

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
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, 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
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
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
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
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

Wednesday, July 10, 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 and 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, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 214—The Cyberbullying Prevention Act

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 214, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce Bill 214, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act. This act is a step in returning power to young people and others who have lost power as a result of cyberbullying.

Under the legislation, those who are victims of cyberbullying would be able to obtain protection orders against those who are bullying them. Youth as young as 16 would be able to apply for this protection without parental involvement. It would also allow law enforcement officials to seize computers, cellphones and other instruments that are being used in the act of cyberbullying.

The legislation also establishes a separate civil tort to allow damages to be awarded to an individual who suffers damages as a result of cyberbullying. It also places an onus on parents and those in care of minors to act when they are aware a minor in their care is engaging in cyberbullying. This legislation brings together parental involvement, police ability and power for youth.

It's a significant problem, cyberbullying is; it requires a significant response. The NDP have failed

to provide that response, so we have done so on behalf of all Manitobans and youth who need to be protected, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation and will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by D. Walden, C. Calvert, D. Giesbrecht and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by K. Cross, D. Mukhbrjef, R.F. Schiller and many, many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues facing—currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect

they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by V. Ferguson, E. Ferguson, W. Boucher and many more concerned Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

The provincial government policy of eliminating ABA services in schools by grade 5 has caused many children in Manitoba to age out of the window for this very effective ABA treatment because of a lack of access. Many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child shall—should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Labour consider making funding available to address the current waiting lists for ABA services.

* (13:40)

And this petition is signed by M. Axelrod, A. Flynn, R. Demenuk and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this is signed by A. Holmberg, J. Lewis, J. Peltier and many others.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba

Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

This petition is signed by R. Holmes, W. Tisdale and D. Bieber and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This is signed by T. Chabluk, B. Friesen, B. Friesen and many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of N. Lamm, M. Armstrong, J. Monforton and many other fine Manitobans.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by L. Dyck, P. Gladden, J. Gladden and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is

expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

(4) The provincial government policy of eliminating ABA services in schools by grade 5 has caused many children in Manitoba to age out of the window for this very effective ABA treatment because of a lack of access. Many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Labour consider making funding available to address the current waiting lists for ABA services.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by R. Latourelle, A. Williamson and T. Naske and many, many others.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And this is the background for this petition:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by S. Southam, L. Olson, J. Murray and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase in the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by L. Hunnie, J. Pleo, G. Gillirs and thousands of other Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (13:50)

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

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes

the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

(3) Their preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

(4) The provincial government policy eliminating ABA services in schools by grade 5 has caused many children in Manitoba to age out of the window for this very effective ABA treatment because of a lack of access. Many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Labour consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

Signed by B. Epp, T. Tully, J. Klassen and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services and has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

This is signed by V. Pathizina E. Poschner, M. Mihalchuk and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by G. Ross, D. Klyne, P. Prociuk and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep on growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And this petition is signed by B. Epp, T. Tully and J. Klassen and many, many other Manitobans.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And this is the background to this petition:

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

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention—intervention for children with autism.

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism while still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as other Manitobans.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting lists for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And this petition is signed by C. Paredes, E. Guemo and J. Jacinto and many, many more fine Manitobans.

*(14:00)

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 from Keewatin-Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council's new program, Men in the Kitchen!, we have Harold Bachinski, Tom Hutchinson, Steve Mateush, John Paton, Wesley Thomson and Harvey Sumka, who are

the guests of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Deficit Economic Growth

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Let's talk about this myth of the Premier being a builder again, Mr. Speaker.

Every builder understands that you can't build unless you have a strong foundation, and the spendDP are eroding Manitoba's foundation for growth by expanding our provincial debt.

The NDP has created an unsustainable fiscal structure that grows debt much faster than the rate of economic growth of our province. In fact, the rate of economic growth has been—well, the NDP rate of debt growth has been two and a half times the rate of economic growth in our province since the NDP came in.

So let's be clear. During the most prosperous decade in Manitoba history with the highest increase in revenues and the lowest interest rates in modern times, a ideal set of circumstances to strengthen our province, Mr. Speaker, what did the Premier construct? A giant debt hole.

Does the Premier understand that a giant debt hole is not a good foundation on which to build the future economy of our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, the debt as a portion of the economy was 33 per cent. We lowered it down to 23 per cent. The cost of servicing the debt when the Leader of the Opposition was a senior member of Cabinet was 13.2 cents on the dollar. The cost of servicing our debt today is 5.9 cents on the dollar.

The economy has doubled. It was about \$32 billion when members opposite were in office. It's \$62 billion this year, and there are more people working in the history of Manitoba than has ever been before in the province.

We've reduced the debt as a portion of the economy. We halved the cost of servicing the debt. We've created more jobs, and we've doubled the economy.

Interest Rates Future Tax Increases

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, here's the problem. The degree of difficulty on this issue is not that hard, even for a premier who doesn't have a degree in economics.

The debt-to-GDP ratio is the best indicator of the management capability of a government. The debt-to-GDP ratio in the '90s he loves to refer to—he knows this as a fact—rose by 3 per cent in that decade and it's risen by 52 per cent under this government, 17 times as rapidly.

And there's a problem with that and that problem is a serious one: big debt service cost. And this back-to-the-future Premier who loves the last century so much must understand that interest rates at that time were radically higher than they are today. Interest rates today are at record lows; in fact, they're half of what they were then.

So, of course, all this talk about managing well is just that. The Premier's ribbon cuttings are being funded by borrowed money taken from children and grandchildren, and the NDP should understand that their high spending creates a high-tax problem for Manitobans.

Can the Premier deny that higher interest rates to come will inevitably guarantee higher NDP taxes on Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the debt was lowered by about 30 per cent in Manitoba in our first decade in office, from 33 per cent down to 23 per cent as a portion of the economy. Members opposite don't recognize that we actually created more jobs. We actually created a larger economy and we actually paid down the debt as a portion of the economy.

And one thing—when the members opposite came into office in 1988-1989, one of the recommendations they had from their financial review was to deal with the pension liability for teachers and for public servants. They ignored that and it grew by over a billion dollars. We have addressed that pension liability for teachers and public servants. We have stabilized that and brought it under control.

Members opposite ignored the obvious requirements of making public services sustainable. We have addressed them, Mr. Speaker, and the

\$550 million of cuts that the members opposite wished to visit upon—

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

Provincial Deficit Repayment Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier should consult the member to his right who had it at a third of that the other day. They can't get their own story straight, Mr. Speaker.

This is not a builder over here. This is a debt-hole digger. That's what this Premier's all about, and his high-spending problem has become Manitoba's high-tax problem, and his PST hike will simply make matters even worse.

Now, he inherited a wonderful opportunity, and he and his government blew it. The strongest Manitoba economic recovery ever, and he blew it—nothing to do with him—he blew it. Fastest growing revenues in the history of this province, and he blew it. Lowest interest rates in modern history, and he blew it. And let's talk about transfers from Ottawa now. Record transfers from Ottawa increased by double the rate of the decade before, and he blew that too, and the result of all this wonderful opportunity was a doubling of the Manitoba debt.

Now, will the Premier simply admit that the reason he is so infatuated with the '90s and the last century is that he's blown this decade?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the debt in Manitoba as a portion of the economy is less than when he was in office and the cost of servicing the debt is 50 per cent less than when he was in office.

And the member may not know this, but we actually have put assets on the books. We have a replacement value of assets in this province of \$36 billion. Those assets are schools that educate our young people. Those assets are hospitals that look after the elderly and the ill. Those assets are personal care homes which take care of people. Those assets are flood protection in the Red River Valley and around the city of Winnipeg.

And in the middle of the recession, the members opposite wanted to slash spending, lay people off, put people on the unemployment rolls and stop building the province of Manitoba. That is a recipe

for disaster. The members opposite would be the biggest disaster in the history of the province.

**PST Increase
Request to Reverse**

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I think the biggest disaster is this Premier in the history of this province. Wow.

Mr. Speaker, Becky Cianflone from the Altona & District Chamber of Commerce took time out of her schedule to come out and speak at committee on Saturday on Bill 20. She was very concerned about the negative impact the PST hike will have on businesses in her area. And she said, and I quote, our businesses feel abandoned and attacked by this government. End quote. She called on this government to reverse their decision on the PST hike.

Mr. Speaker, my question for this government: Will the government listen to Becky and reverse their decision on this PST hike?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I know the members opposite have raised this question yesterday as well, and I'll—and perhaps members opposite didn't hear the answer, but I'll gladly repeat it and add some more information to that question.

When we went from 8 per cent small business tax to zero—the first government in Canada to do that, Mr. Speaker—the annual savings projected for a small business with a two–\$425,000 taxable income was \$55,250 per year. Now, of course, this is something that we've been doing over time by eventually eliminating that 8 per cent small business tax. So the member opposite should know that if a business is making \$425,000 in taxable income, since 1999 they have saved \$519,400.

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Becky Cianflone, like Allison Campbell, explained the ripple effect the one-point increase in PST will have on Manitobans. The cost burden on businesses will be passed on to consumers which will have an impact of a further increase to goods and services beyond just the 14 per cent increase the PST introduced by this government. Both these people suggested that the increase would likely lead to layoffs in their businesses.

Will the NDP government listen to Becky Cianflone and to Allison Campbell and others and

reverse their decision to hike the PST on hard-working Manitobans?

Mr. Bjornson: You know, I do meet with a lot of small businesses. I do meet with a lot of organizations that represent small businesses. I tour a lot of the mid-size and large companies here in Manitoba, and what I'm hearing is a lot of optimism for people who are saying they are going to hire more, and what I'm hearing is one of their big concerns about hiring more people to work in their businesses is the fact that they need trained employees. That's the No. 1 concern that I keep hearing from businesses when I tour those businesses.

* (14:10)

So there's a relationship between investing in education, investing in training, providing tax credits for apprenticeship programs and all the things that we've been doing to grow the economy through having one of the best skilled and trained workforces in the country.

Members opposite, 1 per cent cut; that would kill a lot of programs in my department, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, Becky Cianflone, Allison Campbell and many others came to committee and expressed their concern about this illegal PST hike. They spoke of the government's, and I quote, blatant disregard for proper process. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, it's not too late. Bill 20 still has not passed through the Legislature.

Will this NDP government do the right thing and either pull this bill or call for the required referendum?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we will do is continue to find ways to support the 106,000 businesses in the province of Manitoba, and—

An Honourable Member: How are you going to do that?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, the member's asking how are we going to do it. Well, we have done it through a number of different initiatives to cut red tape, to provide streamlined services, to cut the taxes, which I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, not 8 per cent, to zero, cutting the corporate taxes as well.

And members opposite perhaps should look at some of the third party validators that have said that

Manitoba is one of the most affordable places to do business. City of Winnipeg is one of the most affordable cities to do business as well. Maybe they should expand their reading.

PST Increase Request to Withdraw

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, our recent public hearings on Bill 20, Doug Chorney from the Keystone Ag Producers stated very clearly that the proposed PST increase will harm Manitoba farm families, 'expecially' young farm families. We have an aging farm population. With one of anti-farm blocking here will hurt our youth from getting involved in farming by this government's spending problem.

I ask this NDP government to withdraw this law-breaking, ill-thought-out Bill 20. Will they do it today, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It's—I'd like to acknowledge the member opposite for his question. And, obviously, the reason for the 1 per cent PST is when we talk about affected agricultural producers in the province of Manitoba, let's look at Lake Manitoba of the flood of 2011. We've stated publicly that we are going to put infrastructure in place to prevent a reoccurrence of the flood of 2011.

I want to ensure the member opposite and I—in all due appreciation to Mr. Chorney, Doug Chorney, of KAP organization—they're a great organization that we continually communicate to look forward ideas and suggestions as we move forward for the betterment of the economy for the province of Manitoba through the agriculture society of the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, attacking the next generation of farm families with the PS increase is just wrong. This is on top of another lie this government said that they would eliminate education taxes on farmland in the last election. In fact, it was this very minister. Instead, on top of that, this minister does not understand what Curtis Rae [*phonetic*], a young farmer who has a young family, being lied to once, but twice, by this very government.

Do the right thing. Withdraw Bill 20. Do it today.

Mr. Kostyshyn: As we talk about the investment we're making in the province of Manitoba for the

betterment of young entrepreneurs, young ranchers, of the province, I want to assure the member opposite that our province is facing certain challenges, and let me tell you, 'objee', the importance of community pastures in the province of Manitoba. It's a true [*inaudible*] that we were working towards.

Obviously, the members opposite need to be reminded that the federal government has chosen to release the federal—the community pastures into our jurisdictions, so we are now looking towards [*inaudible*] the cattle population for the betterment of the young ranchers in the province of Manitoba so they can have the opportunity to use community pastures as a viable option towards the cattle population in the province of Manitoba.

Minister of Local Government Apology Request

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, the member from Dawson Trail called the people this government in power that put them in power, and I quote, "howling coyotes." End of quote.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that we cannot agree on each—with each other, which is fine; that's democracy.

I ask the member from Dawson Trail to do the honourable thing, stand up and simply say, I'm sorry.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone on this side respects democracy and respect those people that come to committee giving presentations. We look forward to Bill 18 going forward. We look forward to Bill 33 going forward. We look forward to Manitobans coming forward and giving their views, quite frankly, on all the legislation that we've put forward. We believe it's the best interests of all Manitobans.

So, with respect to committee hearings, Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent on all of us to listen to the speakers whether—no matter what side they are on the issue, and we respect the people of Manitoba and respect those committee hearings greatly.

Plessis Road Underpass Project Update

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the ribbon cutting for the Plessis Road underpass was cancelled at the last minute. The NDP MLA for Elmwood has now put at risk municipal, provincial and federal funding for this project.

Can the Premier inform this House whether the project will still go ahead, or has the MLA for Elmwood effectively killed the project?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we made an early commitment to this project, and I can assure the member the project will be proceeding. We've dis—the mayor and I have discussed this, and the project will be proceeding.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know whether he consulted with the MLA for Elmwood, then, prior to that announcement. But this project must be completed by March 2015 in order to qualify for Building Canada funds. This project was announced over a year ago by all three levels of government. Suddenly, the Premier's MLA for Elmwood has now stopped the project in its tracks.

Will the Premier allow the MLA for Elmwood to put the Plessis Road project in jeopardy so it will not be completed at all?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we made an early announcement on this project. This allowed the City to do the necessary engineering work and reviews on it.

The project is proceeding with the enthusiastic support from all members on this side of the House who are actually willing to put the money in the budget to support the project.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, delays to this project will not only put access to Building Canada funds at risk, every delay will add to the costs of the project, and that's especially given this Province's poor track record on cost containment.

So what assurances can the Premier give that his M–NDP MLA for Elmwood will not further interfere and it will allow—he will allow this project to go ahead as planned, or is it already too late?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the project is sup—is proceeding with the support of all members on the government side of the House.

The greatest risk to the project is the \$550 million of cuts that the Progressive Conservatives wanted to visit upon all Manitobans this year. They wanted to cut streets and highways. They wanted to cut roads. They wanted to cut infrastructure projects.

We will proceed with the project. Only the opposition parties will try to stop the project.

Health Services (Winnipeg) Regional Access

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, well, it also seems like there's some MLAs on the other side that are trying to stop the project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last Friday I sought medical care here in Winnipeg. I was turned away from not one but two walk-in clinics because—with no one in the waiting room—because I do not live in Winnipeg. That's two-tier medicine. It's demoralizing, it's degrading and it's discriminatory.

How can this minister try to scare Manitobans with two-tier medicine when it's already here and she put it in place?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member, if he sought care anywhere in Manitoba because he needed it, and for whatever reason he was turned away, it's inappropriate. I'm sorry that that happened and he has my full commitment that I will follow up.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I think the member and all members of this House know that we have made a commitment to all Manitobans to provide them with access if they want it to a family doctor and we put a very aggressive target of 2015 in place. We want people to have access to good primary care. I would include the member for Brandon West in that, and he has my commitment that I'll investigate the situation.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The level's starting to climb up a little bit again and I'm having difficulty hearing both the questions and the answers. So I'm asking for the co-operation of honourable members to give me that opportunity to hear both, please.

The honourable member for Brandon West has the floor.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, you pay your taxes. I pay my taxes, but because you live in Winnipeg, you have access to a different level of health care than I do.

*(14:20)

I have constituents in Brandon that have told me about this, a family with a young son that was turned away from health care in Winnipeg and told to go back to Brandon.

How can this minister defend her health-care system? It is a two-tier system.

What would she say to that young child when he's turned away in Winnipeg and told: go back to Brandon?

Ms. Oswald: I'm not certain that the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) was able to hear me over the bombast and bluster, so I will repeat for him that, indeed, I want him, his loved ones to be able to get care wherever they seek it. He has my full commitment that I'll investigate that. My office has been in touch with his office to get some more information to follow up.

But I can assure the member that I believe our commitment is absolutely no more clear than the construction of the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre so the people in Brandon and the surrounding area would not have to come to Winnipeg for radiation therapy. It's the first time in—or in Manitoba's history that we have had radiation therapy outside of Winnipeg; we located that in Brandon. That's our commitment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: You know, with my Manitoba Health card, I have access to health care in Calgary, Alberta. I was not turned away because I'm not from Calgary, because I'm not from Alberta. But I and many of my constituents have been turned away from health care in Winnipeg because we are not from Winnipeg, we are outside the Perimeter. That is two-tier medicine.

Is that what this PST increase is going to pay for, poor medical care to citizens of Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I want to express to the member, if this is a situation that happened to him last week I express my regret for that, particularly if he was not feeling well or his loved one was not feeling well, and he has my commitment that I'll investigate.

Mr. Speaker, we have told all Manitobans that we want them to have access to a family doctor, everyone in Manitoba, regardless of where they live, to have access to a doctor by 2015. We will continue on the road to that commitment.

And, Mr. Speaker, that will be based on medical need, not on one's ability to pay.

QuickCare Clinic (Selkirk) Hours of Operation

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, on April 30th, 2012, the Minister of Health announced a new QuickCare clinic in Selkirk. However, shortly after the ribbon was cut, there was

little to celebrate. The QuickCare clinic is rarely opened during the time designated on the door.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP thinks that they can solve a problem by throwing lots of money at it. But you can't spend millions of dollars on a health-care centre when there isn't enough staff to keep it open during the designated times.

Can the NDP member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) table any type of correspondence that he has sent to the Minister of Health asking why—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I believe, and it is hard to hear in here, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that the member opposite was asking a question of the member for Selkirk. You have previously ruled that that is not allowed in the House and I would ask you to rule accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, I don't actually believe that the member had concluded his question, but I can understand why the member—the Government House Leader would want to try to interrupt the question for the member for Lac du Bonnet because he was pointing out a very serious issue about how government makes announcements and about how they think things are going to get better. But then we find out that they're not open, you can't access it, they have two-tier health care because you can't be in Brandon and come to Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. I can understand why the government is sensitive.

She should maybe listen to the rest of the question and then go back to her Cabinet, go back to her caucus and try to improve things, not try to disrupt things in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Government House Leader, the level was getting up a little bit, I was having some difficulty hearing, but I, if I understand correctly of what I've heard so far, the member had not actually got to the point of asking his question. He had made reference in the preamble of his question to a member of this House and, therefore, had not got to the point of actually

asking the question yet. So if that should occur at that point in time, of course then I would enforce the rules that are in place.

So I must respectfully rule at this point in time there is no point of order and then to allow the member for Lac du Bonnet the opportunity to ask his question. And should that occur, then, of course, then I would make a ruling different than I would have made at this point in time.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) has the floor, and to conclude by asking his question please.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me continue.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, can the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) table any type of letter or correspondence that he has had with the Minister of Health, or is he happy just showing up for ribbon cutting?

I would like to ask the Minister of Health for her comments on this topic, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to have the opportunity. I have to concede that I was quite certain when the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) rose to his feet he was going to celebrate the fantastic service of the QuickCare clinic located in Steinbach, but, alas, this did not happen.

What I can say to the member from Lac du Bonnet, Mr. Speaker, is that the Selkirk QuickCare clinic has seen over 3,000 patients to date. We know that the reviews of the work from the nurse practitioners and the nurses has been exemplary. Patients are very pleased. Indeed, we want to expand the hours.

And I would ask the member to refer to yesterday's announcement—a mere 24 hours ago—of us offering free tuition for nurses wishing to pursue studies to be a nurse practitioner and return service in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: Expand the hours, Mr. Speaker? We're just hoping that the doors will open even for the situated hours that are there already.

Can the Minister of Health assure that her NDP member from Selkirk, that he can pass along the information to his constituents who need to take the bus lines or taxis from one end of the city to the

other, Mr. Speaker? They get off the bus, they go to the health—the QuickCare clinic, it's not open, so then they have to wait for a bus or a taxi then to come back and pick them up to take them home.

Will the member for Selkirk listen to what the member—from the Minister of Health has to say in regards to how is she going to help him stand up for his constituents, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I need to apologize to the House. I have put incorrect information on the record. In fact, the Selkirk QuickCare clinic has seen 9,000 patients to date, not 3,000 patients. I apologize for putting incorrect information on the record.

What I can say to the member is that we are now expanding our workforce of nurse practitioners. We have more nurse practitioners and, indeed, nurses working in Manitoba than ever in its history. We are expanding the hours at Selkirk by filling those placements.

Mr. Speaker, isn't this just a teensy bit rich coming from the people that fired a thousand nurses, drove 573 out and just recently planned to have deep, deep—

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

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet has the floor.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that this Minister of Health continues to spin those fabrications and continue to put it on the record. Manitobans are finished buying those stories.

Will the Minister of Health today—she already mentioned 9,000 patients. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if the quick health-care clinic was actually open the time when—the amount of time that they are saying.

Will she admit today that they failed to maintain the QuickCare clinic in Selkirk and ensure that the residents of Selkirk and the surrounding areas were provided with medical treatment for minor injuries and ailments, or do I have to now stand up for another constituency, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

It's my privilege to assist the member for Lac du Bonnet, and I would encourage him to share this with his leader. I can table for him, according to all of the nursing colleges in Manitoba, a table that shows these independent colleges showing clearly

that they fired a thousand nurses—I table for the member.

Secondly, in the event that this individual has difficulty, I table a second table to show, indeed, that this is not something made up, as the Leader of the Opposition would say. It doesn't matter how many times they try to spin it, that their goal is to cut nurses. With the absence of being able to use puppets in the House, I cannot more clearly describe to the member, they fired—

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Seems like many of the members in the House today are in good spirits, which is good to see, but at the same time the level has increased greatly and I'm have a significant amount of difficulty hearing both the questions and the answers.

So I note that there are a number of members here in the Chamber that seem to want to have private conversations, and might I encourage them to use the loge to my left or my right here for those conversations so that we might continue with question period.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Children in Care School Attendance Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for two days I've asked the NDP government about the number of children who are in group homes in the care of Child and Family Services who are not attending school.

The Premier has applied about programs for those who are ready for university. I'm talking about children who are ages 7 to 18 for whom the education in primary and secondary school is needed first.

I receive comments daily from people suggesting it's common for children in group homes in care, for whom the government is the guardian, to not attend school.

I ask the Minister of Child and Family Services: How many school-aged children in care were not attending school or only attending part time last year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member again for the question, Mr. Speaker.

We have extended the requirements for children to stay in school 'til 18 from 16. It hadn't been changed since 1961.

We have put additional resources into our schools in terms of co-ordinators to help people continue to be in school until the age of 18, to get access to a variety of programs, whether it's increased emphasis on apprenticeship, life skills, all those kinds of supports that'll allow them to do well in school.

We've seen alternative programs being developed such as the Neelin High School in Brandon, right downtown, where young parents have the ability to go there in the daytime to have access to that school, to have access to teachers and instructors and tutors.

We've got a number of high school programs under the Brighter Futures program in Winnipeg, outside of Winnipeg, that allow young people to get help all year round to complete school, to get a full education up to the age of 18.

And we will continue to do that. Even though our graduation rate has gone from 73 to 83 per cent, we think there's more progress to be made and we will continue to make it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fact that this government has a law that the child up to the age of 18 must attend school, the children for whom this government is the guardian who are in care in group homes, too many are not attending school.

I have had comments. I give you an example. Only one child in the home attended school regularly, and another missed two years of school, which just happened to be grades 11 and 12.

Another concerned citizen said, and I quote, I don't really understand why the kids in CFS shelters don't go to school or day programs to enhance their lives. And this was followed by the comment that this appears to be the norm.

I ask the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) or the Premier: When will she or he acknowledge that this is a big problem and provide a plan to make sure all kids in CFS care are going to school this coming year?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we do ensure that young people go to school. That's why they have the social workers working with the agencies. That's why there are people paying attention in the group homes.

That's why schools have received additional resources to ensure that people attend school and complete their education and stay in school 'til 18.

We have over 45 community schools in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and each of those community schools has money for a co-ordinator, a community school co-ordinator that goes out and visits homes to find out whether a child should be in school, and if they're not in school, what is the issues that need to be addressed. And that has shown great success around Manitoba.

We have a bill in the Legislature right now—but it's being held up—that would validate community schools and define their roles more clearly so that more people will have a chance to have access to community schools.

So there are many resources there, there is legislation there, and if the members opposite would support these initiatives, we could do even more. But even the member from River Heights votes against budgets that support young people going—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the problem is there's kids for whom this government is the guardian who are not going to school. This government is breaking the law.

The fact of the matter is, and I quote, I had a woman tell me her kids have six friends in care who should have graduated but, sadly, none have. I also learned of a child with Asperger syndrome who's only rarely going to school because he's considered difficult in a group home.

It's clearly the responsibility of this government to ensure children in CFS care attend regular school full time or provide an alternative learning pathway.

Mr. Speaker, the new school year is less than two months away. When is the minister going to tell us her plans to make sure every child in care who can has a chance to learn?

Mr. Selinger: I do, again, appreciate the comments of—agencies like the Macdonald Youth Services have very specific programs to help children in their care go to school. We've funded those programs for years.

Marymount also has programs to help children stay in school, and they've had those programs for many years. They have people that work in Marymount in alternative classrooms with teachers.

They provide support on the social and community side to go along with the teachers. There are special teacher aides trained to work to ensure children have every opportunity to succeed in school.

We will continue to find every means possible to ensure young people have a chance to complete their high school and to go on to higher learning opportunities or training opportunities in the labour market.

And I only have to say to the member opposite, he was a member of a government that cut the programs that supported people that are living on social assistance, supported people living in group homes, supported people that needed daycare. All of that 50-50 funding was wiped out when he was in the federal government—

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

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). I think I heard him say on a point of order.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Gerrard: On a point of order. It's important that this Premier (Mr. Selinger) stick to the point of the question. He should grow up and take—acknowledge that he's been in charge for—

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the honourable member for River Heights, and I've often said to members of this Chamber not to personalize the debate, and that includes points of orders. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for River Heights, when he's making his point of order, please don't personalize the debate, and direct your comments to the Chair, please.

Have you concluded your point of order?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Any other advice to the Chair?

I did not hear a reference to any particular breach of a rule of the Assembly here, so I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Now, we'll continue with question period.

Headingley Correctional Centre Bicycle Refurbishment Program

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity, along with the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), to attend the wildly successful Happy Days on Henderson festival in Elmwood.

One of the most popular elements of this year's festival was a draw for 20 refurbished bicycles that were given to neighbourhood children, kids who might otherwise not have a chance to own a bike of their own. These bikes were provided as part of an innovative addiction treatment program for correctional inmates that not only teaches a valuable skill but benefits youth across the province.

We know that restorative justice is an important part of our province's crime reduction strategy, so could the Minister of Justice share more details about this exciting program?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for Concordia for a question on justice, and I'm pleased to advise the House of an innovative addictions treatment program that's allowed the Headingley Correctional Centre to donate 190 bicycles refurbished by inmates to Manitobans serving youth.

And, Mr. Speaker, since May, the centre has donated 20 bicycles, refurbished, salvaged at no cost or donated, to the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre bike rodeo, 20 to the Happy Days on Henderson festival, and 110 to the WRENCH Community Bike Bazaar at Valour Community Centre, as well as 20 to the Ryerson Boys and Girls Club.

The work has been done by the inmates in the Winding River Therapeutic Community addictions treatment program. This program combines community living, cognitive behavioural therapy, personal accountability and positive reinforcement to help inmates understand the connections between their behaviour—

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

Post-Secondary Education Funding

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby) made a promise to raise funding for post-secondary institutions by 5 per cent per year for

three years. Budget 2013 cut that funding by 50 per cent.

Why did the minister break her promise to post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): You know, I just—I think a question like this from the opposition is just unbelievable coming from these people who cut year after year after year after year—am I up to No. 5?—funding to post-secondary education.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, we have increased post-secondary education. We have one of the largest, if not the largest, investment and increase this year for post-secondary education, but in other jurisdictions there are cuts by 7 per cent.

This is an amazing question from this opposition. They have no credibility on post-secondary funding.

University College of the North Impact of Funding Cuts

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Those funding cuts have resulted in UCN being forced to shut down a dozen college programs and lay off critical staff. UCN president Konrad Jonasson says 10 positions will be left vacant and six full-time-equivalent jobs representing eight people will be dropped. They now offer fewer courses than the former Keewatin Community College.

I ask the minister: Why did she fail to anticipate the results of her broken promise?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Last year, the University College of the North graduated 200 students, Mr. Speaker. That 'gover'—that opposition, if they had ever had their hands on the levers of government, would have graduated from UCN zero students.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, one of the programs that UCN was forced to shut down is the student accessibility service, which leaves 74 students with impairments without much-needed support systems.

I ask again: Did the minister not anticipate the impacts her broken promises were going to have on these most vulnerable students?

Mr. Mackintosh: You know, I know there are—the—it's unbelievable that the opposition would think that

they had some high ground, some moral ability to stand up and advocate for post-secondary investments when their record is pathetic, Mr. Speaker. It's almost comical. The comedy festival's over—it's the folk festival. You missed it.

Post-Secondary Education Accessibility Funding

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I think the question that was raised with regard to student accessibility is a very serious one, Mr. Speaker. We have a government that is bringing in legislation that is going to be making Manitoba become more accessible, and then we see a university cut a student accessibility to 74 students in Manitoba.

I ask the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities: 74 students are going to be seeing a lack of service ability for—accessibility, and I want to know what her response is. Has she talked to the minister responsible for post-secondary education? Will she ensure Manitobans that they will be able to access these services, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities): Certainly, accessibility to services is something that this government takes very seriously.

And there is, I think, no greater symbol of that than the ramp that is on the front of the Legislature. And it's important, I think, to remember that when we took that project, what did we hear from members opposite? It's a waste of money because people with disabilities, they can just come in the back door. That is exactly what members opposite said in response to that project.

We expect the University College of the North to honour their commitments to students with disabilities. We expect them to honour their commitment in terms of providing accessibility and we respect that institution to make sure they have the resources in place to do that.

Mrs. Rowat: We have a bill before the House that this government is failing to bring forward with regard to accessibility.

Now we see another minister reduce funding to a northern university that speaks to student accessibility, Mr. Speaker. Cuts this government is making to accessibility for persons with disabilities—74 students are not going to be seeing a service to assist them at university.

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess, you know, had they been in power, you wouldn't have to worry about this issue because there would be no UCN for anybody to have accessibility to.

This is an issue we take extremely seriously. Every institution in this province has to abide by the Human Rights Code. Every institution has the duty to accommodate people with disabilities. That also applies to the University College of the North. We expect that institution to put in place the resources to ensure that their responsibilities are met, and I expect that they will do so.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Men in the Kitchen!

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, the Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council has started a bold new program called Men in the Kitchen! which is helping our neighbourhood become a more closely knit community. This program is particularly helpful for seniors who may not have learned to cook healthy food growing up, but now want to learn for themselves.

Men in the Kitchen! is a cooking course with a focus on hands-on learning. Men learn to cook classic comfort food with healthy ingredients. The men also learn safe food handling, visit with a dietitian and go on a trip to the grocery store to practise reading labels in a smart way. At the end of the course, the men cook and serve a fundraising lunch, which I have attended in the past and enjoyed immensely.

This free program welcomes men from all different backgrounds who want to learn new, and often nontraditional skills. But the greatest gift of this program is the way it brings people together. Men are at higher risk for social isolation and depression. Men are—especially after they retire.

An Honourable Member: Are you planning to?

Mr. Marcelino: Soon.

Men in the Kitchen! brings men together for companionship and community as well as good food.

Attending today are some of the fine members of Men in the Kitchen!: Harold Bachinski, Tom Hutchinson, Steve Mateush, John Paton, Wesley Thomson and Harvey Sumka.

I also ask the House's permission to table the names of the founding members of Men in the Kitchen! into the record. Men in the Kitchen!—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired considerably, and, I think, if I understand correctly, the member has already read the names into the record.

So I'm—if I'm clear on that, then, then I believe the names will be included in the Hansard proceedings of today. *[interjection]* So there's leave to include the names? *[Agreed]*

An Honourable Member: Can we have leave, please?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to quickly conclude his member's statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Marcelino: I hope this fine organization continues to take root in our community. Thank you.

Founding members of Men in the Kitchen!: Harold Kuchenski, Tom Hutchinson, Gordon Krawchuk, Harvey Lysack, Steve Mateush, Bert Oliver, John Paton, Ron Sobotkiewicz, Dave Terrace, Wesley Thomson, Harvey Sumka.

John W. Kuhl—Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate John W. Kuhl on being inducted today into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame.

John Kuhl is an innovative leader and a business person for 40 years in the Manitoba fruit and potato industry. Youngest of seven children, John was raised on a mixed farm at Gnadenthal, which he later farmed with his father. He married wife Lillian in 1949 and had six children.

In 1960, John, in partnership with two family members, founded Southern Manitoba Potato Company. With his knowledge and enterprise, Southern Manitoba mastered climate-controlled post-harvest technology for the storage of potatoes.

John has led or made a contribution to almost every major development in the Manitoba fruit and vegetable industry. John has given leadership to Peak of the Market as chairperson. He has worked with researchers across Canada, including Ag Canada, University of Manitoba and the government of Manitoba. In 2000, John was president—or John was president of the Canadian Horticultural Society in

1987 and 1988 and was awarded an honorary life membership in 2000.

He's always been active in the community. He has served as chair of the school board. He founded Winkler Potato Company and the Kuhl Foundation, and today his son Keith is president and CEO of Southern Manitoba Potato Company with Keith's sons Jeremy and Marlon, who are the fifth generation of Kuhl farmers.

I thank John for his many contributions to the industry and community. He's a gifted leader who has helped and inspired those around him. Congratulations, John, on your induction today into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame.

* (14:50)

2013 Wellness Institute Farmers' Market

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, promoting a healthy lifestyle is important in ensuring healthy communities and a healthy province. Crucial to a healthy lifestyle is access to healthy, nutritious food.

Next week, the Seven Oaks General Hospital Wellness Institute will open their annual farmers' market for the summer. Located at the Wellness Institute's front entrance side of 1075 Leila, the market will bring fresh, local produce to our neighbourhood every Tuesday until September.

The Wellness Institute, also known as the Wellness, is located at the Seven Oaks General Hospital and is Canada's leading medical fitness facility. The Wellness is dedicated to improving the health of the community through health promotion, disease prevention, and rehabilitation services. They offer everything from fitness classes to nutrition counselling, and their summer market is just another way in which they promote healthy living in The Maples and beyond.

This year, the Wellness Institute farmers' market will include healthy, Manitoba-grown vegetables, gluten-free baking, canned goods, salsas, dog treats and products from Epicure and Pampered Chef. I encourage all members to stop by the market and enjoy some tasty, local treats.

Mr. Speaker, everyone needs nutritious food to be able to lead full, active lives. The Wellness Institute farmers' market is another great way in which the Wellness is working to promote the health and well-being of our communities.

Thank you.

Winnipeg Harvest Charity Golf Tournament

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Winnipeg Harvest held their annual fundraising golf tournament at the Southwood golf course here in Winnipeg. With deep roots in the community, Winnipeg Harvest is a vital charity and helps many Winnipeggers and Manitobans gain the food they need when times are tough.

Doug Lochhead of Granite Financial served as the host sponsor for the third consecutive year, and numerous other companies got involved and helped to ensure the success of this event. I was proud to join Calvin Vaggs of Plains Processors and his associates as we each donated a steer to be auctioned off to help raise more money for Winnipeg Harvest. The meat will be cut and wrapped and is a small gift that I could provide to ensuring a successful event.

Local celebrities such as Ace Burpee, who was the auctioneer, and Doug Brown were in attendance, as well as many dignitaries and golfers alike, and the event was a testament to the good work that Winnipeg Harvest does in the community. Thanks to many generous donations, Harvest was able to raise over \$106,000, which will go a long way to making sure that people have enough food. This, again, is a testament to the generosity of all Manitobans, with sponsors coming from as far away as Swan River to support the cause.

However, this will not solve the problem completely. Winnipeg Harvest continues to struggle with receiving enough food to keep their shelves full for those that require food and, like many Manitobans, are feeling the pinch, thanks to this government. Winnipeg Harvest has already extended their entire budget on specific items like baby formula, placing many babies at a serious risk of not receiving the proper nutrition that they need.

Manitobans struggle every day with rising costs, such as having to pay more PST, and many Manitobans who are in poverty and receive EIA benefits have not seen these benefits increase under this government. As an MLA, I am proud to stand with a party that is advocating increasing these rates, and I'm proud to stand with Winnipeg Harvest as they seek to eradicate hunger among the most vulnerable Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this House join me in congratulating Winnipeg Harvest on raising over \$106,000 last night at their

golf tournament, and we hope that one day everyone will have enough food.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Children in Care—Education

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on this 15th day of our emergency sitting, I want to speak of the dire situation many young Manitobans are facing when they're under the care of Child and Family Services.

For the past three days, Manitobans have received no assurances that the children for whom this government is the guardian will actually receive the education they deserve, the education which is mandated by this very same NDP government for all children of compulsory school ages between 7 and 18 years of old-age.

The Public Schools Act is clear on the responsibility of every party—parent and guardian of school-age children to attend school. I'm hearing daily from many Manitobans, caring and concerned Manitobans who work with these children, that it's common for children in group-home care under CFS to either attend school intermittently, part-time or not at all.

Child and Family Services is the guardian of the children they've apprehended from their families. If Child and Family Services is not responsible, who is?

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has said it's the role of social workers to ensure that children are in school. Yesterday, he claimed that his government is providing proper funding for agencies and the people working in them to do their jobs. One must wonder, then, why we hear of so many social workers with such heavy caseloads. With almost 10,000 children in care, no wonder that some social workers are overburdened. Or was the Premier implying that social workers are not doing their jobs?

Children in the care of Child and Family Services need an education. They're being left disadvantaged, compared to their peers, simply because this NDP government is not fulfilling its responsibility.

The law says these children must be in school and that their guardian—in this case, the NDP government—is responsible. The government, as guardian, is breaking the law when these children are not in school. The government should not be above the law. The NDP government should make sure that

all school-age children in care are in school or are in an alternative learning environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances?

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

House Business

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

Is there leave that the House sit until 7 this evening and Thursday in order to allow for all three sections of the Committee of Supply to continue consideration of departmental Estimates?

Is there leave that from 5 to 7, all formal votes be referred until Monday and that no quorum calls are permitted?

Is there leave that from 5 to 7 p.m., in the event that a formal vote is requested on any resolutions or motions, including the last remaining item for a department, the committee is able to move on to the next department listed in the sequence with the formal votes to be held starting Monday? This will mean that Supply will not meet this Friday.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that the House sit until 7 p.m. this evening and tomorrow, Thursday, in order to allow for all three sections of the Committee of Supply to continue consideration of departmental Estimates? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Is there leave that from 5 to 7, all formal votes will be deferred until Monday and that no quorum calls are permitted? Is leave granted? *[Agreed]*

Is there leave that from 5 to 7 p.m., in the event that a formal vote is requested on any resolutions or motions, including the last remaining item for a department, the committee is able to move on to the next department listed in the sequence with the formal votes to be held starting Monday? Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

And that will also mean that the Committee of Supply will not meet this Friday. *[Agreed]*

Thank you.

Ms. Howard: Yes, will you resolve into Committee of Supply, please.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resolve into the Committee of Supply as listed on today's Order Paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION**

* (15:00)

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

This section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the last item, resolution 15.1 of the Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Are there any questions?

Seeing none, I will now put the question.

Resolution 15.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,553,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

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

The committee recessed at 3:03 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:10 p.m.

**CONSERVATION AND WATER
STEWARDSHIP**

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Since becoming minister about a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, I've had the

tremendous opportunity to, in particular, launch TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan. It's a multi-year strategy to set out the priorities addressing both environmental concerns and the need to further develop the green economy here in Manitoba.

The green plan actually comprises efforts across about eight government departments, and so I wanted to make it clear it's not just a Conservation and Water Stewardship departmental document at all.

We asked for comments from the public as result of the strategy. We had about 300 people attend a series of presentations, whether they're industry associations, university groups, municipal leaders and others. I met with environmental lawyers, as well, and we received very thoughtful feedback.

Do I have to stop there?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. A formal vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

The committee recessed at 3:13 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:20 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

When we recessed for a formal vote in the Chamber, the honourable minister had just started his opening statement.

Honourable minister, ready to continue?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just to pick up where we left off, I was just describing generally some of the major events over the last while since I became minister. And TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan was the point that I was addressing when we went in for division.

So we had some very thoughtful feedback. We certainly heard some major themes being addressed in the feedback, both by the attendants at the presentation and by formal submissions. Not surprisingly, but we certainly welcomed the emphasis that Manitobans placed on the need to protect the health of Lake Winnipeg, to address

climate change, and I think we can say, as well, we heard of the importance of Manitobans—that Manitobans placed on the need to protect areas, ecosystems and wildlife that those ecosystems contain.

We will be putting out publicly the final document that will comprise the strategy taking us to 2020 in the near future, which will reflect the feedback that we received and will as well report on progress that we have been making under TomorrowNow.

The other major effort over the last year and a half has been the development of the park strategy that was signalled in TomorrowNow. We were able to publicly announce the strategy called Building the Parks Province. Notably, it sets out a more specific approach to investments from now until 2020—a hundred million dollars to be exact—but it set out a number of initiatives, many moving parts under the headlines: Funding Balance and New Partnerships, Enhancing the Park Experience, New Enticements for Active Families and Stronger Environmental Stewardship.

We were able to make certain announcements that followed on this one or in anticipation of it. One was with regard to peat mining in parks. The other was to propose to Manitobans that we make our park beaches and children's playgrounds smoke-free and, with a strategy to do that, and that was very well received.

I know the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) has been a very strong advocate, along with many of his constituents, for the restoration of St. Ambroise Park. I was able to visit that park along with Spruce Woods, which were really devastated by the flood of 2011.

As a result of some rejigging of capital investment, we are able to make Spruce Woods the biggest park investment in the history of Manitoba, and I appreciate the comments and the ongoing input from the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) as we develop this, because the views of visitors and the MLA and area residents are very important to make sure that it responds to real needs. What I heard in the Glenboro area was a recognition of the importance of Spruce Woods to the area economy. And I also heard that from the member for Portage la Prairie and, indeed, the—Mr. Blight, the reeve of the RM, and others including local Metis reps on the importance of St. Ambroise Park to that area's economy. So it's important to remember that parks

are not just about ecosystems and the recreation. They're also about regional economic advantages.

St. Ambrose, I understand, is now open and we were able to do the necessary infrastructure for day use there, and the buoys are up now along the beach. And, as well, we were able to do a sweep of the beach to discover what debris lay underneath, which, I understand, there was some. So that was cleared out. So the next stage now is to look at how we can move to overnight services again at St. Ambrose.

The funding for these was helped by our reconfiguring of capital investments from Duff Roblin's viewing tower and visitor centre, which we'll just put on hold for now and revisit that in a few years, because we would like to proceed with it, but those are tough decisions. But it's important, and I think Duff would appreciate that we have to clean up after the flood and attend to the damage of flood, and put it in place—preventative structures where we can, before we start putting viewing towers up, to look at how we deal with flood risks of Manitoba.

Just before I conclude, a couple of other major initiatives. One that came from some of the feedback to TomorrowNow, and that was the launch of the idea of a Lake Friendly Accord to co-ordinate efforts and promote leadership to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loading to Lake Winnipeg.

We know that, if we're going to speak to the jurisdictions around Manitoba, we have to show by our leadership here at home, that we are, indeed, stewards extraordinaire. So we have put together a Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance of those stakeholders in Manitoba that are stewards, or can potentially be great stewards of our lake. And that will facilitate information sharing and, really, I think, enhance collaboration and co-ordination among the many, many who are involved and have an interest in promoting the health of Lake Winnipeg.

But I think we can improve reporting and accountability, and we can find some efficiencies. We can, I think, all learn better from the science. We can also celebrate success stories. So the inaugural meeting of the stewards alliance took place a couple of weeks ago. And there was unanimous support for proceeding. So we'll come back in September, at the latest, and we have quite a vigorous list of items that have to be addressed.

Finally, just, as part of my opening remarks, I just wanted to talk briefly about the budget that is before us. We certainly have faced the challenge to

produce greater cost-effective programming and finding cost savings. And, at the same time, ensure that we are on track to deliver on TomorrowNow and the park strategy, along with other objectives that we share.

The Estimates provide for \$9.6 million or a 6.2 per cent reduction, in departmental investments and spending. That includes office consolidations, a focus on more high-risk specialized enforcement and monitoring—in other words, a more risk-based enforcement regime. There's the elimination of 61 now-vacant positions, or at least 60 of them, I understand, are vacant. There are other operating efficiencies, and asking other partners as well to share in our collective responsibility to find cost savings.

We've been able to protect critical investments. For example, investments in Lake Winnipeg and, indeed, there's an increase of 5.3 per cent, as one example, for water science personnel. But drinking water inspections are a priority that's being maintained and, of course, emergency fire response. We've been able to avoid any park or campground closures, as we have seen in other jurisdictions, and we've not even, for example, been—we've not able—we've not made any reductions to beach patrols, and we've been able to maintain our investment in the—in our 119—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order. Honourable minister, the time has expired. We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

* (16:30)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few—I just wanted to thank the minister for his remark—opening remarks, and we will look at—seek global identification, I guess, of the Estimates, if that works for the minister.

And I just wanted to, though, take the opportunity to thank all the staff that works in Conservation and Water Stewardship in climate change and those areas for the work that they've done over the past year in these areas on behalf of citizens of Manitoba.

And I know that there's a lot of work to do in some of the areas in regards to still making repairs and upgrades and that sort of thing through some of

the parks that have been hit by some of the climatic conditions that we've seen over the last few years.

But I think with that, just wanted to make sure that we put on the record that we appreciate the work that they do and thank them for that effort as well.

And, with that, we would—proceeding—with the proceeding with the Estimates.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the Department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 12.1.(a) contained in the resolution 12.1.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: Sitting next to me is Fred Meier, the deputy minister; accompanying us at the table is Bruce Gray, the ADM of Administration and Finance and acting ADM of Water Stewardship. Jocelyn Baker is the acting ADM of Climate Change and Environmental Protection and executive director of Corporate Policy. Serge Scrafield is next to Jocelyn, ADM of programs division. Then we have Blair McTavish, the director of Regional Support Services representing the Regional Services and Parks division; and Matthew Wiebe, the director of Financial Services.

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

Mr. Maguire: Oh, yes, I had requested a global discussion.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

It is agreed, then, that questions for the department will proceed in a global manner with all the resolutions to be passed once the questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the minister and his staff for the good work that they have done in the recovery from 2011 flood, in particular related to some of the park sites. I know that quite a bit more remains to be done, but at least we're in the process.

I specifically wanted to ask the minister about the Pimachiowin Aki process and the corporation. Now that the application has been submitted, does funding continue to flow to the corporation?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the—there's an operating grant of \$234,000 in the lands division.

Mr. Wishart: So that—thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the minister for the answer. So that will be an ongoing for how long? Is there a timeline to this?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I understand that it's to assist in the development and the achievement of the nomination and the designation then, the—or the inscription, as they call it in UNESCO lingo. So it was—and, of course, like any other item in the budget, though, it's reviewed annually, but that was the intention of that operating grant. And obviously this year it'll be very important because there's some follow-up work that will be done by the UNESCO folks coming over here, I think as early as this fall. I think that's the plan. And so that kind of work will be critical in the months ahead.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for the answer to this question. The previous two years there had been a larger allocation there as part of an advertising campaign to raise awareness on The Land that Gives Life campaign and the UNESCO designation. And, as part of that, there was an attempt to do some fundraising to assist the foundation. Is the minister aware of the—what level of success that had been achieved by that fundraising effort?

Mr. Mackintosh: I think, yes, we had a similar question last session, so we'll let the member know if there's been any change to that. I think there has been some additional amounts, and I think that the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society as well had solicited dollars. So we'll advise if there's any change to that number. And as well, of course, the member can consult the annual reports, but we will certainly provide that as an undertaking to the member.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister. I would certainly appreciate an update on the—on any fundraising that has been achieved from that, because everything that had been until December of 2012 has been reported to The Winnipeg Foundation, as it should be, because that's the agency that was responsible. But we can only find a report of \$1,600, which seemed very poor in terms of the amount of money that was spent on this campaign, so I would certainly hope that we did better than that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we'll look into that. The awareness campaign, of course, will be The Land that Gives Life awareness campaign. I think the intention was to follow that up with other fundraising efforts down the road once the inscription is attained. I think that the attainment of the inscription is seen as a much stronger signal to Manitobans and other people worldwide that this is an effort that deserves support of a financial nature. But we'll certainly get the numbers for the member.

* (16:40)

Mr. Wishart: I certainly appreciate that from the minister. I would hope that the amount that's raised according to the books that I have seen is not an indication of the level of support for this project.

Moving on from there, I did want to ask a couple of questions regarding the cleanup from the flood of 2011, and as the minister referenced, on the park's site they did find some objects that certainly required cleaning up. But there's quite a bit of lakeshore that isn't covered by Parks or private individuals; a lot of it is Crown. I was wondering if there was any plan in place to assist with the cleanup of that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I've been advised that there has been some flyovers and some on-the-ground observations of lands, of lake area lands that were impacted by the flood and that there was some cleanup required, and the focus of that was on anything that appeared to be hazardous. I think, for example, there may have been—yes, septic and propane tanks, I understand, and matters like that.

But, if the member does have any other concerns about something that appears to be a hazard or may be a hazard, we'll certainly ask the department to go and look at that. So I think that has been the focus. If it's been other things like, you know, tree trunks and so on, I don't think that's been a priority for action. So I think it's sort of a risk-based analysis. So, certainly, we're very keen to hear if there are other areas that have identified risk associated with them. We have not received any complaints in this regard since our initial work, as I recall.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer. There are certainly still items out there. I would suggest that perhaps consideration could be given to a number to call in to, for people that do identify or find an object that can—could be considered a hazard to report it to, as I know that the conservation officers, in some cases, have been notified but don't feel that that's part of their mandate, nor are they

equipped to, particularly, if it's in—still in the water, nor are they equipped to deal with it so, I would suggest that, perhaps, something like that could be advertised as a solution to help with the cleanup process.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we do have an emergency response team and number, but we'll consider the advice of the member and determine whether there's something more that's necessary. And there may be other approaches as well, maybe just a notice or something like that, but I know that our, the natural resource officers are close to the ground in the local areas, and I think by now something would have come to their attention, but at the same time, I do appreciate that some hazardous materials can show up. They may have been under water for some time and washed up because, for example, we did discover, on the sweep of the beach, that there was some hazardous stuff under the water and so there's always a chance that something could still arise, so we'll consider the advice.

Mr. Maguire: While we're on that topic, I guess, I'd just like to ask a few more questions. Just wonder if the minister could just give us an update on where the bid's at in regards to the Pimachiowin Aki process.

Mr. Mackintosh: The decision in Cambodia a few weeks ago confirmed the recommendation of the evaluators that there should be some repair of the process and a better linkage between the natural area and the cultural area criteria and protocols. I think there was some concern expressed that the challenges may, in fact, emanate more from the dichotomy of the processes than the nomination itself. I think there were a lot of individuals that I heard from who were heartened by the thinking of UNESCO and the recognition that, by using this site, the process could be strengthened for a better bridging between the two processes. So, it may be that this nominated site helps other areas in the world to clarify how both these processes can better work together.

The report that I received stated that the World Heritage Committee acknowledged that maintaining entirely distinct evaluation processes for mixed nominations does not allow for adequate opportunities for shared decision-making processes between the advisory bodies. And so, in that sense, I think there was something positive that came from the nomination process so far.

I also am heartened that the UNESCO folks will be coming back to the site sooner than later to have this matter looked at. There were some outstanding questions, and I think those will be addressed very quickly. The expectation is then that this nomination will set the new standard for how mixed sites will be evaluated from now on.

So I think and, you know, I really appreciate, too—I should put on the record the support of the government of Ontario and the Government of Canada and Peter Kent—he expressed his views on this one and did so in a very helpful way. Parks Canada has pledged to work with us as this proceeds, but, as well, I think the most important recognition has to be to the First Nations of the area, both in Ontario and in Manitoba, that led this whole process.

And I think sometimes that we don't recognize where the real work is coming from and that is from the First Nations, and it's the governments that are actually supporting the First Nations in what they've been doing. But the land-use plans were really an excellent model of First Nation leadership as to how their land should be used in the future. And just because those land-use plans were put into law by the government of Manitoba, as pursuant to an act of the Legislature, shouldn't take away from the leadership of the people on the land, so I think that's an important point I wanted to put on the record.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chair, the whole process—just a couple of questions came up from your comments, Mr. Minister. The mixed sites—can you just explain the mixed sites part of it?

Mr. Mackintosh: I understand that when you—when an area nominates a site for UNESCO designation as a World Heritage Site, you enter a nomination in one of three ways. It's either a—on the basis of the culture of that site or, No. 2, the natural attributes of the site or what has developed more recently and what's become a mixed nomination or a mixed site, and that is where a nomination is sought for both the cultural and natural features of the area.

*(16:50)

Historically, the evaluations were done by different organizations and with different criteria. So, for example, what I understand from the evaluation of the Pimachiowin Aki area was when you looked at the boundaries under the natural areas criteria, there were questions as to why it didn't follow natural features, such as rivers because some of the boundaries were determined on the basis of cultural

uses—in particular, traplines. And so the natural areas evaluator said, well, why aren't you following the natural contours or the rivers of the land. The cultural evaluation said, this is great.

So we had sort of a negative reaction on the one evaluation and a positive on the other. Well, the two shouldn't be in conflict like that. There should be a recognition that when it's a mixed area, the boundaries should be either way, without taking away from the strength of the nomination as a result. So that's one example as to what I think the problem was, trying to put that in a clear way.

So—and by the way, the names of the two organizations on the—that came to evaluate, one's called the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the other is the International Council on Monuments and Sites. And, so as a result of this all, the UNESCO, the world heritage committee, has directed that the advisory bodies, those two, work directly with Canada and with the Pimachiowin Aki partners in what they call an upstream process, in order to allow for shared decision-making processes between them and to present options for change to the evaluation processes for these mixed sites at the next session of the committee.

So change is in the works, and while I'm glad that we were—we're now able to help them reconcile these two different evaluation processes, we have to also attend to ensure that we continue to make a very strong bid. I think that there was clear feedback that we did have a strong bid, and we will shore up anything that can bring this home.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just and the—you also mentioned dichotomy of processes. Is this part of the mixed sites that you were talking about or what is the dichotomy of processes that you're talking about?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I should have made that clear and I apologize, but this was a mixed-site nomination, and there aren't many of them. There aren't many nominated and there certainly are much fewer who—that are designated.

The—they knew all along, the partnership, that this was a difficult process to achieve, that—it—but they decided to take it on, knowing that, indeed, the attributes of the area are both found on the cultural and the natural or ecological sides of the equation. You just, you know—and to respect the First Nations, they make the case that I think is very strong that you can't separate the two, particularly when you look at this part of the globe. So that was supported by all

the governments that were supporting the five First Nation governments with this nomination.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, the whole process, I guess, Mr. Minister, the number of First Nations are still five that are involved in this process. Bloodvein's been included in it, from my understanding, and I'm wondering if there's—what processes have been ongoing, if any—probably not too many, given that the bid hasn't been accepted yet. But I just wondered if you could explain a little bit more there. I know that the cultural side of it's very important and that trying to look at having it so people can actually get to see and feel and be with the cultural processes in those particular locations from those five First Nations units and areas. And so I'm wondering if the—what discussions and what activity has been taking place between the bands and the government in regards to not just the—try to develop the—a better finished application, I guess, but has there been anything done in regards to planning? I guess there won't be any construction, but in regards to planning for the future development?

Mr. Mackintosh: We should just reiterate what the formal process is to bring everyone together. The board—the Pimachiowin Aki board is really unique in the country. So we have the five First Nation governments represented, the two provinces and, of course, support from the federal government. So they come together regularly. I think they're meeting now this week. And the—so that is how they have put their governance structure together. But we've got a land area here of—what—34,000 square kilometres. It's the largest conserved area of the boreal shield in North America and it's not just the land mass but, of course, we've got traditional Anishinabe uses of the land and we've got First Nation resource management control in the Pimachiowin Aki areas under the land-use management plans that are now law in Manitoba under the statute of the Legislature and pursuant to regulation.

So this work, you know, goes back a long time. I see that—I think by 2002 the ideas for this started to gel, so we have Pikangikum in Ontario; Poplar River, little grand, Pauingassi and Bloodvein in Manitoba. So they had to put together their case, 300 pounds of documentation went out of here, which included, of course, the land management plans and the—there were economic studies; there was a cultural landscape study, they call it; an ecosystem study, which, of course, is expected; a governance study; comparative studies; and a management plan.

Now, we realized that it was also important that the partnership between the partners on the board be complemented by a clear partnership at the political level. So a couple of months ago, I think it was in March, I went to Thunder Bay. And there we announced with the Ontario government that the governments of Ontario and Manitoba also have a formal partnership to recognize Pimachiowin Aki and to make the necessary efforts to work together to deal with such things as fire management, you know, other resource management and so on. There was a memorandum of understanding on transborder protection and management of the site that was accordingly ratified. So that's the process and that's what's in place. So things are continuing to unfold.

We look forward to working with the UNESCO folks. The next mission that I understand is planned for the fall, and if—at the ministerial level, if I can play any role I certainly will. But again, I think the role of the First Nations is really what should be celebrated and they certainly are key to this going forward.

Mr. Maguire: You know, the initial planning included how many First Nations groups? Was it three, and then there was two more added later? Is that correct?

Mr. Mackintosh: We could get the dates as to when everyone joined on, but I do know that—I think Pikangikum, Poplar, little grand and Pauingassi began this back as far as '02, but I think Bloodvein joined officially in 2009.

Mr. Maguire: Yes. I guess that was my understanding, that Bloodvein was later. And that would—is that because it's easier to access Bloodvein right now than it would be some of the other areas in regards to being able to participate in the cultural side of the application?

* (17:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I can't speak to the decision-making path of Bloodvein. I'm advised that there may have been leadership changes, but I don't have any first-hand knowledge of what explains any of the timelines. But I do know they came on and they completed their land-use plan which was approved then by Cabinet, just in the last—2011.

Mr. Maguire: So I guess in their land-use plan, my point was that if it's—if, you know, we're doing these for cultural reasons, and we are, I mean, that's a big part of the site application. Would there be—what sort

of cultural activities would be taking place, then, at those locations? And—

Mr. Mackintosh: We know that the land-use plans both, whether it was for Bloodvein or for the other communities was based in no small part on cultural considerations, whether it would be sacred sites, other cultural considerations such as economic activities that depend on the land. And so the land-use plans were built on that.

Which, again, reminds us of how you can't separate, really, I don't think, the natural feature aspects of the area from the cultural areas which really are tied together by both economics and other cultural practices and traditions. So that is what those land-use plans comprise and are the considerations that went into their development.

I know—if the member is maybe talking, as well, about what cultural offerings would be available to visitors, I'm wondering if that's maybe where he's going in the future, but that would depend on the First Nations. And I know that other—the partnership, the board, has looked at cultural tourism or, you know, aspects like that that could generate additional visits and economic opportunities. And I know, too, that there always has to be a balance between the capacity and the protection of the natural environment and culture with tourism and ecotourism.

We know that the area has, indeed, potential. We know that it already has a great reputation already by, for example, canoe enthusiasts. When I had a tour of the area last summer, I heard anecdotes about how popular the rivers were. I saw first-hand how gorgeous they are.

As a former canoer, myself, I could see how attractive those rivers would be because they have beautiful vistas. They don't double back, so it feels like you're, you know, canoeing half the day and you're ending up just over the hill from where you were in the morning. But, as well, the rocks and the pines are extraordinary, a lot of rapids which make it interesting. Some might find that negative. I think most real canoeists would find that to be attractive.

But, as well, the anecdotes that I have heard from people who have visited there from, even British Columbia, have said that there is nothing like this is that province in terms of beauty.

So I think some of the challenge will be how to make the area more accessible to the people of the

world without blowing it by inundating the area with tourism.

So I think there's been studies done on some of the potential and some of the ranges of visits that could be attracted to the area. I know that Poplar has been interested in a—you know, a visitors' centre kind of idea, so that there is something there to look at, and there has been planning stages developed. I know the—from Mr. Bremner, who is a representative on the board of Pimachiowin Aki and is the assistant deputy minister in the department, that the focus on tourist potential is really what they were getting to at this point. They wanted to get the nomination completed, get it in and answer the outstanding questions. And so we know that they want to turn their mind now to looking at that kind of potential down the road.

But, again, it's—I think we have to be careful in achieving that balance. One of the greatest areas of growth in international tourism is what is called sustainable tourism, or used to be called eco-tourism. But sustainable tourism really talks more to the need to ensure that local cultures and eco-systems are protected, despite visits, and that's not always an easy task. So that'll have to be carefully planned as we proceed ahead.

By the way, and I think that, you know, I would certainly encourage that kind of development, whether or not this becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I think that area of the world deserves to be seen by more people of not just this province but elsewhere. It is really an extraordinary place.

There are lakes, huge lakes on that—in that area that I've never heard of until last summer. So I think that as the area becomes more accessible, we'll start to hear those names a lot more commonly.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Mr. Minister. I just wondered if—how many, you know, in regards to the process of the bid that's there, there will be work ongoing now to upgrade that bid, I'm assuming. Can you give me a time frame as to when that will be? And have you got staff working on that regularly? Or have you seconded anyone from outside the department to work on that?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we've had land-use planners assigned to this and, of course, the ongoing funding commitment. And as well, we've been monitoring the development of the nomination process. And Mr. Bremner's involvement, of course, has been very important. And I understand that the UNESCO

mission is planned for as early as this fall and, from that, we expect the amended nomination to proceed on a timely basis.

The decision-making for next year will take place, I understand, in June of 2014, or sometime in that time frame.

I'm advised that Ontario and Parks Canada are also going to be very involved in the process in the months ahead as well.

*(17:10)

I've got a document here that said the reconsideration is for 2015, so we'll have to just double-check that date.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, that would be good if you could just clarify that, the date for me, then, Mr. Minister, as well.

You mentioned the funding proposal going forward on this. There's been some \$14 million, I believe, spent on bids so far. Can you just give me an update on what the expected cost is or how much has been spent to date on the project and what the expected cost might be by the time you get the bid done.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the amount that has been invested to date is \$7 million, and that includes \$2.5 million that has been deposited to the trust fund.

Mr. Maguire: Does that include funds that have been donated by The Winnipeg Foundation?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that includes the \$2.5 million that The Winnipeg Foundation administers.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks. Just to finish off on this area, can the minister indicate to me just what the process is or what work they will do to—in making the changes to rectify the challenges and—with the application before it goes forward again.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised the process really is one of evaluators coming to Manitoba and Ontario and then meeting with representatives of the five First Nation communities. And as well, there are expectations that there will be meetings with the two provincial governments and perhaps Parks Canada. But it really will be a matter of question and answer with the—with those in the communities and governments.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, for that. I wanted to get into a few questions in regards to some of the staffing. I just wanted to follow up because we

started off on that and Mr.—my colleague had to—cover up the speaker here—my colleague had to go to the other Estimates, so I appreciate dealing with that issue.

Can the minister indicate to me how many Cabinet committees he sits on? Is this the list of the Cabinet committees that you sit on, if I could go back on some staffing issues.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm on Treasury Board and Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet, Planning and Priorities Committee of Cabinet.

Mr. Maguire: The—with the flow sheet—flow chart that the—of processes in the supplementary documents, there are quite a number of committees that the minister is in charge of here, 10 or 11 of them here at least, though maybe 15. Are all of the—like, each of these committees and each of these boards have persons on them. Is this all available on a website as to who would be the committee members on each of the—Round Table for Sustainable Development, as an example; Ecological Reserves Advisory Committee; all the advisory committees?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm told that—I—most, if not all, would have both annual reports and reports online. But we'll just double-check that and if there are any that are not reported online or don't have annual reports, we'll—we can advise the member. But I know the annual reports that I see always list the members and what their activities are for the year and their budgets and so on. And, as well, the member wants to pursue questions around staff support for these, I'm certainly pleased to provide those answers. I'm just—I know for each one it could be different.

Mr. Maguire: I was just looking at the upper levels. I know on the bottom side under the departments that's very clear, I think, with all the regional areas and different responsibilities of each assistant deputy minister. You mentioned the individuals that are here today. Have there been any changes in deputy ministers—or assistant deputy ministers, pardon me—from the—from this report to now?

Mr. Mackintosh: The assistant deputy minister of Climate Change and Environmental Protection, Dan McInnis, has moved on, and, as well, the assistant deputy minister of Water Stewardship, Dwight Williamson has moved on. So we have two changes there.

Mr. Maguire: And can you provide me with the information—I believe Mr. Wiebe is here with us—in

regards to his responsibilities in that area, or is—who has replaced those two individuals, I guess, is the cure question.

Mr. Mackintosh: So Ms. Baker is acting for Dan McInnis and Mr. Gray is acting for Mr. Williamson.

Mr. Maguire: And so I guess the question, then, is where have the two individuals that—are these retirements or did they move into other departments? Can you just provide me with some information on that and then the processes of replacing.

Mr. Mackintosh: I think they all go on to become consultants—no, I'm just kidding—paid by the Province at a much higher rate.

Dan McInnis has gone on and, I understand, to the private-sector opportunities, but retired from the Province, and Dwight Williamson didn't express to me any plans. He's just retired.

Mr. Maguire: And so what's the time frame and the process to have them replaced?

Mr. Mackintosh: As part of our, you know, ongoing efforts to make sure that we're operating as effectively, efficiently as possible, I know the department, the executive management, has been looking at whether there should be any reorganization of the efforts in the department, and so that work is ongoing.

* (17:20)

So, in the meantime, the acting positions will continue. My—the advice I have is that the positions have not yet been posted until there's a final decision on how the department structure should look on a go-forward basis. I know they were looking at the pros and cons of some changes and—but I don't think any final decisions have been made yet.

Mr. Maguire: So that would be a, like a realignment of some of the jurisdictional responsibilities?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, when we have a skinning down on some of the staff resources in the department I think it's important that we not just look at—we not just look at line positions, but we also look at management positions. And so, clearly, if there's any efficiencies that can be found at the managerial level those will be pursued.

But, as well, there's—with the—coming back into the Department of Water Stewardship, I know that there have been some efforts looking to see how all of those areas line up. And so—but, as I say, I think that it's just at a pro and con decision or

consideration stage right now. No final decisions have been made, but I'll await further advice from the department before I, you know, approve anything. And—but I haven't been asked to approve any changes at this point. I know there's some ideas floating around.

And I should also note that the retirements are very recent. I think both McInnis and Williamson retirements were in June—May and June.

Mr. Maguire: Can you just—I'll just backtrack a little bit to your political staff, and if you could just provide the names of those individuals to me and what are the positions and whether they're full-time or not.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we've got Chris Pawley is a special assistant in my office. Felix Meza is a special adviser. We have an intake co-ordinator, Mitch Obach. I also have Paul Worster in the community office on Main Street as the executive assistant. Those are the folks in my office.

Mr. Maguire: And those are all full-time positions?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I guess I'm just on this—looking at the whole chart here, I guess, as well. I'm just wondering what the total staff is in the department then—looking for numbers to see if—I know the Estimates book indicates 1,177.54 for this year. I just wonder if the minister can confirm that or if it's changed.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Maguire: Are there—can you give me the number of vacancies that they might have in the department at this time?

Mr. Mackintosh: The most recent number I have is May 17th. I don't have a more recent number, but on that date there were 125.

Mr. Maguire: That's about a 10 per cent vacancy rate, somewhere in that area. Can the minister indicate to me—I believe the numbers have come down 61 from the previous year in equivalents, in full-time equivalents, at least, anyway. Can he indicate to me what area those 61 might have come out of or is it general over everywhere or?

Mr. Mackintosh: In Admin and Finance—so for Admin and Finance, it's 7.79; Regional Services and Parks, it's 24.18; Climate Change and Environmental Protection, it's 18; programs division, it's 8.25; and

Water Stewardship, it's three. That should be a total reduction of 61.22.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate—I guess I don't need a full listing of each of the positions, I mean, as to what they actually were. The numbers are here in the book in regards to the different parts within each regional area or department. I can look at that.

So that's—is this a seasonal vacancy, the 125, that might be there then? This was as of May 17th coming into parks use and that sort of thing. Is that a normal number to have—and a vacancy rate of 125, a 10 per cent vacancy rate, and?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I understand the vacancy rate is down somewhat from last year, but, at the same time, the number reflects what was anticipated for budgeting purposes and does reflect a turnover that is, I understand, not unusual now and really is not in any particular area of the department and is—reflects full-time equivalency rather than—it doesn't set out what's part-time and full-time.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, has there been any cuts in or changes in conservation district staffing?

Mr. Mackintosh: Conservation districts are independent entities funded by Province and municipalities and other sources, so they have their own staffing that isn't directly provincial FTEs.

* (17:30)

Mr. Maguire: With the staffing vacancies that you have, is there—are you looking at filling those in the near future, then, or are they—

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that positions are filled on a continual basis and, of course, as positions are filled, others become vacant, so it's a perpetual process.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, it just seems like quite a few in regards to that, even though there is a large staff complement in the different areas. Are a lot of these—are any of the regional persons going to be replaced in some of the regional areas that we have? I think there's 22 in regional services.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know the department always looks to 'priorize' areas where there are pressures from any vacancy. Some can be 'priorized' over others, and so that's how they've been proceeding over the years.

Mr. Maguire: Are there any projects that have been delayed because of the staffing changes or staff shortages?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised by the department that what they do is identify where vacancies may cause impacts to either front-line service delivery or to the need for any urgent responses or to any projects that are underway and would 'priorize' the filling of those vacancies accordingly.

Mr. Maguire: Just in regards to retirements that you mentioned—the assistant deputy minister's—are there any other retirements that have taken place in the last year in the staff, as well, and can you just supply me with a list of those at some time?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we can provide the number of retirements. If the member's asking for the names, we'll just double-check to make sure we can do that under the—I don't know—disclosure rules in place. But we'll certainly provide a number to the member.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks. I—just looking for both 2011 and '12 and 2012-13 if I could, just those numbers and if the names are available, that's fine—as to who retired.

Just looking at the closures, there's been some closures of government offices and that sort of thing around the province in different departments, and I know you've—been some conservation district changes there. Wonder if you can indicate to me what offices have closed in Conservation.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, there were two rounds of consolidations, one announced in November and the other in April. In Winnipeg the Conservation Library was merged, largely, with the Manitoba Legislative Library. And Leaf Rapids, the district office space was downsized and some services were to be merged with the Thompson office. In Mafeking, the district office was to be merged in the Swan River office and Grandview, the district office was to be merged in Roblin and the Dauphin offices and in Deloraine, there's a Water Stewardship office was merged in the Brandon office, well actually, I think the person lived in Brandon.

Then in April, in Garland, two positions would be based out of the Duck Mountain Provincial Park. In Ste. Anne one position was moved to Steinbach and Dugald one position was moved to Stonewall and Winnipeg one office location was eliminated and 17 staff at 155 Carleton are moving to 123 Main Street and 1007 Century, that was the biggest

consolidation. In Shoal Lake, multiple offices were merged into a single point service office, same in Neepawa and in Brandon and in Hodgson, the fire staff was planned to be relocated to Gypsumville. Finally, in Hadashville, the staff was merged with the Beausejour and Falcon Lake but the fire suppression base was maintained.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, the minister mentioned the Grandview position there, I think was it Grandview or Gilbert Plains that, I believe it was Grandview that the Conservation office was, it's closed, the person moved to Dauphin?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that was done last year and announced in November. The district office was merged in both Roblin and Dauphin.

Mr. Maguire: Just to—I know I've had some calls and quiet concerns about the situation there with regards to the Moose and the Duck mountains and that sort of thing and of course there's a lot of a—you know, there's a ban on hunting in the mountain and I know that these persons are concerned about the fact that the—with the conservation office—officer being taken out of Grandview, that that was the logical place they felt for that person to be. Can you indicate any of the reasons why the—some of these offices have been closed or the reasons for moving the people and relocating them?

Mr. James Allum, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, with regard to Grandview there were no layoffs, I understand, as a result of that consolidation and that in the general region the complement remains the same, it's just that the deployment is based out of Roblin and Dauphin. But, when it comes to moose management, I was in Swan River this summer and visited with departmental and community stakeholders, and I'm aware that a biologist position was added and that was filled and there was also some increase to the natural resource officer presence in the area. We're continuing to monitor the, you know, any vacancies and changes that are taking place there so I think the department is on top of the that.

* (17:40)

In terms of the other rationale for the change, there were some enhancements to public service and I know that efforts are continuing, looking at how government interfaces with Manitobans in smaller communities to ensure that we're able to provide continuing service and that we better bridge service offerings across departments. But I know that one of

the considerations was the ability to find some cost savings, and I noticed that the release of April 11th, 2013, spoke of efficiencies of 1.49 million across several departments, and so that is one of the reasons for the changes.

We also recognize—and I come from a small town—that any changes can sometimes be difficult, and so we certainly have attended to answer questions from the various areas whether they're municipal councils or staff or others to explain the rationale for the changes. But I'm certainly sympathetic to the need to maintain a strong presence in the regions of Manitoba because this department disproportionately provides services in the regions.

And so we've been very careful to make sure that we take a close look at any of these consolidations, but I think these are well under way or they've already been completed and staff have done the relocation.

As well, the level of staffing was a concern and that's why we've been careful to call them consolidations. The primary purpose was a consolidation and not staff reduction or service reduction. So if the member has any comment or any concerns with a particular area, we certainly will attend to that. And we've been very vigilant to be responsive to local concerns to remind people that while there are consolidations under way, we have to ensure that the public can access the services. And, when I say that, I mean not only that the services be available, but we know that there were some locations that were closed because there was no disability access. And, you know, as a former minister for disabilities, I know that doing those upgrades can be hugely expensive.

And I remember another portfolio so, you know, some of the courthouses of Manitoba are huge, wonderful buildings, but the upgrades are really, really expensive. And I've heard a comment that while, you know, we could move the court setting to a different place if a person's in a wheelchair. Well, that's not the point. The point is that you also should be able to hire without regard to the disability, as well, for those people that staff those buildings. So that was also a consideration that was factored into some of the consolidations, and I think that is about cost avoidance while at the same time enhancing accessibility.

And we also recognize that people are sometimes better served by being able to make

applications and obtaining documentation online now, and I think this has been able to refresh our view in terms of what processes can go online. Many are online, but we know we can make some future investments there that can make our services more accessible so that somebody doesn't have to drive, you know, 20 minutes down the road to get something. They can just click on their computer and get what they're after.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to touch base in regards to some of the travel that the minister may have done in his department in the past year. But, before I get into that, was there any travel that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) did that was paid for by the minister's department and the purpose of any such trips?

Mr. Mackintosh: I know that the travel was all online on a regularized basis now, so, you know, I can advise the member if there's been anything additional to what's posted, if that's what he's after.

And in terms of the Premier's expenses, we can get back to him on that.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I was just wondering if the Premier had done any travelling on the Conservation Department's budget or the Conservation Department paid for any? I don't know if that's online or not. Wasn't aware of it, but—and if there is other travel other than what's regularly posted, is what I was looking at.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we'll get a note to the member on that.

Mr. Maguire: As we move forward with the—some of the new departmental initiatives, can you just outline some of those for me that were undertaken or announced in the past year, in 2012-13, particularly. Sort of, you know, things that you might have put in news releases. I know you mentioned some of them in your opening remarks, but.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I think the most notable initiative was the publication of TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan. It was concluded that the department really needed a longer term view and 'priorizing' of what it should be focusing on. But, as well, we had to—I think, had a more—we had to have a more global view as to the appropriate priorities for all of government when it came—when it comes to the environment and developing a green economy. So a tremendous effort was undertaken with that strategy.

And, as the member may know, I have a particular interest and an affection for multi-year strategies because I think that governments are increasingly compelled to make strategic decisions in terms of what the priority should be, and, therefore, where the investment should be on a longer term basis rather than just proceeding on a year-by-year basis.

The effort to put tomorrow together—TomorrowNow together was extraordinary. A lot was asked of other departments, and certainly a disproportionate effort was put in by our staff in collating the various interests and then deciding on what should be articulated and promoted. I think the most important part of TomorrowNow was its publication and the request for feedback from Manitobans. So, on the one hand, I think the document and its priorities were vindicated as a result of that, but we did hear from Manitobans that they wanted approaches that were, shall we say, bigger, better, stronger, when it came to Lake Winnipeg and water protection generally, in the basin. There was a particular interest in our parks, because I think that that is one of the most immediate interfaces between public service and the people, when it comes to our department at least. We had a real interest in fish and wildlife protection and protected areas. We also had very strong responses when it comes to climate change. And, of course, I think a lot of people, when they think of conservation or environmental protection, they think of recycling. So, not surprisingly, we had a lot of interest and a lot of views on recycling and options there.

So we took all that into consideration and the final document will reflect that kind of feedback. But I think for the member I will say that the strong feedback, when it comes to Lake Winnipeg, is reflected in the conclusion we drew, that we needed a Lake Friendly Accord and the stewards alliance. And I'll just explain this as briefly as I can.

* (17:50)

We promoted the idea in the—in TomorrowNow of a Lake Winnipeg accord. It became clear to me, in fact, right in the community, the member—you represent Deloraine? Yes. One of my early visits was to Deloraine and to the conservation district there and others, visiting other people in Manitoba and then talking to people from outside of Manitoba, in particular at a conference that the Premier and I attended in Minneapolis, at the university there.

And in discussions with some of my counterparts in Canada, you can't talk about saving Lake Winnipeg as easily when you get further from the lake. People in Deloraine are concerned about the quality of water in the immediate vicinity. They're concerned about Whitewater Lake. They're concerned about what's coming off of the mountain. People in Saskatchewan are concerned not about Lake Winnipeg so much as Lake Diefenbaker and the Saskatchewan River.

So we realized a very fundamental importance of how you communicate, and so we—the light came on, and we realized that as a result of the great work of the mayors and reeves of the south basin and the lake-friendly initiative that is well under way to raise awareness in Manitoba and to, you know, shift to more lake-friendly products, that we should call this the Lake Friendly Accord. That will appeal to people that are particularly far from Lake Winnipeg and are living on the basin. But the results are the same. If you're lake friendly, if you change your practices for the lake at your feet, you're going to change the water quality to the better in Lake Winnipeg.

So that was actually a very fundamental shift that came from this dialogue and feedback from TomorrowNow. So that's why we landed on that. But, as well, I learned a second lesson, and that was that we simply cannot talk about asking other jurisdictions to ramp up their efforts to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loading to their waterways unless we clearly showed the leadership of Manitobans in protecting our waterways here. We had to lead by example. And so that is why we are ramping up efforts domestically, shall I say, within Manitoba, and that is what the Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance is essentially about. And, as well, though, the Lake Friendly Accord will not just be for neighbouring jurisdictions to sign on to; we're going to lead by example again there and have Lake Friendly Accord versions that will be signed on to by municipalities, by schools, school divisions, by farmers, by homeowners. *[interjection]*

Anyway, I think there's some other sectors there.

So that was a big lesson that was learned. So I think that was the major initiative over the last year, in answer to the member's question. But there are some others as well, if—but perhaps—I see the member wants to ask some questions, perhaps around the lake-friendly initiative.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I just—before you do that, I think, if you could provide me a little bit of a status report on where some of these projects that you've got on the go are at, as well.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, just—then—just to conclude on the Lake Friendly Accord, we're getting excellent support in principle for that concept, not just within Manitoba, but, for example, my counterpart in Saskatchewan, Minister Cheveldayoff, gave a thumbs-up, and he said, make sure that you tell people of Manitoba that I said so. But he does see that as a very useful mechanism to better engage Saskatchewan residents in better protecting Lake Diefenbaker and Saskatchewan River and other waterways within Saskatchewan.

We heard even from the premiers of the western provinces at the gathering that our Premier (Mr. Selinger) attended, tremendous support for this concept, including from the Premier of British Columbia, outside of the watershed. So we think that this kind of initiative will have some lift beyond the watershed.

We had a real support from co-chair Ms. Pollack, of the International Joint Commission, of leaders like Lance Yohe of the Red River Basin Commission and, I think, most notably is Robert Sandford, who is a guru when it comes to water health and water protection. And, in fact, I learned many lessons from Dr. Sandford, which led to the accord and the alliance.

We're going to be floating the idea of the Lake Friendly Accord in Minneapolis this weekend with the Midwest legislators. We think that those opportunities shouldn't be missed in terms of getting the idea out and getting people interested in this concept.

In terms of the distribution and the movement then to get signatories to the accord and its various forms, that is in development now, and the idea is to have the documents signed off at the next meeting of the alliance so that there's stewardship by the alliance of how the accord should look and how it should be sold. So that will happen in the fall.

The alliance, again, you know, we had the beginning, the first meeting of the alliance; we're looking to see, you know, who else should have been there, but I think we've got most of the key stakeholders in the room. And stakeholder after stakeholder, I think there was a big thumbs up for this approach; people just said it's time.

There are many alliances, if you will; there are groupings and, you know, tremendous work that's happening. But we can't afford to have people running on off in all directions at once. We have to know what everyone's doing. We have to better analyze what the priorities should be, who can better work together. We have to deliver change.

As well, I've been—well, I've been floating this idea for some time and—but the most recent meeting is the water on the land conference here in Winnipeg. It was attended by many stakeholders and the Manitoba Co-operator reported on that. But it is going to be very important to remind the agricultural community in Manitoba of their leadership.

Over the last number of years, there's been a lot of demands put on them to change practices, and they have risen to the occasion; they have heeded the call. And it's also important to remind the agricultural community that the other sources of phosphorus and nitrogen are being attended to, and that is why the sewage treatment challenges of the city of Winnipeg are so important to have addressed.

And so, timelines are in place now for the north and south end plants, and we will move ahead with that. So that is the Lake Friendly Accord and the alliance, so a lot of work happening over the next three months in particular.

The park strategy was released with a request for a response by June 1st and with that has been a proposal that we have a fair funding of parks, moving from what really is 75 per cent roughly or 72 per cent of taxpayer funding of provincial parks to greater, to a greater sharing of the funding from those who use the parks and benefit from the services that we provide.

Ontario has moved, you know, to 80 per cent user pay. We are really trying to get to 50-50. That would be, I think, a sweet spot that we have to attain. And so, we are having dialogues now with those, you know, the park cottagers right now; there's open houses that are ongoing to move in a fair way for—to a greater user pay. And I know that we'll be interested to hear what the feedback as those open houses move along.

But, as well, within the park strategy, just a lot of changes that are afoot. We've got to recognize that parks are not, should not just be passive places for people to get recreation but have to more actively play a role in ensuring healthy lifestyles for Manitobans and our visitors. We have to, I think,

provide some more interesting enticements to our parks. I think we've got to provide a greater leadership in terms of environmental sustainability with the practices in our parks, and so there are a number of efforts that are under way in that regard.

* (18:00)

And, you know, that's, you know, we put out the idea of banning smoking on our beaches and, you know, strong views on both sides but it's the right thing to do. I—we've heard over and over again complaints from parents, in particular, about smokers on the beaches next to the kids playing and even in the playgrounds. And so I think if we're going to have some leadership for outdoor health, that's a good place, but this will be the first time in Manitoba where we've begun a discussion about banning smoking in outdoor places because the focus has historically been on indoor places. But what a better place than in the places where children go in our parks. But that's just one example. As the member can see from the park strategy, there are many, many moving parts in there. So those are two of the big initiatives, and the status of that we're going to take the parks' feedback and come back with the final plan on that one as we are with TomorrowNow.

On pesticide regulation, we put out a consultation on that one and I got huge feedback on that one, over 2,000, actually, responses on that. That includes, you know, everything from names on petitions to very lengthy replies. And it's been a real learning curve for me over the last year and plus to understand all of the dynamics of pesticide regulation and learning what has happened in other provinces. But even more importantly to understand the state of bio-pesticide development in Canada. And, in fact, Canada now is becoming a leader in bio-pesticide—lawn bio-pesticide development because of the regulations in most of the rest of Canada, and we're seeing leadership at Saskatchewan's—you know, the Ag Canada in Saskatchewan developing a new product that's coming on the market next summer that I understand has passed all the tests with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada.

And, as well, we've got a product that's called Fiesta commercially and Weed B Gon domestically that is now replacing the traditional 2,4-D type products in most of the rest of Canada and is proving effective. And, in fact, I just saw a study done by the Guelph University, the Turfgrass Institute showing that Fiesta in some ways is more effective even than

traditional products like Killex. So I think there's a lot of public knowledge that we have to work towards as I have really tried to develop personally to make an informed decision on pesticide regulation.

So that will—the statute and regulations are being developed now and this will provide an opportunity because we've articulated what our objective is to engage the direct stakeholders like the lawn companies and others in looking at the definitions and the lists and so on and make sure that we get it right so that people can continue to control weeds. I'm a lawn lover for one and I want to be able to continue to control weeds without having to pull every one of them. Although that's not bad on some afternoons but, you know, we're busy people and we need other alternatives as well. So those products are coming on the market and I think Manitobans would be surprised to learn that the synthetic chemical pesticides aren't even available anymore at the places where they go like Home Depot or Rona or Costco or even Pollock's Hardware where I go. So those replacement products are already on the market and going to work for Manitobans that want to control their lawns by more than organic practices.

So those are three major initiatives and the status of them, and, you know, there's many others, but those are the three biggies I think over the last year.

Mr. Maguire: Back to the travel, I was asking about the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) travel. Can the minister provide me with any—oh, no, we did get into that, I guess, in regards to whether there was any other or not that you had undertaken yourself that's not on the website? I think it was clear that you were going to make that available to me if there was any that's not on the website.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes. I would love to put on the public record some of the places that my—I went to to gain some knowledge and the impact that that has made but I think I'd be safe just to—yes, we'll reference the website and then we can advise the member if there's other things. But I know on the parks strategy I attended the American Parks and Recreation Association, which really was an eye opener in terms of understanding the status of parks across North America. The Americans have gone through a lot of very difficult budgetary decision making that has impacted parks, and so I was able to learn a bit from that. But, as well, to learn what the trends were, what the expectations of populations across North America are about how people do

expect different things in parks now. The old—the idea of just going to a park with a tent appeals to some, in a growing way, for backcountry experiences, but mainstream everyone is expecting electricity and a lot of people are expecting full service. So, clearly, the investments that we have to make are in electrical sites to a greater extent. That's—there's a huge demand for that.

So those are—but that's one example of some—of a trip.

The other one I've got to talk—tell the—put on the record publicly. This last April, I went to a conference on climate change in California where these—where there's just tremendous leadership on carbon trading and cap and trade. We are a member of the—of a group that is interested in pursuing cap and trade, and I can tell the member that I went to one session there. It was called carbon trading 101, and I swear it was supposed to be 401, because it has a whole language to itself. It's a very complicated way of managing carbon emissions, which is concerning in a way because it's very difficult, I think, to speak publicly about it, and it is just immensely complex.

But—so I've learned a lot. I've put a lot of—I've crammed a lot of learning in because of—and one, largely, I think, because of the demands of putting together TomorrowNow with officials, but as well to make sure that Manitoba maintains a leadership when it comes to environmental protection.

Mr. Maguire: Just wanted to ask the minister, I was talking about the retired—getting a list of the staff that have retired in the last couple of years. Can he also provide me with a list of those that have been hired on a contractual basis in the last two years as well in the department, 2011-12 and 2012-13?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, as I recall, the member asked that last year and I think we were able to provide that on a timely basis, so we'll attend to that.

Mr. Maguire: And, while we're doing that, then, I guess this one's just in regards to the fees and charges that might have come up. Can the minister give me a complete list of the changes that—of the fees, No. 1, for the department—charged by the department in '12 and '13, and any changes in those rates?

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the member talking about park fees?

Mr. Maguire: Well, park fees and any other fees that might be in the department charged through the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we can compile that.

Mr. Maguire: Yes. Just the—there's been about a \$10-million cut, drop, deduction in the department's budget. Can the minister indicate to me what major areas are affected by that? And I know given that about—from my quick perusal of the budget, it's about 55 per cent wages, I believe, in the department, at the \$82-million mark—\$83-million mark, including some items that I'll get into in a minute. But with that much of it there doesn't seem to be a large reduction in—of course, in salaries. I think it's only \$562,000 reduction, in spite of the fact that there's 61 fewer employees. That was kind of an average number come out to the—over \$3 million, but there's a 562 reduction, so I just wondered if you could indicate to me where the major reductions are in the department.

* (18:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: So, with a budget of \$146.3 million, there were cost savings of \$9.6 million, or about 6 per cent. So half of the reduction, roughly, the member is right, is on the staff side, and that was by trimming 61 positions out of 1,240 or so departmental positions. So the latest information I had was that all but one of those 61 positions are vacant and all the staff have been redeployed for no net job losses. So it's been quite an exercise.

The other half of the savings is from other administrative efficiencies, and we have, for example, the capital parks budget stretched to eight years from five, so there's savings on amortization and interest on an annual basis as a result of that. The office consolidations that we spoke about earlier, there's some overhead reductions. The funding of hatcheries, for example, has been moved from taxpayers to anglers. So those are really, I think, the main emphasis.

Oh, and I should just add, the deputy did want me to say this, but it may be that the member's looking at staff costs and lines, and they will see many increases, but there are general salary increases, as well, that have to be factored into that. So in some cases it works out that—it nets out to the positive.

Mr. Maguire: Just the line on page 11 under allowance for staff turnover, it's just about

\$7 million, the negative there. Is that a typical number? Why is it \$7 million? That seems like quite a variance.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that there wasn't a change this year. If there was, it wasn't anything that was really significant. But that is the expected turnover and that's what's budgeted for.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just if the minister could just explain the turnover, then, from staff turnover—this is from retiring staff, staff that's leaving.

Mr. Mackintosh: That was based initially on a number of around 9 per cent, and that would be turnover from people just, you know, retiring or moving on, yes.

Mr. Maguire: And so those persons aren't replaced, and there's a savings in that budget, then, of roughly \$7 million?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I wouldn't want to leave the impression that if there was a vacancy that that position, then, is going to be deleted or—everything's all fluid. You know, that position may be filled and another one may be left vacant. So it really is left on the basis of the parties that we spoke about earlier this afternoon.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I know, it's just the, I guess, the explanation there and the reconciliation of the salary amounts. Does the department—I mean, there's about \$74.7 million in salaries, about just under 50 per cent of the budget, but I just wondered what—why there was \$6.965 million under allowance for staff turnovers, and I guess the minister's explained that the best we can at this point, so we'll move on with that.

Just wondered, as well, if the minister, then, on the contracts that have been let and out this year, how many and what type of contracts are being awarded directly, and in what areas, I guess, and how many of those contracts are going to tender. And I guess I'll put a number in there of \$25,000 and up. I don't need all of the smaller ones, that sort of thing.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm just wondering how the member wants to proceed. Last year, I think we got the information to him in written form, or if he—does he want me to read it out? I don't know—

Mr. Maguire: Oh, you can do that in written form. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mackintosh: We can get that to the member on a timely basis.

Mr. Maguire: I just wondered—a quick one here while we're dealing with some of these just in regards—one of my colleagues advised me—recommended here, I know we've been dealing with—the member from Spruce Woods has been dealing with the coal ban and that sort of thing. We've written letters, I know, to the minister, and wonder if he can just give us an update on where that's at.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, one of the first issues I delved into was the idea of a coal ban, and I met with a number of—or a commitment to a coal-heating ban, and I met with a lot of individuals on that one, representatives of Hutterite colonies, in particular, and others—those that are providing biomass. We've heard from other key stakeholders, Keystone Agricultural Producers and many others including environmental organizations and including members of the Legislature on both sides of the House, about how to best manage the coal-heating ban.

I think what is clear is that we have to have some flexibility with how that is implemented in order to guard against any unintended consequences. And the biggest unintended consequence we want to avoid is a switch to other fossil fuels, where we might be able to avoid that where there are other opportunities, in particular, where biomass could go to work for the environment and for colonies and individual users. So we're now at the stage of fine tuning how that can look, in light of the feedback that we've received.

And so we hope that we can speak publicly about this in the weeks ahead and provide some certainty and some predictability in terms of how we look at managing this on a go-forward basis. I think that we can find a—the right balance between eliminating coal heating in Manitoba while ensuring that we make a switch, whether it's to biomass, preferably, or geothermal or other sources.

We still recognize, of course, that gas conversion is still—would be a lower emission, but that is not the ideal place. And I—you know, we've seen—we've actually drilled down on the numbers looking to see what the conversions have been, what the experiences have been.

There's also, I think, a burgeoning industry in Manitoba; a biomass industry. We've got providers that are coming in or that are Manitobans that are into that, and so I think we have to ensure, as well, that the biomass market is effective. It's a supply-and-demand match. So I think we're getting there in terms of how we can proceed, based on the feedback.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I appreciate the minister's comments on the coal issue. I know there's a—I don't think it's legislated, but there's a potential moratorium coming on the use of coal. And can you just refresh my memory in terms of when that date is? And second to that, is that date—is that firm or is there going to be some flexibility going forward on that in terms of the moratorium itself?

Mr. Mackintosh: The government had stated its intention to introduce a regulation for January 1st of 2014, and so the question is: How is that to look. How is that going to play out? And so that is what we've been looking at in terms of ensuring that there's flexibility in—with regard to that. In order words, what kind of a period of conversion is reasonable and so on. And so that's we're working on now and I hope that—I anticipate that we'll be able to speak publicly about this over the course of the summer.

* (18:20)

Mr. Cullen: Well, that's certainly good to hear. Clearly, I know in my constituency we have a lot of Hutterites who certainly are involved and potentially involved in this, and I assume the minister is looking at those types of operations specifically. And maybe you could comment just to confirm for us that, you know, those colonies, those communities will be involved in the moratorium.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Hutterite colonies disproportionately have been relying on coal, and we've seen some real leadership from them and, in fact, I know they've been doing some very successful conversions and helping to develop the biomass market. But there are some that are finding it more difficult to achieve the conversion.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So I think it's important to provide some flexibility, but to continue to signal that they have to move towards ending coal heating. It's just a matter of getting there in a way that doesn't push people into, you know, 'fossilil'—continued fossil fuel use. So in that regard I think that there's a meeting of the minds of both the environmentalists and the current coal users that there has to be some flexibility, and so that is what we're looking at in terms of what flexibility would work best for everybody.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I guess we were all hopeful there would be biomass products available, maybe available widespread and at a reasonable cost. I don't think we're to that position yet. So, hopefully, you

know, you and your department will take some time to consider that and, hopefully, consider some time to those communities and those individuals that'll have to make some, you know, significant changes.

I know when the proposal first come out, there was some money set aside, I guess from the coal tax, that was going to be available for both the development of biomass and for the conversion. Is that funding still available for both the biomass development and for the conversion?

Mr. Mackintosh: When we announce how the coal heating ban will work, I can assure the member that further funds will be available from the coal tax for people to convert. That is, I think, part of the deal, if you will, that's out there—that we want to help people. We want to, as I said to many of the Hutterite leaders, that we want to work with you. We want to move this with you in a way that's helpful so that everyone benefits. So the member can look forward to an announcement on further funding for people to convert.

Mr. Cullen: I just want to remind the minister, too, that, you know, some of the colonies are certainly looking at gas, but that's not available, you know, widespread throughout the province. So, clearly, when the communities are looking at that, it's certainly a very substantial extra expense to run the pipe into those communities. So it's certainly an issue there.

The other side of the coin is, too, I have some manufacturers of those types of furnaces and, clearly, they have an interest in terms of what kind of announcement's going forward as well. So I am assuming your announcement will bear in mind their potential concerns going forward as well?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, there are many sides to this. And while some people say, well, just get rid of that idea of a ban, there are others that say, well, no, my investments in Manitoba depend on a ban coming in.

So we're sticking to the idea that we have to get away from coal heating. There has to be a ban. It's a matter of how it's managed to achieve all the right results. So that's the effort that's under way now. It's a hot file on my desk, I can assure the member, and, you know, we're going to get it right. And there are some outstanding issues that we're going to sew up and then enunciate publicly. As I say, you know, the plan is to do that before the end of summer.

Mr. Cullen: Just, I guess, one final comment more than a question, is, you know, clearly, with the gas

not available in a lot of communities, I wondered if the minister or the Province or Manitoba Hydro or in combination there, are looking at some means to, you know, support that infrastructure.

Mr. Mackintosh: We want to primarily support non-fossil fuel development, and that is why we've really been paying close attention to how the biomass market is developing and where the shortcomings remain. There is biomass being produced, increasingly so. I think it's a matter of linking the regional supplies, you know, to the areas that don't have supplies and, you know, supply and demand and making the linkage. So that is an effort that has to be nailed down.

So we're taking the advice very carefully that we're receiving and, indeed, from what the members are even saying today, we're going to make sure that we have—we use this opportunity to reduce emissions in a real way, and at the same time, moving away from having to import energy into Manitoba. Biomass can be an entirely Manitoba-produced energy source, and that's another reason not to provide any incentives to move towards natural gas.

Mr. Cullen: Just changing gears a little bit, I know you mentioned Spruce Woods Park, and I just wondered how things are progressing. I know we haven't talked about that file for a little while, but did you see any snags on the horizon or—in terms of development going forward? Are we still on schedule to where we should be or where you anticipate it's going to be, or is there any issues that have come up? And I know we talked about the lagoon situation in your office there a couple of months ago. I just wanted to see if there's any update in terms of that siting of that lagoon.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, there's two parts to the question. The first phase of the park redevelopment plan will focus on re-establishing the lower campground with fewer and more robust flood-resistant washroom-shower buildings. This phase will also include the start of flood mitigation work since some shoreline erosion along the—or shoreline erosion control along the riverbank. The work's been tendered and it will begin after—at the end of this camping season and will continue in the winter—of course, depending on water levels and weather conditions.

The majority of the cleanup of the lower campground's complete and will be, of course—is open now to the public with temporary washroom and shower buildings in place, but I can assure and

put it on the record here specifically that this is the biggest investment ever in a Manitoba park that we're aware of. I asked them to go back and there's nothing. I think Winnipeg Beach was a big investment, but this one's bigger. I think it's about \$21 million, which is very extraordinary, but I'm absolutely convinced that this is the right investment. This is an unbelievable park that has to be not just preserved but enhanced. It's in the middle of Manitoba. It—and the member's advocacy has been listened to. It is a huge economic driver in the region but, as well, with the risk of the river there, there has to be prevention works as well. And so that work is well under way. So there's no glitches that I've been alerted to.

The issue of the lagoon I took seriously and I spoke to the family. And staff went and, I think, visited with them or met with them and went over different options and explored some of the options that they raised. I think there were some barriers to those options, and I think they're also looking at what mitigation could be put in place for the pre-existing options. So, clearly, efforts would be necessary at a minimum to mitigate any visual impacts and so on. So, I think that's still a work in progress, as I recall.

By the way, and I—again, this is an open invitation to the member if he wishes any more briefings or any other, you know, local notifications to be made, we wouldn't mind doing that, and perhaps there is room for a public release in terms of what's going on there.

* (18:30)

But I think the—we haven't heard a lot of questions from the general public this year. So a matter—you know, this is a multi-year strategy, and what I've learned is—as antsy as I am, you know, A-Type, you know; it's got to be done at once. The parks construction really has to begin after the camping season. Otherwise, you lose that camping season. You know, you can disrupt entire campgrounds by construction efforts.

So we're keeping an eye on it and I look forward to the member's advocacy and any advice that he gives to us down the road. I consider him as a partner, if you will, in how this has to proceed, in a way that's sensitive to regional interests.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you, and I appreciate the minister's comments.

I did take a drive in, actually, the lower part of the campground over the weekend. And your staff

probably has the numbers there, in terms of the use of the facility. Certainly, the lower campground was in reasonable shape. I was a little disappointed in terms of the number of campers there. I didn't visit the upper campground, but I'm just still wondering if we're getting the message out there that, you know, the facility is up and running and ready to go. And, you know, this was a Saturday morning of a, you know, just the week after the long weekend, and I would have—my expectation was it would have been kind of back to where we'd been. But we're—it would appear that we're not there. So I'm wondering if that's something the minister could check on and maybe there's some strategy we can use there to alert people that, yes, we're open for business.

Mr. Mackintosh: I know we've made notifications through the reservations system and, you know, online. But maybe we just make a deal that we, in the next two or three weeks, we can put a release out in terms of the status of the park. You know, we're paying for the staffing there, and that worked so far, so—everybody's better off if every site is full. So why don't we do that? I'll ask the department then to put together a little press release. We can put it out regionally at least, or put it out across Manitoba and hopefully Westman will pick it up.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just a couple of questions here before I turn the questioning over to my—our colleague from River Heights.

Mr. Chair, in regards to the ELA—the situation where there was changes in the situation in the lakes in Ontario—Manitoba has been the benefit of that, but because we've had a lot of the scientists here in our own community. And I had the opportunity of attending the International Institute for Sustainable Development's dinner here a while ago, their AGM, and spoke with some of the people there and heard their presentations.

Can the minister give us an update on the kind of funding that this—that the Province of Manitoba has put into ELA, this year, I know, since the change has taken place, and can you give me an indication of the size of the donation that Ontario gave, as well?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the stage we're at now is determining, first of all, liability issues and the ongoing role of the federal government. Those discussions are happening with Ontario's expressed interest in being part of a solution. We're also interested in being part of a solution. And in terms of how all the funding would flow, from either Ontario

or Manitoba or Canada, that's the subject of the discussions.

So what took place was the federal government allowed summer research to continue there, to accommodate those discussions. And so we will await assurances on the role of the federal government. And the liability issue—by—I don't want to make light of that at all. The issue is very serious, in terms of who's responsible for any environmental damage or anything that could be discovered in the future. That would break the bank of any organization if the federal government did not have responsibility for liability. So that has to be signed off on. And, as well, it's expected that the federal government would have an ongoing contribution.

In terms of the IISD's role, we've certainly supported the IISD in being involved in this one, and we contribute over a million dollars to IISD. I think that we're actually the biggest funder of IISD. So that's where they're getting financial support at this point. But, on a go-forward basis, we'll see how the discussions all unfold.

Mr. Maguire: Just in regards to the provincial share of funds going to IISD then, there is nothing earmarked for ELA. The million that you give to IISD is funds that they use for operations of ISD or can the minister clarify that?

Mr. Mackintosh: No, we've initiated some discussions with ISD that we will just keep at the table but certainly earmarking funds are—would be one very tangible approach from Manitoba, would be very helpful. We outline priorities with ISD for investments by them and so that would be an approach that would be at the table but, you know, I'll let those discussions continue in the light of the larger context of the federal role as well, I mean, this is still, you know, at a critical stage and so I'll let those discussions unfold.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I listened to a presentation that evening by Dr. Michael Paterson there, the chair of the facilities, and he spoke about how he could see some opportunities there from investment, I guess, and others. He's—he indicated to me that a lot of—that all of the projects themselves have been privately funded in the past. The government's involvement was around the buildings and the infrastructure and those areas and, of course, they're needed to keep it going from that end of it as well and so I just wondered if the minister knows of the—can tell me just how much—I know Ontario had made a donation to that, or not a donation but a contribution towards

the cost of that continuing running of the facilities, I wonder if he could tell me how much that was?

Mr. Mackintosh: No, my understanding is Ontario is engaged in those discussions now about what contribution and how it looks because of the importance of determining the federal responsibility and ongoing role. So it's very much in progress, it's in the discussion phase.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate then whether he's had discussions with the—his counterpart in Ontario or is that being done at the premier level or where are those discussions taking place?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, both. I know the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) had discussions with the Premier of Ontario and I've had discussions with my counterpart but there are other parties involved as well. I think, too, the potential that the member talks about of other funding sources remains also a question that has to be determined.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I thank the minister for that—for those comments and I was just looking for detail, I guess, in regards to the staffing and that sort of thing. We have a good many of those persons live in the city here, are in our province and there's an economic benefit to having 30 scientists in our home community here, as well, within the provincial borders and so I just wondered what the—what kinds of discussions were there in regards to the developments but obviously if there's—the liability then is one of the bigger issues that's still on the table from the federal side of it. Is that correct in my assumption there?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, that's right. I think until that issue is resolved finally and with certainty this remains a difficult matter but I believe that there is a more recent interest in the federal government of having some role with regard to liability and perhaps in other ways as well. That's the signals that we have and that's very positive and I think that is highlighted by the federal government's interest in allowing the research to continue this summer while the discussions are ongoing.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, let me start by asking the minister, in the budget as presented both in, you know, this Budget 2013 Estimates, expenditure and revenue and on page 7 of the Estimates for Conservation and Water Stewardship, there's capital investment of \$24,427,000, and I'm just interested to know to what

extent those dollars would be dollars which would be eligible for expenses under the revenue that was generated from increasing the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent.

* (18:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: The amount is funded out of general revenue, and as at yet we haven't been advised of any earmarking of any particular items. But that can obviously be done at any point.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if the minister could provide a breakdown. I gather the \$24,427,000 that \$15,839,000 is infrastructure assets and \$8,588,000 are general assets. And if, could the minister provide a further breakdown of the expenditures under those two categories?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, much of, maybe I can highlight some of the major items. A lot of this is related to parks capital, park investments. For example, I'll just go Birds Hill lake is 1.5; got the Brokenhead Wetland Interpretative Trail at 750; Spruce Woods, we've got 2.72 this year—that's the single biggest; we've got Upper Fort Garry at over 2.5; we've got West Hawk town site at 1.3; West Hawk waste-water lagoon at 450; and the West Hawk-Falcon Lake truck-haul lagoon, 200; William Lake water treatment plant, 350; Brereton Lake water treatment plant upgrade at 350; Blue Lake washroom building at 350; Asessippi road upgrade at 500—did I say Brereton Lake water treatment upgrade at 350—lagoon, Cyprus mine at 240; and just to finish, we've got the Grand Beach boardwalk redevelopment at 250—we announced that last week; Manipogo washroom building, 175; Paint Lake waste transfer station, 182; and the Paint Lake water treatment plant upgrade at 175. So, Rainbow Beach washroom building, 175, and their treatment plant at 350.

So those, I think, are the more notable ones on the list, so, I think, yes, two groupings there. Park infrastructure, but a real focus on waste-water upgrades. Hopefully, that answers the member's question.

Mr. Gerrard: Just a little clarification on the differentiation between what are called general assets versus infrastructure assets in terms of this capital.

Mr. Mackintosh: The general asset list appears to be characterized by enhancements to the department's own buildings—that seems to be a common feature. We have software in there as well, and licence management, but we also see machinery

equipment, mowers, tractors, graders, bulldozers, backhoes, boats, snowmobiles, trucks, ATVs, as well. So we have, you know, enhancements to initial a—fire attack base. We've got ventilation upgrades and, you know, office renovations and building.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. I just wonder if there are any expenditure allocations for infrastructure for drainage or for water retention, or would those fall under Infrastructure and Transportation?

* (18:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, those fall under MIT, but a caveat would be, of course, any efforts that may flow through the work of conservation districts and, you know, other organizations like that. That wouldn't be a government, a direct investment or—nor would it be a capital investment on the books of Conservation. But MIT, of course, would be responsible for major works and for provincial drainage and water control works.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, thank you. Are there any other sort of infrastructure expenditures besides those listed here in the capital investment section?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I gave a listing of some of the major capital investments, but there were many smaller items that I didn't list for the member, but the member should be aware, though, that there are multi-year commitments. In fact, in Parks, there's a hundred million dollars that's been invested that is committed to between now and 2020. So I didn't want to leave that off, and—but the list that I just read in part was just for this year. I think that—okay.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks for that clarification. And the next question relates to—there's a Clean Environment Commission report, I believe, on Bipole III, which is either new or been given or will be coming. Could the minister provide an update on where that is?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, it's our intention to release that publicly. I think that's—it usually happens that the report is released publicly and then licensing decisions would follow that, so that's the intention of the government.

Mr. Gerrard: And what would be the timeline for that release?

Mr. Mackintosh: Very, very soon.

Mr. Gerrard: The—I know the minister has been working on a peat mining strategy, and I would just like to ask for an update on where things are.

Mr. Mackintosh: So the Peatlands Stewardship Strategy, I think, is the first of its kind in Canada, so we're charting some new ground as a result. We've consulted very strongly on this one with stakeholders and have identified the issues and started to implement the strategy as we go, recognizing that we have to move towards a comprehensive document in the end, but it was not our intention to wait until that document was put together to take action. So, aside from the consultations that have taken place, the first action was The Save Lake Winnipeg Act and the moratorium on the peat leases.

In politics, as in other places, it's often not what you say but what is heard. Some people heard licences, as well, and, I think, to the general public, too, they might not appreciate the difference between a lease and a licence when it comes to peat mining. There were licences that were already in the works that were Environment Act licence applications that had already been made and were well along the way. So I came into office having to address, I think, the challenges around that.

We have since then extended the moratorium on leases, No. 1, until the strategy is completed, and No. 2, we have initiated and put into law a licence moratorium. In other words, you can't even apply for a licence. There's one in the hopper now. There's one that predates that, for an operation in the Interlake area, so there's one caveat that was ahead of our announcement on that one. And we've communicated that directly to the industry as well.

That really puts a pause on the developments, aside from the two licence applications that were—that are—for which a licence has been issued, Sun Gro and Berger. The other one is Sunterra. That's at an application stage, and then Aboriginal consultations have been launched on that, so that is important.

And at the same time, we made the decision to end peat mining in provincial parks. There were five leases. Fortunately, they were all in one park and five leases were held by one company, fortunately, so it was easier to manage than, say the work on the timber—forestry in parks, but it wasn't cheap. As easy as it is for people to say end peat mining in parks or end mining in parks, there are vested economic interests and there has to be due process and fair compensation, because those companies reflect those interests, leases and licences as part of their assets and there are economic opportunities that are at stake. So I've learned a lot on this and I realize how

challenging it can be to change the lease and licence environment when it comes to mining interests, but you have to act fairly and you have to act according to the law. So, we were able to make an arrangement with Sun Gro in that case and were able to end peat mining in Manitoba, and that's it—in parks—sorry.

So the next stage is to move to legislation for peat land stewardship and remove peat management from the mines—the mining—The Mines and Minerals Act and move it to legislation that would be under the auspices of Conservation and Water Stewardship and that would address peat mining and peat stewardship, in particular, in a unique way.

So that legislation, we are bound and determined to get that introduced in the next session and have a concluded strategy in that time frame—how am I doing?—so this has been a lot of work.

I also will say that there are some components of that that are very important, in addition to—by the way, I just want to take a step back—time is running out, but I may—there's two points I want to make: First of all, I knew when those licence applications came in for peat mining near Lake Winnipeg in the Interlake that the bottom line was there could be no negative impact on Lake Winnipeg. That would have to kill the project if that was going to result in terms of—you know, that there was going to be phosphorus loading at a time when the lake was at a tipping point. So we got ISD involved and we paid them to do not just a study of those two sites or those two licence applications, but a cumulative impact analysis for the Interlake. And it came back that all of those impacts can be wholly mitigated, and that was very interesting and that was a real lesson and I think that was counterintuitive to most people that were looking at this. And the science was peer-reviewed and it's not finished yet. I don't think the final report's finished, but we have the interim report, and that's been put out publicly.

The other thing I wanted to say is that peat land strategy, as well, in terms of any extraction opportunities— I think that benefit sharing with Aboriginal communities will be a component that maybe the member might not expect to have heard, but that—I think, it also should be a component in addition to those other components that the member, I'm sure, will be looking for.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, in the last few seconds here, the water management strategy, I think, the minister had mentioned this fall is it?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member was at a conference where we talked about the status of that, and that is moving along very well. I think that we'll be-going to be able to articulate that publicly this summer.

And it will be, I think, a very important turning point in how we can better promote the management of water on the land and look at how we deal with drainage licensing in Manitoba in a different way that recognizes the importance of agricultural production, increasing productivity is fact, but at the same time that the benefit to producers of holding water on the land and celebrate those that are doing it already and develop the science around it according to Dr. Lobb's research. We've invested a lot in the water systems research centre and we want to make sure that goes to work in a way that protects both the environment and agricultural productivity.

So it's a tough balance. I think we can achieve it, but the work is going to have to be ongoing. But I think we're near-

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order. As was previously agreed in the House, the hour being 7 p.m., committee rise.

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY

*(15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to some faint resemblance of order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

As previously agreed, questions for this department will proceed in a global manner. And the floor is now open for studious questions—all right, any questions.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I have no more questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister, there's no more questions. We will now proceed with the resolutions.

Resolution 44.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$638,108,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Support for Universities and Colleges, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$33,389,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Manitoba Student Aid, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,041,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Adult Learning and Literacy, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,571,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,537,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$100,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 44.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 44.1.

At this point we will thank the minister's staff here at the head table—class dismissed—and committee will consider this last item after their departure.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Briese: I have a motion.

Mr. Chairperson: Very well.

Mr. Briese: I move,

THAT line item 44.1.(a) the minister's salary 'beduced' to—be reduced to \$1.08.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved,

THAT line item 44.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order.

Anyone want to speak to the motion? Seeing no speakers, is the—

Mr. Briese: Yes, I just want to make a couple of short comments. I know the minister missed question period today, but some of the concerns about the— from the University of the North and so on.

But in the Estimates session last Friday morning, the minister did put a lot more things on the record, and because we are somewhat limited in the Estimates now, I will look forward to bringing some of those forward in concurrence.

And I do want to thank the staff for sitting in through these—what turned out to be a little bit lengthy Estimates hearings, and I appreciate all the work they do in support of all of us in this building.

So, with those few remarks, I'll leave it at that. Thanks.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further speakers or comments, committee ready for the question?

The question is: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear different responses.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please indicate by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In the Chair's opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I request a recorded vote.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess so that I may report this request in the Chamber and for members to proceed to the Chamber for the vote.

The committee recessed at 3:08 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:17 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to some semblance of order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the last item, resolution 44.1, of the Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

Are there any questions?

Seeing none, I will now put the question:

Resolution 44.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,016,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy. The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Education. Shall we briefly recess so that the appropriate ministers and critics can assemble? *[Agreed]*

All right. Brief five-minute recess and then we'll resume. Thank you all.

The committee recessed at 4:18 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:22 p.m.

EDUCATION

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume and we will begin the consideration for the Department of Education.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Yes, thank you very much.

Well, I am pleased, Mr. Chair, to have the opportunity to sit with my colleagues and the opposition in the Legislature to have a conversation about public education. Our government is committed to providing high-quality education to students across the province and supporting teachers

and parents as they help our students reach their full potential.

In 2013-14 our Manitoba government is once again fulfilling its commitment to fund public education at the rate of economic growth with a 2.3 per cent increase to public school funding for 2013-2014. This is the 14th consecutive year the Province has met or exceeded its commitment to fund public schools at the rate of economic growth and the funding has increased by \$440.5 million or 57.1 per cent. Over those 14 years funding to public schools has grown to \$1.211 billion.

This year's budget increase sees every school division receiving funding, the level of funding, we believe, which provides stability in the face of reassessment and also funding in regards to enrolment declines. The increase of funding to public schools is being made despite difficult economic times, and it reflects the co-operative work with school divisions ensuring restraint in order to ensure that expenditures are managed carefully and property taxes in support of education remain affordable. Of course, this is in stark contrast to what happened in the 1990s when the Conservative government cut funding to education for five consecutive years and resulted in the loss of 700 teachers in Manitoba.

A decade ago, Manitoba had among the highest residential property taxes in Canada, and this is no longer the case. According to Stats Canada, the average property taxes in Manitoba have increased by only 9.2 per cent since 2000, the smallest increase of all provinces and significantly lower than the national average. The education property tax has increased by \$450, from \$250 to \$700 since 1999. We have also increased the maximum seniors Education Property Tax Credit to \$1,100 in 2013 from \$1,025 in 2012. With Manitoba's existing property tax credits, 1 in 4 of Manitoba senior homeowners already pay no school tax. Our government eliminated the education support levy on residential property, a savings of more than \$145 million to homeowners every year. As a result of these measures, Manitobans save more than \$330 million annually in education property tax credits.

Highlights of this year's funding include new resources for antibullying programming and continuing support for stay-in-school initiatives, additional resources for numeracy to help students in early and middle years build strong foundations in math, additional resources for early childhood

literacy to help students get a strong start in reading, and increased support for northern students and students from remote communities.

Following on our commitment to provide parents with more accessible, understandable information on their child's academic progress and achievement, the provincial report card pilot and voluntary process was completed. During the 2012-13 school year, the provincial report card was voluntarily implemented in 485 schools in 35 school divisions. The response from teachers, parents, education leaders and our partners during the pilot and the voluntary implementation phase has been very positive, noting improved communication of student achievement and a closer examination of current assessment practices.

The provincial report card also ensures that parents, no matter where they live in Manitoba, receive clear and consistent information on both academic achievement and learning behaviors and include meaningful comments that assist parents in their role as education partners.

Manitoba's a diverse and growing province, and we were very pleased that we recently introduced new brochures in 16 languages to help parents get acquainted with new report cards.

Our government recognizes the important connection between quality early years' learning experiences and long-term school success. In 2011, October, we announced that we would provide new supports to enable school divisions in Manitoba to cap kindergarten classes at 20 students.

We committed \$3 million in class-size funding in 2012-13, we provided that to all school divisions in Manitoba on a per-eligible-student basis. And this additional funding has supported the hiring of 83 teachers and has enhanced professional learning experiences for early years' teachers.

A \$4-million increase in operating funding for 2013-2014 will bring the total funding for this initiatives to \$7 million, to ensure that school divisions are provided with the targeted support that they will need to meet class-size guidelines, including the anticipated hiring of an additional 69 teachers across the province. As all of us know in this room, smaller class sizes will provide our students with more one-on-one time with their teachers, helping them get a strong start in school and in life.

We were also investing \$15.2 million in phase I of our infrastructure investment to ensure that additional classroom spaces are available to support smaller classes. Under phase I, we will create 28 new classrooms across the province in 2013-2014. The capital projects chosen under phase I are based on careful consideration of the needs identified by school divisions and site visits by Manitoba Education staff.

The Province of Manitoba continues to build new schools, as well as to support our major new additions and renovations to existing schools.

Construction is under way on a new early-learning-to-grade-8 school at Amber Trails, two new high schools in Steinbach, two new schools in Winkler, a new automotive shop in Morris and a heavy-duty mechanic shop in Swan River. Design is progressing on eight classroom additions and a 74-seat centre at Bonnycastle School; a seven-classroom addition, multi-purpose room, grooming room, resource room and child-care centre at École Taché and a new DSFM school in Thompson.

Recently, two new schools were announced, one in South Pointe in Waverly West and one in Sage Creek that will accommodate over 1,000 students in Winnipeg.

Our commitment to health promotion and excellence in science education is reflected in our capital commitment under the Active Schools Fund, a five-year, \$50-million investment to ensure that quality gymnasium facilities are available to support healthy and active living—as well as a science classroom renewal fund, a five-year, \$25-million commitment to improve teaching and learning facilities in the sciences.

To date, 14 new gymnasium projects and the renewal of 45 science labs are under way. The planning and design phases are set to begin on a further 15 to 20 science labs.

We are also taking important steps to link early learning and child-care facilities to our public school building facilities by making room for child-care spaces in both existing and new schools with the support and co-operation of school divisions and local communities. Of particular note is the inclusion of daycare facilities as part of the design and planning of the additions at École Bonnycastle and École Taché.

*(16:30)

Our commitment to early childhood education and learning is also reflected in the development of the early childhood education unit, established in 2011 to increase the connection between early childhood education and the formal K-to-12 education system.

The unit continues to assist school divisions in using EDI data, to inform program planning, as well as to develop support documents that ensure that the latest research on effective practices guides kindergarten programming.

Our government is committed to providing safe and caring learning environments. Since 2004, when we introduced the Safe Schools Charter and code of conduct, our government has been a leader in taking action to protect students from bullying and cyberbullying.

All students have the right to learn in safe and caring school environments, free from bullying and respectful of human diversity. In response to the tragic suicide of Amanda Todd in British Columbia last fall, our government introduced an antibullying action plan, including legislation and new supports for students, parents and teachers to prevent bullying.

As part of this plan, I introduced Bill 18, the safe and inclusive schools act. Bill 18 strengthens the definitions around bullying and cyberbullying and ensures that schools and school divisions are able to take proactive and effective action to prevent and address bullying in policy and in practice. It requires incidences of cyberbullying to be reported to the principal and to parents when they are brought to the attention of teachers, school, staff or volunteers who are in charge of students.

We look forward to having this legislation go to committee so that we can hear the presenters. I understand we have almost 300 presenters, and we look forward to that bill going to committee so we can hear the voices of the many people that would like to speak to Bill 18. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those opening remarks. Does the official opposition critic have an opening—any opening comments?

An Honourable Member: Just very briefly, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable member.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Just very briefly, Mr. Chairperson, I want to thank the staff from the

department for being here. I know this is unusual that our Estimates are held as late as they are in the session. I don't know if we've normally had Estimates in July. I don't remember the last time we've had Estimates in July. It certainly wasn't anticipated. I didn't anticipate it. Had I anticipated it, I would have scheduled this for the Chamber, not for the committee room, where it's air-conditioned. But that's proof that I didn't know that it was going to be this long into the session.

So I want to thank each of you who might have had to rearrange some plans or holiday plans. That's sort of the unfortunate part of the job sometimes, but we do appreciate the sacrifices you may have had to make as a result of this extended process that we do think is still important in terms of what's happening in the Legislature.

Also, of course, want to note the great work that our educators and administrators are doing in the education system, some of which I've seen first-hand through the education of my own son in the public school system, and very appreciative of the interaction and the experience that he's had in that process.

I acknowledge the minister's comments about the seriousness of bullying. I think that's true, and it's one of the reasons we brought forward today, and proud to have done so, Bill 214, and I'm hopeful that the NDP won't be stalling that legislation. It's modelled after legislation—ironically, the minister mentions some of the very serious cases that have happened in Canada and the United States—and in response to those serious cases this was the kind of legislation those jurisdictions brought in.

So, if the minister, I'm sure, is serious, as she says she is, and I'm sure she is about reducing bullying, then I know she'll be wanting to go to her colleagues and quickly ask them to pass Bill 214, that we'll get it to committee and we'll hear presenters. I'm sure she won't want to, for partisan reasons, hold that up and put kids at risk. I know that that's not something that she'd want to do. So I look forward to her actions in seeing that that bill move quickly, because I know people would be quite upset if she was putting the safety of kids at risk by doing anything other than that, and I'm sure she won't do that. So, look forward to that bill going to committee very quickly and then the minister's words will be proven through her actions.

So we know when we expect that, because we're so late in the Estimates process—I believe there's only

15 or 16 hours left at this stage of the game—that we won't be able to ask all the questions that we want during the Estimates process, so we will have to hold some of them to concurrence, and I appreciate the minister and other ministers are always—make themselves available for the concurrence process, and that is appreciated. And we'll give the duly noted notice that needs to be required, so that minister and others can make themselves available during concurrence. And it's unfortunate that we won't have the time entirely that we need in the Estimates process, but I'm glad that there is another part of this legislative process that allows us to continue to ask questions at a different time.

So, Mr. Chairperson, with those brief comments, I think we're ready to proceed to the questions.

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

You've all heard this before, but I get to repeat it, because that's the rules.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 16.1.(a), contained in resolution 16.1.

At this time we now invite the minister's staff to come join us at the head table, and perhaps once they're settled, Honourable Minister, if you'd be kind enough to introduce them to the members of the committee.

Ms. Allan: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated staff from the Department of Education that are with us here tonight; the staff I've had the privilege of working with for almost the last four years.

I'd like to welcome David Yeo, who is the Education Administration Services director. To his left is Claude Fortier; Claude is the Financial and Administrated Services executive financial officer. I would like to welcome John Weselake, who is our acting executive director of the Public Schools Finance Board.

I'd like to welcome, as well, Lynne Mavins, who is the director of our Schools' Finance Branch. And I would like to—sitting, as well, with us this evening from our School Programs Division will be our assistant deputy minister, Aileen Najduch. And from our Bureau de l'éducation française Division, Assistant Deputy Minister Jean-Vianney Auclair.

I thank them very much for being with us this afternoon and into the evening, and we look forward to have—answering your questions. And, of course, also look forward to the opportunity in concurrence, if you're unable to get through any questions that you aren't able to get to over the—whenever the time is left in Estimates, I know the time is short, we would be more than happy to provide you with any information that you want in regards to our Department of Education.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister.

One last item for the committee to sort out before we proceed with questions and that is how to do so. Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of the Department of Education chronologically or to have a global discussion?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd request a global discussion with the assurance I'll try to be as linear in my thoughts as possible, although I do tend to drift sometimes.

Mr. Chairperson: A global discussion has been suggested. Honourable Minister, is that acceptable?

Ms. Allan: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, very good. Discussion for Estimates in this Department of Education will proceed in a global manner. And wouldn't you know it, the floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Goertzen: I know the minister—and I appreciate her introducing her staff and giving her assurance about the concurrence portion—that's appreciated. Some of this will be an overlap then, but we do go through some perfunctory things we normally do at the beginning of Estimates. If she could identify all the deputy ministers, assistant and associate deputy ministers and directors and including those who might in an acting position within her department.

Ms. Allan: Well, I have one deputy minister and that is Dr. Gerald Farthing. I have two assistant deputy ministers who I've introduced, Aileen Najdich and Jean-Vianney Auclair. I have, as well, an associate deputy minister who actually works for both departments, Dr. Rory Henry. And that was what you wanted, right? Not directors, just ADMs and deputies? *[interjection]* Oh, and directors—oh, back to the chart. Actually, on chart 1 in the Estimates book—so the public schools finance—sorry, the—hang on a second. I did introduce the acting executive director of the PSFB, John Weselake, and Lynne Mavins, who is the director of the Schools' Finance

branch. I did introduce David Yeo, who's the director of the Education Administration Services branch.

* (16:40)

The directors in the School Programs Division that work for the assistant deputy minister of School Programs is the director of Program and Student Services—the director is Joanna Blais, and the director of Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment is Darryl Gervais.

The director of the française division is—of Curriculum Development and Implementation is Gilbert Michaud, and the director of the education support services is Florence Girouard.

The director of Library and Materials Production is Lynette Chartier, and the director of the official languages programs and administration services is Kassy Assié.

And then, of course, we have an Aboriginal Education Directorate, which does a lot of terrific work in Aboriginal education, and that director is Helen Robinson-Settee.

I have introduced our executive financial officer, Claude Fortier, and the Innovative Technology Services director is Calvin Hawley.

I think I got them all.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the minister for putting that into the record. I know, it's been my experience in the past that the Estimates books and their listings are sometimes just a bit out of date, not in this department—I've not had the experience in this department—and not for any particularly nefarious reasons. It's just I think sometimes happens with the time lags. So I appreciate that confirmation about what's in the Estimates books.

Can the minister indicate—again, typically what we usually do is she'll list staff in her office, special assistants, political staff and any administrative staff that exist in her office and the deputy's office.

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, I appreciate the comments in regards to the organizational chart because we actually realized last year that we were in Estimates, that we had the wrong organizational chart, and got into Estimates and realized that we had made a mistake, and I was horrified. So we were able to resolve that through the Estimates process.

The staff that are in the minister's office: Pearl Domienik is the administrative secretary; Debbie

Milani is the administrative secretary; and Melissa Bodman is administrative secretary. And those three individuals work for me in the minister's office. The deputy minister's office: Rachelle Fiola, she's the executive assistant to the deputy minister; and Nadine Lambert, she is the administrative secretary to the deputy minister.

Political staff that work in my office: Carol Wenaus is the executive assistant to the minister, and Andrew Clark is the special assistant to the minister.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you for the response, Madam Minister. Can you also provide the number of staff that are employed by the Department of Education?

Ms. Allan: Three hundred and—403.77 FTEs.

Mr. Goertzen: And the current vacancy rate of positions within the department?

Ms. Allan: The current vacancy rate is 8.97 per cent as of May 17th, 2013, and the vacancy rate as of May 18th, 2012, was 9.31 per cent.

Mr. Goertzen: I don't imagine the minister will have this at her disposal, she might. She might surprise me. If she doesn't, they could sort of provide it later, but provide a list of staff hired through competition or appointment in the last year, delineating which—how it is that those individuals obtained their jobs, either through appointment or competition, and a list of all the vacant positions.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

Ms. Allan: Oh, sorry. It's been a while.

The list of regular positions that have been filled from April 1st, 2012, to March 31st, 2013, I have competitions. They're open competitions, there were 21. Closed competitions, there were zero and internal competitions, there were two. So there were total competitions 23. Direct appointments acting status, 17; acting status to regular, three; lateral transfer, four; term to regular, three; temporary appointments, zero; promotion in position, three; order-in-council, one; for a total of 31.

Mr. Goertzen: I commend the staff for being prepared with that list. Could she provide in greater detail the specifics of what those positions are and the individuals who have filled those positions not necessarily on the record right now but at a future point?

Ms. Allan: Yes, we would be prepared to provide the MLA with that information.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, Minister and staff, for that undertaking.

Moving on to other questions not related to specifically staff related questions. Does the minister have any indication how many temporary huts or temporary classrooms are currently being used in the different divisions across the province?

Ms. Allan: Well, I would like to first of all chat a little bit about the MLA for Steinbach's language about what he's calling these temporary classrooms. We don't call them huts. We actually refer to them as modular classrooms. We have done, I believe, an excellent job over the years of designing these modular classrooms. In fact, we not only have modular classrooms; we have what are called HQKs, high quality relocatables. And I have been in many of them throughout the province of Manitoba, even some in my hometown of McGregor several times actually, and actually teachers really like them. They prefer to teach in them and they can particularly serve a purpose for communities like the MLA's from Steinbach where we have a situation where we have a growing community because of immigration and, of course, you know, build it and they will come. That's sometimes the model here in regards to the classrooms.

At the present time here in the province of Manitoba we have 361 modular classrooms that are currently in use in Manitoba schools, and these modular classrooms are built incorporating the most current heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems that are energy efficient and they actually do provide healthier teaching environments in regards to some of the huts that they used to have in the—in recent memory. So we do—we have done a better job, I believe, in designing those classrooms, and so those—that is the number that we have in the province of Manitoba at this point.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the number, regardless of how they're called, and I know sometimes it's a function of—we get used to a common vernacular because those in the profession sometimes call them huts and whether that's descriptive of what they are or not that's often what they're called. It's like trying to convince people to not call it a Kleenex but call it a tissue, and I mean it is sometimes things just become sort of common within the language.

The number of modular classrooms or huts, whatever you want to describe them as, what impact does that have on school divisions and their

emergency plans that they make in terms of going through lockdowns and that? Is having buildings that are either detached or semi-detached from the main building does that have an impact on the emergency plans that they're required to have?

* (16:50)

Ms. Allan: All school divisions in the province have protocols in place in regards to situations where they have to communicate with their students, and modular classrooms are part of the infrastructure of the school. And they all have the ability to communicate with those—with the people that are within those modular classrooms to ensure that if there is an incident that is of concern to the principal and to the staff and students, they are able to communicate and make sure that they're not putting their students at risk when they are in those classrooms. So, they take all of the physical space into consideration when they're putting those kinds of plans in place.

Mr. Goertzen: So, not to put words into the minister's mouth but then she's essentially saying that she doesn't believe that having emergency or having modular or temporary huts as part of the school that it doesn't negatively impact the emergency plans of a school.

Ms. Allan: Well, it's my understanding that in my four years as minister, no one has ever said to me that they have any concerns in regards to their modular classrooms. In fact, when they're dealing with situations in their schools, when they need more classroom space and we provide that to them, they are thrilled and they are thankful for that. I have had meetings with trustees across this province who come to me and say, thank you so much; you know, this is a good thing.

We are making record investments in our public schools. We're making regular investments in capital infrastructure in our schools, and I have full confidence in our administrators in regards to their emergency plans that they are able to deal with the physical spaces that they have. We rely on the professionals in our system to ensure that our students stay safe.

And, in fact, I was able to experience that—personally actually in, I believe it was April, when I was in a school and the fire alarm went off in the middle of my press conference. And, of course, it wasn't—*[interjection]* Yes. Actually, it wasn't April because it was earlier than that because it was

freezing cold outside, and it was the very first time ever I have not taken my coat with me into the room where I was doing the press conference because they were so excited I was there, they wanted to take my coat and hang it up. They wanted to be polite and I thought, oh, should I really tell them that I don't want them to take my coat and hang it up. But they were just so excited, so I let them take my coat. And the fire alarm went off and I went, oh, but I want to go get my coat, and they said, no, no, no. Everybody out of the building right now. And I went, really? And so we stood outside the school and froze to death for 20 minutes while—and I was going, I am never going to forget to take my coat with me again. When I'm in a situation like this, the coat always goes with me. So, I think they did a great job in that situation.

Mr. Goertzen: And it's always good advice. And my mother always says this. My mother still tells me to take my coat wherever I go, so it's good to have that advice and it's good advice for the minister as well.

The schools, currently—is there any criteria in terms of which doors remain locked or don't remain locked? I know there has been debate in the past about whether or not there should be a central point of entry. Some have even suggested all doors be locked. I wouldn't suggest that. And I know that there's never a way to prevent any kinds of incidences that are negative from happening, but is there any specific protocol that's in place in terms of which doors are accessible to the public and which ones aren't?

Ms. Allan: Every school division is—they have a safe schools advisory committee and they work with the principal in regards to the safety of their school. And they will work with their principal in regards to the assessment of risk and in regards to keeping their young people safe. Of course, every school division in regards to what doors are locked, what doors are open is quite different from school to school, particularly depends on the age group of the students in that school.

There has to be a balance in regards to elementary schools and high schools in regards to access. Some of the issues that they take into concern when they're talking about safety for elementary students is they want to make sure that the young people are able to leave the school for recess, but, of course, you don't want those doors locked when you want to get them back into the school. Another situation in high schools that they have to take into consideration is the number of spares that young

people will have and how they will be moving throughout that school. I know that I've been in lots of schools where some doors will be locked and some doors will be open and it varies from school to school.

Our school divisions have been working with the RCMP. They have an excellent resource document that they have provided to school divisions and they will work with school divisions to provide advice and expertise to school divisions in regards to risk assessment and, you know, how to manage moving students through hallways and what is in the best interests in regards to making sure that students can move through those hallways during different points of the day, and if there is an emergency or if there is a situation where that school has to be secured because of an unfortunate incident, then they can deal with that. So we're very thankful to the RCMP who are working with our school divisions in regards to those situations, and, certainly, we certainly hope that nothing ever happens like we've seen in some other jurisdictions that are very troubling.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, and I would echo, certainly, the last portion of the minister's comments. All of us as parents and those who care about safety in our schools, and I think that's all Manitobans, would be concerned if there was any sort of incidences that we've seen in other jurisdictions.

How many lockdowns were reported by schools in the last school year, in the 2012-2013 school year?

* (17:00)

Ms. Allan: We actually don't have that information available to us because school divisions have not been reporting that to us. So we are actually at—over the last few months, we have been working in our department to draft a regulation that we will be requiring school divisions to report to us twice annually in regards to lockdowns that they are having. It would be a similar exercise, actually, in practising lockdowns, similar to the training that they do around fire drills. We have been doing—we have been in consultation with the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service, and we believe that that kind of—putting that kind of policy in place and putting those kinds of practices in place would be in the best interest of young people and also in the best interest of teachers and parents and communities. So we are actually looking at that right now.

Mr. Goertzen: If the minister can sort of walk me through the complexities of it. To me—and talking to

somebody who obviously doesn't have all the experiences as the minister, why is it difficult to have—put in place a regulation? And why would it take months to put in place a regulation requiring schools to report that, whether it's semi-annually or whatever the minister's describing? Is that not something that could happen much quicker than that?

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, a reg. doesn't take months.

Mr. Goertzen: So why is it taking so long to get this particular regulation in place to have schools report lockdowns?

Ms. Allan: I want to clarify, and my apologies. I said that they would be reporting to us twice a year; I didn't mean that. I meant that they would be practising and doing training and—similar to fire drills twice a year, in regards to ensuring that they would have appropriate lockdown policies and practices in place.

And one of the reasons why we haven't put the regulation in place quite yet is because officials in my department have been in consultation with the RCMP and with the Winnipeg Police Service to ensure that when we do put the regulation in place that it is the appropriate mechanism and the appropriate regulation to ensure that the lockdowns that we will be implementing with school divisions will be done appropriately.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate that clarification. So then just for greater clarity, is it my understanding that there is no requirement for school divisions to report lockdown to the minister and there is no plan to have that regulation?

Ms. Allan: Well, at the present time, we have not had discussions about—asking school divisions to provide the numbers of lockdowns to us.

Mr. Goertzen: I guess I find it curious, and maybe there's an explanation that I've just been missing and the minister can provide that for me.

That—there's lots of discussion and she discussed and I believe her when she says, you know, safety and security is very important, and I have no reason to doubt her when she says that. It just seems to me that that would be something that would be quite important for the minister to hear about, lockdowns that are happening in school. In fact, I would suggest, in my mind, that they should be reported, you know, almost—not immediately but very soon

after they happen, with an explanation in terms of why they happened.

I can't imagine that there are hundreds a year. I guess we really don't know exactly the number that are happened.

But wouldn't the minister want to have that kind of information because she might, whether it's seeing a trend or seeing some sort of a pattern in terms of things that are happening, she could quickly address that?

Ms. Allan: I'm informed by officials in my department that most of the lockdown reports actually occur because of what is happening, because of the investigation of the RCMP, and they are involved in investigating and they are—it's not what's happening within the school; it's quite often what is happening surrounding the school or outside of the school. So it's important for us to work with the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service in regards to what is happening around those schools and, of course, as well, what affects the school internally. We—if we continue to work and have this regulation in place it'll strengthen what is happening within our school to ensure that our students are safe.

Mr. Goertzen: Sure, and I'm not surprised that that's probably the most likely reason for a lockdown, that doesn't surprise me, at all. But now I'm a little confused because it seems like you have some information about sort of the number and the causes of lockdowns and yet they're not really reported to the minister's office. So just maybe clarify for me, what information do you have in terms of lockdowns? Do you have any information in terms of historically how often they happen and the reasons that they happen? Do you have any of that collected?

Ms. Allan: School divisions report information to our department in regards to lockdowns. Quite often, it's not required. It is done, it's done not on a daily basis and it is done sometimes, for instance, when a—the police are raiding a home in the neighbourhood. If they're raiding a home in the neighbourhood and they feel that it would be in the best interests of the young people in the school to have that school locked down, to ensure that they are safe while that raid on that home is being completed, they will get in touch with the school and they will ask the principal to lock the school down. Quite often, as well, there are situations where school divisions will inform us and it's called an incident report in regards to situations that are happening in a school. They will inform our officials in my department.

As we look at this, as we do further work in regards to the work that we are doing with the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police and, of course, our other consultations are with the Manitoba School Boards Association. They have a risk assessment individual, Keith Thomas, who's been with the Manitoba School Boards Association for many, many years, and also Safe Schools Manitoba. You know, as we continue to look at this particular issue, it is, you know, something that we may look at as we develop the reg and we implement it. We're still in a consultation—we're still consulting. And, of course, at the end of the day we want to ensure that, you know, these kinds of situations ensure that we keep our young people safe.

Mr. Goertzen: So just to—for greater clarity, just to put a bow on this, the—it's essentially the honour system. If the school divisions want to report that there's been a lockdown and why it's happened, they can, but they're not required to. Is that correct?

Ms. Melanie Wight, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Allan: That is correct.

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Honourable member from Steinbach. Sorry. No, sorry, sir. Sorry.

An Honourable Member: Not yet.

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): For Lac du Bonnet. Sorry.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Madam Chair. And just to sort of go along with the critic's line of questioning, Madam Minister, but is there a record or do you collect the data in regards to the amount of evacuations that schools have?

* (17:10)

Ms. Allan: Are you talking about evacuations for fire drills? Are you talking about evacuations for—what are you talking about?

Mr. Ewasko: Just for clarification, when we talk about evacuations, there's definitely a number of evacuations in regards to fire drills that schools are expected to have, and I believe that's brought down from the school boards. But, in general, when we're talking evacuations, any time that a school has to be evacuated, whether that's fire drill, a bomb threat, you know, anything, does the department track those evacuations?

Ms. Allan: Well, we have—schools are required to do fire drills—10 a year. So, you know, we rely on the

professionals in our public education system to do those fire drills. You know, it's not really—we rely on the professionals to do their jobs and we're quite comfortable that they can organize 10 fire drills a year. Of course, what I believe is more pertinent to us as a department and to me as minister is to ensure that if significant events are happening in a school where, you know, our young people could be at risk, that we would be informed of that. And we are very confident in the professionals in our system, that they are getting in touch with us in regards to situations that have occurred within our system and within our schools on letting us know what is happening in regards to any kinds of evacuations because of any particular incident. And, of course, you know, that is for sure—there has to be a balance between what happens in regards to the fire drill and what happens in regards to a significant event. There needs to be a balance in regards to that.

Mr. Ewasko: And just for clarification, I was not questioning the professionalism of our administration or principals, senior administration of any school divisions. I was just strictly asking if the department tracks the amount of evacuations, whether that being, you know, mandated fire drills, which I am assuming that a lot of the administrators are carrying out those functions, but it's just whether the department does have some sort of record of the other evacuations. So if the school—you know, department has—say, school X has 12 evacuations, then—you know, then possibly there were two other evacuations besides the fire drills. So I was just asking if you keep track of those types of things.

Ms. Allan: If a school has a situation where they have to close the school for half a day or part of a day or a whole day because of an incidental situation—a chemical spill in a lab, a fire in a room or a flood, you know, those kinds of situations—the Schools' Finance Branch—they would be—they would know about that because they are required to inform the Schools' Finance Branch about that because there has been a closure of a school. Any kind of suspension of operations, we would know about that.

In regards to the bigger issue—in regards to if there was a bomb threat—certainly hope that doesn't happen often—but certainly, if there was any kind of situation like that—bomb threat, knives, guns, those kinds of situations—our superintendents—we hear about that very quickly.

Mr. Ewasko: Now, I just want to be clear that I'm not necessarily—I know I used the bomb threat

analogy as a possible—as a circumstance when a school is evacuated, but you also touched base on, you know, of course, if there's a flood or, you know, a pipe's burst or a gas leak or something like that where you have to evacuate the school to a nearby community centre or a gym or whatever, that doesn't necessarily impact the finance branch because technically everybody would continue to get paid for that day because they'd still have to supervise the kids.

So I'm basically just asking again: There should be some sort of tracking whenever schools have to evacuate for whatever reason it is—whether it costs money or saves money due to people not being at school. In regards to, say, a snow day, which somebody's very well aware, say, at 4 in the morning or something, and they don't send in the troops to the schools, there's absolute, you know, a set of money that's saved there, and I'm sure the finance branch is alerted on those dates. But I'm basically asking if, for evacuation purposes or anything else, that that's tracked. Thank you.

Ms. Allan: Well, as we continue to work with our education partners in regards to this whole issue of lockdowns and keeping our young people safe, and as we continue to work in regards to policies around evacuations and develop our rank in consultation with the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service—of course, we're continuing to have this discussion with the Manitoba School Boards Association—we may move to that. We—I'm not saying that we're not going to do it.

I think, you know, it's—you know, it's something that, you know, that in—like now, you know, it's, as you said earlier—someone said earlier, it is on the honour system. You know, we're pretty lucky here in Manitoba. We're pretty small and people work with one another and know one another quite closely and pick up the phone a lot. But, as we move forward with this regulation and we continue this discussion and this dialogue with our stakeholders and our law enforcement—our officers—we may well go to that and work on some kind of reporting system so that we can ensure that we, you know—we can make a determination about what kinds of incidences are happening in our schools and in our surrounding communities. And it'll give us some kind of data in regards to whether or not we're seeing situations increase.

And certainly, though, what's most important to us is, if we have a situation that is a significant event,

superintendents know full well that they need to inform us and we know that they do. We certainly have absolutely no information in our office where we have heard of a situation where there was a significant event and we weren't made aware of it, you know, almost immediately. We have that confidence, you know, in our schools.

*(17:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I guess it just seems strange to me that it seems like a bit of a passive approach that there wouldn't be any specific requirements. Realistically, the minister probably learns about and the department might learn about closures on the CTV News or lockdowns on the CTV News as early as anything else because there's really no requirement and—for those things to happen.

And I just—it just seems extraordinarily out of step with what the minister was saying about great interest in the safety within schools, and yet there seems to be a decidedly lack of interest on things that are—you'd think would be telling signs about what was happening in the schools. But it is what it is right now, and so it—there's—I'm sure the minister will take the comments into consideration and do what she will with them.

The other question sort of around this issue might relate to the police in schools, or the resource officers, I think, they're called in schools. And I don't know that this comes right out of the minister's appropriation, but I know she'd have an interest in this because it's happening within the schools. The last I'd heard there was a possibility of the funding on that program not being extended beyond June of next year. Does the minister have any indication of the future of that program with the resource or the police in schools?

Ms. Allan: Actually, that's the School Resource Officer Program and that—the responsibility for that program is the Minister responsible for Children and Youth Opportunities.

Of course, I have an interest in it because we all know the benefit that school resource officers have in schools. We know how important for some schools where they have had the opportunity to have a school resource officer in their school, we know of the benefit of having that individual in the system. It's an opportunity for young people to see police in a positive light and the work that they do with the young people in the school can really be meaningful.

So I know it kind of—I know that that responsibility was moved to the Children and Youth Opportunities office and I have had conversations with Minister Chief in regards to the school resource officers because, you know, it seems kind of odd that it is in another department. So I try to keep in touch with him in regards to the program.

Mr. Goertzen: And I'll go out on a limb by assuming that the Minister of Education, in her discussions she's advocating for the continuation, maybe the expansion of that program for all the reasons and probably many more that she cited.

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Honourable Minister.

Ms. Allan: I was waiting for you to say my name.

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Wave your hand there.

Ms. Allan: Yes, absolutely. I've also had a conversation with Paula Havixbeck who is a city councillor, because, of course, school resource officers are funded. It's a tripartite agreement: it's the Manitoba government; it's the City of Winnipeg; and it is the school division. So it is—those school resource officers are funded one third, one third, one third. And so it is a unique arrangement in a unique situation, and I think that we need to continue to advocate. It would be wonderful to see more in schools. It's something—it is a program we know where we're seeing more demand for. And I think the reason, obviously, that we are seeing more demand for the school resource officers is because of the benefit that schools feel they bring to the culture and the safety of their schools and it creates some really great things in schools.

So, you know, I certainly not only am supportive, but have also had conversations with other levels of government in regards to, you know, how to see more school resource officers in schools and how we can make that happen.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, and I appreciate that, and I'm not surprised that there are more schools asking for these resource officers. Does the minister feel at all that that in of itself might be an indication that some of the schools are feeling that their schools are less safe or that they need that additional support to provide the kind of safety—and I understand that resource officers do other things and the outreach and the bridging with students. But is—can it be an indication that some of the schools are feeling that their school environment isn't as safe?

Ms. Allan: Well, I think it—I think what it really speaks to is the fact that there is such a benefit and builds so much capacity in the schools in regards to having someone of stature in their school. I know that it was a very exciting day when Sheldon Kennedy was in town, and Sheldon and I had the opportunity to visit a school with a school resource officer in it. And, you know, young people in our system look up to people that, like police officers, that work in our schools, and it can be very exciting for them. I think that any time we can do this kind of programming in schools—we do lots of other kinds of programming in schools that build safe and healthy cultures in our schools. Any time we can do this kind of programming, we should ensure that we can continue to build capacity in our schools to continue to make them safer places.

Mr. Goertzen: Are there any statistics that the minister has or requires from divisions in terms of how often illegal drugs are found within the schools?

Ms. Allan: Our Safe Schools Charter and our codes of conduct deal with the issue of illegal drugs in schools and school divisions. Every school determines what the breach of the school rules are. This would involve—it would involve the breach of school rules, and so school divisions deal with those situations on a case-by-case basis in regards to what the rules are in the school.

Of course, illegal drugs are absolutely without question unacceptable in our schools, as they should be, and they would involve the police in that kind of a situation. Do we ask for incident reports on every one of those situations that incurs in our school? No, we don't. We rely on our schools to follow the Safe Schools Charter in regards to the codes of conduct and to deal with those situations in our schools.

Mr. Goertzen: So the department has no data at all in terms of how many instances there might have been in the individual schools in a given school year in terms of illegal drugs? There's no quantifiable data that exists within the department?

Ms. Allan: That is correct.

Mr. Goertzen: Is that something that the minister might find useful, just in terms of trends, and, I mean, obviously, not on a case-by-case basis, you know, you wouldn't be examining those individually, but collectively, just to see if there's a growing trend. And, you know, I think all of us in the Legislature at one point expressed concern about crystal meth and the possibility that that could become a significant

issue in the province, and I think there was actually some good bipartisan work done among legislators on that, and part of that was, I think, we got ahead of the curve on that issue. And it just seems to me that having that data about the drugs in school, that it (a) wouldn't be very hard to gather, and (b) could be quite helpful.

* (17:30)

Ms. Allan: Well, we do have a working relationship with our superintendents, and I believe that if we—and I meet with the superintendents two or three times a year. I have meetings with school superintendents, the executives of the school superintendent. They have a pretty well-thought-out and pretty structured organization, and if—and they come to me in regards to—lots of times, in regards to issues that they are dealing with in their school systems.

I also meet with the Manitoba School Boards Association several times a year in regards to issues that they are seeing in schools. And I believe that if that—they have never raised this particular issue with me, in regards to this particular issue—and, obviously, that is something, you know, that if it was raised with me and we thought that that kind of data gathering expertise or that kind of data gathering would be helpful to us, we would—you know, that is obviously something that we would definitely look into. And that is something else, as we have this conversation about safety in schools with our partners, we could look into.

The other thing that we're very excited about in the department and in our schools is the Tell Them From Me survey that we are going to be doing twice a year in almost every one of our schools in the province of Manitoba. The tell them me from—the Tell Them From Me survey is a confidential survey that we will be able to—that will happen in schools from ages—grades 7 to 12. And young people will have an opportunity to provide confidential information to us in regards to some of the situations, the climate of their school, what they're hearing in regards to any kinds of safety concerns, bullying, cyberbullying, any issues that they believe are important to them in regards to them feeling safe as young people.

And it was interesting when we did the announcement at the St. James school in Ron Weston school division, the—two of the people that came to speak about the importance of the Tell Them From Me survey were incredibly passionate about how

important this survey can be, because, you know, young people are really interesting, on the ground, talking to one another all the time, and they really are—it's really important, you know, that we hear their voices in schools because they really know what is happening in their schools in regards to their safety and their security.

And we're going to be doing those Tell Them From Me surveys in our schools twice a year and getting that data back in our—*[interjection]*—yes—in our—from our schools, we're going to be getting that data back, and that is part of another very important part of our initiative in regards to finding out what's happening in our schools in regards to young people's safety and security.

Mr. Goertzen: And may I suppose there's a difference between that survey where kids are asked to self-identify and, sort of, specific instances that are measureable in terms of drugs in school? But I won't go on it for long; I'll maybe come back to it.

The Tell Them From Me survey that the minister referenced, is every portion of that survey mandatory or is it—are kids able to opt out of all of—or portions of that survey, or all of it, I suppose? And are school divisions mandated to use the survey?

Ms. Allan: School divisions have opted in to use the survey, and we have some—and we're just asking Aileen Najdich, who manages this program in our schools—some school divisions have chosen and they can make that decision on their own if they would like to add additional questions so that it's not a cookie-cutter approach. So that if—you know, if you have some school divisions that, you know, are sensing that something might be happening or they would like to get further data on something, they can add to that at. It's up to them to make those decisions at the local level in regards to what questions they would like to ask, but, no, the actual original survey, like the standard survey, if that's the proper terminology, is mandatory. And we have asked school divisions to do it with us, and the uptake—we're not telling school divisions they have to do it because quite often we find that if you don't make it mandatory, it ends up being mandatory and you get better uptakes.

So we're very, very pleased in regards to the uptake in regards to the number of schools that are going to be doing it. We have 96 per cent of our schools that will be involved in the Tell Them From Me survey and so we're very thrilled about that.

Mr. Goertzen: So what were the objections maybe anecdotally, in terms of those who didn't, the schools who didn't participate. What would their objections have been to participating?

Ms. Allan: Some schools, you know, they may feel just at this point that they aren't ready to come on board. They may be dealing with certain issues in their school and they're not quite ready and they want to wait. You know, 96 per cent is certainly an uptake that we're pleased with, but if they feel that they have a lot happening and they don't want to do it at this time, there will be another opportunity for them to come on board. It's similar to, you know, our report cards.

We did a—you know, as we developed our new province-wide, plain-language report card here in the province of Manitoba, we asked school divisions to come on board with it, and we decided that what we would do is because it was a new province-wide initiative, that what we would do is we would do it on a pilot for the first year to give school divisions an opportunity, you know, to participate and of course we were thrilled that I believe it was 34 school divisions out of 37, if my memory serves me correctly. So sometimes in the first year of doing something, you don't make it completely and totally mandatory. You ask them to work with you and next year, we're very pleased that our report cards are going to be in every school division including the DSFM.

And so with this Tell Them From Me survey, you know, we'll continue to work with our school divisions and support our school divisions in making it happen because it is, of course, a very important tool for us as government because it provides us with an opportunity to get information from young people that are really on the ground in schools and really know and hear their voices and who really know what's happening in their schools.

Mr. Goertzen: So it's quasi-mandatory. I'm taking that it's highly encouraged but not actually mandatory.

The Tell Them From Me survey, are the results, either collective or individual, going to be made available to the public in some fashion or is that simply used internally?

Ms. Allan: Every school will get—obviously, every school will get their results because there wouldn't be any sense doing it if you didn't. And then we will make the provincial results public.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that response. Does she have an expectation of when that might—when that might collectively be released?

Ms. Allan: So the survey will occur around October, November and so then we will get that information back and we will have an opportunity to tabulate it. So I'm—we will look at this and we're looking at maybe some time in early 2014.

Mr. Goertzen: Is the survey completed? Is it ready to be distributed? It's public?

* (17:40)

Ms. Allan: It actually is a company, a Canadian company, that manages the Tell Them From Me survey, and actually other jurisdictions in Canada use this survey as well, and—I've actually forgot the question. Do you remember what it is? *[interjection]*

Yes, yes, yes, sorry—

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): Honourable Minister.

Ms. Allan: —and it's an online survey so you can actually go on and you could have a look at the survey online and, you know, and you would be able to see it.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm assuming that—

Ms. Allan: Sorry, sorry. Wrong information. No, you don't get to see it; the students get to see it online, but you don't get to see it.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, it doesn't take that much to confuse me actually, but you've managed to.

But the—but somewhere is in—it's not a secret the kids are answering. The responses are a secret but the questions aren't a secret. So somewhere is the actual survey and the questions that are being asked; it's available to parents. Parents know what their kids are being asked and that sort of thing, right?

Ms. Allan: The school divisions preview the surveys and then when the results are made public, you don't see the results. You see the results in regards to—you don't see the actual questions, but the results are thematic so you're able to pretty quickly determine what those results are in regards to the actual themes and questions.

Mr. Goertzen: Since I'm not getting paid by the hour, I'll just ask. Can I get a copy of the survey?

Ms. Allan: No, I don't think you can actually. *[interjection]* Unless you go back to school.

Mr. Goertzen: Okay. These—the surveys are filled out anonymously, I assume. The kids are filling them out in an anonymous fashion.

Ms. Allan: Yes. There actually is a person who goes into the school and co-ordinates it, confidentially co-ordinates it with the young people. They are appointed to do that particular job. And so, yes, it is confidential because that gives young people the, hmm—the word, I guess, is confidence that they can fill it out and there won't be any retribution, that it's a confidential survey and they can be honest with it.

Mr. Goertzen: How is this different than the Youth Health Survey?

Ms. Allan: Well, the—it's different from the Youth Health Survey. The Tell Them From Me survey is managed by this professional company in—from Nova Scotia, as I'd said earlier, and they manage it arm's-length and they get the information and they get the data.

The Manitoba—it's called Youth Health Survey, and it is a survey that is done once every four years, and it is a survey that is done in regards to—with young people, obviously, in our school system—oh, no, no, no, sorry—and it is actually a survey that is done and it's called Partners in Planning for Healthy Living, and it's a group of Manitoba partner organizations, and they share a common mandate for the primary prevention of chronic diseases aiming to build capacity and to use evidence to build an integrated risk factor surveillance system that spans and reflects the unique context within Manitoba Health.

So the partners that are in what is called the PPHL is—oh, my goodness—they are: the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, the regional health authorities, CancerCare Manitoba, cancer care society, the Healthy Child Manitoba, Heart and Stroke Foundation, Manitoba Education, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Physical Education Supervisors Association, Parkland—the regional health authorities, as I said early, and the Public Health Agency of Canada—Manitoba and Saskatchewan division. And these are the partners in healthy

planning who are working and learning together to get this kind of data. So it's data gathering and then it's identification and dissemination of effective best practice. It's program and policy development, implementation and evaluation, and it's strategic and investigative-driven research. And, as I said earlier, it is done once every four years, and that's how that survey is managed.

Mr. Goertzen: And the results of that survey are made public in some fashion as well, I assume?

Ms. Allan: Yes. The results of that will be released in early 2014.

Mr. Goertzen: And do the students or school divisions have the ability to opt—and I've gotten to that—I don't want to return to the nightmare of discussing what's mandatory or not mandatory, but is there an opt-out provision for schools, divisions or students on this survey?

Ms. Allan: That survey is managed by school divisions, and they make the decisions—the decision about whether or not there is an opt-out or whether or not it will be mandatory, but it's not—it—there is no—we do not say to school divisions that it has to be mandatory. And then they make the decision about whether or not there is opt-out.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not familiar with the survey, so would school divisions or—be opting out of the entire survey, or are there portions of it that they can opt out of?

Ms. Allan: Yes. They would have that ability to opt out. If they wanted to opt out of the—you know, their sexual health question, if that was in the survey and they wanted to make that decision to opt out of it, they could do that on a school division basis.

Mr. Goertzen: Does the minister have any information on how many school divisions, then, opted out of the sexual health survey portion of the survey?

Ms. Allan: Yes. We have that information for you. And if you don't mind, we'll just get it for you.

* (17:50)

We know from—we have—we know which school divisions participated. We know at what grade levels they participated, whether they participated from the grade level 7 to 12 or the grade level from 9 to 12, so we have also the—approximately about the time frame that they did the survey. And so, yes, we have that information.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm sure the minister will anticipate my next question about whether she can share that information.

Ms. Allan: Yes, we will get that information to you.

Mr. Goertzen: Of the school divisions that did participate, did the minister, either directly or indirectly, hear any concerns from parents whose sons or daughters may have participated in the survey and felt uncomfortable with the questions?

Ms. Allan: We have heard some concerns in a couple of school divisions. Obviously, the member is very familiar with what happened in Border Land School Division. And so we have heard some concerns about parents not feeling that—or feeling that they could have been provided with more information in regards to the survey that was happening. And so we can take that into consideration the next time the survey happens in four years.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, okay, and so if there are concerns about age appropriateness in terms of the question, then the feedback that the minister has received and probably the—I don't know what the numbers of opt-outs are because I haven't seen the list she's provided—or committed to providing that—but I'm assuming, then, that that will play a going forward with who's ever the minister in four years, that will play a role in terms of revamping the survey?

Ms. Allan: Yes, that's—those are things that we've learned from and we will take into consideration the next time we do the survey.

Mr. Goertzen: I committed to cede the floor to my friend from River Heights. I have just a few more questions. I'm always concerned when I give him the floor that I might not get it back, but the—*[interjection]*—yes, well, I'm not so concerned right now, I suppose. He seems to have—yes, but a few more questions.

Before we sort of got off onto the survey questions, we were asking about drugs in schools and instances. Does the—either the department or the divisions, individual divisions, do they contract or deal specifically with companies that provide the services of drug dogs, for lack of a better word, to enter schools at designated times in search for drugs?

Ms. Allan: It is my understanding that we have two or three school divisions here in the province of Manitoba that do contract companies with sniffer

dogs at certain points in the year—at random points in the year, and that it's two or three. I'm informed by my officials, it's two or three school divisions.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister indicate which divisions those are?

Ms. Allan: We would—we will get in touch with school divisions and we will ask them if they—and have a conversation with them, if they're comfortable, in regards to that information being—you know, we'll get a more—some more accurate information. And then we'll ask them if they're comfortable with that information being provided.

Mr. Goertzen: Does the minister have any indication of—I don't want to use the word success because I suppose success would be if nothing was ever found in the schools—but what the results are of those efforts by schools when they're using sniffer 'dogs'—dogs—or dug—drug dogs in the schools?

Ms. Allan: We actually—we—you know, we don't have a formal mechanism in regards to the few school divisions that do this. It's—it is, though, a situation where we rely on the professionals in the system in regards to, you know, the breach of school rules, if this was rampant and widespread, you know, we would have a confidence that we would be informed of that.

Mr. Goertzen: When the minister or her staff are undertaking that discussion with the school divisions about providing the information on which divisions are using these services, could she or could they also undertake to ask them what the results have been?

Ms. Allan: Absolutely.

Mr. Goertzen: Sort of on the last question on this topic before I turn it over to a friend from River Heights, does the department fund in any way the DARE program, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program? I think the acronym, it's the—it's run, I know, by the RCMP who come into the schools but the funding, I think, is external. Is there any sort of funding provided by the Department of Education for that program?

Ms. Allan: Usually, we have everything at our fingertips, but we don't think so. I have heard of the program, though, but we'll look into that and we will definitely ensure that we can get that information back to you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, and I'd like to start by asking the minister, in the budget documents, there is capital grants of \$52,942,000. I'd

like to know whether all of those expenses would be eligible for funding under the revenue generated through the provincial sales tax increase, from 7 to 8 per cent?

Ms. Allan: I'm sorry. I was wondering if we could ask the MLA for River Heights to sit closer or speak louder, or both maybe, because we're just—yes—even if it's just one chair up.

Thank you so much. Because we have fans blaring here, and—[interjection]

Way better. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: All right. And in the budget Estimates there is capital grants of \$52,900,000 and \$42,000 and I'm just wondering, to what extent the amount of funds that are listed in those capital grants would be eligible for funding under the money raised by increasing the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent?

* (18:00)

Ms. Allan: Well, obviously, we have made record investments in our schools in—here in the province of Manitoba, and we have made record investments in infrastructure. And many of those investments have occurred this year in regards to the announcement of new schools: Waverley West and Sage Creek. And being able to—and, of course, we're building a—I understand, I've received an invitation to go to the new school in Winkler in October, and the new school that is happening in Steinbach. And those schools are—in regards to financing those schools, they are amortized over several years sometimes. So any kinds of investments that we are making in infrastructure in regards to new schools are certainly going to be—it is going to be helpful to us in regards to, you know, having, you know, the PST increase.

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We want to continue to invest here in the province of Manitoba. We want to invest in schools. You know, I made an announcement today about the science labs, you know, that we are renovating, refurbishing and building here in the province of Manitoba. So, you know, these kinds of investments are critical to families, and we want to continue to make those investments.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if the minister could give a more precise breakdown of which schools would be covered with the capital grants and what proportion

would be construction of schools versus other aspects.

Ms. Allan: We will, you know, we will absolutely get back to you with a definitive answer on that for sure.

Mr. Gerrard: And is there funding for construction or capital projects in schools which is outside of these capital grants, from other sources?

Ms. Allan: No, we don't have any capital funding for infrastructure beyond that \$52 million that is in the Estimates.

Mr. Gerrard: And there's not allocations through other departments like the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation which might flow to schools.

Ms. Allan: The—no, the Public Schools Finance Board is—it's a board that is administered or managed by three deputy ministers. Gerald Farthing, the deputy minister, is the chair of the Public Schools Finance Board. But all of the funding is approved through the usual processes, Treasury Board, and we are responsible for all of that funding through the Department of Education.

Mr. Gerrard: Part of the reason for getting clarification is that in certain instances there have been funds throwing through, for instance, the Building Canada Fund, which might be administered by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation, but to the extent that I'm aware of that, that doesn't apply in Education because you—all of the funding is direct through the Department of Education. Just—

Ms. Allan: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Gerrard: The—under—in this book, which is the budget and budget papers, on page 17, there is listed capital investment of \$228 million for universities, colleges and public schools. And I just want to sort of be able to cross-check, right, and to see, I presume, that the fifty-two million, nine hundred thousand and—nine hundred and forty-two thousand would be the amount that would be for public schools in that investment.

Ms. Allan: Well, we will get, as I said earlier, we will get clarification for you in regards to that exact number.

Mr. Gerrard: That's what I was interested in and I thank the minister for that.

The minister knows that I'm quite interested in the attendance rates for children who've been in care of Child and Family Services and I wonder whether

the Department of Education would keep records of attendance rates for children in Child and Family Services?

Ms. Allan: Well, the MLA for River Heights has raised that question in the House for the last two days in question period. And I suggest that he has said in the House that anecdotally he has information that he is concerned about. And I would suggest that, if he has concerns about something that is happening in a group home where kids aren't going to school, I would ask him to provide us with that information or the minister responsible for family services. This is something, you know, that, you know, we would appreciate having that information if he has specific information and we would, we could look into that.

Mr. Gerrard: I just wanted to check to the extent to which the department had information, but the department I gather doesn't itself collect information on attendance rates for children in Child and Family Services.

Ms. Allan: That's correct; we don't have attendance rates for group homes and for children in foster care.

Mr. Gerrard: Those are the questions that I had and I'm ready to pass it on to one of my colleagues here. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Sorry, I thought I raised my hand. Hi and good afternoon. Earlier this afternoon the member for Steinbach was asking some questions about the Tell Them From Me survey. I wonder if the minister could indicate for us today how much class time does it take for the students to fill out the Tell Them From Me survey.

Ms. Allan: The class time is 20-30 minutes.

Mr. Friesen: The minister indicated earlier that there is a—that almost a hundred per cent of students take this survey; I think she was trying for a hundred per cent compliance with this mandatory survey. What happens in the event that a student is absent the day that the survey is administered?

Ms. Allan: No, actually what I said was I was referring not to students, I was referring to schools; 96 per cent of schools were participating in the Tell Them From Me survey. And, you know, obviously we would prefer as many students as possible took the survey, we rely on the school divisions to work with the person that—looking for a word—*[interjection]*—administer, thank you, the survey, but it's up to, you know, we have—David, how many students in the province of Manitoba; thousands and

thousands and thousands. You know—*[interjection]* A hundred and eighty thousand, I mean not all of them take because it's in grade 7 to 12, but we, as the Department of Education, we're not concerned about, you know, if there is a student not there that day. This is a survey that is implemented and delivered at the local level by schools. And if, you know, 95 or 96 per cent of the students are there and we get some good data from that, that's great.

* (18:10)

Mr. Friesen: Yes, and the minister might have to repeat, I was listening to the conversation earlier, but can she confirm, this is an online survey that all students take?

Ms. Allan: That is correct.

Mr. Friesen: Then, when the survey's administered, does that mean that all classes have to be in a lab where there are enough computer terminals to allow the students to take this survey online?

Ms. Allan: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Friesen: And could the minister also confirm this is an anonymous survey or is the student identified?

Ms. Allan: It is anonymous.

Mr. Friesen: So I'm just trying to understand—I don't think the minister was clear on—she said that this takes between 20 and 30 minutes for the test to be taken—*[interjection]*—22. Oh, my colleague is suggesting she might've said 22 minutes. *[interjection]*

The Acting Chairperson (Gregory Dewar): Order. Order. Order. *[interjection]*

The member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Friesen: This survey has 20 to 30 minutes. In any case, what I'm trying to do is just get an idea of the kind of requirement that teachers are given to facilitate this survey.

I know that, going back in time a little ways here, we've been, of course, reading about the place of mandatory testing and standardized testing in the classroom, and over the last couple of years we're doing less in the province of Manitoba than we did at one time. I believe at one time the minister made the comment that one of the concerns she was

expressing is the amount of instructional time that the administration of the standardized tests took from a teacher, expressing a concern that perhaps that certain parts of the curriculum might not be met as a result of the—what was considered to be the focus on the standardized testing.

Does the minister share a similar concern with the amount of time that doing this survey would take out of instructional time for the classroom?

Ms. Allan: Well, I certainly don't ever recall ever saying anything about that in the past in regards to standardized testing, but that's okay. *[interjection]* Yes, it could've been MTS. Teachers in the classroom do self-directed testing with students all the time, and we certainly don't have that kind of concern in regards to standards tests.

What—I am not concerned about the 20 minutes that this survey—20 to 30 minutes that this survey—because I think what's important to us is we continue to work with our school divisions in regards to creating a safe and caring learning environment for all of our students. And we know that this survey is going to be important to us, because it's going to give us really good data, and it's going to give us really good data from young people that are on the ground in schools interacting with other students.

And the collection of this data allows schools over time to collect reliable data that can help them determine intervention strategies. And we all know that intervention strategies are important and they are critical, and many school divisions—once they have that data, that will provide them with the opportunity to look at best practices, best practices perhaps in other schools, best practices in other jurisdictions in regards to how to keep our young people safe.

And, of course, what's most important to me as minister is what we are going to find out from this data, and I know that members opposite will be very interested in this. It's going to provide us with information about bullying and what kind of bullying is happening in schools. And that's going to be very important to us because it provides us with the opportunity to hear directly, in a confidential manner, from students in that school about what kind of bullying is occurring and it's going to allow staff in the school to ensure that there are programs in place. And, particularly, it's going to provide them with information about, perhaps, not just programs but maybe some kinds of supervision that might need

to be put in place, because they may be able to pick up situations

You know, we all know that bullying happens most of the time outside of the classroom. It happens on the playground. It happens in a washroom. It happens in a locker room. It happens on a school bus. It happens on a field trip. So this kind of information will provide us with the opportunity to really determine what kind of bullying is happening and where it's happening, and it'll provide our professionals in the system with the ability to determine if they need to put programs in place and maybe, perhaps, supervision in high-risk areas at high-risk times, quite frankly.

Mr. Friesen: Back to the survey. The minister had mentioned earlier that with 180,000 students in Manitoba schools, if we understand that the survey is being taken by students through grades 7 to 12, they estimate around 90,000 students are taking this survey, and I think she may have mentioned this was twice a year, but that could have been the other survey she was speaking of.

I guess what I'm wondering is what is the full cost of the contract to the company that is delivering this service for Education.

Ms. Allan: This survey that is done with schools is cost-shared with the school. We pay 50 per cent of it, and it's going to—we—it's going to cost us around \$180,000.

Mr. Friesen: Sorry, that was a good clarification because I had understood there was a contract to an Ontario company, but I believe that might be for the other survey that the minister was discussing with the critic just earlier. So this contract in—is actually cost-shared, as the minister says, then, between the Department of Education and the schools themselves. So we then know that \$90,000 of this flows to the school divisions.

Is the minister concerned at all about the fact that there's a cost being incurred by the school divisions when this is not an initiative that they asked to be implemented in their schools?

Ms. Allan: It's not 90, it's \$180,000.

An Honourable Member: That was the total cost.

Ms. Allan: No.

The Acting Chairperson (Gregory Dewar) Order, the honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Allan: It is a total cost to the Department of Education of \$180,000, and that is matched. There are over 650 schools in the province of Manitoba, and that is matched by the individual schools. We have an uptake on this survey of 96 per cent. It is not mandatory. It is optional. It is optional; it is not mandatory, and that is, I believe, any time you've got the uptake on a 50-50 program in a school, it is pretty clear to me that people in school divisions are very excited about this survey because they want the data. And this is all about keeping young people in our schools safe. And it's also about getting good data in regards to what kind of bullying is happening in schools, about whether or not school divisions have problems in regards to discipline in—or in regards to incidences.

St. James School Division, Ron Weston, has used the Tell Them From Me survey long—not long before, I shouldn't say that, but he was doing this before in the St. James School Division and he was paying the whole freight for this particular survey. Now what's happening, because we're doing it province-wide, we can actually get it cheaper because we have the opportunity to buy bulk, if you would like to say it that way. And we're actually—school divisions are over the moon because now that it is less expensive, to use a little politer language, school divisions who weren't able to—school divisions that weren't able to participate in the Tell Them From Me survey are very excited because now they are able to participate and they are able to participate with us at half the cost. So, yes, they are over the moon.

* (18:20)

Mr. Friesen: And did the minister already state for the critic for Education, is she able to provide us with a copy of the health—or of this survey on Tell Them from Me?

Ms. Allan: Well, I've already answered that question for the MLA from Steinbach earlier, and, no, it is a confidential survey that is managed by a company out of Nova Scotia, not Ontario, and that survey is not available to the public. Probably because if they gave it out then they would be out of business.

Mr. Friesen: But to be clear, I mean, we're certainly not asking to see any of the data to be collected from the survey, but this is a survey that is administered in a public school and it's administered to our children and to our nieces and to our nephews. It would seem like a strange kind of secrecy to draw around the survey to suggest that we could not know the

questions that are being asked of the students on it. I think that, certainly, the minister makes an argument that it's proprietary. Well, certainly, the themes she would not suggest would be proprietary. I guess I don't see what would be the problem with submitting a copy, not to indicate the kind of content collected but simply to indicate the questions asked.

Ms. Melanie Wight, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, that's what I told the MLA for Steinbach about an hour ago, that, yes, the data is collected and that information is provided thematically so that it doesn't—it isn't that difficult to figure out the kinds of questions that were asked in regards to the survey.

Mr. Friesen: So what would the Minister of Education be willing to provide in terms of information?

Ms. Allan: Well, as I said earlier, we will be providing—the first survey is going to be done around October–Novemberish. And then we will collect the data, and we will have that information available, as I told the MLA for Steinbach earlier. We will have that available—that data available and make that province-wide data available, provincial rollout data available, in 2014.

Mr. Friesen: And then just to connect the dots here, I would assume at that point in time, although we would not have the proprietary questionnaire that was being asked of students, we would have an idea of the thematic material and we would have an idea of the content that had been put together in order to assemble the questions on the questionnaire. Is that correct? Is that an accurate assessment?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Friesen: Can the minister indicate where in the departmental Estimates we could see the line where it would indicate the additional costs being incurred by the department for their part of the contract on this survey?

Ms. Allan: Well, first of all, I have to correct the record. I've been telling you that this is run out of—by a company out of Nova Scotia and it's New Brunswick—close—and it's a company called The Learning Bar. And the \$180,000 is on page 95 in the Estimates book under the Support to Schools under Other Expenditures, Grants, and it's in that particular appropriation right there. And there's nothing else on that page, so it should be pretty easy.

Mr. Friesen: Yes. That's easy enough, but can I also ask the minister if she can verify that that is also then the line item that would contain the contract for the other survey on youth health?

Ms. Allan: No. It's not in there.

Mr. Friesen: Where is that expense located in the departmental Estimates?

Ms. Allan: Well, actually it's—for the Youth Health Survey, we don't spend any money on it, we—it—so it's not in the Estimates book. I talked earlier about how this is a survey that is done once every four years and it is done by a consortium, and the provincial funding that is provided to that survey is—it's \$40,000 and that's from Healthy Living, and then—well, I'm sorry, we do do services in kind. We, you know, support it in regards to staff. But absolutely there's no cash from my department. So it's \$40,000 in funding from—in 2012 and then I believe from—so the Healthy Schools initiative was provided \$40,000 in 2012 and then another \$40,000 was committed in—actually in May 2011, and in addition \$300,000 of funding from the Healthy Child Manitoba office contributed to the coding and preparation of the surveys for the data collection for—once the survey was done that amount of money, and that is also a survey that is done once every four years with this consortium of health-care agencies.

Mr. Friesen: Okay. And just because it's loud in here with the fans running, I think I heard most of it. Could the minister indicate the total amount of funds necessary to drive the survey once every four years?

Ms. Allan: Well, if my math is correct and I'm doing it via algorithms, it's \$380,000 is my understanding.

Mr. Friesen: Okay. So, just very incidentally, it happens to be almost the exact dollar figure of the total survey cost of the previous survey we talked about. So the youth health is 380 and she's previously said that 360 would've been the total cost to drive the Tell Them From Me survey. It was \$180,000 from the department; \$180,000 arising from school divisions in a matching program.

* (18:30)

I'm going to jump around a little bit. I know the minister can do that because she had Estimates with me last year, and I was so pleased that we did not proceed in a linear fashion last year. So I'm going to jump around a little bit.

Coming back to the survey on Tell Them From Me, I was wondering about—and I'm sure that a company of this size with this kind of expertise and knowledge has ways to guard against this—but I'm wondering about junk data that is collected. In other words, with a data size this big and with an anonymous approach to the survey—so there's no IP address, there's no identifying information for any student—what is to keep a student from answering a survey like this with capricious information, untruthful information, using hyperbole, maybe even going farther and making false accusations, putting misinformation on the record. There seems to be no apparatus that would prevent them—I would be concerned as a principal, as an administration, as a classroom teacher, as a parent, that misinformation be put on the record. School divisions work hard enough. The department works hard enough.

Does the minister have a concern about data put on the record that is not accurate because a student simply believes that there will be no repercussions because no one can tell, and they can say what they like and they can accuse whom they like?

Ms. Allan: Well, as you know, seeing as you're a former educator, that, you know, you have, you know—you're dealing with information from students. And, you know, it's not really any different than calling, you know—having students that come into the principal's office and you're trying to figure out things that are happening. And so this is nothing new for educators in our public education system and our professionals in the system. They work with, you know, the learning bar, and they also work with the information in regards to what's happening and they are pretty confident that they—that the data that they get is no different than sometimes information that they're getting verbally. So they're pretty confident that the data that they're getting is reflective of what is happening in their schools.

Mr. Friesen: I do challenge the minister on that answer. Having been a teacher, as she knows, in the public schools, teaching in three different school divisions, when a student does bring any allegation or concern forward, it's, of course, not done anonymously. There isn't a complaint box in most schools where a student can drop off information. Instead, when a student makes some kind of a statement to a teacher or to an adult in charge, to an administrator in the building, they're doing it in relationship with that teacher or caregiver. And there is no anonymity in that exchange, that the principal knows the student, teacher knows this student. And

they can make an assessment about the child. Sometimes it's necessary to make an assessment, you know, to try to attain some understanding about the veracity of these claims. It can't be done on an anonymous survey. So I'm just wondering. I'm certain that the company with whom she has contracted, with whom the department has contracted, must have tools in their arsenal. They have must have built-in features in the software or they must have people reading the data who are able to make, I guess, discretionary decisions about the veracity of these claims.

Does she share any concern about untruthful or false information being put on the record in an anonymous context? And, certainly, I don't think we can just say that it's no different than a student marching into the principal's office.

Ms. Allan: Well, the Tell Them From Me survey is really not a survey, you know, so—a survey that is designed to resolve conflict between individual students. It's a data collection survey that is trying to determine the safety and the culture of the school. It talks about—they're trying to figure out how many incidences of bullying occurs, what kind of bullying is occurring, where it is happening, is it physical, is it verbal, is it social? So, you know—do they feel safe, do they feel confident that when these kinds of situations occur, is someone there that they can talk to? Do they feel that there is a safety net there in the school? In regards to when a situation happens, is it being responded to?

So it's really a survey that is developed to kind of really figure out exactly what that culture is in a school in regards to whether or not students feel safe. And if they don't feel safe, what is it? And, obviously, you know, you just have to have one conversation with Ron Weston about the Tell Them From Me survey, and I'll tell you, he'll tell you how important it is. Every one of his schools in his school division—not every one, I mean, not elementary or kindergarten schools, but every one of Ron Weston's schools has done the Tell Them From Me survey in his school and they have done a lot of work in their schools, actually, in regards to determining exactly what kind of bullying is a problem and how they can create safer schools, and I'm very proud to say that Ron Weston, in every one of his high schools in his school division, has a gay-straight alliance.

Mr. Friesen: Has Ron Weston seen the survey?

Ms. Allan: Yes. As I said earlier, superintendents in school divisions have privately seen the survey and

they know what that survey looks like, and, yes, he's seen it.

Mr. Friesen: Have members of parent councils been offered an opportunity to view the survey?

Ms. Allan: I don't believe so. No.

Mr. Friesen: Can the minister indicate why that decision was undertaken to withhold the survey from parent councils?

Ms. Allan: I didn't make that decision.

Mr. Friesen: Can the minister indicate who made that decision?

Ms. Allan: No. I don't know who made it.

Mr. Friesen: Well, if the minister doesn't know who made that decision, I'm not sure on what basis she's then saying she would not allow members of the opposition to see a copy. I mean, someone made a decision. It must have been made at a pretty high level to—I mean, we have, throughout this province, a system of parent councils who work very effectively with school administration in communities north, east, south, and west in this province. They champion many, many causes within schools, and I know that the minister's well-aware of that. I've had a chance to sit down with the parent councils association and talk about the scope of the work that they undertake within schools to improve the schools, to improve school climate. They work on things like fundraising for schoolyard equipment, but they also work in other ways, as well.

I'm wondering who made the decision and why the minister would not know who made a decision to not allow a survey of this type to be shared with parent council associations of Manitoba.

Ms. Allan: Well, no one knows better than me the value of the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. No one knows that better than I do, and certainly this government works with the—and certainly this government enjoys our relationship with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. And, you know, my understanding is that this is a survey that is delivered by The Learning Bar. It is a survey that is delivered throughout Canada, and it's a survey that jurisdictions and school divisions have used all throughout Canada and all throughout Manitoba. This is a confidential survey that is administered to students, and when the survey comes back, as I said earlier in response to the questions from the MLA for Steinbach, the data that we receive is data that is thematic, and so that gives a

very clear indication in regards to, kind of, what those questions were.

* (18:40)

But, trust me, if this is the biggest issue that you can drill down in the Department of Education and find, about a confidential survey that is being used in our schools, that the uptake is 96 per cent, there's a 96 per cent uptake and everyone is going to be able to use this survey in our schools to find out whether or not—and use that survey to create safe schools, you know, I don't administer the survey in superintendents' school divisions or in superintendents' schools but I know that we will get data back that we will share publicly in 2014 and that's what's important to me. What's important to me is getting clear data in regards to how young people are feeling in schools, where—what kind of bullying is going on in schools, perhaps cyberbullying, where it's happening and how we can provide that information on a confidential basis to administrators in our public education system so they can use that information so that they can provide a safe and caring school environment for our young people in our school system.

Mr. Friesen: Has the minister seen the survey?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Friesen: Has the deputy minister or any of her ADMs seen the survey?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm glad somebody has.

Just another question now before I give the floor back to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). We had talked about the amount of class time that it takes to administer the Tell Them From Me survey, but I had not yet asked the minister to indicate the amount of class time it takes to administer the other survey, which is the youth health survey. Could the minister indicate what is the class time that it takes up to administer that survey? And that one's compulsory as well. Can she just confirm that?

Ms. Allan: Well, you know, I'd like to go back to the MLA for Morden-Winkler's questioning in regards to a survey that we've had 90 per cent uptake on in regards to keeping our schools safe. You know, I remember when the MLA from Morden-Winkler stood up in the House and asked me if I'd had a one-on-one meeting with WISE Math. I remember him asking me that question and, you know, he was really critical of the Minister of Education because

she hadn't had a one-on-one meeting with WISE Math and what were we doing with math curriculum in the province of Manitoba because, you know, if I didn't have that one-on-one meeting with the WISE Math people, Robert Craigen and Anna Stokke, the world was going to come to an end. It—or Madam Chairperson. It was like I, you know—like he, you know, he was determined that because of his knowledge of our public education system and because he is a former teacher, that the world was going to come to an end and, you know, WISE—you know, we weren't going to be able to make changes to the curriculum.

Well, I am pleased to say that, you know, I know that—I am pleased to say that, you know, I think the officials in my department did a wonderful job in regards to the curriculum changes that were made in regards to WISE—in regards to the math changes, you know, and I just want to remind the member opposite that we are actually the first jurisdiction in Canada or in the western protocol that has made changes to our math curriculum because we did believe that it was important and it was important to us and we did that because what we did was we, of course, consulted with not just WISE Math, we consulted with all of our stakeholders. We consulted with the Manitoba Association of Math Teachers, we consulted with the math education professors and, of course, we had a discussion with our divisional math consultants and our curriculum consultants and we worked with our superintendents. And that work happened over the last two years. And here we are in a situation, you know, two years later after the MLA for Winkler-Morden was so concerned—

An Honourable Member: Morden-Winkler.

Ms. Allan: Morden-Winkler, thank you very much, the MLA from Steinbach has corrected me and I appreciate that.

You know, that he was so concerned about that that we weren't going to be able to, you know, review this curriculum and have good things happen for young people because I wasn't having a one-on-one meeting with teachers or with WISE math.

So I just want to remind the member opposite that we have every confidence in our work with our education partners in the system, that this survey that we are doing in our public education system with our partners, will provide us with good data to keep our young people safe.

And I'm pleased to tell the MLA that the youth health survey takes 35 minutes.

Mr. Friesen: I'm pleased that the minister has confirmed that the survey takes 35 minutes. So we have a survey that takes 35 minutes, another one that takes 30 minutes. And I just once again then, does the minister express any concern about the amount of class time that it takes from away from academic areas to conduct both of these surveys in the class?

Ms. Allan: Well, I certainly don't have any concern. The youth health survey happens once every four years so I think, you know, 35 minutes once every four years I, you know, I don't think, once again, I don't think the sky is going to fall. You know, we've got the, you know, we got the Mr. Sky falling in here. I don't believe the sky is going to fall once every four years, 35 minutes, I don't know, it seems like not a lot of time to me.

And then of course, the other survey, well it's 20-30 minutes, not 22 minutes, it's 20-30 minutes. And I don't—I feel strongly that this is important data for our school divisions and obviously they feel very strongly as well, Mr. Speaker—Miss—Madam Chairperson. So, no, I don't have any concerns. Thank you very much though for the question.

Mr. Friesen: With respect to the contract with Learning Bar, can the minister confirm that, was this contract an openly tendered process?

Ms. Allan: They are the only company in Canada that provides this service.

Mr. Friesen: So this a sole-source contract?

Ms. Allan: You can call it what you want.

Mr. Friesen: I can tell it's very collegial around here this afternoon.

It was an honest question, the minister did say they were the only company in Canada, but we know in other areas, the department, of course, contracts outside of Canada. So I just wanting to see if there's, I mean I imagine there's a tremendous amount of expertise in this area as well, in the States, it's probably in Europe as well and many other countries.

And so I was just asking whether the minister had looked beyond this one company before making a decision to enter into contract with this one company, who is indeed from Canada, as the minister has stated, not Newfoundland, not Nova Scotia, but New Brunswick.

Ms. Allan: Well, the beauty of using a Canadian company, I would have preferred to use a Manitoba company, of course, because I'm proud of Manitoba. But the beauty of using of a Canadian company is that we have the opportunity to do jurisdictional analysis in comparison with other jurisdictions in Canada. So that is the beauty of it.

Mr. Goertzen: I thought it was hard to get the floor back from the member for River Heights, let alone. The—I thank my colleague for his questions and I know he's got a great interest in education and was a great asset to the classroom himself before he became a great asset here in the Legislature.

* (18:50)

A couple questions for the minister. Does she have any thoughts about the importance of ensuring that important matters before school boards are held in the public and not referred to committees where they're done privately?

Ms. Allan: Yes, I believe in transparency and accountability.

Mr. Goertzen: With that in mind, is the minister planning any particular regulation or legislation—I'm not sure what the mechanism or the vehicle would be—to ensure that votes that are held and important discussions that are held in the school division are done so on the public record?

Ms. Allan: That is under discussion in my department right now.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister care to share the nature of those discussions and which way those discussions might be moving?

Ms. Allan: No, at this point, those discussions are happening internally, and we will probably be having further discussions about it, and when we're prepared to have an open discussion about it publicly, I'll be more than thrilled to inform the member of those discussions.

Mr. Goertzen: The issue of publishing board meeting agendas in advance of the school board meetings, is that something that will be part of those discussions?

Ms. Allan: Everything's on the table.

Mr. Goertzen: That something she'd be in favour of?

Ms. Allan: We're having discussions in our department right now, and I will be having

discussions with my officials, and we will continue to have a look at all of the issues around transparency in regards to board governance.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister obviously isn't opposed, then, to the concept of having agendas published in advance?

Ms. Allan: We will have good discussions as we move forward on this in regards to how we can make discussions at board levels and decisions that are made at the board level are more transparent and accountable for parents and communities.

Mr. Goertzen: I know we only have, in this portion of the Estimates of Supply, and for today, about 10 minutes left. I'll return to a different line of questioning, but I want to, before I leave, just reference a few different things, I—the department, I know everybody's busy and probably have better things to do tonight, but you might be able to get some of these answers for tomorrow.

In the Public Accounts 2011-2012, under the Department of Education payments that came out of the Department of Education, I'm just looking for greater clarity in terms of some payments, and I'll list them off, and I'm not expecting answers right now in terms of what those payments were for, but I'll just list off those which I'm mostly just curious in terms of what the payments were about.

Manitoba Teachers' Society, a cheque for \$42,498; Probe Research, \$19,590; R.R. Bowker LLC in Chicago, Illinois, \$22,114; Royal Winnipeg Ballet, \$235,246; Student Vote Ontario, \$24,000; TFO Toronto, \$50,000; and Touchstones Discussion Project, Annapolis, Maryland, \$12,661. If the minister could just—or her staff be able to provide some information tomorrow on what those cheques were about, that would be great.

Ms. Allan: We will look to get that information. I will have a conversation when the committee ends this evening and I will have a discussion with officials in my department in regards to how soon we can provide that information to the MLA for Steinbach.

Mr. Goertzen: A couple of issues just around, as we close out the—this evening, around, sort of, trends in education. And I am always worried about fads, sometimes, because they don't always, sort of, work out. And my friends in education will tell me about many things that sort of go on for a few years and then they get changed, and often they're not very helpful.

But there is certainly a movement in some jurisdictions towards what's referred to—is project-based learning. And having more curriculum designed around project-based learning, where students aren't just simply taught formulas—not that that's not important—but then they apply that knowledge to something to try to ensure that they're understanding the application of it. And I know, I've talked to some of my colleagues, for example, in Minnesota, and they're—brought in specific legislation around this. And we're really encouraged by both post-secondary institutions and businesses about trying to ensure—their frustration was. And I hear it in Manitoba, too, that often students are coming out with very specific knowledge about things, but don't know how to apply it, and so they've moved much more strongly to project-based learning. Can the minister have any comments about—to the extent that's being done in Manitoba now and maybe what the future of that is?

Ms. Allan: There are different methodologies, obviously, and as the MLA for Steinbach has said, the pedagogy changes. And the educators in our public education system, you know, are always looking at new ways of learning and looking at other best practices in other jurisdictions all across the world. And, you know, I think that we have to stay current and we need to figure what works, and not everything works for every student.

And I think that project-based learning, I have heard from some school divisions and some schools are using it in the later grades in regards to being an important tool. You'll also see, you know, some school divisions implementing iPads and technologies in their school. And I know that the MLA's good friend, Michael Zwaagstra, isn't exactly, you know, he isn't, you know—he, you know—some of him don't—you know, he doesn't believe that providing technology, you know, can be the best in regards to the conception of learning and providing knowledge to students.

And then there are other educators that believe that that is an important tool, that if we're going to educate our young people in regards to the global economy and what's happening in our world, technology is an important vehicle and an important tool in regards to learning. So, you know, we will, you know, we—I'm not an educator and I rely on the senior officials in my department who work with school divisions in regards to, you know, what can be in the best interests of education.

One of the wonderful opportunities I had today was to go to Vincent Massey Collegiate and see the new state-of-the-art science lab that has just been built there. And this amazing gentleman that oversaw the design with the architect of that science lab, he is a very special person because he's one of the most—one of the 20 smartest people in Canada. They had that contest in Canada and he actually was one of the 20 smartest people in Canada. And I think we're fortunate to have this wonderful gentleman in our public education, and he was so excited about this beautiful new science lab. He was actually already lobbying me for another one. He was very clever and very engaging, and it was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet him today. So we have lots of great stuff happening in our schools all across Manitoba, and we're very fortunate because we do have educators that attend professional development opportunities and look what's happening in other jurisdictions and look what's happening in other schools in regards to providing our young people with a quality education all across this province.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister indicated that there were a few school divisions already engaged in project-based learning in the later years. I understand that's more where it's adopted, and the responses that I heard in talking to some educators in different jurisdictions is they feel it helps to provide students with an ability to become self-directed and individual thinkers and all good qualities that we'd want students to have whether they go on to different education or whether they are involved in the workforce.

Is there any sort of analysis about what's going on in those school divisions who are using project-based learning in the later years and in comparison in terms of how that might compare to other methodologies that are used?

Ms. Allan: No, we—as a department, we have not done any of that analysis in regards to what's happening in those particular school divisions, but what is most exciting about it—

The Acting Chairperson (Melanie Wight): The hour being 7 p.m., committee rise.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Local Government.

Would the minister's staff and opposition staff please enter the Chamber.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions, are we prepared to move on to resolutions, then, I assume?

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$31,379,000 for Local Government, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,493,000 for Local Government, Infrastructure and Municipal Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$347,876,000 for Local Government, fiscal assistance to—Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$53,000 for Local Government, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

* (15:10)

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 13.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

Floor is open for questions.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I move

THAT line item 13.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Midland

THAT line item 13.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order.

Floor is open for questions. Seeing none, is the House ready for the question? Committee.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, signify by please saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Pedersen: With respect, Mr. Chair, I ask for a recorded vote.

Mr. Chairperson: Do you have two members in support of that? The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

* (16:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Order. In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates of the Department of Local Government, the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) moved the following motion:

THAT line item 13.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote and, subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Midland.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 18, Nays 30.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The sections of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of the departmental Estimates.

Report

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy, the honourable member for Agassiz moved the following motion:

THAT line item 44.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

Mr. Chairperson, this motion was defeated on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested that a counted vote be taken on this matter.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Chairperson: Order. In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy, the honourable member for Agassiz moved the following motion:

THAT line item 44.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote and, subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Agassiz.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 18, Nays 30.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The sections of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of the departmental Estimates.

This section will resume with consideration of the Estimates for Local Government.

Order, please.

I now call resolution 13.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,877,000 for Local Government, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Shall we recess briefly to allow the minister and critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next series of Estimates?
[Agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:16 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:20 p.m.

ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

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

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

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I am pleased to briefly highlight some of the important activities that the department that I have responsibility over has been embarking upon. The government—as you know—of Manitoba, recognizes it has a duty to consult in a meaningful way with Aboriginal communities when any proposed provincial law or regulation, decision or action that may infringe upon Aboriginal or treaty rights are affected, as it affects any Aboriginal community. We have that responsibility. As a result, the Aboriginal Consultation Unit has that role, and that unit is contained within the department that I have responsibility over. And I know that the—my

colleague from Tuxedo will probably want to talk about it in a—greater detail.

Another area that we have responsibility over is treaty land entitlement. The department continues to focus on the implementation of treaty land entitlement agreements in the province of Manitoba. A very important development that we have recently concluded negotiations with is Sioux Valley, the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. Along with the federal government and the Province of Manitoba, we have concluded negotiations on the first governance agreement in the province of Manitoba. And, potentially, this could serve as a model for future provincial First Nations self-government agreements in the province of Manitoba. And, again, I can get into further detail about this. The date for a formal signing has yet to be announced, but we anticipate that it'll probably be in the fall of 2013.

In the area of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, as members know in this Chamber, our department has been taking a leading role on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in our province, but at the same time, trying to make that a national issue. As a result, at a recent meeting that was held in Winnipeg on April 17th, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, among the tasks it's been given—adopted, the calling of the federal government to initiate a national inquiry on this very unfortunate issue that we are dealing with nationwide.

We also have a responsibility on the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, the Metis Economic Development Fund, the Island Lake retrofit and training initiative, which is another critical issue facing First Nations people in the province of Manitoba, particularly those communities that don't have running water, a basic necessity that is probably taken for granted by most Canadians, but, indeed, we have made some progress, together with the federal government, in initiating a project in the Island Lake community where we then, to date, able to do a lot of work in trying to retrofit a number of homes in those said communities in the Island Lake region, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Garden Hill and Red Sucker Lake. So we're very proud of—and, again, I can get into detail on that a little later as we carry on with the Estimates.

With those few remarks, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to thank you for the opportunity in

allowing me to provide opening remarks for this department.

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

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I want to thank the minister for his opening comments, and just for a—just a few words to say in opening these Estimates.

I just want to say, I've—of all the portfolios I've had, I've really enjoyed this one so far and all the incredible people that I've had the opportunity to meet so far, and I know that there's many people—I haven't had the portfolio for very long and there's many people still I have yet to meet, but, in particular, the—you know, many of the chiefs I've met, many of the elders, in particular, and, you know, sitting down with some of them and getting the stories from them. I've been able to have a great opportunity to learn a great deal from them, and it's been just an honour to be in this portfolio. I'm certainly learning a lot. It's a new portfolio, as every portfolio is when I first take it over. There's a lot that I learn and I gain from these portfolios. And I know in particular, this one, it's been—it's just been great in terms of all the wonderful people that I've met so far.

Of course, there are many challenges, I think, that face many of the communities in Manitoba, and I think that those communities, I want to get more into that over the next—over the course of my questioning of the minister. But I think with every challenge, there's also incredible opportunities; incredible opportunities for businesses in Manitoba to partner with First Nations communities, to partner with the Metis community, and huge opportunities in terms of employment opportunities for our First Nations people and for Metis people and in how we can—how we'll be able to work together on that, so it's—many of those communities being able to work together.

So I just wanted to say I had a great opportunity to—when I first took over the portfolio last fall, I had the opportunity to go to the Metis annual meeting in Brandon and met many people there, and it was just a super opportunity. A friend—an old friend of mine, Will Goodon, is a key player in that community, and, of course, I met with David Chartrand and others, but, in particular, it was great to have a chance to reconnect with an old friend in Will, and he's been a great person to me in helping me show—help show

me around the Metis community and many, many others.

And I could go on and with lists of names, but I know that our time is relatively short in Estimates, and so I think I'll leave my opening comments at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 1.(a) contained in resolution 19.1.

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

Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, to introduce his staff.

Mr. Robinson: To my left is Mr. Harvey Bostrom, the deputy minister of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and Mr. Robert Wavey, the executive director of the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat.

* (16:30)

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

Mrs. Stefanson: And I would appreciate if we could have a more of a global discussion, if that is if the minister is amenable to that.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been suggested a global discussion. Is that agreeable to all? *[Agreed]*

Okay. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: And I think I'd like to start off and, again, I think there's many issues that I'd like to get into and, again, I think we have a relatively short period of time here, so I'm going to try and focus as much as I can. I do know that there's some of my other colleagues as well here who would like to ask some questions as well of the minister. So I will just get right into it.

I had the opportunity to attend the business council forum at the Fort Garry Hotel. I'm not sure if the—or maybe I'll just ask the minister. Did he have a chance to attend that forum?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chair, I did not have an opportunity to attend the said forum at—in Winnipeg.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thanks very much and I think—I know I did have an opportunity to attend the forum and, in particular, one of the areas touching on northern Manitoba and some of the challenges that face—that we're facing. And it was very productive. I thought it was a great discussion and it—I may try and get the—I'm going to try and get the transcript of it. Thank you. But, certainly, it—there was a discussion around northern Manitoba, the population of northern Manitoba, just some of the challenges that communities are facing in northern Manitoba.

And I just wanted to—if I could ask the minister at this stage, what is the population of northern Manitoba?

Mr. Robinson: Well, the member for Tuxedo poses a very interesting question that I can't respond to because I don't know.

The industrial communities of Thompson, The Pas, Flin Flon, The Pas, Churchill—of course, they're all factored in when we give the population. But, certainly, the First Nations communities are a growing population. We've been advised that in the Ann Lake region alone that there is roughly—a rough population of 10,000 alone in those four communities.

And I think that many times we're advised that the population that we have there is in excess, including the industrialized communities that I mentioned in the area of 70,000, that's a rough figure.

But, if I could just leave it at that, I believe that my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) would concur that when we talk about communities north of the 53rd parallel, we're probably talking roughly in the neighborhood of 70,000.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, and I was just wondering and that is what I was referring to. And I think at the business council they had mentioned around 75,000. I was just wondering. I just wanted to compare those numbers with what you had. Is there an indication of what the unemployment rate is for northern Manitoba right now? Is there a break out on that?

Mr. Robinson: We don't have any hard numbers, but, certainly, I can report that for many of the communities, particularly the reserves and the First Nations communities, that many times the

unemployment rate will run up to 95 per cent in some. With the—with initiatives like the East Side Road, as an example—the East Side Road activity, the unemployment rate has come down.

In spite of these very negative numbers that appear on the surface, we are making progress in trying to address the socio-economic reality of many of these communities, particularly the First Nations communities. Of course, we have the industrialized towns that I said: Flin Flon, Snow Lake, The Pas, Thompson. They tend to hold their own. But, where there's no economy, as an example, Shamattawa, the communities in the Island Lake region, the East Side Road Authority—has helped in training many of the young people in the future are—we have made an investment, I believe, in a future to allow people the opportunity to get training in a trades in, for example, in the all-weather road building and, as well, we have had the opportunity of training many of our people in the Wuskwatim project. And, of course, later on down the road, we are working and looking with the view of the participation of Aboriginal people, First Nations people, in the Keeyask and in the Conawapa projects.

And, as I said in my opening remarks, based on Supreme Court rulings, it requires governments to involve First Nations people and, certainly, I think that what this government has been trying to do is to engage Aboriginal people. And, when I say Aboriginal people, I'm particularly talking about people that live on reserves, the First Nations people, to be engaged right at the outset, because certainly I think that what we have found out from past practices, including hydro development projects, we have found that the mistakes that were made in the past, for example, one of our staff members here, Mr. Wavey comes from the community of Gillam, and, in the community of Gillam, the Aboriginal people there had a real negative experience with the initial hydro development that occurred in their area. And I also come from a community which was part of the—which is regarded as part of the northern flood area, and the experience wasn't good, and we don't want to go back in our history and make the same mistakes that were done back then. We want to get it right from the beginning, and that's why we've made an effort in the last several years to ensure that we have the concurrence and we have the participation—active participation of First Nations people as we look to the future for development of hydro as one example. And Wuskwatim is a good example that we engaged the Mistawasis Cree nation, that their engagement

has to be as full and equal partners in that initiative, and I think it worked out all right. As we get into the area of Keeyask and Conawapa, the same will apply. And without a participation of First Nations, certainly, I think that we can't expect hydro development to occur.

Currently, an example of Manitoba Hydro's regular employees, currently we have a rough figure of 40 per cent of them being of Aboriginal ancestry. So we're very glad about that reality and, certainly, it's something that we're very proud of. And as we step into the future, we've got to continue our efforts in ensuring that those numbers improve and that participation in all facets of development, whether they be in the development of an all-weather road, whether they be in other areas, it has to involve the participation of Aboriginal people.

* (16:40)

I think gone are the days where we import workers from the south to come and make their fortune and then leave without involving the local community members is something that we can't revisit as we have in the past.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the minister for that answer.

The minister mentioned the East Side Road Authority. I'm wondering if the minister could indicate to me how many employees are there currently with the East Side Road Authority.

Mr. Robinson: I'll have to take that question under notice and I'll reply to the—to my colleague by letter in—as soon as possible. Certainly, I could provide the member with other information relating to the east-side road initiative, and I'll gladly table a couple of copies of the last transportation initiative update that we had from the east side which I'll gladly do that, Mr. Chairperson, and certainly the member, my colleague, can have a look and peruse that. But, with the specific numbers of people that are employed, I'll have to get back to her by letter.

Mrs. Stefanson: I wonder if the minister could indicate to me what the overall budget is for the East Side Road Authority—annual budget.

Mr. Robinson: Because it's slightly separate from our direct responsibility as Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I don't have the numbers handy. But it's again something that I'll take under notice and get back to the member as soon as I can with the entire

budget, including the number of employees that are currently at the East Side Road Authority.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay. And I'm wondering if the minister could also indicate, or get back to me if he needs to, on who the senior managements of the East Side Road Authority, including the salaries that they make as well.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I will. I will concur with the—I will discuss this matter with the CEO, Mr. Ernie Gilroy, and I will certainly get the information that the member requests.

Mrs. Stefanson: Can the minister—just some background on the east-side road itself, when did the east-side road—when did the project initially start?

Mr. Robinson: There's a long history. I remember back in late—I don't want to date myself here—but probably about 1968, 1969, when these two gentlemen in front of me and myself were young leaders in the community—well, we weren't even leaders; we were just kind of hanging around the leaders. We first heard about the desire of our leaders at that time that wanted a connection to give them all-weather-road accessibility to the bigger world. And I know that my colleague, Mr. Bostrom, will recall that dialogue that used to happen with the late Alfred Cook from Bloodvein and former Premier Ed Schreyer and also others like Harry Cook from the Bloodvein community, and it took all these many years for this to become a reality.

We have—it's something that's been asked for since many of these current leaders—you know, when I have discussions with them, they'll tell us that they've been talking and hearing about this since they were children and these are men in their 40s and 50s now. So we have long been wanting this, and certainly we have heard this loud and clear. And, having been the representative for that region for the last 20-plus years now, or just about 20 years rather, this is a priority that we have made within this government to try and do what we can to ensure the opportunity be provided to the people living on the east side. And the east-side road itself follows a winter road cut, within that—within the area, and we first announced this in 2008; but, of course, leading up to 2008's Throne Speech announcement, we had talked it over with a lot of people. Now, I don't want to say there's just going to be one road; there's two phases of this.

The first part of it is commencing on Highway 304 at Hollow Water to Bloodvein, from Bloodvein

to Berens River, from Berens River to Poplar River, and some spurs to Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids.

The second part of this is an east-west link between the Island Lake communities and the north-central communities of Manto Sipi, also known as God's River, and Bunibonabee, also known as Oxford House, and Gods Lake Narrows. So the link there will come out in the Norway House area; Sea Falls, I believe is the route, so that is the long-term plan.

Now, what's got to be understood here is that this is an initiative that's been tackled by this government alone. With the current fiscal reality, it's going to take a hell of a long time to build this road. My rough guess is that it'll likely be 20 years or more, if it's going to be just provincial money. Now, if we were to partner with the national government, the federal government, this road could be done a lot quicker, and certainly that's something, since day one, since I've been given the responsibility of ESRA, that I've been doing. And, together with my colleague the minister of transportation and infrastructure, we have been—with every successive federal Aboriginal Affairs minister there has been, we have made our pitch. And I was saddened, the other day, when minister, former Minister Toews, minister of Public Safety for the Government of Canada, decided to take a new road in life because he was certainly an ally in a lot of the things that we were doing with respect to connecting up these communities with the bigger road.

And, while I'm on the topic, I certainly want to put on the record that, having served with Mr. Toews when he was the Attorney General for the province of Manitoba and I was a member of the opposition, I certainly want to wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours, and I know that he'll do well wherever he winds up and the work that he's going to be doing in the time to come.

So I just wanted to put that as one of the challenges that we're faced with in the work that we're trying to do, that if we had the participation, the full participation, of the federal government, that we could build this road a lot faster than it's going at this point in time because what we are using currently are provincial dollars.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that. How many miles total is the road that the minister is talking about?

Mr. Robinson: On page 2 of the material that I tabled, Mr. Chair, will give you Highway 304, the little map on the right hand side of the paper, the all-season road—it'll give you an idea of the distance from Hollow Water to the Bloodvein First Nation. If my memory serves me, it's about 130 kilometres or maybe just a little more than that to Bloodvein.

* (16:50)

From Bloodvein to Berens River, I think we are probably looking at about another 140 kilometres. From Berens River to Poplar River, we're looking at roughly 160 kilometres, give or take. And with the spurs to Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids, which go eastward, I would have to say that the distance would probably be in the 80-to-90-kilometre range.

And I'm just giving some rough estimates here but, certainly, the people that are more familiar with this would have more information than I'm providing, certainly. But just to give my colleague, the member for Tuxedo, an idea as to what we're talking about, and the magnitude, that is basically it. And it's along the east side, or along the west side—east side of Lake Winnipeg, as the map indicates, in what I provided here as the updated transportation initiative of the east-side road.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the minister for that, and I can see one of the questions that I did have, as well, was how much has been completed thus far of the total project. I was going to ask about the dollar figures now. I believe those projects completed, or nearing completion, on page 2 and 3 of this brochure. I could add those up, I guess, and that's—is—would that be the total of what's been expended so far?

Mr. Robinson: Part of the arrangement that we have done, and we've taken extreme measures in ensuring that there's a lot of accountability in this because, well, we realize, you know, when you're dealing with projects like this, that they'll come under scrutiny. We have made arrangements and, certainly, that the communities have been fully engaged right from the outset, in that the contracts with the East Side Road Authority are done in a proper way that will meet the standards as established by the laws of this province.

We have community benefits arrangements with each of the communities. We have community benefits agreements, for example, with the community of Hollow Water for their portion, which goes northward from the community of Hollow Water, and also with the community of Bloodvein—

which, their portion also required us to call on the federal government. And, certainly, the federal government helped us on the connector road portion, and we need their help, obviously, on building the connecting roads that are going to be necessary in fully enabling the transportation system as we look forward.

The community benefits arrangements—agreements vary in value with each of these communities, depending on the work that has to be done. The community of Bloodvein, as an example, the stretch between Bloodvein and the community of Hollow Water southward, requires two bridges to be built at Long Body Creek and the Bloodvein River. So those are additional costs that were factored in.

Further north, we have, in the Red Sucker Lake area, we built a road—we built a bridge that, approximately, as the member will note, required the help of 25 local workers to install the bridge at the Red Sucker River area of the province. So, it is benefiting the communities, but financial controls are certainly being factored in, as we move on with this project. And I believe that the East Side Road Authority team have been very diligent in their efforts in ensuring that this occurs.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just looking at the projects completed or nearing completion in this brochure that you gave me—or that the minister gave me, it mentions there's about 12 tenders or contracts here. And I noticed that of the 12, 11 are—they are a contract and with a number associated with them, and the other one says tender and R3. What's the difference between a contract and a tender in this process?

Mr. Robinson: Well, the contract is with the community to agree on certain things. Obviously, the tendering process requires us to go outside of the community because we don't have the necessary capacity and the equipment that would allow us to do those—to do that work that is necessary.

For example, we've had to go outside of the communities for the bridges—that's one example, and also the specialized work that's required and the dynamite work to build the gravel pits, as an example. So we've had to go outside the community because, certainly, that capacity doesn't exist in many of those communities. So, again, we had to go through the tendering process to ensure that the due diligence required was done in a proper way and the contracts are done with the communities.

We have—the communities that I've described in—on the southern portion of this, which include Hollow Water, Bloodvein, Berens River, Poplar River, Pauingassi, Little Grand Rapids, the four Island Lake communities and the north central communities of God's Lake Narrows, Manto Sipi and Bunibonibee, so they've all been active in this and we have community benefits agreements with all these communities that I described.

Mrs. Stefanson: I assume for each of these contracts there was a tender process that was utilized, and I'm just wondering if the minister could indicate what that tender process is?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the tendering process would be like anything we would use within the Province of Manitoba. The same principles would apply.

Mrs. Stefanson: Are there any specific—like is there a specific criteria that is used. For example, I mean, I know that a lot of this is, you know, want to rely on employing people within the communities—local communities. Is—within the tendering process, is there certain criteria that there's a certain number of employees that need to come from those surrounding communities or anything of that nature?

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, on some of the training activity, we wanted to make sure that the people in the communities have opportunities in learning the work required in building or constructing a road. But, certainly, in other areas, where outside help had to be called, in specialized training, if you will, certainly, that was taken into consideration and we have employed that to the best of our ability.

* (17:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: And so in each of these instances, I assume, that, you know, there were a number of bidders that came in with—that, obviously, would have to meet certain criteria that you mention. How was it in the end decided the—who would end up—which company, or so on, would end up with the contracts in the end? Was it specific, like, was it mostly—did it have to do with the lowest bidder or were there things that were taken into consideration beyond just the dollar figures?

Mr. Robinson: Again, as I previously responded, I believe capacity, and, of course, the lowest bidder, and any other business transaction is how the East Side Road Authority conducted the business.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'd just like to ask the minister a couple of questions here in regards

to the east-side road. With the First Nations people being trained on the construction side of it, does the minister have any numbers as to how many people have been trained, like, say, operating heavy equipment, and does he have any idea of, say, for instance, in five years down the road, will there be enough trained people there that they'll be able to just use all First Nations people to do the project?

Mr. Robinson: I can report to my colleague from La Verendrye, certainly, we're very proud of the work that the East Side Road Authority has done, and, of course, when we were looking for an agency of government, if you will, we attached it to the Manitoba Floodway Authority, and we felt that was the best fit because of the experience that they had in doing the work with the floodway here in the southern portion of the province.

I can't give you specific numbers on the number of people that have been trained to date, but, certainly, what I can report is that the number that have been trained are, by a long shot, you know, a pretty good number, and, again, in my reply to the critic, the member for Tuxedo, I will certainly copy the member for La Verendrye to get those specific numbers that he has requested.

And, certainly, to date, because the project is relatively new, I can't give you a precise number as to how many people have been trained, how many people are working. Certainly, the desire would be that, in the years ahead, that we have some skilled labour in that region, because what we haven't talked about, certainly, up until now, because we have to get to the first portion, obviously, is going to be the maintenance, the factors that surround that. That certainly has to be a consideration further on down the road, if you will, and we will try—we will provide those numbers that he requests as quickly as possible.

Mr. Smook: I'd like to ask the minister, like, I've been on that road several times and I'm, you know, proud of the job they're doing up there. I think it's great to see a road that's going to be opening up the east side.

But who makes the decisions on to—as to how the projects will be forwarded? Example I want to give is Long Body and Loon Straits. There's bridges over those bodies of water, but yet one of the most important ones would be the bridge over the Bloodvein. There is an all-weather road right up to the Bloodvein, and then, from the Bloodvein to the First Nation of Bloodvein, there's an all-weather

road. Is there any reason why the bridge over the Bloodvein hasn't been completed yet?

Mr. Robinson: It's been a phased-in approach. As with any business dealings, as with any—when you have a certain responsibility, you have to do what is available to you in that year so that—and he asked specifically—the member for La Verendrye asked specifically about who makes the decision. I reported earlier on section 35 considerations, certainly the rights holders of that area would be Hollow Water First Nation and Bloodvein, so that has to be taken into consideration. Ultimately, the East Side Road Authority is responsible for ensuring that there is a level of agreement and satisfaction among the First Nations when we get into the area of sensitive issues, of a river crossing, as an example. Or there may be some areas that we've been told about where there has been burial sites or traditional areas that should not be touched or shouldn't be built on. With the knowledge—the traditional knowledge kept by each of the communities, that has to be taken into consideration. And the East Side Road Authority has developed a certain degree of capacity and expertise in ensuring that these matters are taken care of to ensure that those issues are taken care of in a respectful manner.

Mr. Smook: Mr. Minister, I was just wondering about: Is there a plan for how the road will proceed from now on? Are there certain tenders that are—be tendered sooner than others?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, there's been a schedule that's been developed and as my deputy minister advises, it's a staged approach. Obviously, it would be nice if we had all the money in the world and be able to do this immediately, because it's certainly a huge need, but it has to be staged. It's budgeted and the East Side Road Authority along with the communities that have contracts with the East Side Road Authority have to live within that budget.

Certainly, I could say that the projection, right now, is that the first phase of the east-side road, whatever it's called eventually, the tentative opening of that first section of road between Hollow Water and Bloodvein will likely be in the fall of 2014, so that's ambitious and that's again with the resources of the provincial government.

Mr. Smook: And, Mr. Minister, has the tender for the bridge over the Bloodvein been let yet?

Mr. Robinson: I'll seek to get that information for the member and contact him directly by letter.

Mr. Smook: Yes, the reason I ask these questions—it almost seems like, in order for, say, the Bloodvein First Nation community to take advantage of this for the, you know, economic benefits and that, that they would want to proceed in such a way that they would be able to, you know, open up the road into Bloodvein as soon as possible. Like, the Rice Lake road, which comes from, I guess, the 304 up to the Bloodvein River is approximately 90 kilometres, and it's been a road that's been in existence for probably 30 years. So, I just kind of wonder why, like, they are building a super highway on one side of the Bloodvein, you go on the other side of the Bloodvein, it's a beautiful super highway, but there's no bridge over the Bloodvein, and I was just wondering what the reasoning for that was.

* (17:10)

Mr. Robinson: Well, there's always been the winter road cut which has been used for a number of years from Hollow Water—for many years now from Hollow Water to Bloodvein, and it's almost a road that you can call seasonal, I guess, pretty much—or a pioneer road, I believe is what they used to call it. Certainly, it's less challenging than it would be north of Bloodvein. I don't want to say that it's not challenging between Bloodvein and Hollow Water, but it's more challenging because we're talking about rougher terrain north of Bloodvein. We're talking about muskeg, and that is why the extra work is required, and it's over, like I said, an existing winter road that's been cleared for such and has been used for a number of years. But the additional work that's required in—between the Bloodvein and the Berens River area is something that extra work is required.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just let me start out with a question for the minister related to infrastructure. Which of the budgeted items here, perhaps capital grants, for example, would be eligible for funding under the revenue generated by the addition of 1 per cent PST?

Mr. Robinson: We've just been talking about the East Side Road Authority for the last few minutes, but I can't tell the member for River Heights with certainty as to whether or not that would apply under the 1 per cent increase. But, certainly, when we talk about the 1 per cent increase, I think that all members in this House have been very clear that we are trying to deal with the infrastructure needs of all Manitobans. What we are talking about with the East Side Road Authority and the issues that we are dealing with on—with Aboriginal and Northern

Affairs are issues that have been ongoing, but, certainly, I think that in time it would probably fall under that category as well, that the member for River Heights, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is mentioning.

Mr. Gerrard: I—just a little bit of—let me clarify. The—my understanding that the funding for the building of the east-side road, for the construction, would fall under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation, or at least that's where the estimate would be.

For the Estimates for the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, there is a—in this budget, Estimates of expenditure, on page 31, for example, there would be a capital grants amount of \$3.962 million, and I presume that in terms of the Estimates for the department specifically, that that would be the item in particular where there may be infrastructure items that could be eligible for funding under the PST. And just trying to get some clarification—you know, would part of it or would all of that \$3.962 million be eligible for funding under the revenue generated by the PST?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the money we're talking about under the East Side Road Authority are not a part of this section of our Estimates process, Mr. Chair. So, just wanted to let the member know. Certainly, the matters that we're assigned to talk about in this section of Estimates are contained within the Estimates information that I provided for the perusal of all members of this House and certainly I don't want to venture into a dialogue that's outside of the realm and the scope of what we're expected to conclude with here today in this Estimate's process.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay. Now the—let me move on to another area and that is the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs is responsible for having a consultation unit which is to provide consultations or to facilitate consultations by the Crown and by other departments with Aboriginal communities, and I understand that there's a fund associated with that. There is a policy which—from the government's website, is designated the Interim Provincial Policy for Crown Consultations with First Nations, which my understanding was generated before the—as an interim discussion item for a meeting in June in 2010, I think in Brokenhead community, and I'm just wondering, is that interim provincial policy being used as a de facto provincial policy at this juncture or was there some amendments which came out of the June 2010 meeting or subsequently?

Mr. Robinson: Certainly the—I recall the meeting that the member is talking about in June 2010 at the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation and I recall that we as a government had offered the First Nations leadership of this province a working formula which we believed would address the obligations of this government under section 35 in the duty to consult and accommodate in a meaningful way for the First Nations communities in this province. And what we did at that time—and we followed that up with a letter to each of the First Nations, and at that time the chairpersons of the Chiefs Committee on Consultation and Accommodation were Chief Arlen Dumas and Chief Derek Nepinak, who is now the grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, was a formula which we felt was workable, which also got into the area of revenue sharing. So we thought that was a pretty strong move by a government.

The Province of Manitoba recognizes that it has a duty to consult in a meaningful way with communities—Aboriginal communities, I'll say, when any proposed provincial law regulation, decision or action may potentially infringe upon or adversely affect the exercise of treaty or Aboriginal right of that particular community. The Aboriginal Consultation Unit—and the primary role is to be facilitators for the complexity and to get through a lot of this stuff that's hard to understand by even so-called experts on Aboriginal Crown consultations for—not only in my department but other departments within government, has been challenging, continues to be challenging and will be challenging for the foreseeable future. The Aboriginal Consultation Unit has been busy doing that. It has enlisted a growing number of Crown Aboriginal consultations from nine back in 2008, 2009, the year of its inception, to 20 in 2012 and 2013. Four Crown Aboriginal consultation files were concluded in the year 2012 and 2013.

* (17:20)

One of the current consultations for the current year that we're in right now is the Keeyask Generation Project and transportation line along with the Lake Winnipeg east system improvement transmission project; the moose management strategy development, phase two; the St. François Xavier natural gas transmission pipeline project; the Dauphin Lake fisheries 2013; and the Point du Bois spillway replacement project.

In addition, there's consultation processes for lake—for Manitoba Hydro's finalization of the Water Power Act Licence for Lake Winnipeg Regulation,

and the Shellmouth Dam enhancement project, and the Shoal Lake First Nation 40, the Freedom Road, are in the early stages of planning.

So the Aboriginal Consultation Unit within our department is quite busy in trying to accommodate the various calls for consultations and meaningful accommodation for First Nations that requires such—and, certainly, my department has that responsibility.

Mr. Gerrard: My understanding that there was some funds set aside to facilitate such consultation and those funds might be allocated if there was a proposal coming from a First Nations community or a proposal coming from, you know, I don't know where else, a mining company or what have you. Can the minister tell us about this fund and what—how it works and where it would be reported in the Estimates?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the fund that the member from River Heights is referring to, is within the Treasury Board department, and I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, it was \$5 million over five years. A fund that could be utilized by First Nations in order for them to do the work that is necessary on their side. So I think that's the fund that he's referring to.

Mr. Gerrard: And just to complete that, is the role of the consultation unit to facilitate access to that fund? My understanding is that some First Nations who have applied have had to wait quite a long number of months to get approval for funding. How is the process working?

Mr. Robinson: There's a process in place where the lead department, on such a project with a First Nation, jointly developed a plan, and that is submitted to Treasury Board for their consideration. And I can't really tell the member as to the amount of time it takes in order for a particular project to be granted approval or non-approval.

Mr. Gerrard: Now one of the areas where, you know, there's been a lot of discussion, and I think the minister has been involved, is in the future of some of the flood-affected communities, for example, Lake St. Martin. And perhaps the minister could tell me about the consultation process for Lake St. Martin in terms of their community in the aftermath of the flood.

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, the flood of 2011 and the ones that were affected, and the ones we've heard about a lot in the—in media and on the street—Lake St. Martin, Pinaymootang, Little Saskatchewan and

Dauphin River—has been very challenging. However, I am very happy to report that today I had a look at a PCR that was finalized, I believe, yesterday, with the Lake St. Martin First Nation, approving the land selected for their new community. So, you—I haven't had the opportunity—you've been the representative for that area—I haven't had the opportunity of reporting that to you, so I was happy about that development. They've identified land for a community expansion process, and they've hired a consulting company to work with them and also to do the environmental work and the land-use assessments, along with the dealing of the rural municipality of Grahamdale, which is also a consideration and has been a consideration all this time. We know that that work has been carrying on.

With the staff of Mr. Bostrom, we have also worked upon the issues of not only Lake St. Martin, but, indeed, Little Saskatchewan, Dauphin River and Pinaymootang. And what we've done just to be certain is we've created four tables—four working tables to ensure that the needs and the aspirations of all these four communities located on the east side of the Fairford control structure are dealt with in a positive manner, are dealt with in the same way. So we have been working and with Lake St. Martin. We have made that agreement and that is very new. It was either yesterday or today that the agreement was finalized, and we received the information by way of band council resolution in our office today to just advise us about that latest development.

With respect to Little Saskatchewan, the issue is a little more complex because Little Saskatchewan First Nation owns about eight parcels of land within the RM of Grahamdale, so some work has to be carried out there. And some homes that were located or purchased by the Province of Manitoba and located at the old radar base at Gypsumville were selected by the Little Saskatchewan First Nation and—to be placed in an area of their choosing, within one of their—the lands that they owned.

And, certainly, I may tell the member that when the federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister Valcourt—I had the opportunity of working with Minister Valcourt and have met with him in April, May and June of this year, and I've had regular meetings with him. And we did meet with Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan First Nations individually. And one of the assurances that he gave to both First Nations as—was, to the best of his ability, on behalf of the federal government, he would move as quickly as possible in trying to

ensure that the land that they select would be designated reserve status as quickly as he could move on that front. So I commend my colleague, the federal minister, for that effort.

On Little Saskatchewan, there's some uncertainty as to where they want to have their permanent community located because there's still some outstanding work to be done. But, certainly, I could say that they've picked 34 unused homes from the provincial evacuation site at Gypsumville, along with—I believe it's six other homes, totalling 40, and a church—to be located in there, one of the areas that they're going to be settling in within the land that they own within the RM.

* (17:30)

But arrangements—certain agreements, have to be finalized between the RM, and we certainly have made it a point to have our staff maintain regular contact with the reeve of the RM of Grahamdale, and she certainly has been a big help in ensuring the people are given a good opportunity to get back home to a more permanent location again.

And we certainly don't feel good about the length of time that they've had to be outside of their homelands. Certainly, I—from whatever my government has been—if we're at fault, I apologize for that. Certainly, I do. But we are doing our best to ensure that the people are moved back to an area that they're more comfortable with near their homelands.

And we also have a working relationship with the Dauphin River First Nation. And, certainly, Minister Valcourt and the federal government has to be commended for appointing Mr. Sid Dutchak, who's been a tremendous help in being able to do the work that is necessary to get the people back home. And we have done that to the best of our ability over the last several months, coming on two years now, or past two years now—26 months, I get—25 months of—26 months since the people from that area have had to leave their homes.

Mr. Gerrard: Perhaps the minister could provide a little bit more information on Dauphin River, because there were quite a lot of people who were out of their homes for a long time there, and just where we stand in terms of being able to get people back.

Mr. Robinson: With respect to Dauphin River, a part of the negotiation with respect to that is that the Province proposed a 722 easement line that will affect the building structures in the existing location

in the Dauphin River First Nation community. Introduction of the 722 easement line meant that the homes within the community would need to be relocated and built inland within their community.

Subsequently, Dauphin River has submitted a counter-proposal that allows the community to remain in its current location, as it also addresses the 722 easement line requirement, and the proposal requires all homes to comply with the 722 feet elevation underside of floor joists.

There is agreement between the federal government and the provincial government to equally share in a replacement of housing and infrastructure, and we're certainly moving on that.

Dauphin River has made a selection of provincial Crown land south of the existing reserve for reserve creation by Canada. Manitoba has agreed to transfer this selection and the reserve creation process is currently under way.

What we have to do next is that the Province and the federal government have to review the proposal, and we will be responding as quickly as we can, as part of the negotiations with this community. And also the Province will be seeking approval to cost share approximately 24 homes that require repair and 35 homes that require replacement along with the infrastructure requirements.

And once the First Nation housing and easement proposal has been approved, it's expected that Dauphin River will hold a community consultation to solicit feedback from their own members on the proposal and hold a referendum vote on that proposition.

But, certainly, back in December, my deputy minister and I—Mr. Bostrom—met with Chief John Stagg, and along with the people that he had working with him, and we were very satisfied with the willingness of Chief Stagg in trying to come to some conclusion and some satisfaction for the people that he represents.

The difference with Dauphin River and the other communities is that Dauphin River also has adjacent to it the community council or the community of Dauphin River which is under the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. Certainly, when we've taken matters with respect to Dauphin River it's been with a view of also accommodating the needs of the citizens of the community of Dauphin River, and their mayor certainly has been very mindful of that and has been

very co-operative in the work that we have been doing.

While I'm on the subject with respect to Fairford or Pinaymootang, the Province has received a written confirmation from Chief in council that the final requirement of 15 houses to address their housing needs for evacuees for—and members that have a severe mold has been received, and we are trying to accommodate that. We are informed that the federal government has committed to funding 15 houses. The homes will be built by the First Nation themselves, and negotiation meeting has been planned. And I don't know the results of that meeting that was held with the Pinaymootang First Nation to discuss the final settlement issues, but, certainly, it's something that has been addressed and we're very pleased with the co-operation of Chief Woodhouse and the Pinaymootang community, and I think that he's been a very good person to work with as all the other chiefs have been as well.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the minister referenced, in the case of Dauphin River, that there was going to be community consultations and a referendum. Is that the same process that is being used—or has been used with regard to Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I should have been more clear on that. Yes, it is pretty much the same method. The working group that the Province and the federal government have been in engaged in with each of the First Nations requires, of course, band council resolutions so that we're not out of step with each other. So that's been attended to. And, certainly, with the Lake St. Martin First Nation, with their future home, they are going to be holding, again, a referendum just to—for certainty that they all agree to the sight that has been picked for their community as will be the case with Little Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gerrard: And just to be clear in terms of, for example, Lake St. Martin, you have a band council resolution. That's the step before the referendum, so the referendum presumably would then be coming up shortly. Is that how I would interpret?

* (17:40)

Mr. Robinson: The band council resolution that we're in receipt of, and I don't have it in my—I don't have it on me—selects the area that Lake St. Martin desires. The referendum will deal with the easement and also the other areas that are associated with that, and that'll follow what we receive today. And we

hope—and, certainly, the band, I believe, the First Nation and its members are of the same mind that they would like to get to that area as quickly as possible.

Mr. Gerrard: Is that referendum part of the consultation process that would be funded through the Treasury Board funds, or is that separate, or how does that work?

Mr. Robinson: It's part of the arrangement that has been developed between the First Nation, the federal government and the provincial government, and it comes as part of the final settlement arrangement.

Mr. Gerrard: There's been a fair bit in the news recently in terms of the Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters and the—what will happen in terms of the flood evacuees, whether the Red Cross will take over as the critical—with a critical role in this area. Can the minister provide an update on the status of where we are right now?

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, that falls under the responsibility of the federal government, and I had the opportunity of meeting with the federal minister, my federal counterpart, Minister Valcourt, back in June, and at that time, we discussed the issue, and he advised the Province of Manitoba through myself that the Red Cross was being approached to carry on with the required services for long-term evacuees, that responsibility. And, currently, discussions, to my understanding, are under way with the federal government and the Red Cross, and to some degree, I would imagine, with First Nations.

But, certainly, that's the responsibility of the federal government. And I'm not trying to play a jurisdictional game here, but that is the reality of how our governments work. And the Red Cross and the federal government are currently engaged in designing how this will work in the event that the Red Cross is required for their services for long-term evacuees.

Mr. Gerrard: Part of the reason for bringing this up is there—if there are individuals who are evacuated and, you know, have issues with what's happening in terms of support or not support, you know, are they to go now to the Red Cross or to the federal government? Or who's making decisions at this juncture?

Mr. Robinson: To the best of my knowledge, the First Nations authority, through their chief and council, are the body that people ought to be going to. At the same time, as far I know, the Manitoba

Association of Native FireFighters are very much in the picture. They served notice on the federal government that they would no longer be providing the required services for long-term evacuees and that thus the action of the federal government in trying to find other ways of addressing the needs of long-term evacuees, and that is why discussions are currently under way with the Red Cross. And we anticipate that the Red Cross and the federal government will come to an agreement that'll be long lasting and for a longer term in the very near future.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay, just to—for clarification, are the Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters still involved or not, and if the band, for example, receives a request or deals with an issue, where does the band now go to?

Mr. Robinson: To the best of my knowledge, the First Nations still deal with the Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters until such time, I suppose, that there is that solidified agreement between the Red Cross and the federal government.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable minister—honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Chairman, and through you to the minister, just a little follow-up on the questions, and I appreciate the update as to where the individuals from the various reserves are located and what you're expecting to do in the long term. But could you put some timelines around this? As you indicated earlier, two years is an awfully long time to be displaced, and I still don't have a feel for how quickly this process is going to move to any results.

Mr. Robinson: You know what makes me feel a little better and a little more relieved now is that we have the collaborative effort of the federal government. We have a good federal representative in Mr. Sid Dutchak, who's been working with the Province, the federal government and the First Nations, and he's determined, as we are, to get the people home. I wish the people didn't have to be away from their homes this long and away from their traditional homelands. I can't with certainty, and I would be lying, I would not be telling the truth, if I were to tell my colleague from Portage la Prairie a timeline just from the top of my head. I would hope that would be in quick order, and we're certainly

aiming for that and all parties are of the same mind, I believe.

Mr. Wishart: Well, and thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the minister for that answer. I certainly share his desire to see people back in their homes or back in a new location, in some cases, as quickly as possible. I do hope that with better co-operation, as you've indicated, that things will move along quickly.

Would it be possible to ask the minister to update the—us on that at future times, as to the progress, because we're—you know, two years is a really long time, and we want to see this move to some resolution in as timely a manner as is possible given the limitations that are in place, so would it be fair to ask the minister to bring us an update in the future as it becomes available to him?

Mr. Robinson: We'll certainly take those words of advice from the member for Portage la Prairie, but I think, moreover, we would offer the critic and other members from across the way briefings whenever they feel it's appropriate to have a briefing on the issues that we're dealing with. And, of course, I would afford you, as the member representing these communities, the same opportunity as well.

Mr. Wishart: Certainly appreciate that, and I'll probably make an effort to contact the minister's office on a regular basis and see if we can continue to keep this moving.

I wanted to ask a quick question on the east side, because, of course, not only is the minister responsible, but your constituency covers a fair portion of that. There should be some opportunities with the opening up with the—of the east side with the east-side road to the communities in there. And I just wanted a brief evaluation of not only the opportunities in terms of commercial interests and perhaps tourism interests that you see, but any potential problems that might be associated with that as well.

* (17:50)

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, one of the main initiatives and one of the main desires of the people that live on the east side has been, of course, the east-side road, and we're proceeding on working on that to the best of our ability. And the member may not have been in the Chamber about some of the challenges we're faced with building that road on the east side, because what we're doing with that is using, simply, provincial dollars.

But certainly the aspirations of the many in the communities—and I've had the good fortune of representing that area for quite some time now. Certainly, the opportunities that they would like to see are things relating to tourism, the natural beauty of that area. And I've been told, repeatedly, since representing that area, that's one area that they would like to protect from major development, destroying the land, those kind of things, over the years. And I've not only heard that since being a member of this Chamber, but certainly as a young man I've heard about the sacredness of what they call Pimachiowin Aki, the land that gives life, and the sacredness of the land and how we must protect that part of Mother Earth, and how important it is to do.

Certainly, the natural beauty of the land, the communities have embarked upon initiatives like the creation of EAST Inc., which is a tourism initiative that allows people to go on paddling or canoe trips down the Manigotagan, the Bloodvein, and the Berens River. And many people have done that from the Ontario side coming out of Lake Winnipeg over the years.

So that, with the activities that are going on, hunting, or what they call wildlife experiences, there are certainly things that the people that live there are trying to promote, and certainly we, this government, has been trying to work with them and making investments—maybe not large enough investments—in order for them to promote that part of the province, because it is, indeed, a gem. And, if people have not been in that region yet, I certainly want to advocate on behalf of the people that live there, because it's a beautiful area of the world, not only our province, but, indeed, the world.

And the protection of the boreal forest is certainly something that the past leaders—I recalled the late Dave Courchene from Sagkeeng, the late Alfred Cook, Harry Cook, past leaders that have lived in that region, talk about the sacredness of that land, and how they would like to protect it into the future, not only thinking about our generation but, indeed, the generations that are going to come after us. And we are committed to doing that as well, and listening to their advice.

And I don't want to open up a debate here on talking about, as an example, a transmission line coming down the east side because it will be much cheaper by building down the east side. You know, I've been there, I've done that. I've been criticized for the position that I've taken as individual member of

this Assembly, but I have taken it with the confidence that the people are—have my back, and I'm assured by their willingness to protect this land that is regarded as the land that gives life.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr.—the member for—I'm struggling here. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the comments.

But really what I was getting at is nothing to do with the east or west side versus Bipole III. But there has long been talk of taking advantage of ecotourism and more regular types of tourism like hunting and fishing and guiding that are associated with that. And, yet to do that, you have to be in a position to take advantage of that when the opportunity arises.

I'm wondering if the steps are being taken to take advantage of those opportunities as they arise, to get the right type of facilities, to plan ahead, to take advantage of that, because I do recognize that it is a very beautiful area, and it provides some opportunities, not only for Canadians but for other people around the world who would want to see it. But we have to have the right types of facilities as part of the process, and I just was looking for an update on what the process is and whether anything has been initiated.

Mr. Robinson: One area that I talked about was EAST Inc., which is a relatively small agency that operates independent of government and works directly with the communities. And I believe their board of directors are primarily made up of people that live in the communities of the east side—the lower east side, particularly. And they have tried to promote some of the aspirations, including fishing derbies. They did an effort here a couple of years ago—it was a regional derby that was run concurrently in all the communities on the east side, and I can't recall how many years ago that was—that would've been about three years ago—and it actually worked out all right. And they got sponsorships from the private sector, and I believe the winner won a—I don't even want to guess what the winner won. I think it was a boat or something like that or a canoe. But whatever it was, those are some of the initiatives.

And each of those communities has their own aspirations. For example, Little Grand Rapids is home to some fishing lodges, and they're doing quite well. And, certainly, with a little bit of help by the Province, I think that we could help a little more. I understand that the Tourism Department is working and looking at ways it could expand its attention to the region, but that's an answer could be better

responded to by my colleague, the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. But, certainly, I think that the efforts that we are making are, maybe, perhaps not enough, and we should be paying more attention to that region, because it's one of the untapped areas. The hunting experiences that big game hunters have experienced in that area from Manigotagan north to the areas of the Island Lake region and beyond are something that are just indescribable because of the beauty of that area. And we certainly want to do everything we can to assist the people that live in that region with—in whatever way we can to continue promoting that area for its natural beauty.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, and I just have a couple of quick questions in reference to the Estimates books tabled by the minister. So I'm just going to go through those questions before we can proceed with the line by line.

On page 8, we've got a line that is entitled Agreements Implementation, and I notice that there's a significant decrease over last year. I'm wondering if the minister could explain what that is.

*(18:00)

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the matter that the member raises there relating to northern—the northern flood agreements and being able to meet the expectations of a central government, and we had to give up our share and that was areas that we felt were—we were able to give up money. It was in the areas of the Northern Flood Agreement and areas relating to that. And, because we are doing a relatively good job and we're not the biggest department in this government but I think that we're quite effective, and the staff that work in this department have been very effective, and we have—we are able to do this reduction at this time simply because of the lack of the requirement of the initial amount of money that was required in 2012 and 2013.

Mrs. Stefanson: Aboriginal Development Programs, just further down the line item on that page, there's a reduction in that as well. Was there a program that has been cut, and, if so, what is that program, or is just general savings across the board?

Mr. Robinson: We had to make some reductions from the Aboriginal Economic and Resource Development Fund, and it was an area that we were able to afford. That fund is for—is generally used for core funding organizations like the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Association of

Friendship Centres, and other such organizations, so we had the opportunity of taking a reduction and a hit on that one.

Mrs. Stefanson: And is that—does that also include the Economic Growth Funds as well as the Aboriginal Development Programs?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, the Aboriginal Economic and Resource Development Fund, which is commonly given the acronym AERD, is a fund that's into its 12th year now. It's an economic and resource development fund, and in 2012-2013 the fund itself supported about 47 projects, for a total of over a million dollars in grants. The total budgeted value of the 47 projects is over \$14 million, and a total revenue leverage from other sources, other than the provincial government, for the project was over \$12 million. So we're very proud of the maximization of a relatively low-funded program within government.

Now the First Peoples economic development growth fund, the member from Tuxedo mentions, is a separate program. It received approval from Canada that it would be also delivering their Aboriginal Business Development Program, and they have that responsibility.

The First Peoples Economic Growth Fund will be administering and delivering a \$2.25 million in equity contribution dollars for eligible Manitoba First Nations businesses over the next 14 months. And contributions after fiscal year 2011 and '12 are dealt with by Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in accordance with the MOU that was signed between the Province of Manitoba and the First Nations gaming economic development fund.

A new multi-year agreement will be negotiated in 2013 and '14 between the AMC and Manitoba to address the \$25-million commitment that was made to the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund. The fund does report that the following program delivery since its inception—and I just want to read this out to the member—between September 23rd, 2008 and November 2012, the dollars approved, there is 59 loans approved to date of \$12,323,899, and the dollar is leveraged to have been \$35,466,185. So that brings the total to over \$46 million. And 74 support applications have been approved to date totalling about \$677,797, and the total amount of money leveraged has been \$252,718,000, bringing the total to over \$856,000, so.

It is a program that is designed to allow people that don't ordinarily have an opportunity to get into the area of business, that opportunity. And we're very proud of the effort that has been made by the board of directors which consists of people like Pat Turner who is originally from—well, she is from Grand Rapids; still lives there—an independent business owner and a former leader of her own community, along with Bob Silver and Bob Brennan, Rosa Walker. All these people have a lot of experience, and, you know, this group of people don't even take a per diem or an honorarium for the work that they do on this board of directors. And they're led by the very capable leadership by the lay-capable leadership of Mr. Ian Cramer, the CEO. And we're very proud of the efforts and the work that they have done to date. So, we have nothing but good things to say about that organization. The First Peoples Economic Growth Fund is, indeed, a very worthy program. And I know that there's been a couple of write-ups in the local newspaper about the program in recent weeks, and we're very proud about the progress it has made.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that. Moving on to page 17, under Administrative Support. It seems that there's been a full-time employee that is no longer with this area of the department and—but yet the dollars have gone up. Can the minister explain that, the amount that is—the expenses have gone up from \$373,000 to \$380,000. Can the minister explain that?

* (18:10)

Mr. Robinson: Yes. If the member would permit me, I'll have to take that under notice and get back to her. I don't have the details before me here.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay, yes, if the minister could get back to me on that, that would be greatly appreciated.

Just on page 23, under Remoteness, it seems to have gone up from 17,000 to 26,000. I'm just wondering why that would be from last year over this year?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, that's a \$9,000 difference. We don't have the details before us here. Allow me to get back to the member on that as well.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay, I just want to thank the minister for that. If he could get back to me on that, as well, that's fine.

And, Mr. Chair, I'm prepared at this point in time to move towards the line by line.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,994,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$129,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the minister's salary contained in resolution 19.1.

At this point, we request the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, I move

THAT line item 19.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo

THAT the line item 19.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order. Is there any debate on the motion?

Mrs. Stefanson: Just very briefly, Mr. Chair, it's—it is unfortunate this government is—and all the ministers—are in favour of a PST increase that we don't believe was done in a very democratic way, and so these are the reasons why we are moving towards reducing their salary in such—or for those reasons. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further debate, shall the motion pass?

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mrs. Stefanson: Appreciate a recorded vote on that, please, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there a second member to support that—the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

A formal vote has been requested. As per the agreement of the House today, all requests for a formal vote are to be deferred until Monday.

Accordingly, this motion shall be deferred until Monday, and because the motion is deferred, the final resolution for the department must also be deferred until the vote on the motion is completed.

Also, as per the agreement of the House, the committee can now set aside the Estimates for the Department of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs, and proceed to the consideration of the next department, the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

The committee recessed at 6:15 p.m.

The committee resumed at 6:17 p.m.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson, I'm pleased to present to this committee for its consideration the 2013-2014 Expenditure Estimates of the Department of Housing and Community Development. I look forward to engaging in a constructive discussion regarding the direction of our government has set out for the department in these Estimates.

On April 16th, 2013, our government outlined its funding commitments for this fiscal year in the provincial budget. Budget 2013 presents solutions that focus on building a better Manitoba and protecting families and businesses against an uncertain global economy and supports ALL Aboard, the province's poverty reduction strategy.

This year's budget provides 80–\$82.6 million for the Department of Housing and Community Development. Our government remains strongly committed to continue moving forward on our ALL Aboard poverty reduction strategy. We're focused on tackling the root causes of poverty through education and training, building and renewing affordable housing and maintaining important income support programs for low-income Manitobans. By creating, restoring, repairing and redeveloping housing, Housing and Community Development is creating better living in public housing, and working with local community to address local issues and develop capacity in support of Manitobans' well-being, while revitalizing neighbourhoods across the province.

We will maintain our commitment to providing access to quality, affordable and suitable housing, to supporting the neighbourhoods that are socially and economically inclusive and to creating healthy communities where Manitobans live, work and play.

We've worked hard to find ways to be more efficient through reducing administrative costs and reducing duplication between programs. We will invest in a number of key areas during the 2013-14 fiscal year. Housing investment enables neighbourhood revitalization, advances community development and improves investors' confidence in Manitoba. The department 'moraines' well positioned to deliver on its existing 1,500-unit commitment, to deliver affordable housing over five years.

As of March 31st, 2013, we have committed to developing 1,224 new, affordable housing units and 1,354 households with rent geared to income assistance. In 2013-14, the fifth and final year of the commitment, we will deliver a further 276 new affordable units and provide 146 more households with rent geared to income assistance. Projects added to the 1,500 commitment will include a number of family rental and seniors rental housing projects. In addition to this commitment, we are introducing a new three-year housing plan that includes 500 new social housing units and 500 new affordable housing units. We are also introducing rental housing construction tax credits, a new financial incentive

offered to the private and non-profit housing developers, to provide more rental housing—Manitoba communities.

* (18:20)

Over the next three years, we will invest a hundred million annually to restore and redevelop housing units in our portfolio. An additional \$34 million will be dedicated annually to repair existing stock and provide quality home environments for tenants.

We will continue to enhance housing quality and accessibility by renovating and repairing existing social housing for current and future tenants by undertaking major capital improvements such as new flooring, paint, cupboards, lighting, fixtures and appliances in tenant suites.

We will continue to alter the functionality of some social housing units to meet special housing needs of tenants such as seniors and large families. We will also continue to promote energy efficiency, water conservation upgrades and green components in the capital investment in the renovation of the social and affordable housing portfolio to maintain an acceptable standard of living and create healthier environments for tenants.

We will continue to support the co-operative housing sector and assist the development of new housing co-operatives to strengthen the housing environment and add to the housing choices available in our communities. We will move forward in our commitment to building healthy communities and improving the social and economic well-being of Manitobans by continuing to support volunteer and non-profit organizations in their activities, engaging local community forces in the restoration and repair of our properties and providing skills and apprenticeship training and employment opportunities for our tenants seeking access to the labour market.

I'd like to express my appreciation of housing community development staff for their ongoing work dedication to continuous improvement and commitment to the provision of high-quality service to Manitobans. I look forward to this committee's review of the Department of Housing and Community Development's Expenditure Estimates for 2013-2014 and welcome the comments of committee members.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Honourable Minister, for those opening comments.

Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, have any opening comments?

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Yes, I do, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the minister for her opening comments.

Mr. James Allum, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the housing issues in Manitoba. I have taken my new responsibility as critic very seriously and have taken the initiative to meet with many of the community development corporations as well as a number of groups that are involved in the management of the housing situations.

Some of the facilities and—certainly, viewed some of the facilities. Certainly, I've come to appreciate in more detail the housing challenge that we deal with here in Winnipeg and province wide. And, certainly, the interlinking but with a number of other areas of responsibility which will certainly have to be touched on and have to be part of the solution if we are to deal with the housing shortage as it exists now and probably will continue to exist for some time into the future.

But I look forward to the opportunity to ask a few questions of the minister. Some on the programs and new initiatives and some on the financial side of the operation of the department. I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting Chairperson (James Allum): Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we should defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with the consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff and staff from the official opposition to join us in the Chamber. Once they are seated, we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson. I'm joined today, this evening by Joy Cramer, the deputy minister; Darrell Jones, the CEO of Manitoba Housing; Craig Marchinko, the assistant deputy minister for Community Development and Strategic Initiatives; and Mala Sachdeva, the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer for Housing and Community Development; and

Lissa Donner of Family Services and Labour, who is executive director for Policy and Planning.

The Acting Chairperson (James Allum): Does the committee wish to proceed with these—through these Estimates in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mr. Wishart: As a global manner.

The Acting Chairperson (James Allum): The floor is now open for questions—Agreed? [*Agreed*]

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again, Madam Minister. We'll begin by looking at some of the staff positions. And I appreciate the staff that have joined this evening, and I've met a few of them and I look forward to meeting the rest.

Just looking through your organizational chart, you have one vacancy that is listed, that being in Housing Delivery. I just wondered how long that had been vacant and whether that still remains so.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, that position's been filled and an offer has gone out.

The Acting Chairperson (James Allum): The member asked that you repeat the answer.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That was a position, executive director position. The person retired and we have just finalized our competition now and an offer has gone out.

Mr. Wishart: Certainly, I appreciate that, and I hope the minister will speak up because the acoustics in here, as she knows, is a bit tricky at certain places and can be—can certainly be a challenge.

I want to move on from there, then, in terms of positions and staff positions from the previous year to this one. And there had been an indication that there had been no changes in the number of full-time equivalents, and yet, when reviewing the previous year's, we had a number that was different. I wonder if the minister could provide some explanation as to why there seems to be now one more staff position than there had been the previous year.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Both of those positions were transfers from other departments. One was for the non-profit strategy and the second was for the Agencies, Boards and Commissions that moved over

from Family Services and Labour. Oh, because the OAG made that recommendation. For an—okay—so, may I? So there was a transfer from Family Services and Labour for the Agencies, Boards and Commissions, and also upon the request or the recommendation from the Auditor General, we also hired one new staff person to assist in that office.

Mr. Wishart: I certainly appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate the response, Madam Minister. That explains why the number there doesn't concur. I did notice, going through the Estimates book, that there are a number of other places where the previous year's Estimates and this year's opening Estimates adjustment from 2012-13 did not align, and perhaps there's a simple explanation for that as there was for this, but do we need to go through this all line by line, or can you give me a kind of a global explanation as to why these numbers, the closing ones are the Estimates from 2012-13 and the ones for '13-14—the opening ones for '12-13 and the '13-14 book do not seem to be the same numbers?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Just for clarification, is the member from Portage la Prairie speaking about staffing numbers or just—[*interjection*—]financial numbers, too, you're seeing the difference.

Is the member—we're talking about numbers that have been reduced?

* (18:30)

Mr. Wishart: In some cases, they have been reduced. In some cases, they are higher. Just for example, on page 8, the Estimates from '12-13, which is listed as 1,748 actually appears in the previous year Estimates as 1,682. Why are these numbers different?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So what this represents is that it's an adjusted vote transfer, so that there was a change in that particular budget line. There may have been another position that was filled, so there was an increase in that budget line.

Mr. Wishart: And that would apply in that specific case, so that at any time during the Estimates books where we see a variance, it's because there was a change in the appropriation during that particular year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, that's correct. It could be a transfer, for example.

Mr. Wishart: Is it possible for the minister to provide a listing of these, because there are a

substantial number of them that are different, and perhaps a note of explanation, financially, as to why they're different? Especially the first two pages—there's quite a few.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Is the member speaking about pages 8 and 10? Yes, we will provide that information at a later date.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that. I don't want to have to grind through all of these on an individual basis, so that would certainly be appreciated.

I want to move on a little bit there. Certainly, one of the big changes has been the addition of some of the transfers and some of the different allocation of funds. I know that there's some money moving out of the Department of Housing, some to Children and Youth Opportunities, some to Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, and, of course, some that was moved in from Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade; I suspect that relates to the Start program, at least partially. I wondered if the minister could provide some explanation as to how that worked.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The transfer to ETT was related to training initiatives—funds that we transferred to them. And then the transfer to children's and youth opportunities was related to the School Resource Officer Program.

Mr. Wishart: And, in regards to the transfers from, there's \$431,000 there, from Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, and then down further there's actually a transfer back to them. What programs were these each for, then? *[interjection]* That's on page 8.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So the reference to the transfers of function was what happened last year is we took on—Housing and Community Development took on the responsibilities of the emergency homeless shelters across the province. And that is a reflection of money that we received to provide the financing to Siloam Mission and Thompson Homeless Shelter.

Mr. Wishart: So, just for clarification, which line appropriation would that be, then? That is the \$225,000?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: So, for the transfer, for the funds for the shelters, it came—you would see it in our budget line at 30-2b, and it was transferred from ETT 10-3A-3A.

Mr. Wishart: And that amount would be? That amount was?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Chairperson, \$431,000.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate that because the reference numbers you just gave me don't appear in my book, so I certainly appreciate an actual number.

The money that was transferred to Children and Youth Opportunities and Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade—\$391,225—and then Innovation, Energy and Mines—three—what were they for?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: As I have said, earlier, the \$391,000 was for the School Resource Officer Program, as well as the ETT money of \$225,000, that was for training initiatives. And the \$3,000 was for information and technology services.

Mr. Wishart: The ETT money was for a specific programs by any name?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It was for information technology services for Business Transformation and Technology, masterpiece maintenance, accounting fund module.

Mr. Wishart: That was for the environment, training and trade, those dollars? *[interjection]* I'd asked for that.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd thought you were referring to the \$3,000. You were referring to the three—the \$225,000?

That was for training initiatives. We have a very close relationship with ETT, where we are working on training community forces, and they are working very closely as we transform some of our housing units with their assistance.

Mr. Wishart: That's what I was trying to get to; that that was the amount used for that.

How many sites were worked on in this training process and how many workers were trained?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: While we're waiting for the details of that answer, I will provide some air time for the member.

I can confidently say that, over the last few years, that there have been over 200 people who have been participating. There were different pockets of training opportunities. One was with BUILD; the second was with North End renewal corporation and our community forces, as well as we had partnerships with Inner City Renovations, Green Manitoba—what's MGR? *[interjection]* Manitoba Green Retrofit.

* (18:40)

So we worked very closely with all of those organizations. They were involved in some of our water conservation initiatives as well as some of our development projects. We also had partnerships in Brandon with BEEP. I can tell you, off the top of my head, that they were very involved in Gilbert Park, Lord Selkirk Park, that they were involved in Blake Gardens, as well as touched hundreds of units in Winnipeg. One would be on Assiniboine Avenue and, then, they also did some redevelopment and building in Brandon for us. I think what would be in the best interest of time is if I gathered that information and I could provide it to him at a later date.

We spent millions and millions of dollars, and I am very proud to say those investments, not only did they redevelop and renew our suites and provide good quality, safe, affordable housing for Manitobans, they also provided training opportunities for hundreds of individuals. There is—it can be estimated that out of the 200 people over the last few years, that there are approximately—well, there's 45 individuals. Some of them have gone on to take apprenticeship programs and some have also been hired by the private sector. In my mind, that is our ultimate success is when the private sector acknowledges the work that we've done and hires these individuals.

As I'm speaking now, I also—the River Point Centre was also another initiative where we worked very closely with BUILD and North End renewal corporation. We're changing lives and we're making a difference not only with the foundations and the structures that we're renewing, but providing these opportunities, because we know the best way out of poverty is education and jobs and employment experience, and I could go on. There are many stories where I've heard from the men and women of the pride that they have in the work that they do.

I'd like to also put on the record that while individuals were redeveloping Lord Selkirk Park, we worked alongside many, many good contractors from the private sector. And when those units were up for tenancy again, many of the neighbours asked to live in a unit that their neighbour had renovated. So that talks about the pride in the community and the potential about building safe, healthy communities when we're using government money to invest in renewing our stock but also providing training opportunities.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer. What I was attempting to get was some measure of how much was done and for the dollar, of course, and how many people actually benefited from that, and you have referenced that in some of your speeches before and made further reference there. But I'd just like a more numerical measure, if I could, of how successful this program has been, because in the course of visiting with the community development corporations, some really were very supportive of the program. But, often, wondered how—what the longevity would be and how the training could be guided in the future to take the best advantage of it.

So I would like, I guess, if you have—now that you have made general reference to the program, I'd like not only some numerical, which the minister has offered, but a bit of a plan for where this will go in the future.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It's only going to get bigger and better. We have 13,000 units across this province. We work very, very closely with the private sector to hire locally when we're in these communities. We have a commitment to many of these non-profit organizations and social enterprises that we're going to continue to build on our success. If the member has an opportunity to look at RFPs, he will see on the majority of them that there is always a reference on local hiring and training opportunities. And we've had some really good experiences with Bockstael, as well as Mansfield, that have embraced this model. I know that this is supported across the province, and I know that the hundreds of people that we have been working with and changing their lives—I will commit to get an actual—there's people coming in and out of the program at all times, so it will be hard. We can get a number for what it is today for him, but we can provide a listing of the millions and millions—tens of millions of dollars that we have invested in redeveloping and renewing our buildings. But, going beyond that, providing training and employment opportunities and providing opportunities to—for families to fight their way out of poverty and to continue to contribute to this great province.

Mr. Wishart: I would appreciate a little more detail than has appeared here and certainly the general comments that we have seen, but the program does seem to have some merit and we wish to explore the relative merit of it even further.

The minister's also made, in her opening remarks, reference to the rental housing tax credit

program, and I guess I was looking for a little bit of an explanation as it—certainly, when you look at the line-by-line items and anything that we have seen with it in terms of written comments, it seems like a fairly complicated program. I would like some explanation as to how the minister sees this working in the future and how it would work with the private sector. In particular, if she could give us some idea as to what's covered under the tax credit program and what's not.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Prior to answering that question, I do have the numbers that the member has asked for, and I would be delighted to put some of these numbers on the record.

Let's start with what has been our direct managed expenditures for maintenance, for modernization and improvement. Just to show about the record investments that we're making right now, I'm going to select a few numbers. From 1995 and 1996, the total amount that was invested was approximately \$20.8 million. The number was reduced in 1997-1998 to about \$20.7 million, and as we approached the year 2000, we were at \$23.2 million. I can tell you in 2009, we were at \$62.5 million, and I can tell the member that in 2010-2011, it was over \$100 million was invested, as well as in 12-Budget 2012 and Budget 2013, the numbers are well over \$107 million. So there are the numbers that the member has requested. Those are concrete numbers. Those are huge investments that we're making.

Now, on to the residential housing construction tax credit. What we—I should talk about the history of this before we talk about what it actually looks like. Is—the history of this is, I was very, very fortunate to work alongside of Manitoba Real Estate Association, as well as—[interjection] Pardon? And the Manitoba Home Builders'—and we worked with the non-profit sectors—they keep talking to me while I'm talking—the non-profit sectors and many community advocates, and we, in a very short time period, came up with a formula, not only necessarily for the Province, but also what the private sector could do and what the federal government could do, as well as the municipal government. And I was extremely proud that in Budget 2013, we were able to implement the Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit. This is going to provide non-profits and the private sector an opportunity to have their tax credit, which will equal the 8 per cent on their capital cost, to see that return to them.

This is very exciting. The community is embracing it. We feel that this will be one of those incentives that will help for the development of the construction industry. We also know that there is record amount of construction that's happening, not only for us, as the Province of Manitoba, but also the private sector have been building a number of units, though for us it's always about looking at affordable and social housing units.

So the member had asked for what sort of the parameters of this program, and the parameters are that the tax credit is going to equal 8 per cent of the capital cost of the new rental housing construction to a maximum of \$12,000 per eligible unit.

Eligible non-profit and non-profit co-operative projects will receive a fully refundable tax credit in the year the tax credit is earned as qualifying units are rented.

* (18:50)

Eligible for-profit projects will receive a non-refundable tax credit claimable over a minimum of five years and capped based on the landlord's Manitoba income tax.

I think that's about it, and I think what I'd also like to talk about is we can layer them with our tax incentive financing program or what we like to call TIF. So there's going to be multiple tools that the private sector as well as non-profit are going to be able to access to ensure that we are improving the rental stock across the province.

We have a lot of work to do. I'm very familiar with the vacancy rates. There has been some improvement, but, obviously, there's much more work that needs to happen. But it has to happen collectively. It cannot just be the Province of Manitoba. It has to be the private sector. It has to be the federal government, the municipalities that step to the plate, as well as I'd like to see some of the wonderful industries, the businesses that are creating these incredible job opportunities across our province, coming to the table and working with us and providing a solution of providing good quality, affordable housing for their employees. We have to work at it collectively. Not just one level of government, not just one private sector organization can deal with it, and I am remiss in not mentioning the wonderful partnerships that we have with over how many non-profit organizations and co-operatives?—260 non-profit organizations that we

have the privilege of working with that every day that do provide good quality housing for Manitobans.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Wishart: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that explanation. I just wanted to clear up a couple of things, because I had heard from some people in the industry that they were not certain as to whether design and the architect fees and some of the legal fees were actually also eligible expenses for the 8 per cent tax credit or whether it was just a construction cost itself.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: It is total construction costs that will be eligible, up to \$12,000 per unit.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I certainly appreciate the minister's comment. We'll get to that \$12,000 fairly quickly on many units anyway—so whether everything is included or not.

And I appreciate the comments that the minister has made that we need to empower the private sector to get engaged in building rental units, whether they be low-income rental or whether regular rental units, because it's certainly a big task for a government alone to do that. So I actually think we are fairly positive in terms of the program. We'll see what the impact will be as time—as it develops, whether there'll be any problems with that.

The training that the minister mentioned earlier—that also can apply in this, or is it just in the renovations? Labour training—the Start programs—only in renovations?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: If the private sector wants to develop a training program along with it, that's fine. But we're not linking this to any training incentives.

Mr. Wishart: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for that answer.

I also wanted to touch briefly on RentAid and portable housing allowance. Having heard from a number of people in the process of looking for additional housing support, they find that—and, looking at the application process, that an awful lot of questions are asked, a great deal of information is required by them and, of course, that's fair, particularly when it relates to income. But they don't seem to have a great deal of information on the approval process for either of those programs. I wonder if the minister could take me through—if they're separate processes, fine, we'll do them separately. But, if there's one process for both of

those, could we have some explanation and how the approval process is done?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much. I'll address the RentAid question first. RentAid is a monthly benefit to help low-income seniors, families and persons with disabilities and some EIA recipients to pay their rent. In Budget 2013, enhancements to RentAid shelter benefits for low-income Manitobans increased these benefits for all recipients by \$240 per year and increasing and simplifying the income and rent thresholds for RentAid and allowing more people to qualify.

We also introduced the RentAid transition bonus, a benefit of \$110 per month for up to two years for EIA recipients in private rental situations transitioning into training and employment and/or otherwise ineligible for RentAid.

These initiatives resulted in a total increased investment of over \$6.3 million in new annualized benefits for low-income Manitobans. Budget 2013 also commits the Manitoba government to a long-term objective to streamlining the portable shelter benefits to better support Manitobans and transition into their independence.

The specifics about the application process for RentAid and how those decisions are made—that has to be directed to Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, because through Employment and Income Assistance is how this is managed for this program.

The Portable Housing Benefit program is a rent supplement for low-income individuals with mental health issues who are supported by participating agencies. The benefit is up to \$200 per month to secure rental housing units in the private market. Along with the \$200 a month, also there is services that are provided to the individuals. There were approximately—wasn't it 500, 600?—yes, there are 600 portable housing benefits that are used across the province; they are in Central region, Eastman region, Interlake region, Norman region, Parkland region, Westman region and Winnipeg region. They are managed through the Canadian Mental Health Associations in most of those regions, and what happens is that they work together collectively.

Some people have a committee. Applications are made directly to the agency, and people will then work with individuals that are accepted to the program and help find them adequate housing as well as providing them with the support. It's a—also one of those programs that it's hard to tell you

definitely what the numbers are. I can tell you, as of March 2013, that there were 506 clients that what we call in-pay, which meant that they were in affordable housing; we were providing those supplements to them. There were another 62 clients, which were approved but we're still in the process of finding and securing a housing unit in the private sector.

So we are extremely proud of the organizations that we have—that have embraced this model. Right now we're just waiting on the finalized evaluation of the program, and we will be studying that very closely and then deciding what our next steps will be. But this is—this program is providing success not only for individuals on the road to recovery and is proving—and this is something that we all know around this table—the importance of good quality housing.

And that's why we've embraced the model of housing first, and this is yet another one of those examples of housing with supports for individuals.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the explanation—and the minister, then, I should go to other department for

the explanation on the approval process for RentAid and the portable housing allowance is really done by individual organizations through mental health. Is that the final answer there?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: This—the Portable Housing Benefit is managed through the Department of Housing and Community Development but then transferred to the non-profit organizations in which have—groups that have agreed to be working with us on the administration of the Portable Housing Benefit. It's a really good program and we want to take this opportunity and thank all of those non-profit organizations.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The hour being 7 p.m., as previously agreed, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, the hour being 7 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Plessis Road Underpass Pedersen; Selinger	3272
Bill 214—The Cyberbullying Prevention Act		Health Services (Winnipeg) Helwer; Oswald	3273
Goertzen	3263	QuickCare Clinic (Selkirk) Ewasko; Oswald	3274
Petitions		Children in Care Gerrard; Selinger	3276
Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum		Headingley Correctional Centre Wiebe; Swan	3278
Wishart	3263	Post-Secondary Education Briese; Mackintosh	3278
Ewasko	3263	Rowat; Howard	3279
Driedger	3265	University College of the North Briese; Mackintosh	3278
Goertzen	3265		
Eichler	3265		
Stefanson	3266		
Mitchelson	3267		
Smook	3268		
Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal		Members' Statements	
Rowat	3264	Men in the Kitchen! T. Marcelino	3279
Briese	3266	John W. Kuhl—Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame	
Applied Behaviour Analysis Services		Friesen	3280
Pedersen	3264	2013 Wellness Institute Farmers' Market Saran	3280
Maguire	3266	Winnipeg Harvest Charity Golf Tournament Graydon	3281
Helwer	3267	Children in Care—Education Gerrard	3281
Schuler	3267		
Friesen	3268		
Graydon	3268		
Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review			
Cullen	3265		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Provincial Deficit		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Pallister; Selinger	3269, 3270	Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)	
Interest Rates		Infrastructure and Transportation	3282
Pallister; Selinger	3270	Conservation and Water Stewardship	3282
PST Increase		Advanced Education and Literacy	3305
Stefanson; Bjornson	3271	Education	3306
Eichler; Kostyshyn	3272	Local Government	3330
Minister of Local Government		Aboriginal and Northern Affairs	3332
Eichler; Lemieux	3272	Housing and Community Development	3348

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>