there was a press release back some time ago in 2010 in regards—from the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and the Premier was up there and had done the—was up there for the huge—big announcement, and it stated that the construction for the project was going to begin spring of 2011. And in question period you had mentioned that there were some hiccups with the process, and I was wondering if you could possibly expand on the hiccups.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank you for the question, honourable member.

Those hiccups, or those setbacks, were not in any way related to the actions of our department, of our government, but were of the nature related to the performance of the contractor. Right now there's—I

think there's—that—present contractor is no longer doing the project for the centre and there'll be a new bidding happening for the construction of the centre.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, the tender had gone out and it was awarded. So can you tell me who that tender was awarded to?

Ms. Marcelino: I would—I have no information on who was the successful company who won in the bidding process. All I do know is that that company has not—is no longer the company that will be working for that project and it will be retendered.

Mr. Ewasko: So, then, Madam Minister, if you could then get that information for me in—as well as how much that tender had been awarded to that contractor, as well, would be greatly appreciated. Is that possible?

Ms. Marcelino: We'll certainly obtain that information, but I doubt if it's obtainable in a day.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the—Deputy Speaker, I thank you and I thank the minister, and I'm just going to turn it over to my colleague for the Department of Agriculture or for—sorry, for the Department of Local Government right now.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Chair, just to—through you to the Minister of Local Government, there's a couple of cleanup questions we need from Estimates.

I had asked you on June 26 for the—a list of the capital projects approved for 2012-2013, the specific projects, the cost breakdown in terms of Manitoba Water Services Board or any other department, municipal portion, private business that happens to be there, whatever the cost-sharing basis is, and you said you would send me the list. I'm still waiting. When will I get the list?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Yes, just wanting to—well, I thought that you'd received the list already, so I'll ensure that I look into that and find out where the list is because we made a commitment to try to find and put that together. So I'll certainly look into that.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you very much. And, also, I had asked for the members of the Municipal Board, who they are and their terms being on the board, and I haven't received that either.

Mr. Lemieux: At the time, there were some changes. Some people, their terms had expired, and new people were coming on. So I believe now we

have the, you know, the new list of the new appointees, so I thought I would wait until we have those to provide you with the most up-to-date members on the Municipal Board. But we have that now, I understand, so I'll certainly be asking my staff to provide you with that.

Mr. Pedersen: And I also had asked for—where \$21 million was spent in UDI—under your department in UDI and at the time you didn't have it at your fingertips. I'm hoping that your fingertips are reaching it soon and you can send me that list also.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, UDI is very, very important, certainly, to us and to many Manitobans, including the City of Winnipeg, and there are many important projects, but I will—will certainly endeavour to see where that is and try to see where—what's happened with it, quite frankly. But I certainly don't have a list with me today, and—but I'll have to—I'll certainly have to get that for you.

Mr. Pedersen: And with all those, would the minister be a little more specific? I realize that there's information you have to put together to get this, but it was asked over two months ago, and can he give me a time frame for when this information will be given to me?

Mr. Lemieux: I'm sure the critic from Midland can understand that the department has been working diligently with regard to amalgamations, and they've had a lot to do. And I know that they will certainly do their best, and I'm sorry I can't give you a specific date, but as soon as possible would be maybe the accurate and most accurate answer I can give you. And I know they're listening, so they will—they'll certainly be hearing me say that.

Mr. Pedersen: I do not underestimate that the department is busy and that, too, but I—I'll take you at your word that you're going to provide me with that information on a timely basis.

But now that you've mentioned amalgamations, let's move on to that one.

Recently, Mr. Chairman, through the media the minister was musing about exemptions. Can he be more specific about exemptions in terms of under Bill 33 and how it will affect municipalities?

* (15:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, you know, it's more than musing because I'd asked the members opposite for some input with regard to possible amendments and maybe areas that they thought should be addressed to

make the process work better for municipalities if they had some suggestions, and I didn't receive any—had none coming, and so—but I do appreciate the Liberal member in the Chamber coming forward and making a couple of suggestions on things to look at. I do appreciate that very much.

But, certainly, as I mentioned to Manitobans that, you know, No. 1, no final decision has been made on any kind of amendments or what we're looking at. But we look forward to hearing from Manitobans at committee. I think that's the key. We certainly want to hear what Manitobans have to say with regard to amalgamations and we are committed to Bill 33 and—because we're committed to ensuring Manitoba's municipalities are strong and prepared for the future.

I know my critic has heard me say about reducing administrative costs and investing the savings into better services and fully taking advantage of the Building Canada Fund, which, I'm pleased to say, we're going to be meeting soon to discuss the criteria and dollars and so on, and also taking—building roads and bridges and sharing construction operation major assets. And all of those issues are truly important to municipalities which, right now, a lot of them do not have the financial wherewithal, nor the capacity, to be involved in many larger projects or even smaller projects. And so we want to make sure that municipalities are strong going forward and they are able to share professional services such as accountants and expertise in emergency preparedness and response.

And so, as I said, we're open to suggestions on how to improve the bill, but when I said that the other day, the opposition just responded, quite frankly, by saying they didn't want it at all. Shelve it. Yank it. Throw it away. And, as a government, we are truly committed to Bill 33 and we want it to work and we are trying to be reasonable with regard to listening to suggestions on amendments and possible ways to make it better.

But, as the minister, I went to meetings in Arborg, Ste. Anne, Crystal City, Waskada, Miniota, Dauphin, Grosse Isle, Winkler, Rivers, Rosburn, Roblin, to meet with mayors and reeves and full council members to hear their suggestions. Now, not all were very—not all were happy with regard to this initiative, granted, but I was there to listen to them. I told them I was listening to them and I was hearing them and not just being there just to attend a meeting. And so, when this act becomes law, I'm

sure hoping that it'll reflect—and I know it'll reflect—what many of their wishes are. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: So we're headed into committee tonight and tomorrow night and possibly Wednesday night. You are not going to share with municipalities what your possible exemptions are, what amendments you have in mind before it goes to committee? You're going to wait until after and then, as I understand, you're going to write the amendments after that?

Mr. Lemieux: Not necessarily.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, then, what necessarily? What's the plan here?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I'll ask the member for Midland again, my critic: Does he have any suggestions for amendments or things that possibly the government should look at to, you know, I mean, to make Bill 33 better for municipalities?

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Chairman, I guess, is what this is in committee—we're headed into committee tonight, we've got municipalities—municipal people travelling four to five hours to come to Winnipeg tonight to present, perhaps in the middle of the night, and this minister wants to play cat and mouse with these municipalities as to what his plans are for this. This is—it is not for me to decide what this bill is; it is his bill. And these people are coming to present, so it will be certainly interesting to hear what he has to tell these municipalities when they present and give their ideas.

So, having said that, a question, then, in terms of what's proposed under Bill 33: Currently, all municipalities get a base grant of \$5,000 per municipality plus a per capita payment. So, if three municipalities go together, does that mean they will only get the one grant of \$5,000 plus the per capita?

Mr. Lemieux: Maybe I should correct the member opposite. Tonight is about listening to people presenting, and, you know, I believe that's important. People have registered in good faith to give the government some suggestions. And I think it's incumbent upon me, as I've done in the previous 14-or-so meetings I've had with municipal leaders and municipal officials—reeves, mayors and councillors—to listen to the public. And maybe some official—or officials or elected leaders will come forward over the next couple of days. But I'm hoping that the citizens will have an opportunity to have

their say and give some suggestions. And that's what committee's all about. So I'm looking forward to that.

All I asked the member was, what's your suggestion? You know, are you talking about scrapping it? And he says, well, it's your bill. But, you know, I mean, we try to work together in this Chamber and try to put something together for the benefit of Manitobans. I'm just asking members opposite, do they have a suggestion or an amendment or something they can see making the legislation better? That's all.

Mr. Pedersen: So the minister didn't answer my question. So I'm assuming, then, from him not answering, that means that the VLT-base grant, instead of \$15,000 between three municipalities—\$5,000 per each—will now be \$5,000 per the new municipality.

Mr. Lemieux: No. I will say to the member from Midland that that wasn't my answer at all.

But my point being was that I'm looking for some suggestions still from him. And, by him asking a question with regard to the financial side, I'm really pleased to see that they're concerned also about the financial state of these municipalities, as we are.

And we know that on the consultations we did—and I'm looking forward to hearing Doug Dobrowski, for example, the president of AMM, coming forward and giving his suggestions tonight—because we know when we went around doing consultations with regard to the Building Canada Fund in these municipalities, there were many who came forward and said, we don't have a hope in Hades to address our municipal issues because the federal government are telling us it has to be one third, one third, one third cost-shared. And, if you have a lagoon that's \$6 million that needs to be replaced, the federal government have their \$2 million, the Province have their \$2 million. Thanks to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) of Manitoba bringing forward a 1 cent on the dollar increase, we are able to tie in—we were able to tie in and be able to—without letting that money fall off the table with the federal government—being able to partner with the federal government on the Building Canada Fund. So many of these municipalities said, we don't have a hope to have these projects addressed because we don't have the tax base; we don't have the financial wherewithal.

So these amalgamations are not to take away financially from any municipality at all. And we're

inspecting quite—expecting, quite frankly, that any cost savings from these municipalities will be put back into services, to enhance the services for their citizens.

I mean, that's all I'm saying and—but I'm still waiting for the member's answer with regard to how he's going to make the legislation better.

Mr. Pedersen: Under the Municipal Road Improvement Program, which currently runs until January—I believe it's January 1st, 2015, but the member—the minister can certainly correct me on that if it runs longer. It's similar in that it has a maximum annual grant per municipality, and then it's on a prorated on the population. Will this one also be affected by two municipalities or three municipalities or more forming one municipality, so that they'll only be eligible for the one grant instead of the individual grants that they're eligible for now?

Mr. Lemieux: As I mentioned before—and my colleagues, I know, have heard me as well when they've asked me questions, and I really want to thank my colleagues right now because they've come forward with a number of different suggestions. Rural MLAs, MLAs from Winnipeg, MLAs from the North, have come forward with different suggestions on how to make this legislation better.

* (15:20)

And all along we've talked about this legislation making municipalities better, not taking anything away from them, trying to enhance what they have, and we're proud of that. Right now it looks like that's exactly what's going to happen.

And, quite frankly, we will be announcing shortly the municipal road program, which was just announced not long ago, and many municipalities have taken advantage of that. We're going to be able to partner with many municipalities, and we're going to be pleased to roll that out shortly. And we don't want the municipalities to miss the construction season so we're hoping that that's going to come together very shortly.

Mr. Pedersen: Previously the minister has stated that of the 87 municipalities that are below the thousand threshold, many of them are spending approximately 40 per cent of their funding on administration.

Can the minister—will the minister provide me with a list of the—those municipalities that are,

indeed, spending 40 per cent of their funding on administration?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, you know, Mr. Chair, we've talked about the municipalities and how difficult some of them have had with regard to the challenges they've had, I should say, and many of them have reached their peak population 70 years ago and have been in steady decline since. So amalgamation is not just about population or the number 1,000. It's not a race to 1,000. It was the fact that the members opposite put that in legislation when they changed The Municipal Act in 1997 and '97-98. Minister Derkach at the time used that number a thousand because they believed that number thousand was the number that would be a number that would make municipalities most viable and vibrant going into the future. So, when we looked at amalgamations we used that number as basically a starting point and a trigger for municipalities to look at—to take a look at how they were, quite frankly, with regard to their population and where they were with regard to their economics.

And, also, when you had the Brandon institute for sustainable development take a look and do a study into amalgamations in Manitoba, they used the threshold of 3,000 as a population and \$130-million tax base that a municipality should have. And they put some criteria behind what they said they thought would be the best approach, quite frankly, for looking forward, not just one year, but five years, 10, 15, down the road. As a government, we stayed with the trigger of 1,000. But we're also looking at the viability, the financial viability of a lot of those municipalities.

Now municipalities are talking to each other and talking to their neighbours about what is best for their region. I think, quite frankly, that discussion has been long overdue. Duff Roblin, to his credit, started that process many years ago in the '60s. Regrettably, that document, you know, gathered some dust and also it was looked at in the consultations that took place at the end of the 1990s with regard to amalgamation.

So, for us, Mr. Chair, is that we believe the time is right and it's something that needs to be done. It needs—something that needs to be addressed, and we stand behind Bill 33. And, yes, we are certainly looking at listening to Manitobans and possibly some amendments that may be needed to address specific or unusual situations. So—or issues that maybe we haven't seen yet, but that's the important part of

committee, is that you have a chance to hear the citizens speak and give the minister and government some suggestions.

Mr. Pedersen: So I take it from that answer that he's not going to provide me with a list of those municipalities that are spending 40 per cent of their funding on administration, so I assume that there is no list. There is no list—has that, and this is a figure that he's made up.

When we were in Estimates a while back, I also asked him for a—the qualifications of the either municipal service officers or the staff within his department that were doing the—reviewing, the audited financial statements of the municipalities when they were—as they were being sent in to the minister's department, and he has failed to send me that list of qualification—list of people, list of qualifications. Will he do so now?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I just hope the member opposite's not making a list of some kind that, you know, that would be highlighting individuals for whatever reason, quite frankly, and yet, you know, we don't want to see that happen. But I just want to say that the people within the Department of Local Government are professionals. People have training. And yet, in the end, when budgets are submitted and so on to—or audits are submitted to the department, they are looked at with possible advice, looking at changing how the audits were maybe completed or done or if something had been overlooked. They give those suggestions just by virtue of their history and experience working with municipalities. And so they have the expertise. I mean, I don't have the—sorry, I don't have the list with all their qualifications, each and every person, but I know that—but they've been hired by—through the Civil Service Commission and hired because they were the best people to do the job. So I would rely on the human resources and Civil Service Commission doing their job. They pick the right people.

Mr. Pedersen: See, the minister doesn't understand—fundamentally, doesn't understand. What he's talking about is changing an audited financial statement signed off by a chartered accountant. You do not do that. And yet this minister is trying to deflect, saying that we're going to look at an audited financial statement signed off by a chartered accountant and change it. That accountant will not sign that if he knew that was going to happen. That's what I keep asking him, and he keeps deflecting. It is not a reflection against the employees. It is a reflection on

the minister himself in that it's an antiquated system. They do not understand—the minister does not understand financial statements, and he's creating a burden on municipalities.

And all I'm looking to do, I'm asking on behalf of municipalities who have asked me to ask the minister: What is the process for these audited financial statements? And that's unfortunate that the minister fails to understand the system and that he continues to perpetuate a system which is causing a problem and causing a lot of angst for municipalities out there.

So, having said that, Mr. Chair, I'm going to turn it over to the member for Lakeside because he has a few questions, and I will come back later for the minister.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I'd like to respond to that before it goes to another line of questioning. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying that many municipalities do consult with my department officials to take a look at their issues. And also we know that many municipalities cannot get their audits done on time, and the reason why gas tax money is being withheld—at one point it was around \$14 million being withheld from municipalities, and we give them a 1 per cent increase—the equivalent of 1 per cent to municipalities but an 8.5 per cent increase this year, around \$40-million increase to municipalities.

And, quite frankly, Mr. Chairperson, that—a lot of provinces across Canada are cutting municipalities, cutting their funding, and this government, through the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), has provided funding over and above what many other provinces are providing for their municipalities. And so we're very proud of the support we've been giving to our municipalities, whether it's policing, whether it's dealing with roads, whether it's dealing with a municipal bridge program and basically operating funds and helping them do what they do best.

But all I'm saying is that we're not changing and shifting and moving anything around. We're giving some assistance to municipalities where they're asking for it and they show the department, because it's a qualification or a—it's a—it's part of the criteria behind the federal gas tax, and the federal government should be congratulated for the federal gas tax. I mean, quite frankly, it comes to Manitoba, we flow the gas tax to municipalities. But one of their criteria is that they have to have their books audited in order for us to do that.

So it may be causing confusion, but the municipalities know the process. They have known the process. Part of the challenge they're having—the smaller municipalities are having difficulty getting auditors or people to do their books because they're so small, and that's the challenge. And so it's not all of them, but, certainly, that's what I've heard by municipalities.

Just before I conclude, Mr. Deputy Chair—or Deputy Speaker—sorry, Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to run through, if I could, the Department of Local Government's municipal board members. It's the most up-to-date list I have. The chairperson is Bill Barlow; the vice-chair is Tanys Bjornson; members are Gordon Damon, Marion Robinsong, William Hinker, Leonard Kimacovich, John Blewett, Arthur Proulx, Michelle Smith, Dr. Meir Serfaty, Ed Hart, Jack Nicol, Marilyn Walder, Jim Neil, Nora Losey, Monique Mulaire, Douglas—or Doug Houghton, John Rudyk, Herm Martens, Maurice Taffair—or Tallarie, sorry, Marie Elliott, Sig Laser, Val Bingeman, and Alexandra Johnson. And these are the current up-to-date list, I understand, of the Municipal Board.

Thank you.

* (15:30)

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do have a number of questions for the Minister of Agriculture. I'll start off by—I know the minister was bombarded as well as I was this weekend with mails in regards to Pam and Clint Cavers in regards to the seizure of meat products that they had been actually awarded a \$10,000 award for one of their great ideas they had brought forward. They had not been selling this product. Only product they sold, from my understanding, was to MAFRI for the food day, the Manitoba Food Fight, which they invoiced the Province for, MAFRI, \$50, I believe they were paid for \$300 worth of product. They've now been fined each: \$650 for Clint and \$670 for Pam and \$8,000 worth of product has been seized.

And I understand this product is to be destroyed on Wednesday, and we have no idea whether or not this product is actually a health risk or not. I understand it's in storage, and they have been asking for a time to be extended so they can, in fact, verify whether or not this product is edible or not. They have five years of research into this, and they'd like their product back or explained to them why that their product was in fact seized and is going to be destroyed.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It's a great honour to have an opportunity to reply to the question brought forward by the member opposite.

Obviously, the situation that's hit the media—and often the information is somewhat limited that's been provided, but I do want to stress one important component, and I think members opposite would respect this commentary. As food safety is No. 1, regardless what members opposite may feel, we as a government, we as Canadian Food Inspection Agency and as far as Department of Health, that is the No. 1 guidelines we go by is food safety for people that may be subject to the product.

We are following the mandate of Canadian Food Inspection Agency as we move forward on the issue brought forward by the member opposite. I want to ensure members opposite that we've had communications with the Cavers' Harborside Farms regarding it. In fact, on Friday, we've had staff out there talking with them about the due process is to meet the guidelines as we move forward for a product such as this, that's been identified for human consumption, and I want to compliment the Cavers for their initiative as far as a small business, moving forward with a niche market, and I want to ensure you that as this government, as Agriculture, as far as Rural Initiatives, we are in no way in a position to make life difficult, but there are certain protocols that are covered, that are requested by Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and there's also duties that we have to do in order to protect the general public of meeting the criteria as far as food safety.

So that is my commentary. I know that there are ongoing discussions, and, hopefully, the time to address the issues will be addressed in a normal fashion so that they can proceed to market the product as has been identified.

Mr. Eichler: We all know very clearly that food safety is No. 1, and we're not asking the minister in any shape or form to deviate from them. We're simply asking whether or not this product—I mean, they tell us that the product was not sold in any way, but yet they were handed a fine. And they have not been told whether or not the food is contaminated or not, and, if so, then they should receive an explanation determining what exactly is wrong with the product. And, if it's not contaminated, then they should have their product back.

Do I have the minister's assurance that he will work with the Cavers in order to ensure that that

meat, that product, will not be destroyed without consultation prior to that—the meat being destroyed before they do that? Will he guarantee that today?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I will not assure you that the meat will not be destroyed. I am—it is beyond my control, between the chief veterinarian officer and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to move forward with the proper testing of the product and to move forward with food safety to the individuals.

I do want to assure you that our—the staff have been working with the Cavers not only last Friday, but three or four times prior to that that they have been in discussions and providing assistance of how we can move forward of certifying and meeting the food safety requirements for the safety of the general public as this product is moving forward.

And I think it's worthwhile mentioning is that there are certain circumstances that the member opposite 'teems' to bring up, is that it's probably in the best interest to do further investigations from their side to get to the bottom of the reality of the product that's been—that's being used.

Mr. Eichler: Just for the minister's information, from—for our—what's been shared with us, they're still selling their meat products on that site.

In fact, two days before the seizure was taken on August the 28th, they had an eight-hour inspection and they were fine. The same inspectors came back, seized the product, and now it's in storage and under proper conditions, they were assured of.

So I'm asking the minister to make sure that his facts are straight and that there's not \$8,000 worth of product going to be destroyed, plus the fact five years of work that the government awarded this family, this farm, a \$10,000 reward. All of a sudden, something drastically went wrong.

So I'm asking for the minister's assurance to work with the producers in order to ensure that this meat is not destroyed before it's necessarily the right thing to do.

I will move on from there. I do have, in regards to the going forward program—this was supposed to start April the 1st and we have not had any indication about what grow programs are going to be announced and when. We're six months late. I'd like the minister to address that.

Mr. Kostyshyn: I just want to kind of have the final commentary on the previous subject brought forward.

I want to assure the member opposite, we are continue to work with the Cavers on moving forward with the product. But let us not forget, the No. 1 criteria is that we are there for the general public for food safety purposes and we are just following the mandate when it comes to Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

So, moving forward with the second question brought forward by the member opposite regarding Growing Forward 2, we've made an announcement—Minister Mackintosh and myself made an announcement about the environment to farmlands—about three weeks ago—about moving forward with GF2 projects. And that is one example as far as the environmental.

There is a number of suites—we are going to be making announcements in the next weeks to three weeks. There are ongoing discussions with the federal government about announcing programs.

And I want to educate the member opposite, honourable member from Lakeside, regarding certain circumstances that we are challenged in the agriculture with. And one of them being is that we want to be—take advantage of the opportunity of dollars for a variety of commodity groups as we move forward.

And let me use one example is, you know, the federal government in their decision making has now made it somewhat challenging for us, and we're trying to be creative with Growing Forward 2 dollars. We talk about the research station in Brandon that was recently shut down through the federal government. So Growing Forward 2, now what we're planning to do is to try and be—use some of the Growing Forward 2 dollars so we can maintain the forage program research that was done in Brandon historically.

* (15:40)

Now, there are other circumstances. We want to talk about community pastures, as member from Lakeside is aware of it. The federal government has chosen to dismiss funding of community pastures.

Now, if we want to be very proud of sustaining the beef industry in the province of Manitoba, we need to maintain community pastures so we can maintain livestock numbers in the province of Manitoba.

So, when we talk about Growing Forward 2, we are still in discussions of trying to enhance the

importance of federal and provincial dollars for the betterment of variety commodities and interest groups for the province of Manitoba.

And I can carry on for some time, but I want to assure member opposite from Lakeside that we are in the discussions with not only the hog industry, we're in discussions with Manitoba beef association—of producers. But these are changing agricultural issues that we want to enhance the viability and the importance of the GF2 dollars so we can maintain historical programs that existed previously and how we can improve them.

As you would know, member from the Lakeside, research and innovation is still our key priorities when we talked about Growing Forward 2, and that was probably a number of the pillars that were discussed when we got into the partnership with the federal government, and that was the incentive. We talked about livestock price insurance, and I'm sure the member opposite may have a question on that. These are number innovative silos of—and programs that we're working through Growing Forward 2.

We talk about crop insurance. There's inventive programs. But I want to assure the member opposite that our communication with the federal department and our provincial department is ongoing because there are always changes that are reoccurring between what traditionally what the federal government used to do and our wishes on the importance of what the federal government used to. We want to maintain some of those programs because we know the benefit of what was done through various examples. And I want to refer to PFRA community pastures—those are very important—and the wishes from our department, the government of Manitoba, is to sustain some viability of the community pastures as one of many examples when we talk about Growing Forward 2.

Mr. Chairperson: Before recognizing the member for Lakeside, Clerk Assistant pointed out a transgression a moment ago. And on that basis, I'd—I want to remind all members that we are to refer to each other by our constituency names or ministers by their portfolios.

Mr. Eichler: I didn't take it personal.

Anyway, moving forward, I'll try and give the minister another chance here in regards to where he thinks that these announcements will be made. The two announcements that you did make with the Minister of Conservation wasn't environmental

programs, the two that you referred to, and you gave the producers two weeks for a deadline to respond to those.

Do the minister think this is reasonable in order to meet the mandate that this government set out?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As the member opposite brings forward, member from Lakeside brings forward, honourable member, it's continuous communication we have with commodity groups and policy as we move forward. But a lot of it also has to do with an understanding of a shared agreement with the federal government when we move forward on a joint announcement when you got federal government and provincial staff working together.

My wishes are to move forward as quickly as we can, but I think the member from Lakeside has to appreciate the fact that it's not an opportunity that we obtain the dollars and do whatever you want. It's an understanding in the wording and an understanding with the federal department that we move forward on some of the programs as announced. Two weeks is hardly enough time, I totally agree with it. But I think the flexibility is there to move forward with more timelines and totally understood.

Mr. Eichler: Well, we certainly appreciate and we know that timelines are important. We've seen the number of dollars that have been lost as the result of timelines. So we take the minister at his word and hopefully that anybody that's late in their submissions will still have the opportunity to take advantage of that.

In regards to the community pastures the minister has referred to, they have made a lot of a talk about it. They have not laid out a plan for 2014, so I ask the minister: What is the plans in regard to community pastures, and how's that going to look for producers in 2014?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As I had made earlier in my commentary, and to the member from Lakeside.

Personally, living close to community pastures for 35 years of my life and seeing the viability or the value of community pastures, I want to assure the member opposite from Lakeside that I—and the Manitoba government realizes the importance of community pastures, especially when we've gone through the BSE crisis and we've had a depopulation in the cattle industry. And, unfortunately, as the member would somewhat agree with me—I'm sure of that—that, you know, it's kind of—timing has been somewhat challenging for the federal government to

choose to—basically said, well, here, the Province, you look after it; you do what you want to do, whether it's Saskatchewan, whether it's Alberta or whether it's Manitoba. And when you have the challenges within trying to retain the young producers, cattle producers, in the province of Manitoba, our visionary in the province of Manitoba is to work towards to sustain the economic viability of the beef industry but also somewhat make it financially attractive so that there is a decent dollar saved for the cattle industry by leasing the community pasture.

But let's be somewhat clear on this commentary as well is the fact that community pastures are not only for the benefit of the grazing of livestock, it has ecological goods-and-service benefits to no end in this. And I'm sure the member from Lakeside can really relate to what I'm talking about. If we had the opportunity to save all of them, by all means, I think it's great, because not only does it serve well for grazing pasture feeds but also it provides ecological goods and services. I don't think we're in a position to see land sold off, because, obviously, I think the worst scenario that may occur is that when land will be sold off, it'll be ripped up and be subject to soil erosion, wind erosion, but also because that's the reason why community pastures were in place, because the soil type it was.

But also, I think 'flact' of we've had so many floods in the last number of years, the community pastures have worked quite well as retention-pond areas. And I think member opposite from Lakeside can somewhat agree what a great opportunity of real estate to move forward with that kind of comprehension to use the community pastures, not only for grazing of the livestock but also as retention-pond areas.

So we have our challenges trying to come up with the dollars. The federal government, you know, has a certain amount of dollars invested in the real estate via fence lines, infrastructure, towards the vehicles. And we're still in negotiations. We were hopefully that the federal government was choosing to somewhat lessen the cost factor of the takeover of the financial commitment, because, basically, if could form a large co-operative organization that would run the community pastures as being proposed, it would make it less final—less financially challenging for them to come up with millions of dollars to buy out federal government assets. We're still in negotiations and discussions with the federal government. We don't have a price tag from them, if

there's going to be a price tag. And to clarify the question brought forward by the member from Lakeside, until we have a definite figure in place of what the challenges for this new co-operative group are going to have to come up to pay back the federal government, we, as the Province of Manitoba, are prepared to work with the producers and try and make it as—at least feasible as possible. So—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives has the floor.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thanks for the excitement, Kevin.

But that concludes my commentary.

Mr. Eichler: Well, I appreciate the—you know, the troubles that the minister is having, and I can tell you, beef producers are wanting answers. They want some direction from where the government's going to go. I suggest that if he needs help, reach out and ask. I'm more than happy to do my part in order to ensure that community pastures are here for next year and for the future and for the future generations.

* (15:50)

So, if he needs help, don't be afraid to ask. We're happy to work it any way we can, and we know how important the beef sector is to the economy in Manitoba and we've seen literally numbers—and part of that problem is MCEC which was instituted a number of years back. We've seen not only producers' money being invested, producers' money spent, we don't know how much money the Province of Manitoba has put in. Right now we're on the verge of moving forward with a federal-inspected plant, Plains Processors. And I want to ask the minister where the \$920,000 that was promised to Plains Processors, where that's at today and when the money will flow to them and if there's any additional money that's going to be to—made available to them in the form of a loan or any other outstanding grants?

Mr. Kostyshyn: And let me, first of all, start off my commentary to the MCEC board that was very diligence people that were—heart and desire was to move forward with a federal slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba and continue to work with other federal slaughter facilities regardless of where their geographical location is. So I just, for the record, I truly want to acknowledge the previous staff and board members that sit on there, the MCEC,

that wishes were there to move forward with a federal slaughter facility.

As you know, the MCEC board is in existence and they are still involved in moving forward regarding the 920 and I believe there's ongoing discussions with the business plan of retarding the Plains processing or any other proposal as far as federal slaughter facility. Whether it would be in The Pas, Manitoba, or whether it would be in Russell, Manitoba, I want to assure you that the MCEC is there as a board to hear and move forward in discussions with other departments for the betterment of federal cattle slaughter facility. But at this point in time it's—would be in the hands of the MCEC board regarding the Plains processing.

Mr. Eichler: I didn't hear a date or a timeline of when the \$920,000 would flow. Did I miss it somewhere?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I don't think I'm—I don't have that information in front of me. It's before the MCEC board and I'm sure they're doing what a board is supposed to do. So, at this point in time, I think it's in the best interest that I should not make an announcement that—without the information that they're requesting is provided appropriately.

Mr. Eichler: Well, I can assure the minister that, you know, dragging their feet on this is certainly not going to be beneficial for increase in federal capacity, and we saw what happened the last time they drug their feet. The 200—and their \$2.8 million in federal money that was supposed to flow, they lost \$2.4 million of that because of the government not being able to make a decision. So I'm encouraging the minister to make it happen sooner than later, and meet with the board and ensure and find out and provide that advice to them in order so that they can, in fact, move forward.

On the wind down of the MCEC, the minister has said and MCE has said that the last year of premiums will rebate—be rebated to those producers. What is the deadline for the minister's department in order to have those monies or application made as for a refund to them? Is it March 31st, or what's the deadline for producers to apply for a refund for money that's being paid back to them in the last year with the wind down of MCEC?

Mr. Kostyshyn: To answer the question directly from the member from Lakeside, honourable member from Lakeside, what there is in place right now—and I'm sure the member opposite is quite

familiar with—as of September 1st, 2013, rebates can be asked for 12 months back from September. So we can go back 'til September 2012—September 1st, 2000. So 12 months starting September 1st, 2013.

Mr. Eichler: I'm asking the minister again, what is the deadline to apply for that money in order for it to be refunded?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Basically—thank you, Deputy Speaker—there is no deadline. All we're asking for is producers, if they wish to apply for their rebate, have up to a year to apply for their rebate based on—starting in 2013, September 1st, 2000—back 12 months to September 2012.

Mr. Eichler: One would assume then, from that answer, that there is no deadline for them to apply. I thank the minister for that.

Out of the lot on Marion Street, the empty lot now that was bought for increasing processing capacity within the province of Manitoba, who currently owns title to that property?

Mr. Kostyshyn: The—to my knowledge, and it's the—it's a numbered company that also has somewhat of a relation with a mortgage by the MCEC board, as far as being part owners of that as well.

Mr. Eichler: The numbered company, Mr. Chair, then, do we know who that is, and if so, is there any liability that's going to be incurred by the Province of Manitoba or MCEC?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I think that question is one that I would like to get back to the member opposite. I haven't got into the details in that perspective to deal with it. And it's—really, at this point in time, it's the MCEC board that would probably be able to answer that question, or somebody. But I'll gladly get an answer back for the member opposite on that criteria.

Mr. Eichler: Just to follow up on that as well, Mr. Chair, we ask the minister also to provide us with an accounting on how much money is outstanding, to be paid, as a result of the buildings being tore down and re-landscaped. Also, any other outstanding liens that may be as a result of this processing plant, that is not going to go forward.

We understand that it has been abandoned. So I think it's important that cattle producers have some type of an accounting in regards to what is going to be held as a liability or an asset for MCEC—if the minister would care to assure us that that would happen as well.

Mr. Kostyshyn: And just to—for the record, I'd like to make some clarifications regarding last commentary by member from Lakeside.

Obviously, there was producer dollars, net of about \$5.6 million, went into investment into the Marion Street project, which included cleaning up the site. The reality, when we talk about the Marion Street is that the MCEC board moved forward with the proposed Marion Street project. Unfortunately, when X amount of dollars were invested into the property, and there was a discussion with the federal government with an understanding, and, unfortunately, the \$10 million that was committed to work with the MCEC Marion Street was pulled. That's where the challenges began, when we talk about an investment and a partnership that was being formed, towards the federal slaughter facility on Marion Street.

As it sits right now, I think the member opposite is quite familiar with a place called Aberdeen, South Dakota. And the challenges is, as member opposite would be quite familiar with, as federal slaughter facilities are, at the best of times, challenging, regardless of what kind of slaughter capacity. But I want to kind of focus on my commentary about the plant closure at Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Here's an example of a plant that was being designed for the last six, seven years. Finally got into 'rition'—a plant that cost \$109 million to build, employed 420 people, processed 1,500 cattle per day. Unfortunately, as of today, they have gone into receivership. Less than a year into a business operation, they've gone into receivership.

So it is the challenging time of federal slaughter facilities or any kind of slaughter facilities in the province of Manitoba.

The MCEC board put their heart and soul into have a plant built here. Plains Processing is moving forward with their *[inaudible]*

* (16:00)

I want to assure that the member opposite had brought up a—and there's \$3 million through the MIOP loan that has been allocated towards Plains Processing, to answer a previous question that the member opposite may have had.

But I want to assure that when the MCEC board and staff chose to reduce the levy check-off dollars, that's a good indication of subconsciously they felt that it's a tough, tough scenario, but when you have a

plant that runs 1,500 cattle per day go into receivership hardly a year into—in business, I think the member opposite can appreciate the decision of the MCEC board moving forward with that decision. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: I'd still ask the minister whether or not he will give us an accountability of the \$5.6 million of producers' money and also the \$4 million that's been put in by the Province of Manitoba along with his correspondence back to us on the title and the ownership of the property on Marion Street, so I hope that the minister will do that for us, and I'll just give him an opportunity to say yes or no on that.

Mr. Kostyshyn: The member opposite from Lakeside—honourable member from Lakeside is asking the question. I can kind of give you a brief breakdown, but I definitely will provide a paper copy later on. Investments prior to the loss of the SIP funds, which was 7.7—or \$5.7 million, purchase of the site was about \$1.2 million. Mortgage and taxes is about \$700,000. Renovations and maintenance to run a cut plant was \$761,000, operating a cut plant was 2.1. That was prior to it being ripped out—that's the prior owner. And building demolition was \$237,000. Now, also when you get involved in the blueprints and moving forward, professional fees, accounting, legal, engineering, was \$250,000. And long-term investment shares in Marion Street was about \$450,000.

So this was money that was all spent before the \$10 million was pulled out. So we were moving forward with a—the MCEC was moving forward with volunteer dollars towards the project, and, unfortunately, when we talked about the \$10 million, that's what became of the situation. So you asked me for investment prior. I hope I was able to answer some of your questions. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: In the essence of time, just very quickly, does the minister have the current value of that property on Marion Street?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I would—I think I might be misleading in my estimation so, by all means, I think there is an opportunity that I can provide some accurate figures regarding what the property is valued at.

Mr. Eichler: In the essence of time, I just have a little bit left. The Manitoba Beef Producers' insurance program—I know it's in partnership with Alberta, Saskatchewan. Would the minister provide

us with an update on where the Manitoba policy is at?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, I'd be proud to give you an update on the livestock price insurance, member from Lakeside. What has been happening, the Alberta provincial representatives, the Saskatchewan provincial representatives, Manitoba's staff, have been working quite closely with one another to build a template when we talk about livestock price insurance. And we're not only talking beef; we're also talking hog prices—livestock price insurance.

And presently, as you know—or the member opposite from Lakeside would know, is that there was a pilot project that ran in Alberta for a number of years, and it has its challenging times, and I guess one of the challenging times was—is when the X and L beef was shut down because of the scenario that was brought forward when we talk about food safety. So there was a point in time where some of the livestock price insurance was brought in to compensate producers because they weren't able to move their finished animals through the X and L beef slaughter facility.

I do want to say to you—the member opposite from Lakeside, is that it's ongoing discussions. I would have to safely say Saskatchewan and Manitoba are on the same page moving forward as far as being committed to hopefully implementing the livestock price insurance by 2014. There's always ongoing discussions, as the member opposite would understand, with the federal government, with their certain consent about moving forward with the livestock price insurance. But it's ongoing, but the wishes are that we'll hopefully have something in place beginning in 2014.

Mr. Eichler: Just two more questions. In regards to the federally inspected plants, has there been any other applications in the province of Manitoba for federal inspection plants?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Not to my knowledge. I have no knowledge that there was any other agency or other departments or other agencies that are asking for a federal slaughter facility licence.

Mr. Eichler: Also I would like to put on the record—I know the minister's aware of this as well—there was an—a letter written to your office from Mr. Genette Slack [*phonetic*] on July the 2nd, has yet to receive any information or acknowledgement of the letter. I ask if the minister has not received it. I'd be happy to provide him with a copy, so I ask that the minister

agree to get back to either Dave Slack or Janet Slack in response to their request with the chief veterinarian officer and other complaints that was sent to his office on July the 2nd.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, I believe the documentation has been circulated with the member opposite from Lakeside and their House leader, and we're well aware of the situation that has been brought forward. To my knowledge, I believe there's been some documentation brought forward to the appropriate members opposite, but I want to assure that we will provide that documentation as far as from the chief veterinarian officer of the—what has been done as far as a diagnostic service laboratory—I'm assuming that's what we're talking about. And I think the member opposite from Lakeside would appreciate of the dollars that have been invested in improving the—modernizing the facility, and I believe it's \$1.2 million. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: I thank you, Mr. Chair, and the minister for their comments. I know there's some homework to be done. We look forward to getting that homework back and if we have time before the end of the day, hopefully we can ask a few more questions. I got about two thirds of the way through.

So thank you for that, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Just a couple of questions at this time for the Minister of Finance. First one being, can he indicate whether or not his government has already taken the vote tax for each of their members?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I can certainly find out for the member and get back to her.

Mrs. Driedger: And can the minister indicate whether or not they have to wait for BITSA. I understand they don't—they don't have to wait for BITSA to be implemented, that they can actually take the vote tax but that BITSA does have a role in indicating the cap. Although I would note that with the way the NDP have set this up, the cap is now better for them than what the former commissioner had indicated.

So can the minister make a commitment to find out by tomorrow whether or not each of his members has taken the vote tax to the tune of \$5,000 each?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I'll certainly commit to getting back to the member. I'm not going to commit to a certain deadline by the time that that information is

obtained, but certainly I will be co-operative and find out information for the member for Charleswood.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Driedger: It's certainly something that I don't think that should be that difficult. With each of the members' opposite getting \$5,000 each, I do understand it is flowed. I would assume that it is flowed to every one of the NDP MLAs, and I just wonder, then, if their central party perhaps keeps it in holding for them for the next election or if actually each member gets the \$5,000. I know that the Minister of Finance, I believe, he already has got a rebate of about \$16,000 or something like that from the last election. So this would be on top of that, so \$5,000 more on top of that. He doesn't even have to fundraise for the next election; he's already got the money in the piggy bank with the extra \$5,000. So it has been interesting to note which, you know, the rebate that so many NDP MLA's did get; it really makes me wonder why the NDP felt that they needed the extra \$5,000, because it's really putting, you know, a lot of them quite high up there in terms of the money they already have. So they won't even have to work for the next election; it's just all there.

That aside, then, I'll wait for the minister to bring forward that information. But I do want to ask him about interest rates on taxes owed here in Manitoba. I understand that Manitoba has the highest interest rates on taxes owed at 9 per cent. Can the minister tell us why the taxes that are owed to, you know, to the government by people in Manitoba, why the interest rates for those are as high as they are?

Mr. Struthers: Well, first of all, just to finish off the discussion on election financing, the member for Charleswood shouldn't assume anything. She made a number of assumptions in her preamble that, you know, don't take this wrong way, but could actually be incorrect.

I will endeavour to get the information for the member for Charleswood so that at least I can say that I've played my part in trying to get one of the Conservative's across the way to stick to what the facts are. If they have the facts in front of them maybe they'll use them, I suspect not. I know she—and her colleagues, every single one of them—collected election financing after the last election in the—to thousands of dollars. I, too, collected election financing after the last election, just like every single one of the 57 MLAs in this Chamber. The difference is that we on this side of the House totally admit to that as opposed to members opposite who, if they

were true to their words about election financing, would maybe give back that money that they claim that they're so pure in. So we will follow up with the information that the member for Charleswood is requesting and then she can make whatever assumptions she likes from there, and I'm sure she will.

In terms of interest rates, whether we talk about interest rates with individual Manitobans or whether we talk about interest rates paid by a government in terms of some of the borrowings that government does every year, it is our intention, it's our goal always to minimize the amount of money that we pay in interest rates on the borrowings that we do. We also try to find ways that individual Manitobans can minimize the amount of interest that they pay on debts that they assume. Anything that we have any kind of influence over or control over we try to get the best deal for Manitobans that we can. On top of that, we work with different entities at the, say, the post-secondary level or other entities that do borrowing because we should be able to take advantage of our provincial government's size in terms of borrowing. So, if we can put it all together with other entities we can command a better interest rate in the market.

We—as we saw with Moody's not so long ago, we have our AA stable outlook rating that's been confirmed by Moody's, which means that we have less money that we spend on interest. I would much rather have that money be spent on building schools or hospitals or paying down debt—which we do every year—or many other priorities that Manitobans have rather than have that interest leave the province and go to some banker in New York City. So whatever measures we can take to make sure that our interest costs are contained, we do that.

So, if there's any suggestions from members opposite in terms of how we can improve on that, I'm, of course, open to those suggestions. If there's ways that we can make that better for the people of Manitoba, that would be—we'd be open to that, as well.

Mrs. Driedger: I think the minister may have missed the question that I had been asking, and so I would like him to focus specifically on the fact that Manitoba has the highest interest rates on taxes owed to them at 9 per cent. And yet, when the government owes a refund, there is no interest paid to that person. It only works if the government is expecting to be paid something and people aren't paying, and so you

are charging—this government is charging the highest interest rates on taxes owed. In all of Canada, it's the highest interest rate, and it's at 9 per cent. And I would note that this government increased that interest rate on taxes owed by 50 per cent in Budget 2012. So the taxpayers are getting hit again. So if they can't afford to pay their taxes, they're getting dinged with the highest interest rate payments in Canada.

Can the minister indicate why they felt they had to increase those interest rates on taxes owed by 50 per cent in Budget 2012?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I would point out that those—that is—an interest rate is being charged to people who aren't paying their taxes. That is not uncommon for any government, for any institution that is owed money. If she lets her MasterCard or Visa bill go unpaid for a certain amount of time, then the member for Charleswood, as would I, if I did the same thing, would find that they would be charged interest on the amount owing. I hope she doesn't expect government to act any different than that.

We have a system of taxation, and while I can't think of a single person who likes to pay taxes, I can—I know that it's part of our responsibilities to have a tax system in place so that we can draw upon that tax system to fund the priorities of Manitobans. My encouragement always is for people to—is to pay their taxes to avoid those costs from the outset. But my other encouragement always is, when I deal with provincial government employees whose job it is to put the tax system in place and collect, is to be humane about that. I don't want cases bubbling forward where Manitobans have been treated unfairly. I know that people within the department of taxation deal with individuals all the time and appeals and people talking to them about their own tax—their own individual tax situations. And I know that the people in the department whose job it is to deal with those folks deal with them in a fair manner.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So we're not going to have a situation where we don't have interest on money that's owing to us. No government would agree to that. We're—and we're going to keep our overall tax system competitive with others. You know, we've had a lot of debates over the course of the summer about our tax system and about our overall affordability. And I think it's pretty clear that even when you include taxes, Manitoba is still one of the most affordable

provinces in which to live in this country, and that we've taken measures, including tax relief, to solidify our position as one of the most affordable provinces in which to live in all of Canada.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Driedger: With all due respect to the minister, some of his comments were absolutely ridiculous because we pay the highest income tax west of Québec, which just puts Manitoba out of the ballpark in terms of not being as affordable. But, anyway, that's government spin, and I know they're going to stay with that.

But the minister was talking about competitiveness and fairness, and what I'm trying to say is there is no fairness here in terms of how the NDP are looking at tax debts owed to them. And I would ask the minister why he felt he had to increase the interest rates to make them the highest in Canada if people owe tax debt. Under the Filmon government, the interest on tax debt was two percentage points above the prime, that's it. This NDP government, as of 2012 budget, increased the interest rate on taxes owed by 50 per cent and now leaving Manitoba with the highest interest rates on taxes owed in the country, in Canada, at 9 per cent.

So it's the highest in Canada. I mean, was the government not getting enough money by increasing the PST, doubling the debt, draining the Fiscal Stabilization Fund? Now they've gone after people that actually owe them money on taxes and they've cranked up the interest rate on that so that it is the highest in the country. And yet if the government decides to be slow in paying people refunds, the people don't get any interest on that. They just have to sit and wait for the government to make the payments.

But why does this government need to go this low? People owe money probably because they're in a jam, and disposable income, we know, is extremely low in Manitoba as compared to the rest of the country. Why is this government now going after people with the highest interest rates on taxes owed in all of Canada? Where's the fairness in that?

Mr. Struthers: Well, you know, I was determined. I had made a commitment to myself not to talk about the Filmon government in concurrence and not to go back to the '90s, because I know that really bothers members opposite. But since she mentioned the Filmon government, let's think and remember what it was like with the Filmon government.

They—that government, which she was part of, was faced with an economic downturn—fiscal economic downturn in the early '90s. And, you know, the world at the time was in—was—had floated back into recession. The American economy had slowed. The Canadian economy was experiencing a great deal of instability. What was their response to that? Well, their response was to cut. And they cut into health care and they cut into education. I remember being a school principal at the time, trying to put a budget together with less and less money every year in education in little Duck Mountain School Division. That wasn't fair. But they cut so far that they became part of the problem. They cut to the point where they—you could point to examples of the economy slowing as a result of the austerity of the Filmon government.

So, first of all, to—you know, to bring that back up, I'm a little surprised at the member for Charleswood to remind people about that. And then to say in a derisive way as she did about us draining the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, well, over the years, some of that money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was put there as a result of money from the then-Liberal government in Ottawa, who transferred money to be specifically used for wait times. You know, they have members opposite who complain about wait times in this House. Well, some of that money that we—was in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was used specifically to deal with the wait-list problems, wait-time problems that Manitoba Health was experiencing, probably as a result of some of the deep cuts that the Filmon government did back in the 1990s that the member for Charleswood just reminded us all of.

I'll tell you what else that Fiscal Stabilization Fund was used and, you know, we drained it, which is inaccurate in and of itself because it hasn't been drained. But the—another decision that we made was to take money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and use it to pay down our debt every year. So, on the one hand, we have Conservatives across the way complaining about how—what rotten fiscal managers we are. But you know what? Through the early part of this decade when we were producing surpluses year after year, 10 in a row, we took some of those surpluses and we used it to build the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and then put it to the side so that we could actually use it in times like this when the economic downturn has hit. So, instead of going back and cutting and hacking, slashing our way through health care and education and infrastructure

money like the Filmon government did, we're using that money now to continue paying down our debt so that we don't have to pay more interest to some banker in New York; rather, we can invest that money into hospitals and schools and roads and bridges here in Manitoba.

And for the member for Charleswood to make the ludicrous statement that she just did about disposable income in Manitoba, when right in question period today I tried to help members opposite out by talking specifically about disposable income, 3.8 per cent the Manitoba number, 3.4 per cent Canadian number. That is a good thing. The other facts that I think, you know, that they should be aware of is the household debt, household family debt of Manitobans. In comparison to every other province and to the Canadian average we are in a very positive situation on that.

So I know it's, you know, the members opposite, maybe to their better political narrative that they want to—if they want to dwell on, but it isn't based on fact. Disposable income, we're doing okay; household debt, we're the best in the country. We have a low unemployment rate, 5.2 per cent in the numbers the other day. I noticed the members opposite didn't take any time to point that out. It's a lot of doom and gloom from the members opposite, but I hope I can continue to, you know, inject a few facts into the discussion so that they can actually use those facts and participate in a useful discussion.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I thank the Minister of Finance for his rant today—[interjection] Well, I know, I mean straightforward questions the member was asking and we got into that political debate. I'm not sure where the minister is coming from in his 10 years of surplus budgets when, you know, they go from a 13 million—\$13-billion debt, pardon me, in 1999 to a \$30-billion debt at the end of this year. They have 10 years of balanced surplus, he says. Boy, I would think Manitobans would beg to differ

Mr. Chair, I'm—I want to talk to the minister today about the contract that the Province has entered into with Teranet and the issues around that property sale, the property registrar's sale. Would the minister be able to tell us where that particular signed agreement is at?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we've worked very, very hard with Teranet, Teranet Manitoba. They will be setting up their head office here in Winnipeg. They are look—we've—what we've signed with them is a

licensing agreement to perform the services that had been previously done by the—through the property registry. This is a—oh, sorry—

An Honourable Member: You got to start all over now.

* (16:30)

Mr. Struthers: Did you get what I got so far or do I have to repeat it word for word?

Okay, so we've signed a licensing agreement with Teranet. The Province of Manitoba keeps strict control of the data. We haven't sold the data. Manitobans need not worry about privacy issues, anything like that. We ensured that there—that all of the employees were transferred from Property Registry to Teranet or were offered other positions, and my understanding is that very few opted to not be transferred into the new entity. And those who did were located in other positions, so there were no layoffs involved with this.

Teranet will be undertaking to a number of upgrades to offices throughout Manitoba because there's some capital upgrades that are necessary. So Teranet will be undertaking that over the next while. This is—in the 2012 Budget, we said we would find \$75 million worth of revenue in terms of our assets, and this covers that commitment that we made through the 2012 budget. It also represents a royalty fee if you would—if you could call it that—an annual fee that Teranet will pay to the Province of Manitoba.

This is a 30-year licensing agreement that we've developed with Teranet. Over the space of that 30 years, it will realize about \$491 million. So this is a good deal from our perspective that protects employees, and it protects, most importantly to me, protects the data that Manitobans count on, whether it was the Property Registry or this new Teranet Manitoba.

We—at any time, we can go back to the situation that we have now. At—if at the end of 30 years, for example, we decide we want to go bring it back in-house, we can do that with no penalty. If we want to—if we're happy with Teranet, we think it's good, if the government of the day—I'm not—I shouldn't assume that I'm going to be here for this—but the government of the day will have the option to renew with Teranet, if they'd like, or renegotiate, see if they can get a better deal. Or they can go elsewhere if there is another company in 30 years that can offer

the same benefits to Manitobans, then that's still open to them, as well.

So I believe that this is a good arrangement. It's a more efficient way to do government. It represents some increases to revenue and it represents some avoidance of costs down the road. I know that the member for Spruce Woods encourages us to find ways to be more efficient in government all the time, and this is a very good example of that.

Mr. Cullen: The minister referenced the \$75 million. Has the Province received the \$75 million at this point in time?

Mr. Struthers: Not at this point, but we will in this fiscal year.

Mr. Cullen: If the minister could repeat his answer, I would appreciate that. And how is the—I'm assuming the contract with Teranet has been signed. Can the minister confirm that? And could he confirm when the money will be received?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we—as the member knows, he was in committee the other night, and the legislation took another step forward. That's key to this. But given the generally accepted accounting principles that we deal with, it will be booked in this fiscal year.

Mr. Cullen: In terms of the \$75-million evaluation, how was that figure determined?

Mr. Struthers: That was arrived at through negotiations with Teranet itself. As the member would appreciate, if it was a—it was discussed in terms of the length of the agreement. It—they're a private company. They're good negotiators. They're smart people. If they were going to get a longer lease agreement, it would cost them more. If they would settle for a shorter lease agreement, they—it may not have cost them the \$75 million.

We thought that was a fair rate. We wanted, of course, to maximize the benefits on behalf of the people of Manitoba and the Manitoba taxpayer.

So our positions, as we negotiated with Teranet, were pretty firmly put forward and justified, and we think we landed on a fair settlement for both us and Teranet coming into Manitoba.

Mr. Cullen: Did the Province have an independent evaluation done to determine kind of a starting point from where the Province should be in terms of a dollar figure for that portion? And, I guess, from there, you know, how did the Province go about

sourcing Teranet? Was there an open con—an open bid for this—for that process, for that entity—a certain entity come over and take over that portion of the registry?

Just if the minister could kind of walk me through the process there, and I know there's certainly concerns from some areas that, you know, this really wasn't an open process. Can the minister walk me through that—the process?

Mr. Struthers: The—we—there was an evaluation done before we embarked upon this. We wanted to—we wanted first of all to see if there were some options of terms of changing the footprint of government. We want to find more and more ways to make the provincial government more efficient. And this is one that—this is an idea that came forward at that time.

We did get third—a third party to evaluate, and part of that evaluation was a look around at other provinces to see what they were doing, particularly Ontario, where Teranet had already been established for a number of years and performing there. But we looked at other provinces, as well.

And part of that was to find if there was anybody else out there who could do the job in Manitoba that Teranet was doing in Ontario. Teranet and that provincial government and their registry system had a lot of years of experience working together and had done a very good job, we thought, in terms of perfecting their system. Maybe perfecting isn't the right word; I don't know if we ever get to that point and I don't know if either Teranet or Ontario would say they're perfect, I think they would probably tell you there's still more things they can work on. And I think we'll find that here, as well.

But we did do an evaluation which included looks at other provinces and other companies who may have been able to do this. It was the recommendation of that evaluation that we sit down with Teranet and negotiate with them. Their view was that there wouldn't be a lot of other companies out there who could do the same job as what Teranet was doing in Ontario.

But, as I said, if there are others who come forward who can do a better job than what Teranet is doing, then we do have options over the course of the next while if we believe that there's something better out there.

Mr. Cullen: So, just to clarify then, there was really no open bid process for these particular services?

Mr. Struthers: The recommendation to us was that there was already somebody out there doing this and that there was nobody else that could do it for Manitoba like Teranet was doing. It really became a question of whether or not we could get a deal with them that worked for Manitobans, and we were very pleased that we were able to do that.

Mr. Cullen: My understanding is part of the agreement will—and, actually, part of the agreement actually allows the government to set rates for the services provided. And under the contract the rates can up by inflation plus 1 per cent. Now, I'd ask the minister why that has been incorporated into that contract.

* (16:40)

Mr. Struthers: Well, I see it as a way to protect the consumer. What we do not want is a repeat of what happened when the privatized version of the Manitoba Telephone System was given unfettered, almost, ability to raise rates, and then, over a course of the last 15 years or so, have taken the opportunity to jack up phone rates.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

We wanted a measure of control. We wanted to be able to limit, not choke the private-sector company. We don't expect them to do this without breaking even or making a profit. I mean, private companies thrive on making profits. There's nothing wrong with that. But we did not want this to turn into an opportunity to gouge Manitobans on services as basic as what the Property Registry was providing.

So we've limited that in the agreement, as the member has—for Spruce Woods has pointed out. We want to tie this to a regular formula, if you will, so that it doesn't fluctuate up, uncontrollably, without any kind of measure of control to it. We think we've obtained that with this agreement, and that it will perform well, both for Manitoba consumers and for the company who needs to meet their—who—they need to meet their balance sheet as well.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I suppose conversely too, as the rates go up, as the government allows rates to go up, the government stands to prosper from that increase in rates as well.

So I think that could be the other side of the coin—where, I understand, in Ontario, the increases may be limited to—I'm not sure of the terms—either inflation or inflation plus a half per cent. So that could be the other side of the coin.

Is there performance clauses built into the contract, so that if Teranet is not performing to certain standards, this would allow the government, if you will, an out, to basically rescind the contract so that expectations are undertaken within the terms of the contract?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, there are. We've built in protections over the 30 years of the lease agreement. And while we'll monitor very, very closely, we're not going to be just looking over Teranet's shoulder for the first little mistake that can go wrong, and then nail them on it either. I think we have to have a very professional approach to this. It has to be based on protecting the consumer. It has to be based on the agreement that we've signed, because I think it's a good agreement that this government has negotiated on behalf of 1.2 million Manitobans. So, I mean, if we find things that aren't up with the agreement that we've signed, we will be—we will not be shy in pointing that out to Teranet. We want to protect our interests and the interests of the Manitoba taxpayer. But we'll find a very productive, professional way in which to work that out with Teranet.

I do not expect that we'll end up in huge problems with Teranet. If there are things that happen that are contrary to the agreement, I think we'll find ways to work through those. My sense, from the leadership of Teranet, when I've met with them, is that they would be connect—they would be committed to the same kind of professional approach rather than playing cat and mouse with the people that we've just negotiated a good agreement with.

Mr. Cullen: So I assume there will be somebody within the government side to kind of act as a watchdog for Teranet activities. That's one question.

The other question would be: Will Teranet or will the government be there to maintain the examiner of surveys branch? I don't know if the minister is familiar with that, but if he could comment on it, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, that level of detail I might undertake to get back to the minister—to the member on.

I can assure him that we have in place, as part of this, we've set up a registrar general who would oversee it all. The fellow, a very capable man by the name of Barry Effler in the civil service here in Manitoba. His job and his staff, not a big staff, but I think a very capable and well-focused staff, is to make sure that the details of the collective

agreement, the licensing agreement, are followed and he will take on the same kind of an approach that he has taken on in his years in the department and—which is a co-operative approach, but he does have the tools available to him to get his elbows up if he needs to.

So we wanted to make sure that there's a—that position and that's the registrar general position that I think is mentioned in the legislation that we were discussing the other night at committee.

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's comments, and if he could get back to me on that in terms of the examiner of surveys, I'd appreciate that. So that's all the questions I have for now. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Let me start with Minister of Finance and just follow up. My understanding from the sale of the land property registry to Teranet is that Teranet will make money from the sale of access to the property registry. Part of one of things that I wanted to clarify is that the land transfer tax, right, was originally set up, I understand, to fund the property registry. Will any of the money from the land transfer tax be going to Teranet?

Mr. Struthers: Well, the land transfer tax now is accrued into general revenue for the Province of Manitoba and, I mean, that's a tax that has been established now and my understanding is that that would not directly go into Teranet. What we receive from Teranet is a one-time, up-front \$75 million payment and then we receive from Teranet, starting this year, \$11 million working up to \$24 million annually over the course of the 30-year licensing agreement.

We—Teranet get its money from the services that it provides, and we will set the rates for that at a rate that Teranet believes is sufficient and with small increases annually set sort of as a formula. So we believe that—and we do get letters on the land transfer tax. I think, probably the member for River Heights does as well, as do other members. There's—our justification of the land—part of our justification of the land transfer tax is that you pay that land transfer tax when you—when you're involved in—when you move from one residence to the next you pay the tax. The—you don't do that too often. What we have concentrated on is making sure that every year you receive a property tax credit which in the long run is a lot—worth a lot more to an individual Manitoban than once or twice or three times in a lifetime paying a land transfer tax. So, when it comes to that kind of

revenue, I would rather have Manitobans get an annual kind of a rebate in their taxes that adds up to a lot more than what they pay out in terms of the once-in-a-while land tax that Manitobans have paid.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I think if the minister can check and get back to me on another occasion on whether any of the money from the land transfer tax will go to Teranet. My understanding in Ontario is that the Teranet has been collecting the land transfer tax, I believe, for the Province. I don't know whether it retains any of it, but I do know that there was a problem with a—for a while the Auditor General of Ontario pointed out that Teranet wasn't doing a good a job and that the Province was losing a lot of money because the land transfer taxes weren't being collected as well as they should have been. So that's something the minister could certainly follow up.

* (16:50)

My question to the minister: He—the minister suggested that the agreement with Teranet may not be final. Is that correct, that there could be other players who could come in instead of Teranet?

Mr. Struthers: Well, partly. The deal with Teranet is final, but as part of the agreement is that we're not committed for the next hundred years. It's not like we've sold off the data, we've sold off everything. The example I used is at the end of 30 years of the agreement, whoever's sitting on this side of the House can renegotiate. They can bring the whole property registry back in-house again and do then what has been done for the last number of years. They can renew with Teranet at that time. They can negotiate better terms with Teranet at that time or they could go elsewhere to another private sector option, if there's options out there, and negotiate with them. They could tender it. If there's a number of companies that can do the work, they can tender it and find what the best fit for Manitoba would be.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the problems, as I understand it, the privatization of MTS under this government, issues that the members of the NDP party have raised with regard to benefits from the privatization going to, you know, people who it perhaps should not have gone to. In Ontario, I mean, one of the things that you do not ever want is to have somebody negotiating for the government who can then move and work for Teranet—and I was told that this may have happened—that you certainly don't want somebody negotiating for the government who may have an interest in working for Teranet because they

would have an interest in making a really good deal for Teranet.

Is there safeguards in terms that the minister has put in place that nobody negotiating this contract would ever be able to work for Teranet? Or what has been put in place?

Mr. Struthers: Well, certainly, that's one of the advantages that we saw with dealing with Teranet because they had a history of dealing in Ontario. And, for the most part, our contacts in Ontario said that they were very happy with the way it went, but there were glitches along the way. We very much wanted to avoid those glitches.

We want to take advantage of the, you know, the positive side of this. But—and that's one of the reasons why we put in place the registrar general. We want somebody to be in place that can take a good arm's-length look at this, view the day-to-day decisions that are made, review the overall direction, make sure that the agreement, the leasing—sorry, the licensing agreement that we have in place is followed clause by clause. So we have built in some safeguards to make sure that we don't end up repeating some of the errors that were made in Ontario.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Just quickly, Madam—Mr. Chairperson, just for the information of the House, we're releasing the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) for tomorrow's Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank the member for that.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, clearly, one of the major problems in Ontario was hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars cost overruns, and I'm sure the minister is aware of that major problem.

My next question is to the Minister for Local Government. We've got a hearing tonight. The minister has indicated that there may be the possibility of an amendment, and I just wanted to get clarification from the minister in terms of what the status is of that possibility and that we don't want people who have been, you know, wanting to make changes not coming because they see that there is actually, you know, because they feel that this situation is solved. Okay.

Mr. Lemieux: I put on the record earlier, I know the—about the member from River Heights being actually very supportive in looking for options for

communities with regard to amalgamations. I appreciate the support.

I know asked members opposite from the Conservative Party whether or not they had any kind of suggest—any suggestions at all that I might look at, quite frankly, to make the legislation better. And then I know they made—they just said, well, just pull it and shelve it and start all over. Well that's not going to happen and we believe Manitobans know that.

I will try to brief just by saying that I would not want anyone who wanted to present—because committee hearings are to listen to the public—I would not want them not to come because of something they read in the newspaper or something that—that something would lead them to believe that they're—you know, that somehow amendments are already drafted, written and somehow going to address their concern. So I thank the member for that question because that's important.

The other side of the this coin is that no matter who does not show up—or people who don't show up—I'm not going to misread into that that people don't care. I mean, that's the other side that's important, too, to mention. Because people may not be representing a particular community that may be within that amalgamation umbrella, I wouldn't want them to misread the fact—you know, I would not misread the fact that just because they're not there that they don't care about their community or amalgamations. I'm not going to presume that at all.

But tonight and the nights with regard to committees are really important for a minister and for government to listen to different suggestions that maybe we haven't thought of in this Chamber, because we don't have all the ideas in this Chamber. But I just want to thank the member for raising that.

Mr. Gerrard: To the Minister of Family Services, one of the questions that we sought an answer for was related, on a FIPPA, to the number of children at the Manitoba Youth Centre who are children who are under the care of Child and Family Services.

And I hear anecdotally that this is quite high and I'm just a little bit surprised that the minister is not collecting this sort of information to know better the outcomes, good and bad, for kids who are in care.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Well, I would expect, as the member's stated, that there probably is significant correlation between the kids who are at the youth

centre and kids who've had some experience with Child and Family Services—I think that's very likely.

And I think what we do know from the work that has been done looking at the child-welfare system and kids and young adults who find themselves involved, is that there does tend to be overlap between experience in the child-welfare system, experience in the youth justice system and experience in the health-care system, particularly the mental-health system. And I think, you know, one of the challenges—as the member well knows—of any kind of research like that is, what is the cause? How—what is the link to causality?

And I think, you know, what we hear from folks who do that work is likely the cause are the kinds of things that bring them into contact with the child-welfare system in the first place. And that can be neglect, it can be abuse—sometimes very serious abuse, either physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and that that experience of trauma can have devastating effects throughout the—throughout your lifetime. Now, it doesn't have to and I think one of the things that we're trying to do a better job of working with agencies on is how do we make sure that we're serving those children and young adults who have dealt with trauma in their lives so that they can better deal with that trauma so that we don't have the devastating effects throughout their life.

And I think one of the things that we know about childhood trauma is that one of the effective ways to deal with it is to look for a significant relationship with a trusted adult who can help that child work through some of that and who can build a trusting relationship with them.

What many of these kids have in common is that they've never in their lives experienced what a trusting, loving, caring relationship with an adult looks like because they were maybe denied that with their family of origin and they haven't had that experience.

So we continue to look for ways to build that in. Some of that is through mentorship programs that—some of which are ongoing in the general authority. There are agencies that I've visited try to establish that through having elders on site in the agency who can foster that kind of relationship through involving the entire community in things like—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 9, 2013

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