

Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 28, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 26—The Université de Saint-Boniface Act

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I move, seconded by the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 26, The Université de Saint-Boniface Act; Loi sur l'Université de Saint-Boniface, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Selby: Today I am introducing the proposed Université de Saint-Boniface Act to the Legislative Assembly for the first reading.

The proposed Université de Saint-Boniface Act continues le collège université de Saint-Boniface as the Université de Saint-Boniface. The proposed act will mean that le collège université de Saint-Boniface will now be a university and not a university college. It will continue its affiliation with the University of Manitoba. Provisions in the act relate to matters of name change and the composition of the board of governors.

I recommend the bill to all members of this Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 215—The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I move, seconded by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 215, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act, be introduced for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Rowat: This bill will expand access to ensure all parents are given the option of having their newborn's hearing tested before being discharged from the hospital. Screening newborns for hearing problems should be available to parents who would like to have their babies screened. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Petitions. Oh, the honourable member for Russell.

Bill 214—The Ukrainian Heritage Day Act

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I move, seconded by the member from Brandon West, that Bill 214, The Ukrainian Heritage Day Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, we're still on introduction of bills.

Okay.

Motion presented.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this bill recognizes the contributions made to our province and our country by people who have come from Ukraine. The date of the day that the Heritage Day Act is being suggested is September the 7th, a day which coincides with the arrival of the first settlers in our country, and, secondly, it's a day when students across our schools and our province can celebrate the contributions that have been made by the pioneers and the people of Ukrainian heritage.

It also gives an opportunity for all Manitobans to celebrate the heritage of the Ukrainian people.

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

PETITIONS

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

The operations of Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by G. Gurke, L. Gurke, G. Gingras and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by L. Lebitt, B. Carter-Squire, K. Sivananthan and thousands of other Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves—Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by K. Blanco, A. North, G. North and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high

voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side line–route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this is signed by A. Neufeld, E. Ferris, M. Ferris and many, many other Manitobans.

*(13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'd like to table the Manitoba Health Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2011-2012 Departmental Expenditure Estimates. It's a blockbuster read, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): It's clear that large volumes of water and sustained high river levels would be the distinguishing factor of the 2011 flood. On the Assiniboine River the volume of water during this year's flood is expected to be more than twice that seen during the flood of record in 1976.

This spring the Shellmouth Reservoir is forecast to receive the equivalent of over 370,000 Olympic swimming pools, almost twice the volume of the reservoir. As a result of the sustained high inflows, the reservoir, which has been a critical component of our flood fight this spring, is now going over its spillway. Outflows through the dam will be controlled to reduce peak outflows as much as possible to ensure communities downstream are not negatively impacted.

The Red River crest continues to move northward this week, and is expected to meet–to reach Morris and Ste. Agathe today at below 2009 levels. The Assiniboine and Red River crests are expected to coincide in Winnipeg around April 30th at between 20.4 and 21.3 feet James Avenue.

Since yesterday there have been additional precautionary evacuations from the RMs of Ritchot

and Morris, while the remaining evacuees from Sandy Bay First Nation have returned home. The total number of remaining evacuees is now 1,981.

While favourable weather has meant that many of our projected worst-case scenarios have not come to fruition, the Province remains on high alert. Officials are not stepping down their flood-fighting efforts, as water levels are expected to remain high in many parts of the province even after cresting has occurred, and the impact of spring rainstorms could still be felt in coming weeks.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I thank the minister for the latest flood update. It's positive to hear from provincial officials that the expected crests of the Red and the Assiniboine rivers in Winnipeg at the same time this weekend should be manageable. There have been a number of questions about the possible adverse effects of such an event.

What's happening with the Shellmouth continues to be a top-of-the-mind issue for many western Manitobans. Individuals and communities along Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and other lakes are awaiting ice breakup and trying to prepare accordingly. The Province says it will be rebuilding a dike to help protect communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg's south basin. With nearly 2,000 evacuations, dozens of road closures and unexpected events like the closure of the Wawanesa School, the flood is, indeed, proving very disruptive for many, many Manitobans.

Although there are now fewer municipalities with states of emergency than there were last week, it does not diminish the impact of flooding on local governments. As always, we extend our thanks to the countless individuals working to mitigate the impact of this flood and to assure those affected by it are experiencing the least amount of disruption possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement, and certainly the concern is real, with the Shellmouth Dam now overflowing the spillway, for people who are downstream of that area, and I was hoping the minister would provide a little bit of an impact and–in that area as well as in other areas. Because the flood is going to be as long as it is, there is a lot of concern for farmers who may have water

on their fields for an extensive period of time. We're looking forward to what the minister is going to do in terms of providing predictions, advice and support, et cetera, for farmers in this area.

I also note the evacuation—or the inability to use Wawanesa School and hope that the plans are there that the children can go to an alternate school and that all those children who've been evacuated will be able to go to alternate schools so that their—provisions are being made to make sure that children are not losing the time in school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the update, and again a thank you to all those who are working very hard to deal with this situation.

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, today, April 28th, is the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. On this day, we remember the men and women who did not return home safely from work last year. Fifteen workers died on the job in Manitoba, and 14 more died of diseases related to their work. Many more Manitobans were injured severely enough to be off the job for a number of days.

Workplace incidents take an enormous toll on families and communities in Manitoba, which is all the more tragic because these incidents are preventable. The Day of Mourning reminds us to renew our commitment to workers and families to take the steps necessary to prevent workplace incidents and ensure that all workers return home safely at the end of the day.

In co-operation with employers, we have seen a reduction in time-loss injury by more than 40 per cent since 2000. Stronger legislation has also helped, but there's still more work to do.

The Day of Mourning is an opportunity to reach out to our young workers. Students from three Winnipeg schools, Sisler, St. Norbert and Children of the Earth, participated today in the annual Workers Day of Mourning Leaders' Walk organized by the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow.

Today, as we remember and honour those workers who were killed or injured on the job, we must accept our responsibility and strengthen our commitment to work together to put an end to these preventable tragedies.

Following the remarks of other members, I would ask that all members stand for a moment of silence to honour the memory of the men and women of Manitoba who were injured or killed in the workplace this past year.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Mourning. Each year on April 28th, Canadians take time to remember people who have been injured, become ill and lost their lives due to workplace-related causes.

The National Day of Mourning, which is also known as Workers Memorial Day, was first marked in 1984 by the Canadian Union of Public Employees. In 1991, the Day of Mourning was officially recognized by the federal government. Today the Day of Mourning is marked around the world, with 80 countries celebrating April 28th as a day to remember those who have been injured, become ill or died due to workplace conditions.

* (13:50)

The slogan for the event is Remember the Dead, Fight for the Living, reminding us that workplace injuries and deaths are preventable.

Over the past 20 years in Canada, over 15,000 people have died from work-related causes. Although this number has declined in recent years, there are approximately 800 preventable deaths each year caused by workplace factors. Worldwide, a shocking two million people are killed each year on the job.

For this reason, the day of mourning is an important reminder to the businesses that workplace safety and health is crucial to preventing workplace deaths, illnesses and injuries.

To mark this day, groups across the province are holding events. The City of Winnipeg held its annual Day of Mourning ceremony this morning at 9. The Manitoba Federation of Labour has also planned an event to commemorate those who are ill, injured and dead due to workplace causes. They will be holding a memorial service and a candlelight vigil tonight at Union Centre at 275 Broadway.

Earlier today, the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow held a Day of Mourning Leaders' Walk and media event which began at noon at Union Centre. The walk was attended by many people, including the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) and myself.

The theme of this year's media event is Safety in the Four Directions and uses Manitoba–Manitoban indigenous culture to promote workplace safety and health.

Today we recognize and remember the people who have been injured or killed in the workplace. Let us all work towards making workplaces safer and preventing tragedies from happening in the future. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join other members of the Legislature in recognizing today as the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. The tragic loss of workers on the job is, indeed, something that we want to avoid if at all possible, and, indeed, in Manitoba, it was only as recently as a week ago that the most recent death occurred at the Wuskwatim Dam site, and we mourn and have sympathy for the family and the friends.

Certainly, we recognize the improvements in the time-lost-to-injury rate, but when one compares Manitoba to other provinces, we remain high so that there is a lot left to be done. And it is in that context that this is a date not only to remember those who have been injured or lost, but it is a date to recommit ourselves to ensuring and doing everything we can that there will be fewer injuries and fewer deaths in the future, far fewer deaths, we hope, in Manitoba and in Canada than we have had.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

A moment of silence was observed.

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 students from River Osborne Community Centre Adult Education program accompanied by Bob Thorsteinson, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard).

And also in the public gallery we have from Réal Bérard Community School, we have 23 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Brian Martel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Winnipeg School Division EAL program, we have 10 grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Mingdi Zhao. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

And also in the public gallery we have from Glenwood School, we have 24 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Ms. Jennifer McDermott. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Education (Ms. Allan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipalities Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I just want to acknowledge those workers and their representatives as well as those family members of deceased workers that were present today and thank them for their very heartfelt comments today and let them know that we appreciate what they're doing and sympathize with those who have suffered losses as a result of workplace accidents.

Mr. Speaker, on another issue, and to the acting Premier, last week various municipal leaders expressed disappointment and concern about the announcement in the budget to, in effect, offer the equivalent of 1 per cent of PST with one hand and take away the equivalent sum of money with the other as part of a shell game within the provincial budget on the issue of infrastructure.

And I want to ask the acting Premier why it is that the government is so determined to play shell games with their budgets at a time when what's required is true partnership with municipalities in order to get on with the job of meeting the infrastructure deficit.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): And, Mr. Speaker, I, as Minister of Finance, I pride myself in working with various people across the province, doing consultation with the people across the province, and, when we were meeting with municipal leaders, one of the most important issues that they raised with us was the need for more investment in infrastructure, and that's why we have continued to work with municipalities, we have

continued to raise the amount of money that we are investing in infrastructure, and that's why, in this budget, we have further committed a one percentage point of the revenues from provincial sales tax to the municipalities, and I've met with the municipality—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, they packaged it, both within the budget and in their advertising, as being the equivalent of one point. But, at the same time, they took the same amount of money away with the other hand, and, in response to that, Councillor Wyatt said that the budget doesn't deserve the paper it's written on and it should be an outrage, according to Councillor Wyatt and other municipal leaders who were disappointed in the fact that the government decided to put spin ahead of real action on this important issue.

At a time, Mr. Speaker, when they're going to spend \$4.1 billion on a power line that's 500 kilometres too long, why not reduce the amount of waste on the bipole and sit down with municipal leaders to fix the broken roads in this province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the leaders of municipal councils and AMM are well aware of what the Leader of the Opposition says and what he intends to do. They are well aware that in the last budget they put forward an amendment that would reduce \$500 million out of the budget. He didn't talk about how he was going to share revenues with municipalities. He didn't talk, and his cuts would have meant the end to investment in infrastructure and all of those issues that are very important to municipal leaders.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the numbers and if you look at the investments that we have made in infrastructure and the money that we are flowing to municipalities, there is a 53 per cent increase since 2005-06, and there—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the councillor for Transcona, Councillor Wyatt, said, and I quote: The budget doesn't—it doesn't deserve the paper it's written on. It should be an outrage. Manitobans want solutions. They want solutions. They want their streets fixed. They want their community clubs repaired. They want their swimming pools repaired.

Mr. Speaker, why are they going to build a power line 500 kilometres too long, at a cost of

\$4.1 billion, when what the people of Manitoba want is their streets fixed, as Councillor Wyatt has said.

* (14:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, municipalities have come to us and they have asked for increases in revenue. They want it related to revenue growth. This province is growing—this province is growing—and there will be more revenues, and we have put in place a formula, a formula that will result in increased revenues at one percentage point of increases, compared to the half a percentage point that the Leader of the Opposition promised.

This is steady growth, Mr. Speaker, and the municipalities are aware of it. It's what they've asked for and we will continue to work with them.

Student Aid Loan Status Errors Notifications

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, last month, Manitoba Student Aid inaccurately reported to the credit agency Equifax that 1,500 students had defaulted on their student loan payments when, in fact, they had paid their loans in full. Having a negative mark on one's credit history can be a challenge to recover from.

Can the minister please explain why this error wasn't made public when it occurred last month?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): As you probably understand, that financial systems and computer systems need to be upgraded much like infrastructure does, which we've been doing around the province, and so in November we started the transition to a new Manitoba Student Aid online program. It's going to serve the students more efficiently. It's going to serve them more smoothly.

During that transition period, unfortunately an error did occur. We were informed, unfortunately, not by Equifax, which is—the credit-rating agency did not inform us of the error, but we are very grateful to a student who brought this to our attention.

She brought it to our attention and, of course, we immediately fixed that error and also notified Equifax of the error and confirmed that they purged all those files from their files, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the fact is the department became of the—aware of the error when it was brought to their attention by a student who knew

inaccurate information was marring their credit history. Well, the point is they didn't know that this error had occurred. As a result, they have—it has a negative impact on the student's ability to get a loan.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't she make this public? Students could have proactively checked on their credit rating then to see if there's a problem. She knew about it and she didn't make it public.

Ms. Selby: And we are very grateful to the student who brought this to our attention and acted on it immediately, Mr. Speaker.

As soon as we were made aware of this situation, within three weeks we had fixed the program, notified Equifax, and Equifax has purged all those—the misinformation from the files so that this will not affect the students' credit history going forward unduly. This was an unfortunate situation and we certainly are sorry for it and very appreciative of the student to bring it to our error.

But I have to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the '90s more students were actually applying for student loans because back then there weren't bursaries. There weren't bursaries; there was only loans to choose from.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the fact is the department and the minister did not know this error had occurred, so if it—they didn't know in March that it occurred, how are they going to know if it happens again? Are they going to wait again until students have to come forward to notify them of their own mistakes?

What assurances can she give today to students that this won't happen again, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Selby: As I said in my first two answers, that when this unfortunate situation occurred, we are sorry that Equifax did not alert us to it and we are appreciative that the student let us know.

But we acted immediately upon it. We repaired the situation. We sent letters to Equifax and contacted them to ensure that those students' erroneous files were deleted, as well, so that the students would not move forward with undue errors on their credit rating. Those have been reversed. Their credit-rating history is as it should be recorded now, and, of course, we also sent a letter of apology and are thankful to the student who also brought this up.

But I do have to remind members of the opposition, as well, that back in the '90s they

replaced the bursaries with student loans. Students had a lot more money to pay back in the '90s than they do now because of student loans. We have provided, since 1999, nearly \$168 million in grants and loans.

Student Aid Loan Status Errors Notifications

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the minister is blaming the credit-rating agency when, in fact, it was her fault, her government, her department's fault for advising the wrong information. It's not the fault of Equifax.

Mr. Speaker, the government then hid the fact that they labelled 1,500 students as delinquents. They hid that fact. Yesterday, in Estimates, the minister said she didn't even advise the 1,500 students who'd been impacted. It would have been the common decency, the common courtesy thing to do to advise the 1,500 students who had their credit ratings impacted that they had been impacted in such a way.

Why didn't she at least send out the—you know, stamps aren't that expensive, and just advise the students that this happened and that error happened, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I am happy to report that when—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation, we have two empty loges; you're more than welcome to use them. We have students up here and we have the watching public that are here to hear the questions and the answers, and I think we owe them at least that much. I'm asking the co-operation of all members of the House.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, it is important to renew database systems. Much like infrastructure, they need to be renewed from time to time, and this is certainly the case with the Manitoba student loan financial system. It is going to be a much more smoother system for students. It's going to be a much more efficient system for students. They'll be able to apply online and check on their student loans, all online as well.

Unfortunately, during the transition, as we moved from the old system to the new system in November, an error occurred. This error occurred in

March and we are really grateful to the student who notified us of this error. We acted on it immediately. We immediately contacted Equifax to advise them that the error had occurred. They purged the files. The students' files now are reflective of their accurate credit-rating history, and I feel confident that it will not affect them in the future. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the minister and this government labelled 1,500 students as delinquents, and during that time that it was on their Equifax report these students could've been going to their banks and credit unions and asking for loans, and they may have been rejected and they might not have ever asked why they were rejected or why was it they were declined, but it was because the Equifax report was wrong.

Why wouldn't this minister just simply go and advise those 1,500 students by letter, so they could go and do their due diligence on their own credit rating? I know this is not a government that cares about credit rating, but maybe they care enough about the students to let them know, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Selby: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this is a government that cares about students.

Mr. Speaker, our budget reflects that we care about students. We have frozen the rate of tuition to the rate of inflation. That's about a 1 per cent increase this year. But at the same time as we are ensuring that universities and colleges are affordable and accessible to students, we also know that our students expect schools of excellence, and that's why our funding grants to universities this year increases the grant by 5 per cent, and with some long-term planning we increase that grant over 5 per cent over the next three years as well.

And let me just explain a little bit how supportive that the opposition is to students. While we're freezing tuition at the rate of inflation, tuition in the '90s rose by 132 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's the difference of who cares about students in this province.

*(14:10)

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, it's very simple. The government and the minister labelled 1,500 students as delinquent, and they didn't want to go to the credit-rating agency and tell them that it was a mistake and then go to the students and let them know what had happened. All she had to do was send out a letter to the students and let them know what

had happened so they could go and do their own due diligence.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister is new to her job, but all she has to do, even as a new minister—and in a little bit of advice—is to admit you were wrong and correct your mistake. If she wants to be a strong minister, will she admit that she was wrong and correct her mistake for the 1,500 students?

All it would take is a stamp and a letter, or is she just going to give the same drivel that every other minister before her has given, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Selby: Let me tell you how this government supports students.

I've already mentioned that, of course, university tuition is frozen at the rate of inflation. We actually have the third lowest tuition rates in the country, the second lowest tuition rates of colleges in the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know under the '90s, students weren't eligible for bursaries because there weren't any bursaries, but we've expanded the Manitoba Bursary Program, once we added it.

And we also make it easier for Manitoban students to decide to stay, live and work in Manitoba with a 60 per cent tuition rebate.

We believe everyone in Manitoba has the opportunity and the chance to go to university. We ensure that there's accessibility and affordability to our universities and, Mr. Speaker, enrolment is up one-third since 1999.

Newborn Hearing Screening Program Government Support

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Every year 3 in 1,000 newborns are born with an educational significant hearing loss. Without early hearing loss detection, children are more likely to develop poor language and cognitive skills and do poorly in school. Unfortunately, in Manitoba, a universal hearing screening program is not in place.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain why all babies born in this province are not given the option to be screened for hearing loss?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Actually, babies are screened for hearing loss. It is, indeed, part of the standard assessment that occurs immediately after birth. There is a more detailed kind of hearing screening that can happen. It may be the

one that the member is referring to; I'm not sure based on the wording of her question.

I can tell you that our record in this government is, indeed, to expand screening. There is universal newborn hearing screening established in Brandon, Assiniboine, North Eastman, Burntwood and Central Regional Health Authority. The work is going on to expand that further, Mr. Speaker.

We know very well that when this kind of situation can be detected early, that interventions can be put into play that are in the best interests of the child, which is why we're moving in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Currently, to have newborns screened in Manitoba, the child must first show risk factors. Performing a hearing loss test on a newborn baby takes but a few minutes and can be conducted within hours of the child being born. The tests are gentle and normally conducted while the baby is asleep.

There are rehabilitation programs currently in place for babies and children once identified, but no universal screening. With universal screening hearing, the rehab programs will be more effective.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government putting the cart before the horse? Will the minister commit today to supporting Bill 215 and demonstrate some leadership on implementing this important program?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, as I said earlier, all newborns are screened at the time of their arrival, we're happy to say. We know that no universal screening program, you know, existed anywhere in Manitoba when we took office. We're making steady and concrete progress on universal screening. We know that we're expanding other kinds of screening, as well, Mr. Speaker, at the recommendation of our health professionals. We—I believe we're the first in the nation to do universal screening regarding FASD.

Our Families First screening has also expanded. Newborn metabolic screening is another program that's expanding, and we're going to continue to work with our professionals to bring specifically hearing screening to every regional health authority of which we already have many, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: And I'm going to say again, in Manitoba only babies that are considered to be high risk are screened for hearing loss. By screening only at-risk babies, only 50 per cent of children with congenital hearing loss are identified. This late

detection can result in speech and language deficiencies, academic deficiencies and delays in social development.

Why does the minister want to delay a child's social and academic development by detecting a hearing loss later in life? Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister support the universal hearing screening program today?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, but as I've said twice before in the last few minutes, we are expanding universal newborn screening. We're expanding other kinds of screening as well, metabolic and otherwise. And, indeed, the member neglects to mention that not only are we expanding screening for newborns but we're also, for the first time in Manitoba history, going to be funding a surgical program for cochlear implants here in Manitoba, and for bone-anchored hearing aids as well. This will be for children and for adults.

We want to support communities that are living with difficulties with hearing. Screening is the first place to start. Providing cochlear implant surgery is another way that we can go, and we're going to do that with really important partners at Central Speech and Hearing. And it begs the question why members opposite during the decade of neglect didn't even consider this.

Elevators Inspection Schedules

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, two people were injured yesterday when the elevator they were in crashed. Elevators are required to be inspected for security reasons under the auspice of the Department of Labour.

Can the minister tell me whether the elevator that crashed had been properly inspected and was deemed safe?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, of course, this incident that happened yesterday at Children of the Earth school, happening as it did on the eve of the Day of Mourning, illustrates again the need for an ongoing commitment to workplace safety and health. We regret very much the injuries that were sustained by the two individuals. I am informed today that they have been released from hospital, so we're pleased that they're doing better, and we wish them all the best in their recovery.

Of course, there is an ongoing investigation by the office of the Fire Commissioner as well as Workplace Safety and Health, so we'll await the results of that investigation. I am informed that, according to the principal of the school, the last service inspection for this elevator was March 3rd.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, according to a freedom of information request we received, Manitoba had an inspection backlog of 735 elevators. That's 735 elevators that are potentially unsafe.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure us, then, that of these 735 elevators, are those elevators safe today?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I can report for the House that as of April 26th, 2011, there were 537 buildings who were requiring inspections. It's a 27 per cent reduction from the number that the member has quoted, so there has been some progress. There's continuing progress. We are hiring, through the office of the Fire Commissioner, additional inspectors who can do that inspection.

We also, in moving the inspection services to the office of the Fire Commissioner, will be able to cross-train inspectors who will be able to backfill vacancies as they occur, which is not something that was occurring previously. We're also—will be investing in new software that will give people more lead time to know when an inspection certificate is up. I understand that, previously, people only knew once it had expired.

So we are committed to making progress on this regard to ensure the safety of Manitobans.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, we were made aware that the Department of Labour had been experiencing inspection issues, and, further, there are still backlog in elevator inspections. And now an elevator has crashed and two people have been hurt.

I want to know for sure, Mr. Speaker, that even if this has been transferred to the office of the Fire Commissioner, that there are qualified mechanical engineers within that department who can perform these safety inspections and therefore make sure that these elevators are safe and this will not happen again, perhaps with more serious consequences the next time.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, of course, we're very committed, as is the office of the Fire Commissioner, to ensuring the safety of Manitobans. The people who work in that office work every day and often put

themselves at great personal risk to ensure the safety of Manitobans.

I also want to inform the House that the inspection standards that the Province follows with regards to elevators are consistent with the National Building Code. But I believe that that isn't sufficient, and so today I have instructed the office of the Fire Commissioner to prepare regulations to update the inspection regularity for these type of elevators so they will be inspected even more regularly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

Lake Dauphin Fishery Co-Management Plan

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the Lake Dauphin walleye fishery continues to feel the effects of NDP mismanagement. Over the past 10 years, close to \$700,000 has been spent to develop a co-management plan to address these problems. It's high time to see some results from this process.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Water Stewardship finally table the co-management plan today, or is this still a case of government handing out money and getting no results?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, the management of Dauphin Lake fishery remains very important to this government, which is why, last week, we issued again, for the third consecutive year, that there will be restraints put on fishing during the spring spawn.

We met in consultation with the West Region Tribal Council as well as other stakeholders. We all agree the important thing here is to make sure that we bring the stock back to a very healthy condition. We all agree it's important to respect the spring spawn, and we will continue to work with the community around that issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: This government sunk tens of thousands of dollars into that fishery, yet they have nothing to show for it and the health of the fishery continues to be at stake. It's classic NDP mismanagement.

Many believe that the money spent to date would've been used more wisely for fish enhancement programs and for added enforcement to protect the spawning fish.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister apologize to the people of Manitoba for her failure to protect the Lake Dauphin fishery?

Ms. Melnick: The question is, will the members of the opposition apologize to the people of Manitoba for in April 1999 issuing a press release announcing the fishing closure of Dauphin Lake, doing absolutely nothing to enforce it and, according to their own records, letting 6,000 pounds of fish be taken from the spring spawn.

That's why we're dealing with the issue today, Mr. Speaker. It's another mess that they left.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, there is a simple solution to the Lake Dauphin fishery issues; just put a full conservation closure in place during the spawning season and fully enforce it. The minister would not then need funding for a failed co-management plan. She would not need funding to purchase frozen fish, and instead of handing out frozen fish, the fish could all just—could have—be protecting the live fish, as they should be.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to a full conservation closure on Lake Dauphin and its tributaries during the spring spawning season, or is she satisfied that her half measures will save this important fishery?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, let's put the real facts on the record.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought questions were serious.

An Honourable Member: They are.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Well, let's treat them as such. Okay, I can't even hear the questions and the answers. And if you want to shout, go to your office, there's lot's of—you can shout all you want. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. We have guests in the galleries. We have the viewing public and I need to hear the questions and the answers.

If there's a breach of a rule, the first thing you would expect me to do is make a ruling. How can I do that if I can't even hear the person that has the floor? I'm asking the co-operation once again by members, that we need to hear the questions and the answers. Let's have a little decorum here.

Ms. Melnick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure you, answers from this side of the House are taken seriously.

In 2010, our experts estimate that during the 11-day closure, only 2,000 pounds of fish were harvested, compared to the decade earlier, when 60,000 pounds were harvested. That's a 97 per cent reduction, Mr. Speaker.

The science tells us we're moving in the right direction to restore the walleye in Lake Dauphin. We'll continue to move in that direction. Whether members opposite support it or not, we support it and the local people, too, and we'll restore this fishery.

Water Management Policy Impact on Farmers

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the ministers of Agriculture and Infrastructure gave us a lesson in NDP economics: a billion dollars spent and they couldn't even clean out a ditch.

Last summer I visited the family farm of Edith and Ralph Gowan near Sprague. Their crops are flooded regularly because the NDP government refuses to invest in effective water management.

Mr. Speaker, when is the Minister of Agriculture going to admit that the NDP government has failed the Manitoba family farm and apologize to farmers like Ralph and Edith Gowan?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to apologize for doubling the amount of money that we, in this budget, that we put in to go towards water management in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to apologize for coming up with an excess moisture payment last year on both on the grains and oilseeds side and on the cattle side that helped farmers and made a real difference in their lives. He should stand up and apologize for voting against those initiatives.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, doubling the money and he still can't keen—clean out a ditch. I think the member for Dauphin has spent too much time here on Broadway and he's got a case of perimenteritis.

He hasn't—you know, if this member would leave his ivory tower and once in a while muster the courage to talk to an everyday farm family like Ralph and Edith Gowan, he'd realize that farmers across this province are saying the NDP have failed

the family farm. They failed to implement a water management strategy that works. They refuse to clean provincial highway ditches, and, on a yearly basis, the NDP neglect undoes much of the hard work that so many farmers put in to get good crops.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister let go of his ego and go on the right-record right now and apologize for the NDP's neglect of the family farm?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, when the member for River Heights gives me a hard time about my ego and perimeteritis, he should at least keep a straight face when he tries to make that point. It would be much more effective if he did that. And not only that, I'll help out the member for River Heights. Next time we go to Arborg to talk about the Bifrost project that this government's funding, I'll take him with me so he can see what it is like outside of Winnipeg, so he can—so that he—I'd make that trip with the member for River Heights. I would make that kind of sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, we met with farmers in the Arborg area. The member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) showed real leadership on that, and we got the job done.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I've been to Arborg many times and I've never seen the minister there.

Last year was the most trying, on record, for the Gowan family farm. Ralph and Edith poured their blood, their sweat, their tears into an incredible crop of fall rye, and then the rain came, and because the NDP were derelict in their duty to family farms, refusing to unclog ditches alongside the highway, this beautiful crop was completely waterlogged, a writeoff, an absolute heartbreak.

The performance of the NDP is enough to make farmers like Edith and Ralph cry. The minister and his NDP government did nothing.

Mr. Speaker, knowing the stories of family farmers like Edith and Ralph, will the minister finally apologize to farmers and tell them he's sorry?

*(14:30)

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that not just last year but the year before and the year before and in some cases the year before were tough years in farm country because of the amount of rain that we experienced, especially in areas like the Interlake. There's no doubt about that.

And there's no doubt that farm families and the communities that depend on those farm families had a tough time, and, Mr. Speaker, that had a negative impact on these communities and our provincial economy. There's no doubt about that, and I don't doubt the motivations of any member of this House when they bring these kind of questions forward.

It's an important issue, Mr. Speaker, but to say nothing was done is just not true. Last year we had, in conjunction with the federal government, good co-operation with the federal government, not a bunch of political partisan nonsense but good co-operation that produced an announcement and a follow-through of cash, cost-shared by our government and theirs, that helped farmers like the ones he referenced today in question period.

We're going to stand with the farmers again this—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Workplace Safety Government Initiatives

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, April 28th marks the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, a day where we remember the men and women who died, were injured, or contracted an occupational disease while serving the people of Winnipeg and Manitoba.

Last June our family experienced a workplace accident when my daughter Janelle was severely electrocuted when working for—here in Manitoba. She was unable to work for five months. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Workplace Safety and Health what she is doing to ensure that everyone's grandparent, mother, father, child, grandchild and friend arrive home safely at the end of each day.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you very much for the question.

I was very pleased today to be joined by so many young people in this Legislature who have committed themselves to safe work and to working with their peers on creating safe workplaces. And today we committed to continue to support their efforts in a few different ways, one of which is to commit to long-term funding for the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow. We have been funding them since taking office. They present all over the province to high schools.

We also committed to a grant program for high schools. We do innovative, creative things to promote workplace safety. We saw some examples of those today in the videos that were created, and we committed to a \$10,000 grant for Threads of Life, an organization that supports families who have lost loved ones to workplace injury.

Hip Surgeries Wait Times

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): In June 2010 when the Minister of Health was questioned on a Manitoban who had been waiting for hip surgery, she told the House, and I quote: We're going to continue to bring wait times down. And while, Mr. Speaker, it appears that this minister is once again making desperate promises she cannot keep, in August 2010 Mrs. Sveistrup of Rivers was placed on an urgent list for surgery and to—and just—and to demonstrate her serious need, she was also placed on a cancellation urgent list. Now, eight months later, Mrs. Sveistrup still has not received her urgent hip surgery.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to Mrs. Sveistrup why this NDP government continues to mislead Manitobans on how serious it is that hip surgery wait lists have become?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): And, first of all, I would say to the member that I'm very happy to look into further details about this case. We don't want any Manitoban waiting longer than they should for surgery. It's why we've made a number of investments, Mr. Speaker, and investments in innovation to work on bringing down times for those quality-of-life surgeries, hip and knee surgeries.

We know that we are working very hard, as we have since 2005 when the median wait was about 44 weeks in Manitoba. We have driven that down to 18 weeks. We want to drive it down further. We have had it lower in the past, and we're going to do that through recruitment and innovation.

And, again, on this specific case, we—I'd be happy to discuss it further, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: It's been 57 weeks since Mrs. Sveistrup's initial visit to the doctor. She said, and I quote: The NDP promised shorter wait times for hip and knee surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, the website for hip replacement wait times in Brandon is 51 weeks. She's already waiting almost 60.

Mr. Speaker, what is most disturbing is that Mrs. Sveistrup is considered to be on the urgent list. I cannot imagine how long it would be if she was put on the non-urgent list.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why is this NDP government misleading the public on how serious hip surgery wait times are in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: And, again, that's an unacceptably long wait for this individual, and I commit to the member to look into the details of the case.

On the subject of information for the public, Mr. Speaker, in the time of the '90s there were—was no information on the website. *[interjection]* I seem to have struck a nerve, Mr. Speaker. There was no information publicly available on wait times. This information is now publicly available to individuals about wait times.

There are areas of the province where wait times are longer than others. We're working very hard with our orthopedic surgeons to centralize the list and to share patients to drive those times down. We're absolutely committed to do that, and, certainly, that would be no different for this individual.

We want to assist. We don't want this individual to be experiencing pain and we will work with them to assist.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lesia Szwaluk

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, there are some people who seem to defy human limits with all the things they're able to achieve. Lesia Szwaluk is such a person, whose list of accomplishments is too long for me to do it justice. I am pleased to see that she is in the public gallery today.

Lesia Szwaluk has led a life of tremendous involvement and leadership. Born in 1950 to Ukrainian immigrant parents, she became involved in Ukrainian education and her wider community at a young age. Working with children and youth is a passion of hers. She has remained involved with the Ukrainian Youth Association, CYM, since she herself attended as a child, which has provided her

with opportunities to organize leadership training around the world.

After a 17-year career with the YM-YWCA, including a time as executive director of the north YM-YWCA, Lesia continued her work in Ukrainian education as an executive assistant to the Multicultural Secretariat Department. She was also involved for many years with the Ukrainian-Kyiv Pavilion, and she is currently chair of the board of the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, an organization she's worked with for 20 years.

Lesia Szwaluk has contributed to the advancement of countless Ukrainian-Canadian organizations in Manitoba. Notably, she spent 20 years as the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Manitoba Provincial Council, and has been the executive director of the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko since 2001.

In 2007, Lesia received the most prestigious award of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Shevchenko Medal for her community involvement at the national and international levels. In 2009, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko awarded Lesia Szwaluk a medal for noble work and virtue. She has received many other medals and awards for her commitment throughout her career.

Mr. Speaker, Lesia Szwaluk's dedication cannot be fully accounted for on paper, but the countless people whose lives are better for it are living testaments to her work. Thank you, Lesia Szwaluk, for the many contributions you've made that have helped shape the character of our community.

Karine Martel

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm pleased to recognize an extraordinary young lady in our province who is with us in the Chamber today. Karine Martel is a grade 11 student at École communautaire Réal-Bérard in St-Pierre-Jolys, and is currently working as a page in the Manitoba Legislature this session.

Karine recently returned from the Canada Winter Games in Halifax as an athlete in short track speed skating. Although she did not win a medal at the event, Karine skated extremely well in the competition and represented Manitoba admirably. Her replacement on the team rose from 46 to 33rd position on the depth chart in her only appearance in the Canada Winter Games.

*(14:40)

At the age of 10, Karine started speed skating when her family moved to Iqaluit. Two years later, the family moved back to Manitoba where Karine decided to continue speed skating. Brian and Michèle Martel saw their daughter's desire to continue with her sport and committed to drive her in to the nearest speed skating club twice a week in River Heights, located about an hour from their home.

During her training for the Canada Winter Games, Karine Martel and her family were required to drive to Winnipeg six to seven times a week so that Karine could train for her events. She competed in the 500-, 1,000- and 1,500-metre races and recorded a personal best time of 2:48 in her best event, the 1,500-metre race.

Following her graduation from high school next year, Karine plans to train for the national speed skating team, and I look forward to watching her as she works towards her goal.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members of the Legislature will join me in congratulating our page, Karine Martel on her recent speed skating accomplishments, and I would like to recognize her father, Brian Martel, who is a teacher with École communautaire Réal-Bérard and is in the gallery today with his students.

It's great to see the dedication of the entire Martel family towards short track speed skating and I wish Karine all the best as she pursues her sports future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Assiniboine Community College 50th Anniversary

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week at the Manitoba Legislature, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) joined my colleagues and I in celebrating with staff from Assiniboine Community College their first 50 years of service to educational excellence in Manitoba.

When it opened its doors in 1961, Assiniboine Community College offered only two courses and had 24 students. Today, ACC offers over 30 diploma and certificate programs and eight apprenticeship programs. It has also expanded its range of courses and delivery methods such that ACC now boasts a full- and part-time student enrolment of nearly 10,000 students.

To encourage the expansion of college programs, our Manitoba provincial government has supported Assiniboine Community College through many significant investments over the past several years. The investment made to transform ACC by developing the North Hill Campus, utilizing Manitoba's most outstanding collection of historic architecture at the former site of the Brandon Mental Health Centre, is truly unprecedented.

Our most significant investment to date in this regard was the infusion of \$46 million towards the construction of the new Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology which opened at the beginning of the current academic year. The centre, named after one of Manitoba's most historically respected members of the Legislature, can accommodate more than 1,400 students, more than half of which are new apprenticeship spaces.

Today, the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology offers 13 full-time programs ranging from agricultural equipment technician to web design. In addition, each trade-related program offered at ACC is accredited by Manitoba Apprenticeship and successful students can be given credit toward the apprenticeship of their choice. Together, with the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts, the Len Evans Centre is contributing to the prominence of the—of ACC—of the ACC North Hill Campus as a Manitoba landmark.

Assiniboine Community College has also received significant funds for the expansion of its Parkland Campus, classrooms and labs. The—this investment has helped ACC offer enhanced programming that is helping to train more practical nurses and health-care aides so all Manitobans can benefit from greater access to health care closer to home.

Taken together, our provincial investments in Assiniboine Community College will have a lasting impact on Brandon, western Manitoba, the Parklands and the entire province. I am proud to be a strong supporter of Assiniboine Community College and proud of our government's strong commitment to post-secondary educational excellence throughout the province.

Jessie Robbins

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's a privilege for me to rise in the House this afternoon to

recognize a very special constituent of mine—Miss Jessie Robbins, daughter of proud parents Pam and Gary and sister to big brother Jeremy.

Jessie is 14 years old and attends grade 9 at Souris School. She is a strong student, active in sports and has many friends.

However, in June 2009, at the age 13, Jessie was faced to realize her own strength when she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. Jessie's life changed forever that day. However, by December, 2009, she was finished her treatments and officially classified as being in remission. Jessie's bright—future is bright and optimistic. Her mom says she is a stronger person because of her experience.

In lieu of Cancer Awareness Month, I found it appropriate to tell Jessie's story. Since being in remission, Jessie has focused her time on fundraising for the Ronald McDonald House and CancerCare Manitoba. She was chosen of one of two spokeskids for the Ronald McDonald House where she went along with her parents to eight McDonald restaurants around Winnipeg. She worked really hard, and the proceeds went directly to the Ronald McDonald House. After doing a fantastic job as a spokeskid for the Ronald McDonald House, Jessie asked to participate in the annual Ronald McDonald House Hope Couture fashion show. Nearly 750 people attended and raised \$60,000 for the house.

Not only did Jessie do her part for the Ronald McDonald House, where she stayed during treatment, she lent a hand for CancerCare Manitoba collecting pledges for Kendra's Walk for Kids.

Jessie is feeling healthy and happy. Through her experience she made many new friends and learned many life lessons. Jessie is a vibrant young lady that has shown a tremendous amount of courage at a very young age.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Minnedosa, good friends of the Robbins family, I would again like to recognize a remarkable young lady, Jessie Robbins. She's a wonderful advocate to children and to her proud home community of Elgin. We are so proud of her and we wish Jessie a great deal of success as she continues her journey for greater cancer awareness. Way to go, Jess.

Plessis Road Underpass

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Minister of Infrastructure and

Transportation (Mr. Ashton) celebrated the NDP's commitment to its share of the Plessis underpass at the corner of Plessis and Dugald Road in northeast Winnipeg.

In total, the Province of Manitoba has committed to funding one-third of the costs of building the underpass and the twinning of Plessis Road. The NDP MP for Elmwood-Transcona, as well as the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) and I, have been active supporters of the Plessis Road underpass project. We have heard the concerns from our constituents, and we have made every effort to ensure that their needs are addressed. All we need now is to make sure that the federal government provides its support to this project.

The Province recognizes the importance of investing in Winnipeg's infrastructure to meet the priorities of its citizens. This is one of many key public services we are investing in throughout the province, and we will make every effort to continue supporting these projects in the future. After all, we know how frustrating it can be to wait endlessly at railway crossings, especially when we're on the way to work or an appointment. We also know how the challenges of navigating our way around potholes can affect us. No one is immune, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, having improved roadways and infrastructure is not just a matter of convenience, but it is also a matter of safety. We need to make sure that emergency services have the fastest routes available to them when responding to emergencies when someone's life may be on the line.

It is also important to have safe roadways to reduce the risks of traffic accidents. The Manitoba government has listened to Manitoba families and to Winnipeg drivers, and we are committed to doing what we can to improve the infrastructure in the city of Winnipeg and throughout the province.

The time has finally come for the residents of northeast Winnipeg to no longer suffer the traffic disruptions associated with this railway crossing. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the completion of the Plessis Road underpass, and that the constituents' concerns have been heard. And I'm sure we all look forward to the day when we no longer have to wait for the trains to pass at this particular crossing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Government House Leader): It gives me great pleasure—

Mr. Speaker: House business?

Mr. Struthers: House business.

Mr. Speaker: House business.

Mr. Struthers: It gives me great pleasure to call for Committee of Supply, great pleasure.

Mr. Speaker: We'll continue on with Committee of Supply. And in the Chamber will be Executive Council, and in room 255 will be Education, and in room 254 will be Advanced Education and Literacy.

Would the appropriate Chairs please go to their respective rooms to chair their committees, please.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): 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 for Advanced Education and Literacy. As had been previously agreed, the questions for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak about post-secondary education, as it's probably at the top of my interest as far as topics go.

Campus Manitoba was started a number of years ago to bring together the respective post-secondary institutions' distance ed programs under one roof. The former minister of Advanced Education decided to work with the Council on Post-Secondary Education and review Campus Manitoba to see whether or not the objectives have been made after 10 years in operation and whether or not there was further enhancements that could be made to the operations of Campus Manitoba, and I'm very interested as to the outcome of the review and

whether or not those—any recommendations were made public.

Perhaps the minister can enlighten the committee of the outcome of the review.

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Chair, and I'm going to just assume that the member has a particular interest in post-secondary education because, if I'm not mistaken, his children might be of that age, that they may be either in post-secondary education or thinking about it or, perhaps, have just finished it. So, certainly, probably been a focus around his dinner table over the last few years, as it is around mine, even though mine are younger. It's trying to plant the seed of an interest in learning, and trying to plant the seed of the direction that you hope your children will go, of course.

Certainly, the member mentioned the Nordman review and whether or not it was made public, and my understanding that it is. It's on the website of the COPSE website, and able for the member to view or anyone else who would wish to do that.

Of course, Campus Manitoba being part of this government commitment to ensuring that we've got affordable and accessible post-secondary education right across the province for anybody who's interested in it, and, certainly, there are initiatives in place for students who may wish to leave their hometown and come to either Brandon or The Pas or Dauphin or, of course, Winnipeg, any of the places where we have a university or college campus. And we have bursaries in—set up, as well, for rural students who may wish to leave their home and town and pursue their education at a different place.

But, of course, Campus Manitoba is also available to students. As the member is probably aware, it's a collaboration of all of our universities, and colleges play a role in it. And the thing that works so well with it is the seamless transition of credits from—that are recognized. If you take a course with one particular college or university, it's recognized at the other institutions as well.

Of course, we are committed to Campus Manitoba. We think it's an efficient way to serve students around the province, and are committed to seeing that it both expands and to, someday, get to the point where a student can do their entire degree through Campus Manitoba, would be the goal for it in the future.

Mr. Faurshou: I thank the minister for her response, and I will, indeed, look at the COPSE website to see the outcome of the Campus Manitoba review. Without question, I wholeheartedly support the concept of making available post-secondary educational opportunities in the rurals of Manitoba.

And the minister was quite correct; I have three in university at this point in time, which brings up a whole other topic of student loans but, anyway, we'll get to that in due time. *[interjection]* The—law, medicine and we're not sure just yet.

So, what we're—what I'd like to ask the minister, though, is the enrolment in Campus Manitoba: Has it been increasing—levelled out? How have we been making out with student numbers?

Ms. Selby: Let me just take a moment actually to reassure the member that—to not despair over the trials of raising his children, which it sounds like he's done a good job if he's got one in medicine, one in law and I'm not worried about the third one. It sounds like you're going in the right direction.

But I will remind the member that, of course, if his children choose to stay in Manitoba and work in Manitoba, they'll be eligible for the 60 per cent tuition rebate. So keep that in mind as well, and, of course, we do have a very thorough bursary and scholarship program through Student Aid that I would encourage him to—if he hasn't looked at, to do that as well.

I did want to talk a little bit about Campus Manitoba. As I said that, we certainly want to see Campus Manitoba expand and be able to offer even more courses, and eventually the goal being that somebody could do their entire degree at Campus Manitoba. We don't have that capacity right now, and that is certainly something that we'd like to move towards.

We have seen a slight decrease in the enrolment at Campus Manitoba, and it could be for a number of reasons. It could be because students were taking advantage of the rural bursary perhaps and actually using that money to come and study in one of the more major centres; that could be the reason.

It could be that at this point, Campus Manitoba has limited courses that they have and people can't finish their entire degree, so there is some question of perhaps maybe students have cycled through and done the amount of courses that they can at this time and are looking to further their studies, and at that

point are taking advantage of the rural bursary and moving to one of the bigger centres.

But certainly, our commitment is there, and we hope to expand it and hope that students waiting to be served closer to the community, because we know that's easier for the community, for families and particularly for adult learners, it makes it easier for them to access and to upgrade their skills.

Mr. Faurischou: I do believe the minister has a good grasp of understanding of the rural parents' concerns about adequate programming at a cost effective to the budget of most rural residents.

The Campus Manitoba and other programs offered by Red River College and Assiniboine Community College have been, as I understand, either level or diminishing a little bit, and the minister may have nailed it by saying that the additional bursaries for persons residing out of the major centres as a reason why.

But I would like to—perhaps the minister can just enlighten me as to whether or not within the COPSE report on Campus Manitoba whether there was a publicity element suggested by the review, because I'm gravely concerned that rural residents, parents of high-school-age children are not getting adequately informed of what opportunities are there in their own community or close by and that the—I won't say that the students glean some of the information coming home from school, but I do know one of my daughters conveniently left in her locker till well after registration period and time the opportunity that was there to enrol right in Portage la Prairie at the same course that was offered in Winnipeg.

*(15:10)

Ms. Selby: Mr. Chair, I should correct something earlier, that I was under the understanding that on the website at COPSE you could look into the report. I've just been informed that it's not there, but, I will order that it be placed on the website so that it is available for the member and others who want to look at that. So we'll get that done as soon as possible.

I certainly understand the members concerns about things that sometimes don't come home from school or stories that you hear that come home from school that might not be exactly the same as the information that may have been originally provided. That seems to happen at my house an awful lot as well. Everyone in grade 5 gets \$20 or \$30 a week in their allowance, apparently, is what I hear, and they

all stay up until 11 o'clock every night. I'm the only one who doesn't let them.

I will also point it out to the member that I understand, certainly, people, you know, probably want to encourage their kids to stay close to home, but for those who are thinking about moving into one of the bigger centres, we still do maintain the third lowest university tuition in the country and the second lowest college tuition in the country. And with the policy being that tuition is frozen to the rate of inflation, which is expected—it's 1 per cent this year—it gives a little bit of planning for families, at least, if they are looking at post-secondary education, away from home particularly.

I think the member makes a really good point, though, about making sure that parents, grandparents and caregivers are aware of Campus Manitoba and what is offered there, and I take the member's point in mind and think that it is important as well that—agree that outreach is probably something that we should focus on.

I know that there are new communities that are interested in hosting Campus Manitoba as well, three particular new communities, around the province, that are eager to get involved and not just advertising that it's coming to new places but reminding folks that it is still there. So I take the member's suggestion seriously and agree with him that we need to make sure that people are aware and, as the member pointed out, not just the students at high school but their parents as well.

Mr. Faurischou: I appreciate the minister's understanding of a parental role in assisting in decision making about post-secondary education and as we spoke the other morning at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce breakfast about the advanced placement course offerings within high schools to give students a leg-up, if you will, upon entry into university and the dual accreditation programming that Red River College has entered into with a number of school divisions across the province to offer carpentry, auto mechanics, nursing-aide positions.

It is very important to get the message home to parents, though, and I got to credit the Portage School Division for hosting events, for enlightening parents as to the program offerings and about post-secondary opportunities. But, again, it was not well attended. Having a graduating class of over 200, there was perhaps 10 per cent of that graduating class parents were represented at this open house that the

school had, including Campus Manitoba and Red River College and Assiniboine Community College.

So I'm just asking and I will leave this with the minister, a concern that we need to develop a conduit of communication with the parents as well as the students about the opportunities that do present themselves in rural Manitoba. So I want to leave that at this point in time.

I do want to pick up on what the minister said about the tuition rebate and I will say we—that I am most pleased, personally, that the New Democratic Party picked up on my election idea of 1999, although I will criticize, in one fashion, only half measures. I said that the tuition rebate program shouldn't be linked with a revamp of the Student Loans Program, whereby every student, regardless of parental income, is available for a student loan, and upon graduation those student loans are eligible for tuition rebate to 100 per cent. Also, too, though, if you choose to use taxpayers' money and, indeed, seek employs elsewhere after your education here in Manitoba, those student loans are due immediately. So sort of like a carrot but there is also a stick there because we are losing an immense number of graduating students. And I will hearken back to the nursing program, where I sat down for breakfast with 10 graduating Bachelor of Nursing students, and all 10 were leaving the province. And we have a significant investment in those nurses—students that are leaving.

So, again, I will leave that topic without further commentary.

I do want to ask the very specific question about the change in government position pertaining to a licensed practical nursing program, whereby the Assiniboine Community College had 'exclusivity' of our program offering and that now has been eliminated. And is the government figuring that they now should see that program elsewhere?

And, then, also, too, is that a change whereby other institutions now can offer the psychiatric nursing program that was allotted to Brandon University, or the registered nursing program which was allotted to Red River College? Is this a whole new ball game? Are all post-secondary educational facilities are wide open to offer what they will or—seeing that now the government has removed the 'exclusivity' for the LPN training program?

Ms. Selby: I thank the member for the question, and I do want to remind him that there are 2,500 more

nurses in Manitoba than there were in 1999. So we know that there are more nurses staying now and, of course, we will always continue to rely on the work of nurses and we know that not only do they provide expert care and knowledge, but they also provide a certain warmth and a certain support beyond the medical expertise that they all have in the bedside, as well, that they could be a very big help to patients beyond the knowledge that they carry.

Certainly, ACC is still the largest provider, in terms of our nursing seats across the province, both in Winnipeg and in Brandon as well, and I really—I'm committed to the work that they do. But we do also want to make sure that we're bringing education to people. As I said earlier, we have a commitment to making education accessible, as well as affordable, and so that it's something that people around Manitoba have an opportunity to experience, should they choose to.

So UCN has also got not as many seats as ACC does, in terms of nurses, but we know that it makes it easier for students and, as I said earlier, particularly adult learners who may already have a family and be established in a community that where we can we will bring the campus to them. And UCN is a good example of that, where there are nurses being trained at UCN—certainly, not as many as we see trained at ACC yet, but, certainly, the LPN nurses are being trained at both UCN and ACC.

So I thank the member for his interest in this particular topic.

* (15:20)

Mr. Faurschou: I appreciate the minister's response. I believe we need to have a further discussion in this regard, though. But I would like to also—to make it known to the minister that the Red River College campus is moving from Southport to a closed Victoria School, an elementary school in Portage la Prairie. Renovations are under way. Thank you very much for the capital support that we've received from your department. And I would very much like to encourage the minister to come out and spend half an afternoon and look at the potential of the expanded Red River College site in Portage.

Ms. Selby: Well, I thank the member very much for the invitation and I will be happy to take him up on that. My plan is to tour all our campuses, if it is possible, in the next few months, and I haven't had as much chance to do that yet as I would like to.

So I will like to take him up on that, and I would be interested to hear all his ideas and sit down with him at any opportunity. And, as I know, he has a vested interest in this and probably can guide me both from his experience as a politician and perhaps as a parent as well, as how he's managed to do so well with the two that are already signed up and ready to go to post-secondary school. So thank the member for his support and interest.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I just have—just not too many questions left, but we'll see how it goes here.

I'm going to recycle back on a few things that I just wanted some clarification on and further information.

I believe Manitoba's average annual student loan debt is about \$6,300 for 2009-2010. Can the minister say what it is for 2011—or 2010-2011?

Ms. Selby: I thank the member for the question as well. The 2011 annual report will be out shortly, so at this time we wouldn't have those numbers compiled for the years that the member's looking for.

Mrs. Taillieu: What was the annual student debt, then, in 2008-2009?

Ms. Selby: I'm looking at the numbers comparing 2008-09 to 2009-10, and I should let the member know that the average student debt has gone down in that time. We are seeing a decrease in student debt. We know that we've been increasing amount of money that we're putting into bursaries and that—and it would probably be reflective in that as well.

So the average student debt after four years would be just over \$12,000—the average student debt in the year would be about \$12,000, of course, but this would be before that we would be applying the 60 per cent tuition rebate against that as well.

Mrs. Taillieu: Okay, then. Can you just equate that, then, to what it would be for the '09-10 in terms of the overall debt and then with the tuition rebate as well, just so I can compare the two?

Ms. Selby: And I should apologize to the member, it's a rather complicated bunch of numbers to be talking about over this way, and also, that we had thought that the member might have been finished with her questions yesterday with Student Aid, and I think we misunderstood that, so we didn't ask our Student Aid person to come back because we mistakenly thought that the member had said that she was done in that line of questioning. But what I can

say is that the average student debt in all programs in the fourth year would be just over \$12,000, and it's about \$500 lower than it was in '08-09.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just a few more questions. The Manitoba grad scholarship—Graduate Scholarships—what amount—what is the amount to students at each university: U of M, U of W, BU and UCN this year?

Ms. Selby: I just wanted to get clarification, if the member is asking the total money amount or the total amount of students who have accessed it? I wasn't clear on that.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, it's the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship. So what amount is given to each university for that scholarship, each to the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, BU and UCN this year?

Ms. Selby: There are, of course, only three universities that have graduate programs, so they would be the three that would be eligible to have the graduate—Manitoba Graduate Scholarship. So University of Winnipeg receives \$75,000 annually; Brandon University also receives \$75,000 annually, and, of course, University of Manitoba, offering more graduate programs and—and, of course, University of Manitoba being the only university at this point that offers a Ph.D. program receives \$2.1 million for the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship yearly.

Mrs. Taillieu: So \$2.1 million this year?

* (15:30)

Ms. Selby: Yes, we increased the budget this year. Budget 2011 increased the amount of money going into the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship, so 2011-2012 budget at the University of Manitoba for the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship is \$2.1 million.

Mrs. Taillieu: I believe that the increase to the Manitoba Graduate Scholarships was \$250,000 this year. How much of that, then, went to each of these universities?

Ms. Selby: Budget 2011, of course, was addressing the needs at University of Manitoba because we know that the majority of graduate studies are happening at the University of Manitoba, and the University of Manitoba is the only university in the province, at this time, that offers Ph.D. studies.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, then, is the minister saying that she gave all the money to the University of Manitoba?

Ms. Selby: And I'll just remind the member of the numbers that I stated earlier, that yearly we do give \$75,000 to the University of Manitoba—of Winnipeg, rather, to support their graduate studies. Brandon University, we also give \$75,000 in Manitoba Graduate Scholarship to support their graduate students, but we know that they have significantly smaller graduate programs than the University of Manitoba does at this time.

And, in order to support the University of Manitoba and the number of graduate students that they serve, we felt that the—that this year's budget would speak to the fact that the majority of graduate students are studying at the University of Manitoba. And, also, that they are the only university at this time in Manitoba to offer Ph.D. studies, so we felt that it was important to acknowledge the work they do in the area of Ph.D. studies, and their current yearly Manitoba Graduate Scholarship Fund is \$2.1 million.

Mrs. Taillieu: I am still curious, though; there was another \$250,000. Sounds to me as if that was all going to the University of Manitoba, which I'm very happy for the University of Manitoba for that. But it would sort of seem to me to be kind of a slap in the face to the other universities if they didn't get at least some of that. You know, I understand that University of Manitoba is bigger and has—but if there's going to be an increase to scholarships, I'm wondering why it wouldn't be sort of spread over the other universities as well. Why—and I'm not disputing that university is a great—University of Manitoba is a great university, if you're happy for them, but sad for the other two. So just wondered what the rationale for that was, why they wouldn't get some of that.

Ms. Selby: And, of course, certainly we are excited and happy to support all the universities in their graduate programs and as I stated earlier that, of course, the University of Winnipeg received \$75,000 for their Manitoba Graduate Scholarship, Brandon University also receives \$75,000 for their Graduate Scholarship, and the bulk of the money does go to University of Manitoba, and that's because the bulk of graduate students are currently being served at the University of Manitoba. And, of course, it is the only university in the province, at the moment, that has a Ph.D. course of studies.

And I should point out to the member that University of Winnipeg currently has 219 graduate students, Brandon University has 171 graduate students. At the University of Manitoba, graduate

students and Ph.D. students total 3,741 students, so the member can understand that there is a significant difference in the amount of graduate studies that they are offering.

I also point out that this is money on top of the operating grants that the Province has given the universities this year. We've given them a 5 per cent increase in operating grants and committed to increasing that for the next three years, and I would also like to point out that the universities have been very pleased with the funding so far this year.

Lloyd Axworthy, who is the president and vice-chancellor at the University of Winnipeg, has said that this will allow them to do better long-term planning. Scott Lamont, VP of Administration and Finance at Brandon University, has said that in every respect the university is pleased. And certainly we know that Dr. Barnard, President and Vice-Chancellor at the University of Manitoba, as well, has said that they are also very pleased by the support being provided to the University of Manitoba, so, certainly, yes, the member is correct, the bulk of the money in the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship Program does go to the University of Manitoba, but, indeed, so do the bulk of the graduate students.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just a couple more questions. What impact has the cessation of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Fund had on Manitoba Student Aid?

Ms. Selby: The Canada Millennium Scholarship, which was an initiative of the previous federal government, used to give about \$10 million to the Province. The Province was in control of how that was handed out to students and was able to be used to pay down student debt, so it was able—the Province was able and the folks at Student Aid were able to recognize those students most in need, those students who had debt that most needed attention and were able to pay it down accordingly.

* (15:40)

When the federal government changed, the new current federal government eliminated that program. They did continue payment for students who had began in the Canadian Millennium program, and there has been a transition period where that program transitioned and continued some support for those students, but it has been replaced with the Canada Student Grant program which is 10—is also about \$10 million. The amounts aren't that different, but it is distributed differently and it is distributed at the

discretion of the federal government, not the provincial government, and is not distributed necessarily to the same needs being met as the original program was.

At this point, it hasn't—we haven't really seen a difference in terms of student debt. So far we're still wrapping up the transition period from the Canada Millennium student loan.

Mrs. Taillieu: I think we're ready to proceed.

Yes, I just want to—before the staff leave, I just want to thank you very much for your co-operation and your work here the last couple of days. So, thanks very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 44.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$589,784,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Support for Universities and Colleges, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$35,514,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Manitoba Student Aid, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,197,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Adult Learning and Literacy, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

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, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$995,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,132,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy,

Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Consideration of the Minister's Salary. 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 request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item. They already have left.

The floor is open for questions.

Resolution 44.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,176,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of 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 Labour and Immigration.

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

The committee recessed at 3:45 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:50 p.m.

LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

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 of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Yes, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to take up a lot of time, but I do want to take the opportunity to highlight some of the achievements of the Department of Labour and Immigration over the last year. I'm served by an incredibly dedicated group of men and women who are professional, who are innovative, and who bring

that kind of commitment and passion to their work everyday. So I want to take this opportunity to thank them and recognize them for their work.

Some of the accomplishments in the last year: I want to start with Workplace Safety and Health, as we are, today, commemorating the Day of Mourning. The time-loss injury rate in Manitoba has decreased by over 40 per cent since 2000. And that's significant progress. We have much more work to do in this area, but some of the things that have happened to enable this decrease: one of it is the work of the division who's increased their workplace inspections from 1,600 in 1999-2000, over 11,400 last year. And one of the ways that that's been accomplished is through an increase in inspectors. In fact, over the last decade, the number of inspectors has more than doubled to 74 officers.

Also, last June, I was pleased to be able to introduce amendments to The Workplace Safety and Health Act that saw the fines increased for contraventions of the act for the first time in many years. Those fines have been among the lowest in Canada, and now they are certainly competitive with other regions. I think it's important to note that, certainly, fining companies is the last step in the enforcement process. I have directly witnessed the work of our workplace safety and health officers who very much see their job as working with employers and employees to ensure safe environment. So, when they are called to a job site, you know, their first job is to work with the people there to make sure they're working safely, they know what they're supposed to be doing, they have the adequate equipment. And that's the way that they conduct themselves.

The Employment Standards branch is also an important part of Labour and Immigration. Probably—I have to check the stats on this, but I think that that branch probably sees the most requests for information of any branch in the division from the public: an astonishing 45,000 telephone calls and 5,000 walk-ins in 2010-2011 that the branch dealt with. And, if you look at their website, 15.5 million page views of the Employment Standards website this year, which is really astonishing number of views of that website. And we think that that's important to note because we believe it is important for Manitobans to have access to information on the Employment Standards Code. Last year, the work of that branch resulted in over \$1 million in wages being recovered for workers who were due those

wages, and much quicker resolution of complaints and investigations.

We also know the Employment Standards branch is continuing to innovate and do good work. They've implemented a special investigation unit tasked with proactively investigating and enforcing the Employment Standards Code, The Construction Industry Wages Act, The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, and compulsory trade ratios under The Apprenticeship Act. What we believe this proactive unit allows us to do is to take action when we have complaints, but also when we know that workers may be so vulnerable that they're not making complaints because they're afraid of reprisal.

Of course, the Employment Standards Code has been updated several times, and, most recently, to include leave for people who were leaving to donate organs, and also those who needed leave for citizenship ceremonies. We're served very well, when we look at changes to the code, by the Labour Management Review Committee. This is a committee made up of equal numbers of employee and employer reps, and it is one of those committees where we have a very good discussion about how labour law should change in this province. They often, not always, but often come to consensus. And I know that I've been well served by their advice and previous ministers have been well served by their advice, and we should also, I think, thank them for their hard work.

We also recently introduced legislation in the House, Bill 23, to make some changes to the Employment Standards Code that were recommended to us by business and also agreed to by employees, and these changes will allow for employees who want to have flexible work arrangements to have those work arrangements. Previously, really, those kinds of arrangements were restricted to those workplaces that had collective agreements in place. This will open up those arrangements to all sorts of small businesses. And I'm informed by the director of Employment Standards that in conversations with small business organizations we've received very positive feedback, as well as from the restaurant industry, on those changes that allow for more flexible time arrangements.

We also have the Worker Advisor Office. This office is very important because it helps people who have claims with Workers Compensation Board get advice and information about how to pursue those

claims. We know that last year that office provided services to over 3,000 individuals, and this resulted in the office concluding almost 90 per cent of their inquiries with advice only and resolving over 300 claims. So I think that's good work by that office as well.

I want to talk a bit about the office of the Fire Commissioner. Of course, our Fire Commissioner has been very active with the flooding that has taken place recently, but, as well, taking leadership in a number of issues that are important to Manitobans. One of those have been the devastating fires that we've seen occur on First Nations communities. Of course, First Nations communities are the responsibility and the jurisdiction of the federal government, but we also believe that where we can provide assistance we should, and so through the office of the Fire Commissioner working with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, they have been working together on initiatives to improve fire safety in those communities, to improve training to firefighters and to address fire prevention issues.

As well, the office of the Fire Commissioner has taken on some new responsibilities this year. They have taken on the Mechanical and Engineering branch, which has been transferred to that office this spring, and we believe that this will result in a much more streamlined inspection process for people who require inspections. It will see inspection services and permitting that are related to building and plumbing, gas and electrical devices, boilers, refrigeration plants, as well as fire inspections and RV and mobile home inspections all housed together, and we think that this will achieve a more efficient and timely permit process. We also believe that this will help to bolster the number of inspectors on staff, increasing the number of elevator inspectors, and also enabling more inspections to be done every year because we'll be able to have inspection staff who are cross-trained and that means when we have vacancies that we'll be in a much better position to quickly backfill them.

The other part of my responsibility is as the Minister of Immigration. Since 1999, over 100,000 new immigrants have settled in Manitoba. If we think about that for a moment, that's more than adding two cities the size of Brandon to Manitoba in that time. Of course, we've seen these arrivals increase dramatically over the decade to 15,800 in the last year. We also know that this means our share of immigration to Canada has increased over time from less than 2 per cent in the 1990s to 5.6 per cent

in 2010. Our newest immigrants come from over 140 countries, and in 2010 the top source countries were the Philippines, India, China and Germany. Of course, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program is the key driver of Manitoba's immigration growth. Landings continue to increase every year, up 11 per cent over last year and up almost 77 per cent since 1999.

We believe, and certainly other people have borne this out, that the Provincial Nominee Program in Manitoba is a model for the rest of the country. We get requests often from other provinces and even from other countries who want to know why we've had the progress that we've had on immigration.

*(16:00)

We've seen nominations through that program increase annually, so that now we're at 5,000 in 2010. Of course, we continue to be very concerned about the federal government's decision to place a cap on those nominations at 5,000, and that concern is shared broadly by the business community, by people who work in agriculture, by people who depend on these immigrants who come to work in their industries. And so we continue to work very hard to convince the federal government that we should let this program continue to grow and expand as is appropriate to the economic growth in Manitoba.

We know that immigrants to Manitoba also choose—

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

The minister's time is over. We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I want to thank the minister for her opening comments. And I, too, want to thank the dedication of the staff for the work that they continue to do in, as the minister mentioned, keeping Manitoba as safe as possible. We realize that there will be accidents, but certainly we want to try to minimize those as much as we can.

I also do want to, though, encourage those who are involved in this—staff, as well—that when looking at different incidents is that to make sure that the—that I've always said that the whole area of common sense when you start to implement some of the regulations that are out there, that that needs to take place. I think I sense from the minister that this

is being encouraged, but I find too often that it's everything by the book, and I think that we need to be careful that we use a common-sensical approach as well when implementing certain things.

The other comment I wanted to make to that was that when you hear complaints, I realize that there are usually three sides to the story: there's the employer's side, the employee's side and then there's the truth. And I think that's—you know, those of us who are in public office recognize that and understand that. So it's always good to get a—all sides of the party, their comments and to encourage them to bring everything that they have to the table.

I want to—okay, and I also want to encourage the minister to have a balanced approach when she meets with employers and employees, and I think I also heard from your comments that in—when you put legislation and you bring that forward, that you do meet with employers and employees. I think it's very important that we continue to do that, because everybody has a good knowledge of the areas that they're involved in, and I think that it's important that we listen to both sides, as well, and then try and through that provide legislation that's going to be the best for all the cases involved.

The—you mentioned the Fire Commissioner. I just want to indicate that he was at the opening of the new fire hall in Winkler and that was very much appreciated. And I think that just to sort of tout my area there a little bit and the accomplishments that they've had, we have a wonderful fire hall, and if the minister ever has an opportunity to come into that area to tour the fire hall, Garry Klassen, the chief of the fire hall, there would certainly appreciate touring the minister through the hall itself.

You were just starting on the immigration and certainly we do have a concern, and our area is one that's been the recipient of many, many immigrants over the years. I'm going to be asking a few questions later on when you get to the immigration part of it, but certainly we want to see that continue. I know that the area that I represent has certainly benefited by the many, many immigrants who've come out there. And I think as well that the success rate has been really good.

You know, we always talk about retention, being able to retain those who immigrate into the area, and by and large, yes, we've had some move out and there have been some challenges in the last, I'd say, year or two, but I think we see a resolution to some of those challenges now as time is going on.

And I know that some of the larger employers right now are hiring again. So, certainly, this was a program that was started under our government back in the '90s and has been a very successful program. And so I'm not sure of all the details, but we'll get—probably get to that in a little while, about the influences that the federal and some of the challenges that they have placed to the Province at this time. But, certainly, we do appreciate the fact that we've had immigrants come to our community, and they have really worked out very well, by and large.

So I will be asking a number of questions, and we're going to get into the general discussion of that a little later on. But just, for now, Mr. Chair, that—those are my opening comments.

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

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered by a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 11.1.(a) contained in the resolution 11.1.

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.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I am pleased to introduce this impressive crowd that's joined me at the table. I'm joined by: Don Hurst, who's the assistant deputy minister in charge of Workplace Safety and Health; Chris Jones, who's the Fire Commissioner; Ken Taylor, who's in charge of the money; Ben Rempel, who's the assistant deputy minister for Immigration; Melissa Whiteside, who's also in charge of the money in Immigration; and Dave Dyson, who is the director of the Employment Standards branch.

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

Mr. Dyck: I would like to have a global discussion. On the other hand, though, my questions are fairly structured to specific areas. So I'd like to keep that door open. However, it'll be more in the global area.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. It is agreed, then, that questions for this department will proceed in a global manner with all the resolutions to be passed once questions have concluded. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Dyck: And I would ask the minister if she could provide a list of any individuals hired or brought on contract since last year.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I've got about seven or eight pages of names, so I could read them or we could provide you with the list.

Mr. Dyck: Well, possibly for being able to move ahead in questions, we'll just—if you could provide the list for me, that would be appreciated. Thanks.

Ms. Howard: Yes, we will do that then.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, just wondering, though, if, in this process—and I realize that I'm going to be getting the list, but if you give me a breakdown of any of the new hires or any new contracts since the date that the NDP leadership process took place.

* (16:10)

Ms. Howard: I don't have the information broken down in that way, so we can endeavour to get some dates attached to these hires. The vast majority of the hires have been done through competition, so I don't believe that the date of the leadership would have had any bearing on those hires.

Mr. Dyck: Then the next question I would have is if you could provide a list of anybody who has left the employment or—of your department since the—I guess would have been since—also since the leadership process took place.

Ms. Howard: Well, clearly, we think in different time frames. I have information for 2010-2011, but we will endeavour to get that information to you.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, regarding contract work, do you have any people that you have under contract at the present time?

Ms. Howard: No, not under employment contract.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, how many people—now, you said you had hundreds or whatever that you hired, but how many people would be employed, currently employed, by the department?

Ms. Howard: Approximately 410, I'm told, which would include staff in the department but also staff in the office of the Fire Commissioner, which operates as a special operating agency.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, so those would then be listed in that list that I will be receiving, is that correct?

Ms. Howard: I don't—I thought what I committed to is new hires. What that number is is all the people

that are employed. So I just need some clarification if you want everybody who's employed or just the new hires in the last year.

Mr. Dyck: I'll rephrase that: No, just the new hires. Thank you.

Okay, you just touched on it before, but regarding the new hires that you had this past year, were they all done by competition?

Ms. Howard: So, for 2010-11, there were 35 staff hired in Labour and Immigration Manitoba. Of the 35 hires, 19 were hired through competition, 11 were hired by direct appointment, and five were hired under civil service initiatives. So those would be initiatives like employment equity, development programs like we have in place for people with disabilities. We also have the gateway program in place which hires recent immigrants.

I should note that the majority of the 11 who were hired by direct appointment were hired for short-term positions, so somebody to backfill a mat leave, for example, some short-term administrative work. Sometimes those positions might be students that are hired for the summer to fill vacation leave.

That's the information I have for you.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, just on that, then, so the minister would indicate that any long-term employment was done through competition.

Ms. Howard: That's generally correct, with the exception, of course, of my political staff, who are hired through order-in-council. We also have some staff that are there through employment equity measures such as hiring for people with disabilities or other employment equity groups. But, with the exception of those two qualifications, I believe that's correct.

Mr. Dyck: Any of these new hires or positions, were they reclassified in the positions that they were put into?

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that none of the new hires were reclassified.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. Then another question. Are there any staff vacancies that exist in the department right now?

Ms. Howard: Yes, I'm informed that we have 19 current vacancies.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, then, of course, the question to ask: Are you planning to fill those vacancies?

Ms. Howard: There's planning under way to fill most of those vacancies with the exception of two, and those positions—I'm told one is in the Employment Standards branch and one's in the worker advocate office and one in the office of the Fire Commissioner, sorry.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, so my question would be then, as a result of these vacancies, have any projects been delayed or do you feel that there's been a problem with any of the areas?

Ms. Howard: I don't believe so. I believe that with the efficiencies under way in those offices that all of the business that needs to be taken care of is being taken care of.

* (16:20)

Mr. Dyck: Okay. Then in '09 and '10, how many positions would've been relocated from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg or, I guess, vice versa, from Winnipeg out into the rural area? Can you sort of give me a breakdown of that?

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that the office of the Fire Commissioner moved three positions from Brandon to Dauphin when they opened an office in Dauphin. There also was one position moved from the department from Thompson to Brandon, and there are plans to backfill that position in Thompson.

Mr. Dyck: Could the minister just give me sort of the rationale for doing this? I'm just curious.

Ms. Howard: In the case of the office of the Fire Commissioner, I believe it was intention to increase the presence in central Manitoba towards the north of the office and so that's why they established an office in Dauphin and moved some people there. I believe also the employees were interested in that, making that move as well. The situation in Thompson, I understand, was to accommodate some personal issues of the employee involved.

Mr. Dyck: In another area, could the minister provide a summary of travel for 2010-11 paid for out of the Labour and Immigration, and any pertinent details in connection with that travel in terms of location, purpose, and delegation membership?

Ms. Howard: So for the year ending March 31, 2011, for my own travel, there were two trips: one to Ottawa from June 13-15 to attend the ministers of Immigration meeting, and one right after that to Toronto for the ministers—FPT ministers responsible

for the Status of Women annual meeting. The total cost of that travel was \$1,705.40.

For the deputy minister's travel for the year 2010-11 involved travel to Toronto and Ottawa for deputy ministers of Immigration and the ministers of Immigration meeting. Also involved travel to Beijing, Hong Kong and Delhi as part of a trip with other deputies who were looking at immigration programs abroad, as well as travel to an FPT minister responsible for Immigration meeting in December in Ottawa.

There was also travel to a meeting—a round table on labour administration and labour inspection, international standards for domestic workers, International Labour Organization on HIV/AIDS in the workplace—that was travel to Gatineau. And there was also travel to Ottawa planned but not embarked upon because of the federal election that had to do with multiyear planning and the issue of the cap to the Nominee Program that I spoke about earlier.

Now, the cost for that travel in 2010-2011, all put together, comes to \$20,110.98.

And I don't have travel for everybody in the department, but we do have travel for Immigration, which is probably about 90 per cent of the travel costs in the department. And I don't know if we have a total on that. Again, I have a very long list of numbers, so we can read them out or I could provide them to you.

Mr. Dyck: Thank the minister. I'll be a little more specific then, from the big list then that you have. Would any of the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) travel have been paid for by the department of—your department, whether it's WCB or any agencies under your control?

Ms. Howard: Not through the department, not through the office of the Fire Commissioner. If there are questions regarding the Workers Compensation Board, I think we have to save those for the Crown committees—the Crown Corporations committee. I'm not aware of any travel being paid through the Workers Compensation Board for the Premier, but I don't have those officials with me today.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you, I do appreciate that, and when we get to the appropriate spots, then we'll ask those questions.

Okay, another question: Which ADM was promoted to deputy minister and which branches of

government were moved with that assistant deputy minister?

Ms. Howard: Unless they're holding out on me, I don't believe that any of my assistant deputy ministers have been promoted to deputy minister. The current deputy minister is Jeff Parr, who was not able to join us today for family reasons, and has been the deputy minister for six years.

Mr. Dyck: That's why it was so important that I asked that question, so that the minister could ask that question and be apprised of anything that had taken place. *[interjection]* Well, that's right, but that's why—that's why we're here. that's why we're asking all these questions.

Anyway, another question is how many retirements or new vacancies is the government anticipating over the coming year?

* (16:30)

Ms. Howard: Well, I guess while we're on the subject of retirement, I should take the opportunity to wish the member well in his own retirement from this Chamber. I guess this will be the last time we get to do this together in Estimates. I have certainly enjoyed working with him and wish him all the best.

He will be joining 12 people who have indicated that they also plan to retire from the Labour and Immigration Department.

Mr. Dyck: I do thank the minister for those kind well wishes, and it is definitely my intention to enjoy my retirement.

Yes, another question that I have and that is regarding wages. Have any—or which wages in the department have been frozen or have not?

Ms. Howard: The general agreement that's been ratified by the MGEU provides for a zero per cent increase, a general increase for next year and the year following. That will also apply to executive level compensation, and my own compensation has been reduced by 20 per cent and frozen at that level.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you very much. I'm going to be moving on now to another category which is the advertising part of your budget. So I've got a few questions on that as well, and I guess the obvious would be what is the department's annual advertising budget, and then how does this compare to the previous two years?

Ms. Howard: We'll have to get that information for the member. I don't have the advertising costs broken out.

Mr. Dyck: Well, I guess when the minister does that, if you could also have a breakdown of what would be advertising and what would be printing costs over the last two years? If you could do that, that'd be very much appreciated.

Okay. Then I'm going to move on to—well, I guess while you're going that, I'm just wondering what your planned budget is for advertising for the coming year as well. If you could give me that information, that would be appreciated too.

Ms. Howard: Yes, we'll endeavour to provide that to the member as well.

Mr. Dyck: And I'm going to now move on to the Estimates book, and I've got a few questions in there. I want to thank the minister for giving it to me in a timely manner, day before. Ah, there we go, yes.

If—okay, on page 13 of the Estimates here, I have a question. If you could explain the loss of the two financial and administrative services full-time equivalents for 2010 to '11. And that's on page 13 here, and I think it's just a little ways down, a few lines down.

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that those positions were part of the transfer of Mechanical and Engineering branch to the office of the Fire Commissioner. So those positions haven't been lost, but they were responsible for revenue collection, and because much of that work involved fees for permits and licensing fees and that work's now being done by the office of the Fire Commissioner, those positions were transferred over to the office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, so that was not—it's not a duplication of services; that's something that was needed within that department.

Ms. Howard: Yes, that's correct. It was—when the Mechanical and Engineering branch was within the department those people worked within the department to collect the revenue that came in for licensing costs, permit fees, but when that function moved to the office of the Fire Commissioner they needed the staff to do that revenue collection. So there's no net loss or gain of employees; it's just a transfer from the department to the office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. Then if you'd want to turn to page 23, I've got a question there as well, and that has to do with the mechanical and the engineering.

Now, as you indicated, this was moved to the Fire Commissioner's office. Was this decision to transfer to the office of the Fire Commissioner a budgeting decision, or is it just that it makes more sense to have those people in that department?

Ms. Howard: It wasn't a budgeting decision. It was really a decision made out of a quest, I think, for greater efficiency in the inspection services and also a decision that was made in the hope that we'd provide better service to the people who require inspection services.

Because we have inspectors who do different things in different locations, it seemed to make sense to put the bulk of those inspectors, except for the workplace safety and health inspectors, under one roof so that when someone was requiring a building inspection those people would be working with the same people that would be sent out to inspect the boiler in that building. And we're hopeful that, in that way, those inspectors can gain knowledge from each other. They can cross-train, they can be able to fill vacancies more quickly, but also they'll be talking to each other.

So, instead of us having to send out somebody to inspect your property many times for different things, hopefully, in the future we'll be able to co-ordinate that better. It'll be better and more efficient service for the property owner.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. That makes sense, and I hope it works out that way in the final end, because if you don't try, you don't know.

Okay, then I'm going to move on to page 25, and I just wonder if you could explain the loss of the two administrative support full-time equivalents from the '10 to '11 Estimates. Page 25, and that's under administrative support there, if you could.

*(16:40)

Ms. Howard: I'm informed these are the same positions we were talking about earlier, the financial positions that are responsible for revenue collection that moved from the branch when they moved to—when Mechanical and Engineering moved over to the office of the Fire Commissioner. So those are the same positions that we were talking about earlier, so they're not lost. They just—since their function moved

to the office of the Fire Commissioner, they moved with that.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, I think the minister's getting a little more information here, but I'm just wondering if this is a duplication of—within the book here or in the Estimates or what the reason for that would be.

Ms. Howard: I think that, when the member asked the first question, he was looking at the summary and so—and the second question would be the detail. So it's the same positions in two different places in the book.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. Yes, that makes sense and—okay, then, moving on to page 27, I had just a question there as well, and the question is: Why is there a \$10,000 increase in supplies and services for the department? And that's under supplies and services as you've got it indicated here.

Ms. Howard: So this, I believe, is under the information technology services portion of the budget, so I'm informed that the increased cost reflects some renovation costs for a server room. That server room which would—had been housing a server is now going to be used as a meeting room. It reflects in that \$10,000 some increased training costs for information technology staff, some costs related to web services allocating those costs to this part of the budget, some increased costs for operating supplies, and some changes in the printer refresh costs. I'm also informed that this is partially offset by a decrease in some of the real estate rental costs that that part of the department had been responsible for.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, and I don't need to know the details, but was a fair bit of that then used for instructional purposes or—

Ms. Howard: The staff training costs, I believe, would account for about \$3,000 of that increase, and the majority—I guess, \$5,000 of the increase was the transfer of the server and then refurbishing that room.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. Then, I'm moving on to page 31 and had a couple of questions there as well. How much funding for Mechanical and Engineering now goes to the office of the Fire Commissioner? And that would be—you've got the—well, I guess the total, but I was just trying to look at the numbers there. So, then, I think, under the explanations, you've also given the office of the Fire Commissioner there.

Ms. Howard: So the expenditures that are transferred as a result of the move of Mechanical and Engineering to the office of the Fire Commissioner accounts for about 33 regular FTEs, just over \$3 million in salary and other expenditures.

Now, because many of those services that are going are cost-based on cost recovery, so you need a permit. There's a fee for that permit; that fee goes to pay for the people that are involved in providing that permit. There's also a corresponding transfer of revenue from the Mechanical and Engineering branch to the office of the Fire Commissioner. The revenue is in the order of \$3.6 million.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, I appreciate that.

Then I had a question on page 38 here. Now, this is a part of the comment that is made here—it's about the middle of the page, but also from, I think, a follow-up from last year. And—how many of the 20 additional new safety and health officer positions have been filled to date? And I know that last year the minister indicated there were a number that, I believe, had not been.

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that all those positions have been filled.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you. Then another question I had in the book there was on page 54 and that had to do—that's to do with immigration. And there's an increase of nearly \$3,400 for Immigration. What is this money being spent on?

Ms. Howard: So, as the member is probably aware, the funding for Immigration really comes pretty well directly from the federal government. We have an agreement with Canadian immigration and—Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and through that agreement they flow funding to us. There are very specific uses for that money that they delineate in the agreement.

So the increase that the member is referencing, about \$3.3 million increase, will go to primarily to the Manitoba immigration integration program, or MIIP. So this is the program that funds settlement services. I believe that the majority of that funding from the feds has to be allocated towards English language training, enhanced language training. So that's the majority of that. I think over \$3 million of the increase is going for that.

About \$200,000 goes to the administrative component, to make sure that that funding is well administered, that it's going to organizations who are

using it appropriately, and that we are sure of the use of that money.

And then, there's \$8,000 provided from the federal government that goes to the Manitoba web portal. So this is, I believe, the website that many of the people who come to Manitoba first learn about Manitoba from and learn about the kinds of services that are available when they come here, the kind of requirements that they're going to have to meet to get their qualifications recognized.

*(16:50)

Mr. Dyck: Okay. And then the last question in the Estimates book here is on page 58. It also has to do with immigration, but it's the \$3,000 for Immigrant Settlement Services. The question is: How is that being used or how are those dollars being used?

Ms. Howard: Yes, so the increase is just over \$3 million, and the majority of that, as I said, is going to language and settlement programs; \$2.7 million is going to enhanced language training. So this is language training for people who have a higher level of understanding of English. It's different than English as an Additional Language training, and this is specifically language training to help new immigrants enter the market—enter the labour force quickly.

Also there's \$600,000 in there for an innovation fund project, which we've worked for a long time with the federal government to secure that funding. That's going to help us implement a new service model for refugees.

I think one of the areas that we continue to hear about a lot from the community of service providers is that when refugees come here, they come here with much higher needs than people who come through the Provincial Nominee Program, and we need to do a better job of meeting those needs. So it's my hope that the money received from the federal government for that project will help us, first of all, know when refugees are coming and be able to meet their needs in a much—much more quickly, much more intensive fashion.

As well, we're also—also, that kind of funding can also, I think, help us provide better services to the refugees who come here, who've experienced some kind of trauma, because they come from war-torn countries. We're particularly sensitive to this issue and seeing it arise for children who come and have come through horrific, horrific experiences

and need much more intensive services so they can be successful in school and adapt to life in Manitoba.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, just to follow up on that—and you did mention a little while ago regarding the funding. So, by and large, the funding you get from the federal government is categorical funding, which is specific to certain areas. However, the administration of it is allowed up to your department. Would that be a correct assessment?

Ms. Howard: That's correct. The agreement with the federal government is very clear what kinds of things you can spend that money on. So, for example, this year when they gave us an increase—and we've very glad for that increase, because many provinces experienced a decrease in funding—they were pretty clear that that increase needed to go to this enhanced language training and the bulk of the increase is going to that.

The other was the refugee project that I spoke about. They're also very clear how much you can spend on administration. It's not an infinite amount, and we're well below the limit that they have set. I believe the limit that they set for administrative costs is 15 per cent of the budget. We're currently at about 11 per cent.

Mr. Dyck: I guess at the end of the day you always look at a cost-benefit ratio.

Like, would you feel that, you know, the Settlement Services that you have, the monies you get, that they're responding well to the needs of those who are immigrating?

Ms. Howard: Well, I didn't get to finish my opening statement because I ran out of time, and I was going to get into some of the outcomes that we've seen for immigrants, and we've been able to do some research on this.

First of all, I should say—and I think the member knows this because he's got many of these organizations in his constituency—but the vast, vast majority of the funding that we get from the federal government for settlement goes into the hands of non-profit organizations deliver those services, do an outstanding job of it at very little cost. They're very cost effective at delivering those services.

And we see, when we look at the outcomes for newcomers, that they're doing very well. Newcomers to Manitoba have a lower unemployment rate than the general population. We also saw recently in a study done by the University of Winnipeg that they

have a very high home ownership rate, which was surprising to me—that, within five years of arrival, 76 per cent of people coming through the nominee program own their own home. So that, I think, is another good example of success.

So we believe that we are having positive outcomes from that funding. But we also believe that we need to ensure, both as an accountability measure to the federal government who funds us, but also an accountability measure to the people that we serve, those newcomers, we probably have to do more on evaluation to make sure those programs are working. But, certainly, the early indications just based on the success of newcomers to Manitoba is that those language training and settlement programs are working to help make those immigrants successful here in Manitoba.

Mr. Dyck: Well, I'll thank you for the answer and the response.

I guess, as part of my question that I had last year, and I know we did talk about it and I was just going through this book here and looking at the part of Immigration and the internationally educated professionals and then, of course, there's some comments made here about Manitoba. And, you know, my issue still is—and I know and I assume that you are working on it—but the problem with this is the portability of the education and the fact that, in my opinion, too many cases, they have to basically go back to university and are not allowed to challenge the exams. I know that I mentioned that last year and I've, you know, subsequently heard other concerns directed in the same way.

And I guess I'd ask the minister: What direction and what kind of responses are you getting, and what are the results, you know, of ensuring that the professional organizations do allow them to challenge the exam? And, I guess, you know, we don't want to have people out here who are professional people and—involved in certain professions and don't have a knowledge of it, but, you know, there's so many who do have a good knowledge of it and have the educational background. And so that still is a part of the issue for the new immigrants coming out here.

Just wondering if the minister could respond.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I certainly would agree with the member that that is a big, big issue for a lot of newcomers to Manitoba. It's, you know, it's something we probably both hear about from people

who have recently moved here and the frustrations that they go through not being able to practise the trade or the profession for which they're well trained. And it's a frustration to me also because I want those people—I want them here doing the jobs that they are trained for. We need them to do those jobs.

And that's why we put in place the fair practices act and the office of the Fairness Commissioner, and the report that the member is referencing is the first report of that office. And, as you probably know, many of these professions are regulated independently. They're regulated by professional bodies, a college, colleges of different professions. And so we've taken the approach to try to work with those regulators to get them into a position where they can be transparent about what they require of internationally educated professionals, where those requirements make some sense and where the people that they're working with who want to get their credentials here understand what's required of them and can get it in a timely fashion.

I think we've had some success where the profession has been an active partner. So I think, for example—I went and met with the office of the Fairness Commissioner and representatives of all of these professions, and I think we've had some very good success with engineers. We've been very active partners in making sure that people can get their credentials. And I recently, in fact, talked to a man who's been working in Manitoba for many years who came here, worked in a factory, became a technician working with the engineering and now is ready to write his exam to become an engineer.

But we have to make faster progress, and that's the message that I've certainly given to the regulators.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The time being 5 p.m., I'm interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

EDUCATION

* (15:00)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education.

As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. And

the floor is now open for questions, but I believe the honourable Minister of Education has some comments.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I have to put some comments on the record. Apparently, in my opening comments, I mentioned—I was talking about the education property tax, and I said that the education property tax credit has increased by \$350 to \$750 since 1999. The correct information is the education property tax credit has increased by \$450, from \$250 to \$700, since 1999.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, maybe if I could, Mr. Acting Chair, I'll just pick up on the minister's correction there.

You know there was an earlier promise that government committed to increase that rebate to homeowners fairly significantly, but nothing has been done over the last couple of years, and I'm just wondering why there is a change of heart this year in terms of announcing the higher rebates.

Ms. Allan: Well, we made a commitment to do a further \$50 reduction and—or increase it to another \$50 and we made that commitment, and we honoured that commitment in this year's budget.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, there was a few years—there was a previous commitment to keep increasing that each year over, you know, a number of years, and as a result we would've been at a higher level now, so this is—it just seems interesting that this has come about this year.

Who makes that decision? I'm just trying to figure out—is that a direction that comes from your department to the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) or how is that—how does that work?

Ms. Allan: Well, as the member opposite might recall, in 2008, our economy was faced with some serious economic issues in regards to the downturn in the economy, the worst recession since the Second World War, and when we were going through those difficult economic times, we made a decision to not do those reductions at that time. We knew that we had to honour that commitment to do the further \$50 that we had promised, and that is the commitment that is in this budget that I would like to remind the member opposite that he voted against.

Mr. Cullen: Well, we certainly could get into a lengthy political debate about the nature of the budget, but maybe we'll leave that for another time. You know, we're still looking at a half a mill—half a

billion dollars, pardon me, deficit in the budget, and it just seemed interesting that this was one of those tidbits that we're throwing out at this time, even while we're still facing a fairly substantial deficit position in our current budget.

I do want to get into the department a little bit in terms of staffing. I'm just wondering how many staff are in the department currently.

Ms. Allan: There are currently 409.77 FTEs.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I see that's what the Estimates book reports, but how many actual people do we have hired currently?

Ms. Allan: There are 36.85 vacancies.

Mr. Cullen: Are those vacancies—are those long-term vacancies or are they something that you anticipate filling those vacancies over the course of the next year?

Ms. Allan: What the senior management team does is they manage those vacancies in regards to workload. It's a balancing act in regards to the budget, but they ensure that the work gets done in accordance with the vacancies that they have and moving staff into those positions when the work is required to be done.

Mr. Cullen: Is there any positions within the department that are currently advertised?

Ms. Allan: We don't have the correct—we don't have the actual number, but we believe that there are some currently. We know that there are some right now that are being advertised.

Mr. Cullen: Does the department hire individuals on contracts?

Ms. Allan: Yes, the department does that from time to time on small contracts.

Mr. Cullen: Are those contracts tendered?

Ms. Allan: Yes, we do tender contracts and we have some untendered contracts, and those contracts that were not tendered are usually mainly for curriculum-related purposes. They're smaller contracts and most of the untendered contracts were under a thousand dollars. The ones that were under a thousand dollars were for translation services.

There are reporting requirements for untendered contracts in accordance with The Financial Administration Act. Each department has to prepare a report. It must show the name of the contractor, the purpose of the contract, the value of the contract, and

the date the contract was signed, and we manage those smaller contracts under a thousand dollars that way—over a thousand dollars, sorry.

Mr. Cullen: Would the minister be able to provide me that list for the contracts over a thousand dollars?

Ms. Allan: Well, that's a project that we would have to put together and provide to the MLA at some other time. Most of the contracts that we're talking about are contracts that are more short-term related, and when there's specialized services that are required in regards to curriculum or tape-related materials and it revolves around the translation of those materials—but, of course, certainly, if the MLA would like that information, we'll get it for him once the department has had an opportunity to put it together.

Mr. Cullen: I'm just curious in the process. The minister had mentioned that this information is put together and then is made publicly available. I wasn't sure how that process works, and I guess I'm looking for that information for the last fiscal year, if the department would have that item, I'd certainly appreciate that.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Chairperson, in the Chair

Yes, just to clarify. I don't need it right now. But just if the minister would forward it to me at some time in due course I would appreciate that.

Ms. Allan: Well, I can inform the member opposite that public access to untendered contract information is available through a workstation located in the Legislative Library right here in this building, and that caucus offices have access to the information through their LBIS workstations.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I appreciate the clarification on that.

Was there any money allocated in the last fiscal year paid—anything within the department paid out of Executive Council? So is there any travel, anything, that was paid either out of the Executive Council from the department?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Cullen: So none of the Premier's travel has been paid for out of the Department of Education?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Cullen: Just to clarify, the assistant deputy ministers, they haven't changed recently have they?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Cullen: In terms of political staff within the department, how many political staff are in the department and has that political staff changed recently?

Ms. Allan: I have two political staff in my department. One of them is Andrew Clark, who is the special assistant to the minister, and he has been working for me since around about October; Kaila Wiebe was my assistant. And Kaila had a baby, so she went on maternity leave. And the other individual that I have working on education matters is Lonnie Patterson.

Mr. Cullen: I didn't realize that Lonnie was in your department, another Wawanesa gal.

The budget amount here for salaries, is that based on the public sector wage freeze that appears to be coming in effect this year?

Ms. Allan: We didn't allow for general salary increase through any particular—through what would be called the MGEU collective agreement. But the increments in regards to an employee—the employee increments that they get every year, because—which is standard procedure throughout all departments, those are included in that figure.

Mr. Cullen: How many retirements or new vacancies are you anticipate over the coming year?

* (15:10)

Ms. Allan: I'm informed by my deputy minister that we've had no notification of any retirements in the department. I guess they just love working in the Department of Education so much they don't want to leave.

An Honourable Member: That's it exactly.

Ms. Allan: That must be it.

Mr. Cullen: In terms of secondments, do you have secondments from other departments working in your department?

Ms. Allan: We have one secondment that we're aware of, off the top of our head—and we don't think we have a lot—is Rick Dedi, who is the head of our Public Schools Finance Board and has been for quite some time. That's not something new. We believe he's been there for several years now, four, I believe.

And then, of course, the other thing that the department does that has been an ongoing practice

for many, many years is we have secondments from school divisions where we will be doing—developing curriculum or new policy and program areas, and we will second people from the field to come and work for us. It's a wonderful opportunity for people that are on the front lines to come into the department, and we have the opportunity to have them working on curriculum or programs where they can share their information from being on the field and then they get to experience working for the Department of Education and sometimes they stay for two or three years.

Sometimes, they might stay longer, and it's fun to be in the—visiting in school divisions and meet people who have said, oh, I worked in the department. It was a great experience. You know, those kinds of things. So that kind of thing goes on quite frequently, and it's a great sharing opportunity and a win-win situation.

Mr. Cullen: Just curious, which department is Mr. Dedi—has he been seconded from?

Ms. Allan: Health.

Mr. Cullen: So, in that case, his salary, does it show under your budget or does it show under the Health budget?

Ms. Allan: It shows under ours.

Mr. Cullen: Okay. Then in terms of the people that have been seconded from school divisions to work, that would also show under your budget as well then?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Cullen: Can the minister indicate how many people are currently—we'll use the term seconded—from school divisions that are working for the department at this point in time?

Ms. Allan: We'd have to get that information.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you. I'd certainly appreciate that if you would.

I want to refer to the news release put out by the Province back in January, and this was the funding announcement. There's a few items in there I'm just seeking some clarification on, and the one statement is that each school division will be guaranteed at least a 2.2 per cent grant increase this year. I just wanted to confirm that is indeed the case.

Ms. Allan: Yes, that is the case. In consultation with school divisions, we realized that there was some

school divisions who were quite small school divisions, and when the money flowed through the funding formula, sometimes they would get less than 2 per cent. So I believe it was around 2004 there was a change made to the funding formula by putting a basic guarantee into the formula floor to make sure that every school division in the province of Manitoba at least got 2 per cent funding. So that if we were making an announcement of 2.8 per cent or 3.2 per cent or whatever that, you know, the—because the formula—when the money runs through the formula and lands in school divisions, it looks kind of a little bit different sometimes. And we wanted to make sure that every school division got at least 2 per cent of that funding.

This year we changed that floor to 2.2 per cent when we were looking at the formula and the way it was working and rolling out. We wanted to make sure that each school division got a little bit more. And that builds equity into this—into the funding and into the system. It has been very well received, making that change to the formula, by school divisions because they appreciate the effort that is made to provide funding in an equitable way to school divisions across the province.

Mr. Cullen: There's also a reference in here about, you know, having students stay in school until the age of 18. It's a reference to Bill 13. Does the minister think that school divisions will be incurring extra expense because of that particular legislation?

Ms. Allan: We're in the process—well, first of all, we're going to pass the legislation and then implement it, but we have—will—we have and will be having conversations with school divisions in regards to what this means for them in regards to keeping kids in school. I certainly—you know, we've put aside \$690,000 of funding to provide to school divisions in regards to that particular piece of legislation and we will be working with them in regards to the resources that they require. We know already that we have some school divisions that are already doing this, and so it's a matter of having an opportunity to work with school divisions across the province and figure out what they need in regards to implementing this legislation.

Mr. Cullen: So, at this point in time, you haven't had feedback from school divisions in terms of what the repercussions might be for—from that particular legislation?

Ms. Allan: Well, we haven't—you know, we certainly don't have school divisions in the province of

Manitoba coming to us and saying, you know, we want to do this program and this is how much money we need. We're not at that stage yet. This is going to be a huge cultural shift for our province. This is the first time since Premier Duff Roblin raised the mandatory age from 13 to 16. And this will be the—only the third time in the history of the province the mandatory school age has been changed. And, you know, it's—this is our vision, and we're going to continue to work with school divisions all across the province in regards to providing opportunities for young people to stay in school.

Mr. Cullen: There was some discussion yesterday about the fine structure and there was—you were going to make changes within the proposed Bill 13 for the fine structure. And then you made some comments yesterday about particularly revisiting that fine structure?

Ms. Allan: Yes, we're having a look at that fine structure and we're reviewing what's in the legislation and we may be making some changes to that.

Mr. Cullen: Have you got some feedback from school divisions or anyone else in terms of that fine structure on this bill?

Ms. Allan: It's not overwhelming feedback, but I have had some conversations with some people, and it's an opportunity for us to—I mean, the legislation was tabled, you know, last fall. It's an opportunity for us to, you know, to think and to digest and to, you know, look, you know, closer at the legislation. So we're in the process of reviewing it to determine how to move forward.

Mr. Cullen: You know, in regard to that, I think there's going to be a need to develop possibly more courses or—I guess, I'm just trying to get a sense of how the minister feels that we're going to keep these kids in school. Like, are we going to be offering them more opportunities and more options in terms of different programming, a different curriculum? Is that where the minister thinks we're going to be going in terms of trying to keep these kids in school?

* (15:20)

Ms. Allan: Well, I think, you know, we've already started doing that, quite frankly. We, you know, we—I mean, it's very obvious from the—from our graduation rate, moving from, you know, 72 per cent in 2001 to 82.7 per cent last year that we are keeping more kids in school and more kids are graduating.

And, you know, I talked—I have talked about some of the initiatives that we believe are important in regards to keeping kids in school. It's, you know, technical vocational programming, and I talked yesterday about some of the new technologies. And this is really about preparing young people and capturing and engaging young people in what is—and to meet the demands of not just the skilled trades but also, you know, the modern world and some of the exciting things that are happening internationally.

And so, you know, this is not going to be a cookie-cutter approach for every school division. You know, I talked about the Cranberry Portage experience yesterday in regards to bringing northern students in from communities and housing them in Cranberry Portage and getting them involved in the trades. So this is going to be an exercise where we really have to liaise with school divisions across the province to figure out exactly what they have done. Ontario has had some experience with this.

We've also got a very exciting program that we just launched last year with the Royal Bank of Canada; it's the Pathways program. We participated in that program. It's a program that is a mentorship program with young people in school, and it's a mentorship program that really provides an opportunity for young people to see what they might want to do with their careers. And that's a very exciting program. That's similar to our Student Success Initiative that we're piloting.

So there is a lot of really exciting things here that we're going to—that are happening and that are—that we're going to continue to work on with school divisions in regards to, you know, how to keep kids in school.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, the minister referenced the Student Success Initiative pilot, and in this news release there's talk of the \$600,000. Is that the program we were talking about yesterday in Winnipeg, Lakeshore and Kelsey? Is that correct?

Ms. Allan: That's correct.

Mr. Cullen: And again, that's aimed at keeping kids in school; that's the concept behind that.

Ms. Allan: Yes. You know, all of the research shows that—once again, I'll just do a little capsule for you—all the research shows that, you know, some students are vulnerable at dropping out of school around the age of 15. And so we did this pilot project and set up this mentorship program. And the three

school divisions were identified by their Aboriginal Education Directorate, and so we worked with those three school divisions in regards to putting this pilot in place. And, you know, our initial evidence, in discussion with the superintendents and senior management teams in those school divisions, is that it's working.

So this is something, as we said earlier, we're very excited about because we believe it is one of the solutions to providing opportunities to engage people in school and keep them in school.

Mr. Cullen: So the news release, then, referenced that particular pilot project, and then there's a reference as well to \$690,000 in new funding for stay-in-school initiatives to address truancy. Can the minister explain that particular program?

Ms. Allan: Well, we haven't rolled any of that \$690,000 out yet because we haven't passed the legislation yet. That's for new programs, and we will not be making any announcements about that until we're ready to, until we've had some conversation with our stakeholders about what their sense is of what they think, as well, might work in regards to keeping kids in school. We have some ideas, but it's not something I'm prepared to announce in Estimates.

Mr. Cullen: Well, the news release talks about entrepreneurship programs, further support and enhance the inner-city science lab and develop new ways to help more students be successful. That's the reference to that \$690,000 funding.

I'm just seeking some clarification on that.

Ms. Allan: Well, the funding that we made in regards to the science lab at the St. Boniface College was an announcement that was made, I believe, two or three weeks ago by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And that announcement was made in regards to a very exciting project between the University of Manitoba and the St. Boniface—the St. Boniface Research Foundation.

Well, the first announcement I was getting confused—my deputy minister tells me, which I'm not surprised about. But the first announcement that was made actually when Dr. Farthing and I were at a CMEC meeting in Toronto by the Premier. And that's the science lab project at the—between at the St. Boniface Research Foundation and the University of Manitoba, and I'm sure you can find that information somewhere.

And then the second amount of funding that is in there is funding to the inner-city science lab in the Winnipeg School Division, and it's actually a very exciting program. And it's at the Children of the Earth School.

Mr. Cullen: So just want to clarify then. So there has been money allocated out of this particular fund. The announcement that the Premier made—is that partially funded by the Department of Education?

* (15:30)

Ms. Allan: They're all funded by the Department of Education. So we put funding into a science lab at the St. Boniface Research Foundation. They actually approached the deputy minister about this very exciting initiative and said that they would like to do so. And it's also—it's not just a science lab for students; it's also an opportunity to do teacher professional development. And it also has—because the University of Manitoba—it provides us with an opportunity to connect students with researchers who are working, that are doing research at the St. Boniface research facility.

So this is a project that we funded because the St. Boniface Research Foundation came to us and said they had some funding of \$200,000; and, if we would participate with them, it would be an opportunity to create a very unique teaching facility in a lab facility where students could have the opportunity to come and do this kind of research work with scientists. And we thought it was a very unique opportunity, so we decided to have that as part of, quite frankly, enhance what we're doing in science.

The Niji Mahkwa inner-city lab is a lab facility that brings students from kindergarten to senior level high school of all ages together with university professors, graduate students and a community of mentors to foster interest in science and technology. It builds on the Biomedical Youth Program launched by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba, in 2006, that targets Aboriginal, francophone and underprivileged youths and new Canadians that are traditionally underrepresented in the science and health profession. This is a result of a partnership that was established by the Faculty of Medicine, the Winnipeg School Division and the Winnipeg Foundation for all Manitobans and science enthusiasts everywhere. It addresses community needs and enhances existing efforts over the long term by the University of Manitoba to attract diverse individuals into the health profession with the skills

and interest required to reflect and serve Canada's changing population.

Mr. Cullen: I'm just wondering if the minister knows how much money was allocated to those two projects.

Ms. Allan: The funding for the science lab at the St. Boniface Research Foundation, they put \$250,000 in, and we put \$450,000 into that. And, at the inner-city science lab, we put \$50,000 in for operating.

Mr. Cullen: So, just to be clear, then, those two funds, the \$500,000 was paid for out of that \$690,000 fund, or is that—that's a separate fund altogether?

Ms. Allan: No, this is—that's actually not out of the \$690,000. The \$690,000 will be new money. This is money that we had designated; the \$50,000 was designated through the funding of schools through that particular announcement that we made, and the \$450,000 was from a prior year.

Mr. Cullen: I guess that we did get that clarified in the end.

There's also a reference here to the Bright Futures program. Maybe if the minister takes a bit of time to explain that particular program, I would appreciate a better understanding of that particular program.

Ms. Allan: We're going to get that brought to me so I don't start talking about it off the top of my head and have to be informed about it later. So we're getting the information brought into the room.

Mr. Cullen: Okay, well, let me come back to that in a few minutes, then.

There was a reference to money for English as a second language. You know, obviously, that's a pretty substantial issue for a lot of areas of the province. How is that money for that particular program, how is that allocated across the province? How do you decide who requires what, in terms of funding of that particular program?

Ms. Allan: We have a funding booklet. It's called the *Funding of Schools 2011/2012 School Year* and it's a public document that I'm sure you would probably more than love to read at some point. And on page 13, item 5, it outlines our English as an Additional Language, and it's available for pupils with limited proficiency in English language and we provide funding. The support rates are eligible per eligible pupil, so they're funded per pupil and they receive

EAL support. It's \$800 for the first year of eligibility and \$750 per year for the next three consecutive years of eligibility. So that's EAL support, and just this year alone we put another million dollars into English as an Additional Language. We've made significant investments in our English as an Additional Language, and we also have what's called an Intensive Newcomer Support Grant and that is for refugee and war-affected students. And this is money that is provided to school divisions, and it's more project funding, and so we've been working with school divisions to provide funding to them so that they can provide programs for young students that have come from war-affected countries.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I just have a few questions today. Can the minister indicate how many students there are right now in Manitoba in the K-to-12 system?

Ms. Allan: Well, we have an enrolment document, and it's also public knowledge for anyone to read at any time that they would like, and the summary page is on page 5, and the provincial total of students is 196,580.

Mrs. Stefanson: How does that compare to, say, 2000 and what the enrolment was back then?

* (15:40)

Ms. Allan: Well, if the member wants the exact number, I'm sure we could get it for her, but we do know that our enrolment has stayed pretty stable over the last 10 years or so. We—the FRAME document as well as the public document and—actually, on page 1 of—you can see the enrolment from 1968 to 2009, and you can see that the enrolment has actually stayed—you know, there hasn't been a huge fluctuation in enrolment over the last 10 years. It's hovered between 180,000 and 190,000 over the last, you know, 10 years or so.

We have—the problem with enrolment that I was referencing yesterday is that it's not stable throughout school divisions. You know, obviously, you have the situations where you have, you know, school divisions that have—that the member is very familiar with in Steinbach and the Morden-Winkler area where you have high pockets because of immigration, as well as Seven Oaks and Brandon. So it's not even throughout the province.

So we have some situations where we have declining enrolment, particularly in rural Manitoba, and then we have some places where we have increased enrolment not just in rural—urban Manitoba

but rural as well. So that makes it challenging for us when we're working with school divisions but we make sure that we work with them in regards to their enrolment pressures and their declining enrolment pressures as well. That's one reason why we actually instituted a small school—a declining enrolment small schools grant to help out those schools that are seeing their enrolment decline. So we are trying to be sensitive to everyone's challenges across the province.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you for that. And I just wanted to talk a little bit about kindergarten. I understand from my colleague you may have had some of these questions yesterday but I wouldn't—I'm sorry I wasn't here at the time. And I'm just sort of wondering what the policy is, where you're going as a government with respect to kindergarten. I know it's half day right now. Is there a movement towards full-day kindergarten? Are you studying that right now or considering that?

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, yes. Kindergarten is not just half day right now. It's a full day in some school divisions. The DSFM has full-day kindergarten. It's full day at the Winnipeg School Division. It's half day in some school divisions. It's full day in some school divisions every second day. So, you know, it's—school divisions are pretty much—have the autonomy to do what they want in regards to that.

We are consulting through our education conversation and consulting with stakeholders in regards to—actually, early learning child—early learning childhood and development. We know—all the research shows us that early intervention is absolutely critical to young people from birth to six, and we feel it's—we've made significant investments through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet in early intervention and early learning.

We've also made significant investments in our public daycare system and we just made another announcement last week about 2,100 new spaces for child care. We know how important it is to have that kind of a system because it complements what's happening in the K-to-12 system, and my Bill 13, my legislation that is before the House, that I'm sure the member will be voting for, says that, you know, we're not going to build any more schools without daycares in them because, quite frankly, I think education is evolving. I think we're moving the goal posts.

I think we're not just worried about—we're just not responsible for the K-to-12 system anymore. We

need to be responsible for that child from the moment it's born until we move them through early learning education and development opportunities and move them into the K-to-12 system and then move them through and get them ready for that post-secondary education so that they can move on to their careers. So we're really talking about a kind of more holistic approach to a child's education from cradle to career. And it's been very exciting.

I was talking about—yesterday about how wonderful the stakeholders are to work with. They're pushing us and we're pushing them and so, you know, this is, you know, you know how significant this investment is in kindergarten. If you're going to spend \$80 million, what is the best investment in regards to early childhood learning and development? And, you know, it's been a great—it's been—it's a good dialogue and it's one, I think, we really need to have, and it's been good.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, and I guess I would just sort of ask, just further to that, in terms of moving towards—I think what the minister is saying is they're moving more towards child care coming under education a little bit. Is that happening? Is there a shift in that direction right now, or is it—in what way are we looking at child care in the schools? Is it—if you're going to be building child-care spaces within schools, will that then become part of the learning program? Will there be a curriculum for the child-care facilities?

Ms. Allan: Well, what our department and our—it feels very strongly about is that it's not about us taking over everything—*[interjection]* Yes, yes. It's about working in partnership, certainly with Family Services and Housing and working in part—and that's why the Healthy Child Committee is so important to us, because we have all of the stakeholders, all of the ministers that can work intersectorally there in regards to early childhood education. Family Services and the Housing Minister is there, the Minister of Health is there, and the Minister of Education is there.

So we did set up a—the Early Childhood Education Unit in our department, and we did that with no new funding. We—the senior management team thought a lot about this and did some restructuring in the department because we feel that we have a role to play in partnering with the other departments and with our stakeholders and our daycare community, obviously, and early childhood education community in regards to moving this

forward and having the opportunity to do some work around best practice and what's happening internationally in the world so that we can bring some of that research and development in best practice. We can really get a handle on how best to work with school divisions in regards to this.

Mrs. Stefanson: Is there any thought at all to like a junior kindergarten program province-wide?

Ms. Allan: Well, that's not really something that anyone has actually expressed to us at this point.

Well, the only school division that has that kind of a program, which is Winnipeg School Division that has a nursery program, and, you know, we haven't—we certainly—one thing we have heard very, very clearly is things need to be voluntary. Even—it was interesting; I loved one of the interviews I heard on CBC radio. This parent who was talking about sending her child to kindergarten, and she said, you know, I have two children and one of them I sent to kindergarten and the other one I did not because what was absolutely important to me is I knew that—I know that child best. And that child, one of my children was ready and they needed that kindergarten program. But my other child was not ready, so I did not send that—my child to kindergarten.

So it's, you know, we've always—I appreciate the comments that I receive—or the guidance I receive from my deputy minister and senior management team because they've been working in education for quite some time, and they know that the best way to make education work in this province is to be flexible with school divisions because of the different composition of communities, and not have that cookie-cutter approach. And I know that MTS appreciates that kind of approach as well.

So, you know, that isn't something I can honestly tell you that we are considering.

Mrs. Stefanson: Would it be open as it is, I gather, for kindergarten, and some school divisions have decided that—and maybe it's even left up to the actual school, I don't know. Some schools probably have it within divisions, kindergarten and that sort of thing, half days, full days. It's sort of left up to the school divisions.

* (15:50)

Is this something that could be left up to the school divisions? If I have a group of parents in my community who are actively coming forward and like to look and have the school division or the

Province seriously consider a junior kindergarten or nursery program, is it something—would we go to the school division? And, is it something that the school division would implement, or is it something that we would come to your office about?

Ms. Allan: Well, the early childhood development programs like the one that Winnipeg School Division is running right now, is one that they fund out of their own budget, and, the Frontier School Division does as well. And we—they have 449 students.

And I know I have had this similar kind of discussion actually with some school divisions, and they say that they might do a program in one of their schools but they might not do it in another one, right. And that, I think, is very, very important. Of course, you know—so they're free to do that kind of programming now in individuals schools where they feel there is that kind of a need.

Mrs. Stefanson: I think one of the other things I hear from parents, and particularly, you know, those parents who are working. You know, school doesn't always start when we start working and it doesn't always end when we end—when we stop working as well. So the before-and-after-school programs, I'm not sure where the funding comes for those, or is that just something that parents pay for? Is it something that's being considered by your department just to provide that flexibility across the board for parents in various school divisions?

Ms. Allan: Well, before-and-after-school programs right now are a combination. My understanding is, is that there's different models. Some school divisions provide the program and it is paid for by the parents. Some divisions may provide the program, and it's a combination of them putting some of their financial resources in as well, and, some of the parent fees as well, being a part of that funding, to provide that program.

We are always looking, in our department, at ways to help parents in regards to providing early childhood education and learning opportunities. Some of the work, obviously, that we've been doing at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet is, you know, the 26 parent-child resource centres that we've set up across the province, in a targeted effort to provide opportunities to get young people ready for school. And, you know, the Triple P parenting program that's been very successful. So we're always looking at these kinds of issues as we move forward with our education priorities.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I think the other thing that comes with that, as well, is busing and whether or not there is a movement towards allowing more flexibility within some of the divisions. And maybe this is happening some places where busing is offered, you know, before and after to the—sorry, the before-and-after-school programs. Just—again, for—you know, if there is a, you know, if there's enough people interested in that, is that something that the divisions would pay for? Is it something that parents would pay for? You know, and is there sort of that degree of flexibility and that willingness to work with parents in the community to, again, make it sort of more family friendly?

Ms. Allan: That is definitely—busing is definitely a division issue. They're responsible for transportation. We are responsible, as the Department of Education, for transporting students to school and home from school. But any kind of flexible arrangements that local communities wanted to organize or have would be something that could happen at the divisional level.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just wondering, again, sort of more of a policy question here, but we know there's—I know there's a set number of days for the curriculum year, I believe, for K to 12, whether it's somewhere between 180 and 200 days a year, I think.

Could you just, actually, just—if you could answer that for me, how many days a year is it that—yes?

Ms. Allan: It's 180.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm just wondering, is that—how does that compare to other jurisdictions across Canada. And I know that there—in other countries, as well, there's some movement towards, maybe not necessarily taking two months off for the summer, but maybe going to a shorter week but also, you know, Monday to Thursday, and then maybe, you know, sitting more into the summer months and a movement away from—I know in some countries there's a movement away from taking that two months off, that there's been some studies that show that children tend to lose a lot over those summer months in terms of what they've learned for the year. And, I'm just wondering what your thoughts are in terms of addressing that issue of, you know, children maintaining what they've learned for that year, and if there's any sort of thought about any changes there.

Ms. Allan: Well, certainly, this is an area that we have actually had some discussions about in our

office because it's always interesting to look at what other jurisdictions are doing. And, because we're going through a lot of education reform right now we have had some discussions about it. The 180 days in Manitoba, I just want to remind you, is one of the reasons we have that 180 days is because we already made a change to the school year because we made a decision under the former premier to bring school back after the Labour Day long weekend, and that was very, very, very—that was very, very well received from parents and from the business community, and teachers have been able to work around it by shifting some of their PD days, those kinds of things.

* (16:00)

We have done a—we do know, of course, that there is some concern about summer, you know, learning loss and, actually, that's one of the reasons for the inner-city program that we have set up. Strini Reddy, who, I'm sure, you know quite well, who is a highly regarded educator—we have a relationship with a fabulous program that we fund, actually, and it's a summer learning program for inner-city students in the inner city so that they have an opportunity to continue to stay engaged in learning and in play throughout the summer.

And we also have a couple of places that—it's a little tiny bit different, a couple of school divisions that have looked at maybe changing their school day. It's called the balanced school day, you know, where they do some different things during the day. Maybe, you know, a longer lunch hour or, you know, maybe longer days, those kinds of things. And we work with school divisions on a one-off basis. If they come up with some of those creative ideas in regards to what they think works for their school division, we support that. But I can honestly tell you that in regards to changing—lengthening, lengthening, that's 180 days into the summer, there has been very little interest in that in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that. Just—you mention the PD days and the special education days for teachers, obviously, a very important thing to keep them up-to-date with, especially in the technology world that we live in. And SMART boards and all of this sort of thing that's very different today than when we were all in school, and it's very important for teachers to have the opportunity to go through those things.

One I'm—one thing I'm hearing from parents is that they're finding it difficult because it's sort

of—it—there's—I—there's a number of them, which is fine, to have those days. It's just, they—it's—what are we sort of doing to make it easier again on parents? Because those days for parents who are working, again, we'll run into situations where there's a Friday or a Monday—day for teachers to—who need to—like a PD day. What are we doing for parents to make it more flexible for them, because it is really disruptive we've found? I've heard this from a number of parents in terms of, you know, how do they find the child care for their kids for just that one day of the month or the two days of the month that happened to have that. So it's one thing I've been asked a number of times, and how are we going to accommodate those parents who are working at that time?

Ms. Allan: Well, I guess you kind of missed our announcement about the common PD days. We are moving to common PD days in the province of Manitoba. We have—we know that school divisions, we know school divisions have 10 professional development days. And what we've asked school divisions to do, and our senior management team has been working with superintendents, we want to have those professional development days on common days because of the simple reason that, if you have a big school division and you have 10 PD days, and you've got a whole bunch of schools in that school division, and this is particularly an—a big issue in urban Winnipeg—in Winnipeg, and if those 10 PD days for parents can end up being maybe 15, right, and you have to find child care.

So we've asked superintendents to move to common PD days in their school divisions, and they've been incredibly supportive. And we've moved to eight out of 10 common PD days, and it's—they—I have to congratulate the superintendents because they did a lot of work on that, and we consulted with our education partners about that. We talked to MTS about it, and, obviously, we wanted to make sure that they had autonomy in regards to their professional development, that that didn't hamper them in regards to what professional development they took, because you're absolutely right, that things are moving in regards to what's being taught in classrooms, not just in regards to technology, but in regards to education for sustainable development and, you know, how you meet the needs of children with exceptionalities. I mean, there's just so many issues that teachers deal with every day in the classroom, that we needed to find that balance between common PD days and making sure that teachers have that opportunity for that professional

development. So we are going to eight out of 10 common PD days.

Mrs. Stefanson: Is that right across the province then?

Ms. Allan: No, that would be brutal; you couldn't do that. No, it's within school divisions—across the province but within school divisions.

Mrs. Stefanson: So each school division will look at common days for the teachers within that school divisions?

Ms. Allan: I'd like to clarify the number of school days in Manitoba. There are 180 instructional days, and then, because this segues nicely from what we were just discussing—about, approximately, depending where Labour Day falls. Right? Then there's the other peak 10 days, PD days on top of approximately the 180, depending where Labour Day falls.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. Because my next question was going to be: Are the PD days included in the 180? And so I think you've answered that now.

I'll defer to my colleague here.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I was going to say you could almost go back to school if it was shortened enough that much, but—

The questions I have, Madam Minister, are more to the point of—I've got a number of small communities in my region that are looking at daycares and I know you've announced some funds for daycare programming and that sort of thing in schools. And I wonder if you could just outline—I hope that I'm not covering ground you've already covered and I know you have talked about it a little bit, so I'll be specific then.

I've got Waskada, and, of course, the department [*inaudible*] were down and just opened the Waskada Wee Ones daycare in the school a couple of weeks ago. I had the opportunity to be there as well, and a great facility, and thank you for the work that you've done in regards to helping get that going and making that happen and for the announcement that the schools that have space will be able to use that for daycares and even some of the more nursery programming that they have.

Other areas in—just in my area are—that work quite well are in Pierson and Kenton as well, and of course I went through Kenton a few years—it's working as a branch of the Hamiota system there

with the daycare program. It's in the school there in Kenton now—quite well received—probably as many in the daycare as there is in the school now. It's that small. But—and Pierson has it in the school as well.

The one area—I've got a couple of areas there, I guess, and there are private daycares in Virden and that area. Virden's a growing area with the oil industry that's happening there—Waskada as well as Pierson. All of these areas are growing with—exceptionally with younger people moving back into those communities to work in the oil industry, and usually that's a kind of a one- or two-year thing, but it certainly looks much more sustained than that. And when they're done drilling the several thousand wells that they indicate, between all the companies, that they're going to drill over the next five to 10, to 10 to 15 years. We think that there's a pretty strong base there looking at housing and everything else.

So the point that the area that—you know, while Reston, the community there, is looking at what they could do with a daycare and Virden is, as well, the one area that would like some support and help and have asked me to follow up is Oak Lake, the town of Oak Lake itself. They have a school there, but because of this as well, their rooms are full, and they have a hut there now that they've added on and—as a music room and that sort of thing in that school as well.

And so I guess I'm wondering if it would be possible to look into the needs of that area. They told me if they had over—if they could open 20 spots up, they'd be full overnight, and some of those young people are driving quite a piece now to daycare. They really can't get in anywhere else without going to Hamiota or Virden, and yet they're working there. Some of them are taking their children in 180 degrees away, from the fact that Oak Lake's close enough they work in Brandon, a lot of these young parents, and the second family member may be working there.

* (16:10)

So I guess I just wanted to see if the minister is—there really isn't a, you know, another suitable building at this time in the community to put a daycare in, and they were looking at what they might have to do through Public Schools Finance Board or other areas to seek some support or guidance as to what they could do to get a daycare in Oak Lake as well.

And, hopefully, I mean, their Principal Masson there is on side, the town's on side, the foundation's on side, RM's on side, and there's a lot of folks there that would like to support a daycare being added onto or part of the school system, whether they could use an existing room that's in the school. That would mean putting a class in another location which, of course, they'd probably have to bring something in to do that, and there you get into a greater expense as well, but I wonder if the minister could just enlighten me as to if she's run across a situation like that and what they would do with it.

Ms. Allan: Well, I'm not familiar with the situation and—but, you know, we just made an announcement to \$21.3 million investment and another 2,100 more spaces in daycare all across, you know, the province, but I certainly, you know, will have, you know, this information forwarded to the Public Schools Finance Board and we have, you know, staff people in the PSFB that go out and do site visits and so, you know—and Gerald is the deputy minister and chair of the board of PSFB, so we'll look into it and, you know, this is, you know, this is a huge challenge for us in regards to providing, quite frankly, enough daycare spaces all across this province and we've worked very, very hard at it.

You know, every time I hear a national child-care strategy come out, a policy come out of our federal parties, the hair on the back of my neck stands up because I've been listening to this from political parties federally, both Progressive Conservatives and Tories, for years and years and years now, and, you know, we finally got one out of the Liberals but it was too late, and then it was cancelled by, you know, the Progressive Conservatives and there was a tax credit put in, right, for families.

So I mean this is just—like, we need help. I mean you need to talk to your counterparts as well in regards to how important this is because this is important for families. And this is about how we can invest in early learning and it's so incredibly important. So I appreciate what you're saying and, you know, we're doing our best and we'll continue to look into it.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's concern, and I guess the community in Oak Lake, they've got a great school program there and they've got, you know, the early learning that they have with the kids that are already there. You know, they've won awards and recognitions from the teaching staff there

that are great. They work together really well and they are all of one mind that this would work well and they could make it work, and they have persons trained in the community, which does not often happen either that could really work.

There's three of them actually in the community that could work in the circumstance, so there's even a rotation that would be available there. They've pretty well got all their ducks in a row. They know it takes capital to put a daycare in place and they would—and I know that they've spoken, I believe, with the Public Schools Finance Board on this, and so they're working any route they can. I think I just wanted to make you aware of it and I appreciate your answer and we'll look forward to working with you further on.

Ms. Allan: And I thank you for bringing it up because this is absolutely—you know, this is, you know, I was talking yesterday about how important this is and, of course, in the new legislation we're bringing in—you know, we're not going to allow schools to be built anymore unless they have a daycare in it. I mean I think we've had it backwards for all these years. You know, we've been building schools and then we've been building daycares. Well, guess what? They're born first, you know, and we know how critical is—0-6 years are.

So this is really kind of our vision and everyone's working on this together, but it's going to take a little bit of a—a little while to get there, so I appreciate all of the work, actually, that the community, you know, partners have been doing on this because that's what it's all about. It's about partnership, everybody working together. And it is exciting when you've got people that are already in the community that are trained because sometimes that becomes the barrier, right? Because we all know how important training is, as well, to this particular piece, so I appreciate the member's comments.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, in this particular case they've even won an environmental award. They've got an environmental class on the young kids that have worked hard. They've got a cash award that they've won, and they're adding all of these cash endowments back into the school to enhance through the teachers. They're enhancing the school with them and, yes, it's quite exciting, from a small school's perspective, what they've been able to do there. And others have had some great opportunities with them, as well.

And—so I was looking at a—just another circumstance, I guess, is just if the minister could give me an update on where the capital project in Reston is at, at this time and the amalgamation of the two schools there.

Ms. Allan: I can inform you that the deputy minister went out and had a lovely visit out there and had a good visit with Garry Draper, the superintendent. And he'll be going out again, probably soon—and that the project is moving along very nicely, and that everyone seems to be very, very pleased. Yes. And it's going to look great.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, well. Just to correct—Mr. Draper is the president of the school board there. Yes, and I—you know, I believe you mentioned superintendent. But just, yes—so, no problem.

But, no, Mr. Draper's been quite active in that whole area. He's, of course, been past MAST president as well and has come back to being chair of the school board which, I believe, he was before. And he's very active, very concerned about the youth and the kids in that whole region and—in the Fort La Bosse area there for sure and, of course, across the province. So I thank the minister for that.

And I know that the situation that we're faced with across the whole province is a difficult one, in regards to dollars available for these kind of projects and what's available for capital. And I guess that's—those are some of the concerns that I had and wanted to share with the minister.

There are other schools, of course, in the area, as my region is expanding there as well a little bit. I pick up a few more small schools in the—for the next election. If I'm successful, I'll be able to represent those, as well. And so, as I learn more about some of their needs, we can be in touch with the minister on that, as well.

But those are the issues that I wanted to talk to today, specifically to the Oak Lake region, and then I'll turn it back to my colleague from Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Cullen: I guess I should probably ask a question on the issue we raised here a little while ago, if the minister had her material put together, that was on the—

An Honourable Member: Bright Futures.

Mr. Cullen: Bright Futures, thank you very much. So if the minister would do that, have a look at that. I just wondered, just if she could—during her

comments, wondered how many students are involved in that particular program and, you know, how it's working and what kind of outcomes we're looking for in terms of that program, as well.

Ms. Allan: The Bright Futures program is a \$3-million program for nine community-based education programs for at-risk youth. And the Bright Futures projects are the Power Up! boys—the Power Up! program. And it's a tutoring program that operates over the school year to engage students in activities that reinforce academic learning, social skills and goal setting.

And that program consists of 260 children and youth, from the ages of 6 to 18, and it operates at eight inner-city schools. There's also the Summer Learning Enrichment Program, which was the program that I talked about earlier. That is a program that happens over the summer. It's a day camp that offers literacy, numeracy and science development, as well as cultural and education experiences, and there are 720 inner-city students involved in that program at 12 school sites.

* (16:20)

There's also a SEED Winnipeg, a bursary management program with SEED Winnipeg, that provides administration of bursary awards to students, and they've signed a memorandum of understanding with the Boys and Girls Club of Winnipeg to ensure parents have accurate information about the options for bursary investment and opportunities for additional funding. This is to encourage young people to go into post-secondary education.

There's also Career Trek. I'm sure that you know about the Career Trek program: 180 students in the West-Man region. That program is expanding to the West-Man region, 180 students, and the Children Rising program, 180 students.

There's also the Medical Careers Exploration Program. It's delivered at a health-care setting to—and at the Children of the Earth School.

There's also the program at Seven Oaks School Division, and this is to improve education outcomes for low-income students in the Elwick Village, which is a very high-needs area in the Winnipeg School Division.

And there's also a Pathways program, and this is a program that was originally established in Regent Park in Toronto, and this Bright Futures funding will

support 114 students to improve outcomes for grade 9 to 12 students in the north Point Douglas community.

There's also the Peaceful Village. That's the Manitoba School Improvement Program. It minimizes the loss of immigrant and refugee students from the education system between junior high and high school by providing culturally relevant and targeted program. And that is for 30 participants at Hugh John Macdonald School, and 50 participants at the Gordon Bell High School.

And there's also a You Can Do It Learning Account Awards, and that's the partnership between the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, the Winnipeg Foundation, the Winnipeg School Division and the Bright Futures fund, and it's—the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council's developed an action plan which includes a focus on early education and post-secondary education issues. And these awards are given annually to grade 5 to 12 students in the Point Douglas, Lord Selkirk Park and William Whyte neighbourhoods. And up to 320 five to 12 students—that's grades 5 to 12—will receive a thousand dollar awards to be held by the Winnipeg Foundation in individual learning accounts. And they can use that money to go on to post-secondary education.

So those are the kinds of programming that Bright Futures fund was talking about.

Mr. Cullen: I want to get to a financial question. How much money was set aside this year for the tax incentive grant?

Ms. Allan: The tax incentive grant for the 2010-2011—for—sorry—the tax incentive grant in this funding announcement was \$21,703,000. I don't know if I said that right, but you got the drift. I'm getting tired.

Mr. Cullen: I'm just—it's a process question that I want to be clear how the TIG works. Now, I know—understand there's a formula, probably not—probably a complex formula to determine how much the tax incentive grant would be for a particular school division. So I'm assuming once that calculation is made, then the offer is made to the respective school division. Is that how the process works?

Ms. Allan: Well, the word that we're bristling at is the offer word. There is a—in the funding formula there is a calculation made in regards to the funding that is available to that school division in regards to

the money that's going to flow to them to run their school divisions. Then there is an additional amount of money that is made available to them if they want to freeze their mill rate at the mill rate that they had the prior year.

Mr. Cullen: Are all school divisions—do they have access to that TIG, tax incentive grant?

Ms. Allan: Yes. There is a—all school divisions that need it to keep their mill rates at the prior year mill rate would receive the TIG if they so choose to take the TIG. But some schools—a very few school divisions every year, depending on their financial circumstances, can do that without taking the TIG, but that's a very small number.

Mr. Cullen: Do we have the numbers for this year how many school divisions took the TIG?

Ms. Allan: Yes, 27.

Mr. Cullen: So once that number is provided to the school division, they'll have a look at that and see if they can work within their budget, but some of them seem to come back and—I'm trying to find a different word than a counter offer—but they're coming back looking for more money under the TIG. What kind of a—like, how much room do you as a minister have to move in terms of once you've made that first number available to the school division?

Ms. Allan: Well, what happens with some school divisions—and these are conversations that are had with our officials in our department—is sometimes they might be very, very close to being able to take the TIG, but they may have some extenuating circumstances. Two years ago the extenuating circumstances were immigration, quite frankly. It was, you know—I—you know, sometimes they think they can make this work. So those are the kinds of things that, you know, they talk with my department about. And this is—these conversations quite often aren't just in regards to the specific tax incentive grant, and, you know, these kind of conversations that my department has with school divisions is ongoing throughout the year in regards to some of the challenges that they're having. And I, you know, want to put on the public record that, regardless of where I go in this province, I always hear incredibly supportive comments about the working relationship that officials in school divisions have with officials in my department. And I think you were at the MSBA banquets award when—ceremony—or dinner—when I made comments about that as well.

So it's not—I know you're kind of looking for a different word, but I think it's a dialogue and a discussion, because at the end of the day, what we want to do is we want to provide the TIG to school divisions and work with them. But sometimes they have to, you know, they have to watch their expenses and their revenues, and they're trying to work that out and make that work, right? And, you know, and that's challenging for them sometimes too.

*(16:30)

So sometimes they can make it work in discussion with officials because the other thing we want to make sure we do as well is that we hang on to front-line services. Like, we don't want them to cut all our teachers. Oh yes, we can make this work; we'll just—you know. And we're going, no. You know, but, I mean, everybody's on that same page, right? You don't want to lose—you know, you want to watch your expenditures and your revenues at the same time. So it works out.

Mr. Cullen: I just, from a budgetary point of view, you know, when you sit down to prepare your budget for the department, you have a concept that this \$21 million is going to be set aside for the tax incentive grant. After negotiations with your school divisions, you recognize that, you know, you may not have allocated all that \$21 million. How do you deal with that if you have money left over? Is it—can you explain that to me?

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, you'll find this interesting, because last year that's actually what happened. We had a tiny bit of the money left over. It was in a shoebox under my desk—no, I'm just kidding. We had a little bit of money left over and, actually, when we were talking earlier about the St. Boniface Research Foundation partnership around that science lab, and I said that we had the \$450,000 and it came from last year, that's where that money came from.

So that doesn't, unfortunately, you know, that didn't happen this year. We didn't have as much money this year, and so, you know, we did what we could with it. It seemed to work out really well.

This is the fourth year we've offered school divisions the opportunity to participate in the tax incentive grant; and the first year it was 17 school divisions; the second year it was 20 school divisions; the third year it was 23 school divisions and this year it was 27 school divisions. And three school divisions didn't have to be offered a tax incentive grant because they already had enough funding

through the formula. So it actually works out that this year 30 school divisions didn't raise their mill rate.

Mr. Cullen: In terms of the Estimates book, does the tax incentive grant, does it show up separate on a separate line in the book, or is it lumped in with school—

Ms. Allan: It's in the FRAME report, which I'm sure you'll want to read extensively. It's the green FRAME report that is a public document, and it's on page 49.

Mr. Cullen: I want to just turn to capital funding, if I may. What's the budgeted amount for capital funding for this year, for capital projects this year?

Ms. Allan: Well, I'm teasing my staff and telling them that it's \$92.4 million—oh, it's—oh, darn it. You should have bet me money. It's not 92.4, it's 94.2. Sorry.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I'm looking at page 105 of the Estimates book, and there's a capital funding figure in there of \$48 million. Can you reconcile that for me?

Ms. Allan: What you're looking at there on page 105 is the principal on debenture authority, and what you're looking here is the \$94.2 million; that is the debenture authority that we are committing to for the capital projects for this year. What happens with the PSFB budget is when they are planning capital projects, what they have to do is have debenture authority for projects to make sure that that money is there out of that PSFB budget so that once you've made a commitment to that capital infrastructure project that that money is there. So am I explaining it right?

Mr. Cullen: Yes, and maybe I'll just try to paraphrase that. The \$94.2 million was the—that's what we're intending to spend, what the Estimates book is showing the cash flow out of the department for this year in reality. Okay, that's good. That helps clear things up for me.

I guess, in terms of the Public Schools Finance Board, I know it must be quite a challenge to determine where the next investment's going to be. Do you have a—like a five-year capital plan that's made public?

Ms. Allan: We have a—we work with school divisions, and school divisions provide to us their five-year capital plans, and they update those plans every year, and then, of course, what we do, as well,

with school divisions is we have to be cognizant of enrolment pressures because of immigration. So it's kind of a combination of those factors.

We don't have a five-year plan that we lock down because sometimes school divisions' plans change from year to year in regards to what they're seeing. So we don't—you know, once again, we don't have—we need to be flexible, and we, you know, we are working with 37 school divisions in the DSFM in regards to their projects, and also we have a huge maintenance budget as well that is part of our PSFB budget. So, you know, we have to plan for that as well.

* (16:40)

Mr. Cullen: Yes, just a comment for the minister. Some of the school divisions have been telling me that, I guess, some of the new workplace health and safety rules are coming into play in terms of things like their chemistry labs and those kind of things that need upgrading, and what the school divisions are finding—and this is a substantial amount of money that they need to make these upgrades. Is there going to be allowances for those kind of extra capital costs?

Ms. Allan: Yes, we take all of those kinds of pressures that school divisions are having. The PSFB, you know, works with school divisions to figure out what kinds of challenges that they're having.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, in terms of the capital in schools, and I'm thinking gymnasiums, for instance. You know, we recognized that a few years in the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force that we probably weren't getting the best bang for our dollar either from community recreation facilities and facilities within schools. I think the department has put out a new policy where they want to get more use out of school gymnasiums and I'm wondering how that particular exercise is going, moving forward. You know, are you getting some positive feedback from school divisions that this policy is going to work into the future so that, you know, the community has better access to school facilities?

Ms. Allan: Well, this is our new Active Schools Fund, the \$50 million that we've made a commitment to over the next five years. We believe that it's important to co-ordinate our gymnasium renovations and building gymnasiums. It's important to co-ordinate that with our, you know, mandatory phys ed program, which is the envy of every jurisdiction in Canada. There was just an incredible

article about in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. [interjection] Oh, yes, huge article about it. So we're—we—it's been very, very well received.

The department is working with school divisions and asking them to 'priorize' their projects, and those—that information will be going to the Public Schools Finance Board and they'll be reviewing that in the next little while, but it's been very, very well received, certainly, from school divisions. They're very, very pleased with this announcement.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I want to go back though to the—I understand it was on the provincial website. It's a policy where we're trying to get joint use agreements from communities in conjunction with schools so that the community has access and use of those recreation facilities within the school. I guess, I think it would better serve the community as the way it's being approached and I'm wondering, there's a compliance is expected by September 1st, 2011, so that particular date is coming up fairly quickly, and I'm wondering where we're at in that process. Are you getting feedback from school divisions?

Ms. Allan: Our assistant deputy minister in our department, Jean-Vianney Auclair, is responsible for working with school divisions in regards to moving this file forward, and we have done a lot of work with school divisions in regards to the joint use of school and community facilities.

It's complex. Some school divisions have—I understand the Pembina Trails School Division has got, you know, an excellent model for making sure that, you know, parents can and community organizations can access gyms, and this is—what we need to do is we need to kind of have some harmonization of the rules and Jean-Vianney Auclair has been working very fastidiously on this file in regards to having some policies in place by the fall.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I want to make a comment and maybe get some feedback from the minister on the whole technology side of things. A lot of the divisions in rural Manitoba for sure, you know, are facing challenges in terms of the number of students and delivering courses, and they're looking for technology to help assist in that endeavour. And some of the technology that they have been using is old and antiquated, and they're being forced into spending, you know, several millions dollars within the school division to upgrade, you know, the technology to be able to deliver these programs so that they can deliver, you know, a program through

interactive TV from one school to another. And, quite frankly, they're—it's a tremendous investment that they're looking at. I just wonder if the minister is aware of those situations and what her department is doing to try to assist them in that regard.

Ms. Allan: Well, what the MLA is talking about is broadband and we have been working on this file with Minister Chomiak's department. They're responsible for making—they're—they have been negotiating with MTS Allstream in regards to providing options for school divisions to have broadband—broadband width in their school divisions.

This was done in Saskatchewan but, of course, it was done very easily in Saskatchewan because MTS is publicly owned, and so the government of the day worked with the Crown corporation, MTS, to provide broadband to all of their school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan.

We've been in negotiations with MTS Allstream to provide a broadband width and, of course, we're working with—the government is negotiating with a private company to provide school divisions with options for broadband width. We have had meetings. I believe the 4th of March there was a meeting with Minister Chomiak's department and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents in regards to what those options are for school divisions and what those costs are.

And we're in ongoing discussions in regards to making these services available to school divisions, because it is absolutely critical in this day and age where you have technologies as such an important part of learning to have this available to school divisions. And the other piece of it that I think is absolutely critical is this is an equity issue. This is an equity issue for rural and northern school divisions because they're getting left behind because they don't have, in many, many cases, this technology.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, I guess when we look at the clock, we should certainly wrap things up but, obviously, if it's been done in Saskatchewan, the Province of Saskatchewan must've come to the forefront and dropped a considerable amount of money on that particular development of the broadband there.

Ms. Allan: Actually, it was the corporation MTS in Saskatchewan—or STS, sorry, yes.

Mr. Cullen: Okay, I want to thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. I appreciate the minister's discussion over the last few days and appreciate having staff

here, as well, and thanks again for the time. And I guess that'll wrap things up as far as the Education Estimates are concerned.

An Honourable Member: You're letting them off kind of easy, aren't you?

Mr. Cullen: Absolutely.

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Seeing no further questions, we will now move to the reading of the resolutions. If the committee will bear with me, we'll get through this quickly as we can. And thanks to staff for their time here, as well.

Now for the resolutions:

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,977,000 for Education, School Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,745,000 for Education, Bureau de l'éducation française, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:50)

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$288,819,000 for Education, Education and School Tax Credits, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,211,443,000 for Education, Support to Schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$48,181,000 for Education, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$159,000 for Education, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$27,000 for Education, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 16.1.(a) the Minister's Salary contained in resolution 16.1. We will regrettably have to ask ministerial staff to leave the front table at this time for consideration of this final item.

The floor is open for any questions or comments should there be any. Seeing none, we'll move the resolution.

Resolution 16.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,894,000 for Education, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This now completes the Estimates for the Department of Education.

Looking at the clock, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: 5 o'clock.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, very good.

The time being 5 o'clock, I declare the Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. for all of you starved for entertainment.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): This section of the committee supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Executive Council. Would the First Minister's and the Leader of the Official Opposition's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 30 of the Estimates book.

Would the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition introduce the staff he has with him.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just want to introduce a member of staff from the leader's office, Greg Burch, B-u-r-h, B-u-r-c-h, who's deputy chief of staff and director of communications.

Madam Chairperson: As we previously agreed, questioning will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I've got some material in response to some of the questions raised yesterday. I wondered if you wanted me to read it into the record.

Mr. McFadyen: Is there material for tabling or is it—

Mr. Selinger: It's a response to some of your questions on the stadium, and I was hoping to give you some of the information today so we could then go from there if you wish.

Mr. McFadyen: If it's possible just to table the material that might be a more expeditious way to proceed.

Mr. Selinger: It's not in that form. I'd like to give a brief statement.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, I think, I've got other issues and questions I would want to get into and so my preference would be that we just proceed with questions and answers.

Mr. Selinger: Why don't we do that for a while and then if there's some time I'll put this on the record.

Mr. McFadyen: There are some other members who wanted an opportunity to put questions to the First Minister and so, after some discussion, we'll make some time after about 3:15 or so today for other members, and that may provide an opportunity to address some of those issues.

Madam Chairperson, just to the Premier. Just in connection with the windfarm projects that have been undertaken by Manitoba Hydro, I wonder if the Premier could just outline the structure of the deals that are in place in connection with both existing and proposed wind farms.

Mr. Selinger: In essence, they're power purchase agreements between the supplier of the wind power and Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. McFadyen: And the—who is the supplier of the electricity in this case?

Mr. Selinger: In the instance of the St. Joseph's wind farm, I understand the supplier to be Pattern Energy.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier just outline the ownership and residence of Pattern Energy?

Mr. Selinger: I'll undertake to get that information for the member.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just indicate in terms of the ownership of the generating assets who owns those assets?

Mr. Selinger: Again, my understanding is the Pattern Energy company, but I'll verify that information and get it for the member.

Mr. McFadyen: And, in terms of the arrangements with both private landowners and municipalities, can the Premier just outline the nature of those arrangements and agreements?

Mr. Selinger: Well, broadly speaking, the provider of the energy, in this case, Pattern Energy, makes arrangements with the landowners to have access to their land for the construction of wind towers.

Mr. McFadyen: And, in terms of the control of the windmills and, I guess, the generating assets, the windmills, where are those windmills controlled from?

Mr. Selinger: I understand there's a local facility that manages those assets.

Mr. McFadyen: And is there a control room that—where those assets are operated from, and if so, where is it based?

Mr. Selinger: My understanding is there's a facility that monitors the performance of those assets and is able to allow them to run or not run for purposes of maintenance, and it's managed by a local workforce that looks after the maintenance and running of the wind tower assets, windmill assets in the St. Joseph's area.

Mr. McFadyen: So, just to be clear, are those generating assets, then, controlled and operated from within the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Well, the member should clarify what he means by control. If he's asking, are they controlled physically in terms of whether the windmill is operating or not operating, my understanding is there's a local facility that does that. Pattern Energy is a corporation. It has head offices elsewhere. If you're talking about management control, there may be a chain of command that is not entirely local.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just undertake to look into the issue of the physical operation of the windmills and just provide information as to where the control room is for those assets?

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. McFadyen: And, in terms of the price that's set for the sale of power by Pattern to Manitoba Hydro, how is that price set?

Mr. Selinger: My understanding is that's a negotiation between the provider of the energy and the purchaser of the energy.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier indicate what the price is that the purchaser, Manitoba Hydro, is buying that energy at currently?

* (15:00)

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll undertake to get that information, subject to commercial confidentiality provisions. But, in broad terms, I believe that the price paid for the energy provided is among the lowest for that type of energy in North America.

Mr. McFadyen: And in terms of the financing of the project and the relationship with Pattern Energy, can the Premier just outline the terms of the loan that was provided by Manitoba Hydro to Pattern?

Mr. Selinger: I'll undertake to get that information, but, in broad terms, the Crown corporation provided the financing at a rate that would allow them a small profit, but also at a time when financing in the private sector was prohibitive, and this allowed the project to move forward.

Mr. McFadyen: And just to be clear on that, is it the case that Pattern was unable to secure loans from other potential lenders?

Mr. Selinger: Again, they would have to account for that, but I think the issue was the price which they would have to pay at a time when credit was highly restricted during the height of the economic recession.

Mr. McFadyen: Just in terms of the date at which that loan was entered into, can the Premier just indicate the timing of that?

Mr. Selinger: I'll undertake to get information on that.

Mr. McFadyen: Just going back in connection with the existing two bipole lines, is the Premier aware of who undertook the construction of the two and managed the project of the—in terms of the two existing bipole lines?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll have to get that information for the member.

Mr. McFadyen: In terms of Hydro's board, in light of the controversy associated with the routing

decision on Bipole III and some of the comments being made by professional engineers about the problems with the western route, can the Premier just indicate whether the board of Hydro has sought or received any kind of indemnity from the Province with respect to that decision?

Mr. Selinger: I'll seek to get that information. I'm not aware of that being the case. I think Crown corporation board members are generally indemnified for the roles they played.

Mr. McFadyen: In terms of the sign-off on the project, is the Premier aware of whether any professional engineer within the province has signed off on the western route?

Mr. Selinger: Again, that decision is made by Hydro itself after the board has deliberated on it.

Mr. McFadyen: That would be at odds with the—our understanding. Is it not the case that the board made the decision after being directed to do so by the Premier when he was in his capacity as Hydro minister?

Mr. Selinger: The board made their decision. The—one—in my previous role as minister of Hydro, I gave them a government view on what the government's take on that was, based on the Farlinger report, which, in the conclusions of that report, recommended that the issue was larger—a large public policy issue and that the shareholder, being the government of Manitoba on behalf of the people of Manitoba, should put their view forward and in writing so that 'gydro'—Hydro board could take that into account in their decision making.

This is a practice that, in terms of relationships between Crown corporations and government, is considered to be an appropriate approach, that there should be some policy—broad policy direction upon which the board of Hydro can take into context when they—and into account when they make their decision.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just indicate whether the decision to follow the western route was unanimous at the board level at Hydro?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to seek out information on what the status of the decision-making process was in terms of the vote.

Mr. McFadyen: And is there—has it been the practice with other Crowns or other major decisions to issue written views or directions to those Crowns?

The practice of this government—if the Premier could provide any other examples, that'd be appreciated.

Mr. Selinger: Again, we'll take that question and find out if there have been other written policy statements issued by ministers with respect to their particular Crowns.

Mr. McFadyen: In light of the time that's elapsed since the original decision was made in 2007 and the amount of new information that has been brought forward through both the public consultation process and the comments of other experts and members of the public, I just want to ask the Premier whether the board would currently have the freedom to revisit that decision if they chose to.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the board is responsible for its own decision making. They have received advice from the government in general about their views on it, and they've taken a decision about how they wish to proceed. They always have the ability to consider issues as they arise, and they always have the ability to consider new information.

Mr. McFadyen: And is the Premier saying, then, that he would be prepared to accept a different decision from the board now or in the future in the event that they arrived at a different view in light of the new information?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, the member has to tell me what new information he's referring to.

Mr. McFadyen: It's in reference to the rounds of public consultation that have taken place by Hydro and the presentations that have been made arising from that, as well as the input and commentary of other experts and Manitobans who've expressed views since the original decision.

Mr. Selinger: Again, there have been a wide diversity of views that have come forward during this public discussion on the routing of transmission facilities and converters themselves, and those comments are on the public record. They're available to anybody in a decision-making role, including members of boards of directors, and they can take all of that information into account as they go forward. And the member opposite could also consider that.

This is part of the discussion we had yesterday, as whether or not converters were essential. And I was making the case that, based on information we've got from Hydro, that converters are essential to the future reliability of the corporation, and information related to that also has to be taken into

account by the folks that are on the board of Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. McFadyen: There's been discussion at committee and publicly about the need down the road for a fourth bipole line. I wonder if the Premier can just indicate whether there's been any discussion within government about the potential route for Bipole IV when that line is to be built.

Mr. Selinger: I'll have to check and see what discussion there has been on that. I'm not aware of any recent discussion in—on that regard.

Mr. McFadyen: I just want to ask whether it's the Premier's view that a Bipole IV will be required at some point.

Mr. Selinger: Again, we'll take advice on that from Manitoba Hydro and much of that will depend on future development of generation capacity, future demand for the energy, and how the future development occurs and in what time frame. And there may well be the need for additional transmission capacity in the future and that advice would be brought forward by Manitoba Hydro to its board and subsequently to the minister and to the government.

But there has been some discussion from time to time about whether a fourth bipole would be needed, and one has to assume that in the long term, as we continue to develop the remaining 5,000 megawatts of transmission capacity, that there may be the need for additional transmission capacity.

But much will depend on the future growth of Manitoba Hydro and where the demand for the power is both within and outside of the province.

Mr. McFadyen: Just moving over to MPI, the Minister responsible for MPI announced a rebate some weeks before the PUB issued an order that the rebate be considerably higher than what the minister had already announced.

Can the Premier just indicate whether he thinks it was appropriate for the minister to announce that rebate at the time and in the way that he did?

*(15:10)

Mr. Selinger: If the member wishes me to comment on that, could he be more specific about the time and under what circumstances he's referring to?

Mr. McFadyen: The order that was issued just about two weeks ago by the PUB was preceded by an

announcement by the MPI minister that there would be rebates issued. And that then was overridden by the PUB a short time thereafter. And there are questions about the appropriateness of the minister announcing a rebate in a way that he did, only to be followed by an order by the PUB to issue an even larger rebate.

I wonder if the Premier could just indicate whether he's satisfied with the way that was handled.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'm not sure that those facts are accurate. I think what the government, through its minister, has said, is this: There's a surplus of resources not required for fulfilling obligations to people that get hydro—MPI benefits through accident or injury or other reserve requirements as required by MPI, that the principle should be that the ratepayers should get those resources back that are surplus to those requirements through a rebate. I don't recall the minister specifying a rebate amount or telling the Crown corporation what to do, but simply establishing the principle that the ratepayers, that he represents as the shareholder on behalf of that Crown corporation, should get the benefit of those surplus resources.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just indicate whether he's satisfied that MPI is providing satisfactory levels of compensation to people who have been severely injured in automobile accidents?

Mr. Selinger: Well, the member will know that we've brought legislation forward to improve those benefits, and we've also gone beyond that original round of improvements to add additional benefits. And this is a subject of constant review. We want to ensure that people that are injured under this system do get adequate support, proportionate to the degree of injury they received and the loss of income that they're incurring. So this is a subject that we have to constantly keep an open mind to as we move forward, but, at the same time, ensure that benefits that are being provided are sufficient and adequate to meet the needs of the individuals and their specific circumstances, relative to the injuries they've received. And we do keep an open mind on that to ensure that there is proper treatment there. And we take advice from people that review those matters.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier will be aware that there's quite a large and growing number of Manitobans who have suffered injuries, who feel that they have been inadequately compensated and insufficiently supported by MPI.

Would the Premier undertake to take a look at those cases and ask his minister to take another look at the level of care and compensation being provided by MPI, particularly in light of the financial circumstances that the PUB has recently commented on?

Mr. Selinger: Again, if the member has some specific cases he'd like to draw to our attention, we'd be happy to receive that information.

Broadly speaking, however, there is an appeal mechanism in place for people that don't feel they've received adequate either compensation or support for their injuries. And, for the first time ever since MPI was created, this government has put in place a resource, an independent resource called a Claimant Adviser Office, which assists people that wish to make an appeal on the level of benefit or compensation they've received. And that Claimant Adviser Office is available to any MPI person there-to-ratepayer, or person that has taken out insurance from that corporation. They're available to assist them with any appeals that they wish to make.

Mr. McFadyen: I would just say that the individuals involved would prefer not to have to go through an appeal process if possible, would prefer that there would be a more equitable settlement in the first instance, without their requirement of going through appeals. But I appreciate the Premier's comments, and I'll forward to him some information from some of those individuals have brought—who have brought their concerns to our attention.

I just want to ask, just—I've got a number of—

Madam Chairperson: Order. Did you want to respond?

Mr. Selinger: In addition to the Claimant Adviser Office and the appeal process, MPI has now, for the first time ever, put a program in place for mediation for people that may not be satisfied with the level of benefit or compensation they receive.

So if the member has people that that have brought concerns to him, he may wish to make them available—aware of that mediation process too. They may be eligible to participate in that process.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, and I will ensure that they have availed themselves of that process. I believe that they have, but I will be sure to check on that.

I've just got one or two questions on health care, and then we'll come back to that issue as well tomorrow.

Just on the issue that was brought to the Premier's attention a little while ago about the establishment of a joint operating division within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the contractual terms that were being put before physicians in the province, can the Premier indicate whether he has had a chance to review that issue and address the concerns that were being raised by academic physicians?

Mr. Selinger: The member will know that this question has been raised in the House, and at that time—and it continues to be our policy that no requirement will be imposed on a physician that they do not wish to have imposed on them. They have to agree to any arrangements they've made, and there is a joint process of discussion about this. Academic freedom is important for anybody that is attached to the Faculty of Medicine, and, at the same time, delivering efficient and effective health care is important. So the proper discussion has to occur so that those principles are respected in all cases, both academic freedom principles and the necessity for accountability and transparency with how we deliver efficient and effective health services. So it's our view that that discussion needs to continue until all the participants in that achieve a level of comfort of what's reasonable and appropriate in those circumstances.

Mr. McFadyen: I'm just going to cede the floor to the member for Springfield, who has a number of questions. I know there'll be other members as well, and we'll revisit some issues tomorrow.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I was wondering if I could have a few minutes just to put some information on the record to follow up on questions raised yesterday.

Mr. McFadyen: Is that something that we could deal with tomorrow?

Mr. Selinger: Sure.

Madam Chairperson: The member for Springfield.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I thank you very much, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this opportunity to ask a few questions. And one of the beauties of the Estimates process is to deal with issues that affect not just the province as a total, but also individual areas and constituencies in different things that have come up. And I know the minister,

the First Minister, has been travelling several times to a gurdwara in the—sort of The Maples area, the Garden City area, and that would be the Mollard Road Sikh Temple, and I understand he was there a couple of weeks ago, and he's had discussions with them previously in regards to some of the infrastructure issues that they are struggling with.

And I was wondering if the First Minister could give this committee an update of where he is with some of the commitments that he made.

Mr. Selinger: If the member thinks I've made some commitments, maybe he could articulate what they are, and then I can decide whether or not they're accurately reported.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, I mean, there are several issues that affect that particular gurdwara, or Sikh temple, and one of them is the roads that you have to take. You have to go up Pipeline, then you hit Mollard and you take Mollard over, and they've had some real serious issues with the roads there. And I think a while back the First Minister was visiting and indicated that he would help them with the road construction and trying to improve their access to their particular gurdwara. It's also the Sikh temple where the Sikh Society of Manitoba is headquartered out of it; it's a very large facility, has lots of members. That quadrant of the city is growing with Amber Trails, and having just spent more evenings than I wish to admit to, walking the streets of those fine communities on behalf of my favourite candidate in the federal election there. And there are a lot of East Indians, a lot of individuals who would attend that temple, have moved into there. Beautiful homes; beautiful communities. And the temple is actually looking at expanding, but, again, the problem is that the roads are just appalling and I—from what I understand, it was the First Minister had made some kind of a commitment to help them with the roads to their temple on Mollard Road.

*(15:20)

Mr. Selinger: This is a very interesting conversation, because the member is quoting to me what other people think I may have said to them as a third party. This is what you call hearsay, and it's a pretty dicey kind of conversation, quite frankly, and I'm not sure it's entirely appropriate.

But, to clarify the record, when I was at that temple, and I was honoured to be there to meet with members of that congregation and talk to them, I indicated that that road is a city responsibility, and

that if they wanted to have an improvement to the road, they should talk to their city councillor. I also indicated to them that the government of Manitoba makes resources available to the City of Winnipeg for residential streets. We fund about 50 per cent of the vast majority of residential streets which are done in Winnipeg. But, if they wanted to make that—and that the City has a process for 'priorizing' which streets are done, based on demand and use of the street and condition of the street, et cetera, and that they would have to talk to their local councillor, who would then get advice from their Works and Operations professionals about the priority of that street, relative to other streets in the city of Winnipeg. And if the City felt it was a priority, based on their professional advice and criteria that they had, and wanted to make it one of the projects that they move forward on, then our broad contribution to the City for residential streets would apply there as it does everybody—everywhere else.

Mr. Schuler: Well, and again, that's where this process is very healthy, because, you know, the First Minister is absolutely right. I had a lengthy conversation with the board of the temple, and I did get it second-hand, you know, so I'm now bringing it forth third-hand. And it's healthy, then, to bring it here and get some clarifications, and perhaps I didn't get it right, and perhaps it was not explained to me in a fashion that I understood it. So, you know, again, it's—now is a good time to be clear on that.

And so, from what the Premier has said, is that there was no direct commitment made to help them out with infrastructure, with dealing with the roads to the Mollard street Sikh temple, and that they should deal with the City directly on that, that this is a City responsibility. Just to make sure I have that correct; that is the—what the Premier is saying.

Mr. Selinger: That's exactly what I explained to people there, and I explained to the member opposite, that the City's responsible for streets within the city of Winnipeg, that they have a councillor that, I'm sure would be responsive to their concerns, and that the City has a process for 'priorizing' and identifying which streets need attention in terms of improvements, and that there's a set of engineering criteria relating to traffic and use and condition of the street. But that in broad terms, we have provided transfer of resources to the City for residential streets, and we, in many, many cases—I believe the vast majority of cases—finance 50 per cent of residential street improvements, but that those improvements have to be 'priorized' through the

City's process. And, if they wanted that process to pay attention to their street, they should have a conversation with their city councillor about that to initiate the process.

Mr. Schuler: When the Premier visited the Mollard Road gurdwara, did they also mention to him about some of the difficulties they have with trying to connect to city water and wastewater services?

Mr. Selinger: They indicated that they had some infrastructure challenges, yes.

Mr. Schuler: And did the First Minister make any commitment to them in regards to helping them out for infrastructure dollars towards connecting to city and waste-water services?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I did not make any specific commitments to do any specific projects. I made them aware of the resources we provide to all community organizations in Manitoba, programs like Community Places that are available to people on application, and there's a process by which those applications are reviewed and considered for projects that come from anywhere in Manitoba, all constituencies in all parts of the province.

So I appreciate the opportunity for the member—the member's given me to put the record straight on this. And it's an unusual process that a meeting I had with the community is reportedly given one way and he's asking me questions, but I actually appreciate the opportunity to put the record straight. We do have broad resources for helping community organizations improve their facilities. Some of them are programs like Community Places, but, again, the proper procedures have to be followed.

Mr. Schuler: And I appreciate the Premier being very clear in regards to both of these. There's also the issue of chief settlers trail that, at some point in time, will be coming from Main Street, hopefully, to McPhillips, and it would cut—basically, would cut the Mollard Road gurdwara off from the parcel of land it's on. And there's a lot of great development taking place there. And, as we all know, when a roadway goes in or something else happens in a community, it changes the dynamics of the way people used to operate. So they are facing a lot of challenges, and I think it's important that everybody know exactly what the commitments are and what was exactly said.

And that would conclude my questions, unless the Premier wanted to add something to that. I would

like to pass the torch, the baton, over to my colleague from Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Just had a couple of questions for the Premier in regards to a number of areas in—and I guess one of them is in the areas of—it's appropriate that we're doing this again in the spring as we always do with Estimates in the legislature.

But the situation arose a few years ago in '09 in Melita, particularly around the flooding situations at that time, where the then-premier, now Ambassador to the US, Mr. Doer, came out at that time. The department had funds available to—and it was on a five-year plan—to upgrade the highway from the bridge in Melita on No. 3 Highway, both east a short piece or west a short piece and all the way east to Medora. In fact, I think it's been done to—shoulders widening and that sort of thing on No. 3 in that area, upgraded it past Medora now. And, at that time, that portion of the highway was three or four feet below the bridge level. One of the things that we did when—or that the community did to save themselves at that time, as the Premier is aware, is put a—from being there the other day, is to upgrade the dike, put a couple of feet on it, in some places more than that, back in '09.

And I had the pleasure of being there that day with the Reeve and the—Reeve Trewin and Mayor Walker from Melita and Arthur—RMs and other town employees and others, councillors, to look at the bridge, had the OK from the Premier to—instead of paving the road as they had planned, to build the road up first. That was a good move. We all agreed and the Premier—I'll never forget his anecdotal answer in regards to how he got around to okaying the road to be built, but it was one of those things that he certainly did do, and it's been a blessing, I think, by most people's account in the community of Melita, the flood that they just fought and are still fighting.

But I wonder if the Premier has indicated that they would look at doing a number of other dikes around the province of Manitoba. And I know that they've just finished the work in Brandon. That's a good move as well from a permanent structure's position, upgraded the Assiniboine dikes as well. And I've been out and looked at those as the Conservation and Water Stewardship critic as well, and a great job was done there in a short time.

And so I want to ask the Premier, because I think you indicated, if I'm correct, and I just wanted to get

it correct to make sure that I heard properly, that there would be more work done on those structures once the flooding subsides now to make them into a more permanent structure so that they can be more reliable for the future, and we won't be allowing trees to grow in them as some of them had in the past. Can he just update me on what his plans would be for some of those as we move forward down the road?

* (15:30)

Mr. Selinger: I'm assuming the member's asking—the member for Virden's asking me what follow up we'll do on the dikes we put in place this spring season on the Assiniboine, et cetera?

Mr. Maguire: Yes, it was that and I guess, as well, I'd bring it to the Premier's attention before he answers, the diking in Melita. They were very lucky last Thursday when the wind was there, lapping at it from the south. They had to put a temporary dike behind the dike, which they did very quickly, they hauled a lot of clay in from a certain area. There will be a lot of expense and, you know, there's two questions here, I guess. One is the DFA availability, and you've announced that. Just how that plan will work for all of the emergency sites that—or communities and RMs that have declared emergencies, as well as the—what the plan is for the permanent diking or to make these a more permanent dike once the water subsides?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I thank the member for the question. He will know that I was out in Melita and I was very impressed by the—everybody's focus on making sure they did protect the community. And not only the local officials, but also our provincial officials were very helpful, I believe, in there as well, supporting them.

And they had some concerns about the dike that we constructed with them in '09, having some risk of breaching or overtopping there and even some potential leakage, and so they had built some secondary dikes behind that just to ensure that they would have additional protection. And it will be necessary, likely, to come in, after the worst of this is over and the water goes down, and strengthen, as required, those facilities to make sure that they're there in the future, because it does look like we're in a bit of a wet cycle right now. And, if this wet cycle continues, one of the phenomena we're seeing this year is that the high water is not just there and gone right away, it seems to be there and stay around for awhile at a fairly high level.

So, if the dikes aren't well constructed, they may hold for a period of time, but we want them to hold perhaps for a few weeks, three or four weeks, perhaps even longer. So I think it's understood that all of us are going to have to ensure those dikes are in good shape after this season's over and maintained in such a way that they will be ready for future challenges.

And that would be the same on the Assiniboine River, as well. They've moved very quickly on—I was out there last Monday, actually, along the—in the Poplar Point area there, around—along Highway 26, and visited an egg producer there who had extensive diking being put around his property. And it was very obvious that the dikes that we put in place this spring saved him millions of dollars of damage, because he was in the process of rebuilding a lot of his barns and infrastructure to modernize his operation. And without those dikes—and the ice, as you know, came in very high and the water was within inches of going over the new dike that we put in there—he could have been completely awash in the Assiniboine River. So it was impressive to see the work our folks had done. They were, at the time I was there, continuing to reinforce the dike and strengthen it and putting some secondary protection in behind that as well.

But one of the big factors that was helpful was the dry weather this week. It was drying out those dikes and making them stronger, and there's 24-hour inspections going on. People—there's officials from our department that are driving back and forth along that entire Assiniboine Valley dike to make sure it's in good shape, but they indicated to me that even when I was out there last Monday that it was in a lot better shape than it was even three days before that on the Friday, just because of the weather conditions helping. And they're continuing to pack it down and strengthen it, and there's a lot of aggregate going in there, and they've got special vehicles to do that. It was quite an operation, very impressive, and one of the chaps I remember was Ray Frost and his crew and some of the folks in there and they should be congratulated because they've been putting in long days to make sure that dike's in good shape. And when that high ice arose, they were walking down that dike following the ice, at a walking pace, to make sure that everywhere it went it didn't breach the dike.

So I think we're in the range of \$20 million that's spent on the Assiniboine dikes right now. We're obviously interested in a program of mitigation that we

can cost share with the federal government on this, and it to be recognized, either under DFA or a one-off—a separate program. And I've been in discussions with the current Prime Minister about that. He showed some interest in that and could see the logic if we prevent these things it's going to save us all a lot of grief later on, in terms of taxpayer's dollars and just dislocation and loss of economic opportunity for the people that would be decommissioned by these floods.

So I think we're moving in the right direction, but, you know, we didn't have the luxury of waiting for everything to perfectly agreed to by the federal government. We had to move on these measures. We've asked that January 24th be recognized as the date for the DFA program to apply. And the reason we've asked for that is because we all know the level of soil saturation that had occurred this fall. We all know that the snow pack had a lot of precipitation in it, and that some of the conditions that would be acknowledged under a normal Disaster Financial Assistance circumstance were in place on January 24th. If they will recognize that, that would help us enormously in financing some of these improvements.

And, in addition, I think there could be a separate program for mitigation in the future, but, regardless of how that turns out, I'm optimistic it will turn out well. I think we made the right decision on moving very proactively to put these resources in place, both in '09 in Melita and this year in the Assiniboine Valley. And I'm sure the member probably agrees with that.

Mr. Maguire: And I do agree with it—with the Premier on that. I think that there is, you know, there's a need in some areas at least to move forward.

You know, there's always criticism in some of these things when you move forward, but we've got to appreciate the minister indicating the dollar amount on the Portage area in that regard as well.

I drive home through Portage every week and I know it's—it will be two weeks tomorrow that the Assiniboine Diversion has been running the 25,000 cubic feet per second, as full as it can be. It started out with a little bit of ice on the first Friday when I was going through because it really only came up on the Thursday, I believe, and that only took a couple of days to get rid of. And thank goodness the ice is gone on pretty well all of our tributaries.

I appreciate it, as well, the briefings from the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) in your government and Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Topping in regards to EMO and flood forecasting, Mutulu, the—Philip—the work that they're doing because I think the—as the critic in that area, I've been in touch with them. So the Premier knows as well, and appreciate being kept up to date in the daily updates that we all get, I believe, as MLAs, and it's very useful.

I guess, in regards to a program like Melita, the concern, I think—and I want to give just a word of praise, as the Premier did, as well, to the EMO co-ordinator in Melita—is also a town councillor, Grant Hume. There has—you know, kind of tear your hair out when you're in those positions in the EMO, as they do across the province.

And I appreciate all the people that worked through Easter weekend in all the different parts of Manitoba, right up to The Pas, to keep ice floes going and those kinds of things out of the way from harming more people than they did. But the concern there is that the dike that was added in '09 was done and it was done hurriedly and it was done to relieve an immediate concern.

Appreciate going back to January 24th. Can the—and one question would be, does the Premier—what kind of response did he get from the federal government in regards to January 24th, or have they responded yet? They're probably in the middle of the election, not responding to anything these days, but, from all sides, I just wondered what that would be?

And the other one was, that even though the work wasn't initially done this spring on that dike in Melita, and the tube dikes probably never really had water come up on them except for the odd splash on that Thursday before the Premier was out there last Friday morning—I was also there on Friday morning and know what you're speaking of and, you know, there was a lot of work done—the secondary dikes on 83 and 3 and a the—a lot of other areas to make sure that there was backing. It doesn't look like it's going to be needed but it was needed at the time for—because you can't stand by and do nothing.

So that dike, I guess, is what I'm looking at with the Premier. Is—will it be included or can it be included in an engineering process that will allow for the permanency of that dike as well, because it's pretty temporary with the couple of feet that was just put on on top at that time. It really wasn't packed properly and seated down properly even at that time. And if it hadn't have been for some coconut webbing

that they threw over the dike there last week and—the permanent dike there, the C-dike that they put behind it—it could have been a lot worse. So maybe the Premier could just elaborate on that?

Mr. Selinger: What I would say is we would try to take a very positive approach on that and hopefully our federal partner would agree to it as well.

And as the member said, they're in the middle of an election, so I haven't received any hard correspondence on this. I've raised these issues broadly about mitigation, the need to invest in mitigation.

But I think the member's right, there probably will need to be some review of the strength of that dike after this event's over because of the rapidity with which it was put up. If we have to take some additional measures to strengthen it, I think we should. And then, how are we going to cost share that? I mean, I think that's probably still an open question but I don't think we should let that question get in the way of protecting that community, particularly if we see another wet cycle or another wet season. I think we got to keep moving ahead of these things.

* (15:40)

We've been actually pretty fortunate in the sense that all the work we've done has held up to now. But, as the member knows, and I would agree with him, that those risk factors still remain, especially if we have prolonged periods of high water that puts more and more stress on these facilities that we erected quickly. And we may need to fortify them and strengthen them with additional engineering measures and seeding and the kinds of things that strengthen the ability of the dike to withstand long periods of high-pressure water.

Mr. Maguire: And some—and I appreciate that, Mr. Premier—and in some cases it mean—it may even mean, you know, relooking at the work that was done before, because it was done in an emergency situation even—I wouldn't say ripping it up, but adding to it and doing the proper compaction on some of those dikes. There's a big bend in the river right there at Melita that goes around the Doug's mobile servicing, as well as the motel on the river there, that's in very near flooding, and I think he had a little bit of water on the floor.

But when the Premier was there before we did look at—and I don't know if they showed it when you

were there the other day, but the channel of the river coming through the bridge ends up going straight north, virtually. But before it gets there, it has to go make a big U-shaped bend around those two businesses. And that would take a special permit, I think, from DFO or somebody like that to allow some kind of channel to help that area get the water straight through faster. And they feel that it would enhance—it's just part of the whole relief situation in that area. It's something to look at, but I would just like to make the Premier aware of as well.

The only other place that I've got circumstances—and they arise all over the province, I'm sure—but the diking on the south side of the Oak Lake lake itself at Oak Lake Beach and the little provincial park that is there. That dike has been a number of years with badgers drilling through it, shrubs growing on it, some rocks in place and some not, and a small dam at the south end of it that does hold the water level in the lake at a certain area. I've been there and seen it myself. It's quite a—you almost need a four-wheel drive to get over the dike to get to it to see it, it's so rough. But just to bring it to the Premier's attention that that dike does need a lot of work as well, and I know it is—it can be done under a flood. It would be great to hold the water back, I guess, where you could and enhance a very shallow lake from the recreational complex and use that it's getting. It's very—it's expanded a lot in the last four or five years. But it's a circumstance that that dike needs to be looked at for the protection of the community of Souris from the west that's on the Plum Creek as well. And I just remind the Premier of that, and when they're looking at the co-ordinated plan of southwest Manitoba in regards to how to handle these.

The other one is, you know, in my area it's stretching out a fair distance there now from north to south, but the Orthez Creek in the north side of Boissevain is sort of the head waters for the Pembina Valley. And the Pembina River, it starts out and runs east into Pelican Lake and in through that area out the other end and on east. And the—this is the first time, just to show the will, I know the Premier will know the name Ransom in that area.

Sid Ransom was a very great conservationist for years and years in that area. Father O'Brien [*phonetic*] and Don and Bill and a number of—a Jerry, and a number of whole bunch of that family. Bill indicated to me a while ago that this is the first winter he can ever remember—and I won't give away his age, but he's older than I am—and he hasn't ever remembered a winter before where the creeks in the

Turtle Mountains ran into Whitewater Lake all winter like they did this year, in spite of the of the 40 below weather that we had at some points. And that just shows how saturated some of that ground was and how the snow on top just, you know, it did continue to trickle away underground. And the same in the Shellmouth with water coming in at 1,200 cubic feet and going out at 2,000 under the snow and ice all winter long. It's an unusual circumstance.

So those would be the major issues, I guess, that I was wanting to ask about today, and just to make you aware of and, I know, as we move forward with a plan to see whether those could be included in some of that as well.

Now, I—and I won't get into the Assiniboine River basin at this particular point, but there, you know, of course, there's a lot of water. I was going to use the word "tonnes," but it'd be more like megatonnes of water coming through there. The Premier's used Olympic-sized swimming pools moving by him, so he can't even keep up to how many that would be in regards to the situation there with the Shellmouth.

And, of course, we've just seen how important those structures are and, as we move forward, the importance of perhaps looking at how those can be. You know, we haven't seen a major plan in 40 years, or close to 50 years now, I guess, in those areas. And so just to urge him to include that as we move forward on areas like—because of my responsibilities, the Shoal Lakes, the Salt Lake, Strathclair and a number of other areas that we need to look at around the province that would protect the Interlake as well as other regions.

And so, with that, I would, unless the Premier has any comments on that, I would turn it over to my colleague from Lakeside.

Mr. Selinger: Just—I thank the member for drawing these matters to our attention. I think there's a growing awareness of the need to have a federal-provincial program for mitigation. I think one of the things we've learned in the last three years, if we're just always solving these problems after they occur and restoring it to the condition it was before, that's completely ridiculous, especially if the same event's going to occur over and over again. And we're seeing a lot of that, right, First Nations, and in some of the communities perhaps even the member is mentioning.

So if we can get a—some genuine interest to cost-share some mitigation, I think that would go a long way to address some of these problems. And what I've been happy about this year is even though we've spent tens of millions of dollars on preparing Manitoba for these weather—for these flood events, a lot of those investments are going to become permanent investments, and they'll provide long-term relief and protection for those communities. So it's not just wasted money. It's not just short-term benefit. It's going to provide long-term benefit, the dikes in Brandon, the dikes on the Assiniboine River are all going to be in better shape now. The one around Melita is clearly better than it was before '09 because there wasn't anything, and if we can strengthen it further to ensure that it stays in good shape—and you've mentioned Oak Lake and around Boissevain there.

Those are—that's new information. I mean I've been hearing about these tributaries running high and I think some of the—I guess you could call them old timers that have seen many winters go by—when they give you that kind of information I think we should take it—take some serious look at it because they—it's, you know, it's kind of local knowledge that's important. And we'll—we can work with our officials in MIT to take a look at some of that information, and Water Stewardship, and even Emergency Measures and see if there's—and our municipalities to see if there's some reasonable measures that can be taken to strengthen the capacity to resist those kinds of conditions.

I think we're going to be rebuilding a lot of roads this summer, municipal roads in particular, and we're going to have to commit some of our capital program and some DFA money to rebuild a lot of these roads because a lot of them have been eroded and overtopped and they're going to be in a weakened condition. So if we can get a broader interpretation of a mitigation and even disaster assistance under—with our federal partners that would be extremely helpful, I think, because we can save a lot of grief in the future. We've come a long way in this province, I think. I think we could go further.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Mr. Premier, just one last area. You mentioned roads and there is a need there for sure, particularly in the oil industry down in my corner with the heavy loads. The other one though is—where co-operation may be needed is with Saskatchewan in regards to the Pipestone Creek and the water coming out of Moosomin Dam, and just how to—that can be used sort of like a Shellmouth,

only you can't let it out as soon. It won't run as far but in sort of a mid-March period of time you can let some out to let it down, open up that channel so that it doesn't flood the way it has now.

It comes downhill pretty flat until it gets north of Reston and it flooded 80 or 90 quarters out there this fall—or this spring so far been underwater and before that water gets into the Oak Lake itself. So I just leave that with the Premier. Thanks very much.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for that information. I think those are useful observations and useful information. I would also ask him to raise that with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), perhaps even during Estimates, but we've got it on the record now. But I want to make sure you follow up with the correct ministers because it gives you—it gets you there a little faster, if you know what I'm saying. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to go back to your comments and listen to the old timers and that's in regards to the Shoal lakes in the Interlake. And the history has shown that the lake has never been as high as it has been at this current time. And I know the First Minister's got a pretty good handle on drainage there but there has been a new drain that's been approved out of the RM of Armstrong that's going to be dumping even more water into the Shoal lakes.

So without there not being an outlet approved at this point, and, you know, I don't deal a lot in hearsay but I understand there's supposed to be something going to Executive Council in the next short time, at least that's what they've been trying to tell us, but I was wanting to know if the First Minister could tell us what the long-term plans are regards to the drain that's been proposed by the RMs, on the Wagon Creek Drain, specifically, and what stage that's at.

* (15:50)

Mr. Selinger: That's still under consideration by our officials and I think it'd be—I can't make any comments on that stage. They're still taking a look at it from a technical and cost-benefit point of view. They do very careful analysis of that. The one short-term measure we took was the hatchery drain this winter. The member might be aware of that. We had recommendation from one of the local reeves who thought that would provide some immediate relief. It's certainly not the whole solution, but the hatchery drain, we provided some resources. I think it was in

the magnitude of about \$100,000 to let that flow more readily and take some pressure off, but I haven't heard anybody say that that will be sufficient to the challenge of what's happening in the Shoal Lakes. And bigger solutions are obviously have a bigger price tag attached to them, and we'll see whether there'll be some interest on the part of our federal partners after the election to cost-share some of these mitigation measures.

But we remain open to those possibilities if they will make a real difference, and, as the member knows, any time you do those kinds of things, the DFO, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, weighs in pretty heavily in terms of their impact analysis on the environment and fish, et cetera. So these things aren't able to be done really rapidly, but if we can get everybody moving in the right direction, hopefully, we can come up with some solution that makes sense from a water point of view, from an environmental point of view, and from a cost-benefit point of view with some cost-sharing attached to that. But we are seriously looking at solutions there, but I'm not aware that one specific one has been completely identified as being the right solution with all the issues addressed attached to it.

Mr. Eichler: My understanding is there's nine municipalities that's been involved and there's been a number of meetings that's taken place, and they are unanimous in their request on the Wagon Creek Drain. And I guess it's a matter of the funding and getting the players at the table in order for that to happen. Hopefully, it happens sooner than later after Monday's election, whatever that result may be.

But I'm very concerned about the water level. It's quite a bit higher than what it was last fall. There is very limited access to east-west connections. As the First Minister knows, Highway 229's been closed. Highway 512 has been closed. There's a lot of trade that goes back and forth as a result of need and hospitalization and groceries and doctoring and all those other things that happen, and emergency services.

So I think we need to deal with it in a very timely manner, and also, as a result of that, the people that live on either side of the lake for feed costs as well. I mean, and we had the freight assistance program that came in last fall, but still it's still very difficult, time consuming in order for that to happen. So I would encourage the First Minister to have his staff look at it as quickly as possible.

I know that there's been talk of diking it. It's close. If it does come through in the next 60 to 90 days—I don't think it'll happen right away, but I do think if there is a break of the water out of the Shoal Lakes, that communities of Argyle, Stonewall, Warren will all be impacted. In fact, the city of Winnipeg'd be impacted the worst if it comes down to the Sturgeon Creek drain because it just, quite frankly, can't handle it, so, you know, I would just encourage you to move forward on it as quickly as we possibly can.

And I know, you know, Mr. Topping has been out there a number of times. I had five calls last night. People are very concerned about their residences, and there's some have sandbagged. And I know there's another meeting coming forward on Tuesday night with the—another group of concerned citizens, and I just think we need to try to give them some type of satisfaction that we are moving forward on this as government, whether that's involving the opposition or not. And I know that we as opposition don't make those decisions, but I know that the time is right for those residents to have some type of information relayed to them because they are very concerned about the levels where it's at right now.

Mr. Selinger: And I thank the member for bringing his points of information forward about the concerns of the residents. You're obviously tuned in to what their concerns are and they are—those concerns are understandable, given the rise of the lake and the extreme moisture we've had in the last two or three years.

I know our officials are trying to look at reasonable solutions to this and look at the cost benefit of those solutions, and they've been in close consultation with the municipalities on discussing that. And those solutions have to have a cost benefit attached to them and they have to have a financing mechanism attached to them. We've always been willing to do our share on this. There's been a lot of talk in the federal election about who's prepared to do what. Some of that will have to be sorted out once the dust settles, but the reality is that if there's a way to move forward to provide some relief there, we'll take a serious look at it. There's no doubt about it, and that's why we moved quickly this winter on the hatchery drain because it was easily done, cost effectively provided some immediate relief and gave the opportunity to continue the dialogue on longer term solutions.

And I flew over the Shoal Lakes today as I was coming back from The Pas where I also looked at some of the circumstances around Ralls Island up there and some of their challenges with erosion of river banks and water and some of the diking that they may have to do in the future and will likely have to do in the future to protect that—those homes up there.

So the Shoal Lakes are definitely filling up and we need to find some solutions there and all solutions are on the table and obviously the dialogue with local officials and municipalities will occur. And we're open to moving in an appropriately timely fashion, subject to everybody being willing to cooperate to find a solution.

Mr. Eichler: The hatchery drain does help somewhat, but it's not going to alleviate the problem that's there right now, and I'm sure the First Minister is very much aware of that. It is a help, but it's certainly not going to alleviate the problem, the stress that's going to make the water come south rather than—I mean, because there's no other way to do it. It's just too far north.

But I won't debate that with him. I got another issue I want to talk about and that's Highway 6. As the First Minister knows, there was a public meeting held in Grosse Isle, and last week, in the House, I tabled those petitions. There was 1,129 signatures on that asking that something be done on Highway 6. And I know the department of MIT did make a request to the RM of Rosser to cost share in upgrading PTH 6, and I'm just wondering, is that normal procedure, is—that the RMs are now involved in funding of upgrades or twinning or straightening of provincial trunk highways?

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, on provincial highways, like Highway 6, there's been very significant events, but I'm—without having my notes in front of me, I recall that it was in the order of \$75 million that's been invested in that road and some changes in the engineering of those roads to straighten out some of the bends to make them safer. And I know there's some capacity and some willingness to continue to invest in those roads, and so we certainly will have—provide resources within our highways capital budget to look at issues of improving Highway No. 6; it is an important route in Manitoba. It—there is a lot of traffic that flows on that road, not only in your constituency, but in all the constituencies through which the road goes. So there has been significant

investment there, and I know there's future planned investment there.

On the specifics of a request to the municipality, I don't—you know, I'm not aware of the detail on that, but if municipalities—there—again, if there is some specific project that they're demanding and there's a request, whether they would participate in the solution there, that may be something that has occurred, but I'm not aware of the detail on that. But, again, if people want to solve the problem and they're all willing to co-operate and they're all willing to share the cost of that, sometimes that can move the problem along more quickly.

Mr. Eichler: Just to wrap up, Madam Chairperson, I know the RM of Rosser is very concerned and they're prepared to go to the taxpayers if necessary. They're prepared to make other sacrifices if necessary, because one more loss of life is just one more than they can bear, and there has been a number of losses in the last six, seven years for one reason or the other.

And the curves at Gordon are the most severe at this point—that's where the larger number of accidents that have happened. Of course, there's other curves that are farther north as well, you know, St. Laurent and Lundar where another individual was killed this past weekend. But I know that the RM of Rosser is grabbing at straws, so when the government decides to table their five-year plan for upgrades to roads, I would certainly hope that some of those issues could be addressed in their next short time so that they can make their plans financially as well if they are going to have to be at the table in order to make that happen. But I know that they are very concerned and prepared to do whatever they have to do to make it happen, so.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for that information. That sounds like people have the right attitude, that they want to seriously solve a problem and they're willing to put some of their money or some of their resources into that, and we'll follow up and see—I mean, I'm not—the five-year plan, it's still being worked on and, obviously, the five-year plan may have to respond to some of the very serious flooding conditions we've seen and the impacts on roads this year. And we'll see whether or not Highway 6 is part of that.

That problem is not really flood-related; it's related to the engineering of the road and the fact that it's getting more and more use and some of the bends and turns are historic and they need to be

straightened out. And I understand the need for that. I've been up and down that road a few times myself, and I know some of the municipalities didn't want to unbend—straighten up parts of the road, because it has impacts on some of the businesses in the communities out there. And there's always a trade-off between the safety and efficiency of the road and the historic connections to local businesses. And you straighten it out and all of a sudden the gas bar or the grocery store is not as close as it used to be. And so these things have to be sorted out.

I know in the past that we've 'prioritized' safety as the main—one of the main factors to look at in how we do the engineering on these roads.

* (16:00)

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I'd like to begin by complimenting the First Minister and his staff of the approachability and understanding of concerns and problems facing Manitobans and the approachability of your office and yourself.

We'll also like to compliment—and I hope there is some consideration coming forward from the First Minister's office of, indeed, the above and beyond attention to duty and responsibility by many civil servants in this flood that we're experiencing the present time. And I speak specifically of the 24/7 controllers at the Assiniboine diversion and how they have controlled the flow of the Assiniboine River through these many weeks and giving up much of their family and personal time to safeguard the property and lives of those downstream.

I would like, though, just to ask the minister for a commitment. We could talk about water until the proverbial cows come home, but we here in Manitoba are known, as had been identified by United Nations as possessing the most fresh water per capita of any jurisdiction in the world here in Manitoba. And it is something that we should not only take pride in but acknowledge our responsibility of—to safeguard that fresh water.

And so I'm asking the minister if he could possibly consider a surface water strategy, undertaken by his office, that would engage Manitobans, not only as individuals but through municipal representation, conservation district representation. Seemingly, everyone has an opinion about water, for one thing, and also too, I'm never cease to be impressed by individuals' ideas. As many and thoughtful as we feel that we are, ourselves,

there's always other opinions that impress and take a different slant and an angle that on a particular situation or concern, that definitely enhances the road to resolution of those concerns and problems.

So we just need a mechanism, and if I can impress upon the First Minister that perhaps this could be a lasting legacy, undertaken by himself personally, to look at a surface water strategy for the entire province and find a mechanism to engage Manitobans to that end. And I know the First Minister is very much recognizing of the flood control structures in my constituency of Portage la Prairie and the dire need of attention that is required on those 40-year-old structures.

And that it is definitely a concern to all of us in Portage la Prairie, as to we would be the first community affected if there was a structural failure in that existing facilities, because Portage la Prairie is first community on the flood plain. And prior to the building of those structures, Portage la Prairie was almost flooded annually, because that is where the termination of the Assiniboine Valley concludes, and Portage la Prairie is at that end of the valley and the first on the flood plain.

So, if the minister has a short response, then I just have a quick wrap up.

Mr. Selinger: That's a big—what can I say—challenge the member has put out there, surface water strategy. I'm not going to dismiss it out of hand; I will consider it. It's always helpful when there's individuals that want to champion those kinds of strategies.

The member might be interested in considering—reconsidering whether he wants to retire so that he could be part of that solution. And if he's interested in that, we can chat and see what we can do to make sure we have people that get—understand this.

But, you know, water is a big issue in this province, and that's why this government created the Water Stewardship Department. And part of the role of the Water Stewardship Department is to think big about water issues in Manitoba, all kinds: water quality issues, water quantity issues, water storage issues, water removal issues. I mean, right now we're in the business of trying to move water out of the province or out of farmland and communities and through our waterways.

But there are other times in our history when we need to retain water. And the member knows probably far better than I do that what's been

happening to the rural landscape that some of the water retention capacity of the rural landscape has been lost in recent years through, perhaps, infrastructure projects; perhaps through different farming practices; perhaps through different kinds of equipment that, you know, roll over the land in such a way that there's not the ability to move around things and protect sloughs and wetlands as much as we used to. So all of these things are—and drainage projects—people's incessant demand for drainage project, which moves water off the land much more quickly.

And so we see this in many jurisdictions. It's not unique to Manitoba. And so to take a balanced approach to that requires people that can sort of see all the different interests and the big picture on that.

But it is an important question. One of the things I've noticed as I've gone around the province is there's lots of water in certain areas that's there, more than what's needed to allow agriculture to proceed. But there's also a heck of a lot of drainage that occurs in this province that moves water very quickly, and that creates other challenges in terms of potentials for flooding. So we have to balance all of those things together.

But our surface water strategy is—it's a big topic. I encourage the member to discuss it with the minister for the department as we go through the Estimates. And I'll—I've taken notice of his suggestion, and then we'll see where we can go with that as we move beyond the immediate challenges we have this year.

Mr. Faurschou: Madam Chairperson, before the First Minister became First Minister, indeed, I lobbied long and hard for a department exclusive to the interests of water. And I do compliment the New Democratic Party government for initiating a department exclusive for water. And I'm very pleased, although I had a rather grandiose type of imagination of the Water Stewardship Department crossing all boundaries between various departments because it—water does have—is of interest in Agriculture and Industry and Intergovernmental Affairs and many other different departments.

But where I would like to leave this at the present time with the First Minister is that he's already made mention of the federal intervention within the resources that are under provincial jurisdiction, i.e. Fisheries and Oceans, navigatable waterways Canada for another, and I'm—would like to impress upon the First Minister that at the next

opportunity he has at the federal level to raise that particular issue that these, indeed, are the resources of our province and, respectfully, our responsibility, because these two departments, I just have the personal impression, are empire building, and are looking upon themselves to take on more and more waterways, especially the navigatable waterways act.

I speak very specifically of the intermittent stream that I grew up on. Rat Creek has been designated as a navigatable waterway, and, Mr. Minister, if you would view that particular intermittent stream, there isn't not much more than 50 feet, if I can use imperial measurement, where the—of unencumbered water channel from deadfall trees. That stream is not a navigatable waterway in—I don't believe 99.9 per cent of any common-sense thinking individual residing anywhere in the world that could view that particular intermittent stream as a navigatable waterway. But, indeed, it has been by the powers that be from the federal government.

And if one was to speak with the current Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, it is having a significant impact on the 1 and 16 Provincial Trunk highways interchange, because the bridges now have to be engineered to accommodate a navigatable waterway—being that of Rat Creek.

So—I—that is a point that I'd like to leave with the First Minister, that we pick up the responsibility that we have through our constitutional responsibility and effectively explain to the federal government that we will take care of our resources here in Manitoba, and we need not have further intervention from their respective departments in this regard.

And so I thank the minister, as this will be my—probably my last opportunity to participate in this committee, and this has been, indeed, an honour and a pleasure. Thank you, Madam Chair.

*(16:10)

Mr. Selinger: I'd like to thank the member as well for—it may not be his last opportunity to ask me a question or have a dialogue. But we are in Estimates; Estimates time may lapse. And so over the years he's—we've had a lot of interaction on consumer and—affairs issues because he was the critic for that for many years and I was the minister for that, and I always found that the member was—put the best interests of Manitobans into his questions. He didn't play politics in that sense that so often gets in the

way of good policy making in this Chamber and in this Legislature.

So I think the member has conducted himself extremely well, and I found his questions and his criticism always very constructive: claimants adviser officer issues, how we set that up and how we operate that, how we protect consumers, issues of agriculture and rural life and, of course, all the points he's often raised with respect to Portage la Prairie and what can be done out there with health facilities and, you know, even the Portage Diversion.

It is a great constituency that he's represented over the years. I've always enjoyed the people at Portage la Prairie and visiting there. And I actually do have some long connections there through my family back to the days when Gordon Johnson was the MLA, and the member will know him, what a good MLA he was over the years. And there was sort of a family connection on my mother's side of the family to Gordon Johnson, so I visited him out there when I was a young guy. So I've always had sort of a good feeling about Portage la Prairie. It's a great community, and I think it's been very ably represented by yourself.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Minister, in 2009, we did a flood tour together, and I appreciated the opportunity that you afforded me and to travel with your entourage. And I recall as we left Letellier, you and I drove through the Roseau River reserve and you had made mention that you had had some contact with that particular reserve in the past. And, as you know, in 2009, it ended up being evacuated. Over 800 people were evacuated at a huge cost of \$1.2 million.

That type of a cost is one thing; that's a monetary cost to the evacuation. Madam Chairperson, 2011, we have the same type of evacuation. The cost at this point is unknown, but some of the other economic costs is the loss of revenue for the businesses on the reserve that are Aboriginally run, more especially the gaming facilities, the smoke shop, the gas bar and so on. The—also the loss of income for those that are employed in the different offices there.

I'm sure that there's going to be a certain amount of economic hardship as well. And on the human side of it, Mr. Minister, there's a huge impact. There's a huge impact for these families to be uprooted—and uprooted in a hurry. They can only pack so much stuff, and so you take what you think is valuable. You have the stress of wondering whether the dike will hold or whether it'll breach,

and then, of course, there's always the opportunity if your home is left vacant that there's a—that vandalism can occur. I know that they do their best with the security systems there. They've been very vigilant, but in 2009 a number of homes were vandalized while the people were away, and this only adds to the stress.

And, when we look at what has all taken place throughout the valley, we see that there's been a lot of mitigation work done, and the reserve is no different. There was a lot of mitigation work done. A ring dike was done in 2000 and—or 1997. It did fail one year. It slipped on the north end, but that was all repaired. And, in '09, the ring dike was secure. In 2011, the ring dike is secure.

But the evacuation is caused by the highway. The highway goes underwater and the access then is not guaranteed. And, at one point, we had an issue with the bridge, perhaps. And you've probably heard of the Letellier Bridge in the past. That is being rectified, so we have the bridge issue taken care of, but we're still going to be faced with floods, different severities going forward. They seem to come more frequently now. But we're going to be looking at evacuations because the highways can't be guaranteed. They can't be guaranteed in access.

And so my question to the minister is: Is—has he or his government given some thought to upgrading that highway so that the good people of the Roseau River First Nations don't have to be evacuated?

Mr. Selinger: Well, the member is correct there. There is diking in place there to protect the Roseau River and the evacuation order was one that could be described as precautionary or preventative, because I don't know that the road was actually fully closed at the time they decided to evacuate the entire community. If the member wants to correct me on that, please let him do so, but there was the possibility that the road would not be able to be used to get in and out of the community, and so I believe the community felt that they needed to move their residents to ensure that they had access to goods and services.

You know, this is one of the things I think we have to do after the events of this spring are over, is take a look at these roads and see whether or not there is an appropriate mitigation that could be put in place that will allow greater access to these communities, especially when they've already been protected by dikes now. And that's something, again,

that I think is a weakness in the existing Disaster Financial Assistance program. It only seems to provide help to people after the problem has occurred, and only to restore it to the way it was before the problem occurred. So we keep going back and doing the same thing over and over again, which is not very helpful.

And some of the worst instances of repeating the same mistakes have been in First Nations. Peguis comes to mind where, you know, three or four years in a row, certain homes have been flooded and they've been repaired, but not repaired in such a way that they can prevent future flooding because it repaired to the state it was before when, in fact, they need to be moved or lifted or otherwise protected. And it may be the case with that road, that there has to be some mitigation measure put in place there to allow the road to be more accessible during these high water conditions.

And I'm not as—I know we've done good movement on the Letellier bridge. I heard the member in the House suggest that it was federal resources that did it. As I recall, it was 50-50, cost shared between the Province and the federal government, so I think both levels of government have appropriately responded to that bridge, which needed repairs. And that will make a big difference, and then if there's additional measures that have to be taken on the road, we may be able to look at that, in co-operation with the federal government, on how we can improve that road.

We certainly won't close that door, because if we can stop these dislocations of people, I mean, we've gone from 100,000 in 1950, 28,000 people in 1997, 2,800 people in 2009, to just shy of 2,000 people now. I think we're at around 1,900, and in that range now. And the vast majority of the people that have been relocated have been in First Nations communities this year. If we can reduce that need to relocate people, that just is going to simplify and reduce stress on people's lives.

So, if there's some reasonable measures that can be taken, we're certainly open to that.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the minister for that, and you're right, your recollection on the cost of the bridge was 50-50. I'm not sure exactly what that bridge is going to cost with the delays that have been caused by high water, but at—I will agree that it was a

50-50 cost sharing on it with the federal and provincial governments.

I—just to maybe—further on this particular issue, and I don't want to dwell on it, but I heard the minister speak before about the Shoal Lakes and some remedial work there that—and he talked about—the phrase was cost benefits. And so I would suggest that when we look at, in particular, the Roseau Reserve, we're talking about around 1,900 people total in the province that have been evacuated, displaced from high water, and almost half of those are from the Roseau. That's where mitigation work has been done and it's the—basically, it's the highway that causes the issue today.

* (16:20)

I know the people there get to make—they make their decision, and when they feel uncomfortable, then they have to make a decision for the good of the all. I can also add that the businesses in the surrounding area that service the Aboriginal people on Roseau River First Nations, those businesses have a huge loss while the people are gone, and those losses, there's no chances of recouping. So the cost benefits are there as well.

The other issue that I might point out is that when the bridge is completed and 75 highway, as we know, has issues with flooding and closure at Morris, and I know that the minister and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) are looking at solutions and those solutions, if I understood correctly in the House this last week—that those solutions are many years away because of engineering and the hydrology studies that are necessary.

I can suggest to the minister that with some work on this particular highway, that it could be used as an alternate flood route and would be the shortest way to Winnipeg in the event of flooding until something has been worked out that would be beneficial to 75 highway. This could be used as an alternate flood route.

And so, again, we start—we talk about cost benefits. I would say to the minister that this year has a lot of cost benefits and it's something that I would certainly appreciate that he would put on his top priority list.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I thank the member for the suggestions. I know he has good knowledge of his

community and Roseau River is a part of it and we did look at it together. At the time we looked at it, it was—the weather conditions weren't the greatest, as I recall. It was a grey, rainy kind of day and everything looked horrible, and the bridge didn't look so great and the river was still kind of high, and the community looked like it had been suffering physically.

So I've heard what the member's had to say. I would also encourage the member to attend the Estimates of the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation and raise his points there where senior officials in that department can maybe give him some direct response to whether that road is the appropriate alternative road in the case of a closure of Highway 75 and other issues that he's raised, because they may—they might benefit from that perspective in thinking through where they make future investments.

Mr. Graydon: I thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

On a different issue that you may or may not be aware of, there's the Roseau River where it enters Canada. They call—there was a diversion built in 1913 and it was called the Gardenton diversion, and it channels the Roseau River and restricts the flooding. It was built to facilitate drainage in the United States at that period, and again in 1975-1976, there were more drainage projects that were commissioned in the United States and were completed. There was supposed to be some mitigation work done on the Canadian side of the border, but that never did materialize unfortunately.

However, because the diversion was built at a time that we didn't have the luxury of the technologies that we have today, and they used whatever material was available at the time, there has been in the past some breakouts on this diversion and they've been basically on the south side, and they've been repaired—when they break out on the south side, they go into the community pasture. They spread out and they don't cause a great deal of suffering for the people in the area. However, the north side is very fragile and in places now you can't ride a four-wheeler down the top of the bank, it's so narrow. There was—and I have brought this up with MIT in the past and I've brought it up here in this House.

So, at any rate, they did a survey and they realized that if it broke out, there'd be two feet of

water on top of the highway at Vita, and so we—I give MIT credit, they made every effort to build a dike that would divert that water back into the old river channel and save Vita and the surrounding farmsteads from being inundated in water. However, they were only able to start the dike and the weather conditions got so bad that they couldn't continue to work; the frost was out. They put up an aqueduct—aqua dike, and they brought people from all over the province to put this up. It was an emergency and they did an extremely good job. The Gardenton diversion did hold; it has held right now. I have some pictures in my office that shows that it's very, very fragile, but it did hold. Thank goodness for that.

To take this dike down, they're hundred-foot sections; they're two and a half miles. So you'll end up with 130 pieces that have to be taken down. Each piece is going to take two hours for four people to take it down and to pack it away. It's going to be a lot of man-hours. There's not going to be an emergency now. So probably there won't be overtime worked on it, but it'll still take a lot of man-hours to do this.

Mr. Minister, my question is, has there been any consideration of talking to some of the minimum security penal institutions that we have, like Milner Ridge, and using that type of labour to remove that aqua dike?

Mr. Selinger: The short answer is I'm not aware of that being considered at this stage. I know there was some participation of the inmates at Headingley in doing some sandbagging, but on site where there's security—and in Brandon as well.

But I'm not aware of any consideration for moving people outside of secured facilities to go into unsecured areas to do that type of work.

Mr. Graydon: I agree with the minister that it would be an unsecured area, but it's also a remote area. And would the minister then consider this, being that it is a remote area?

Mr. Selinger: I'll be honest with the member—I'm willing to get further advice on that. But my first reaction would be is I think it's unlikely that there would be that kind of an approach taken by putting people, even in a remote, unsecured area, where there could be the potential for a risk to public security, because the first obligation for anybody within our correctional system is to protect the

public. And I do actually have the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) here. I'm not sensing any enthusiasm on his part for this initiative at this stage of the game. He could review it with his officials, and I'd invite you to have a follow-up discussion with him.

But I think in cases like this, public security comes first in terms of—even if it is a remote area. And you're right. There's going to be some costs for taking down the resources that were put in place, and we have staff to do that, who know how to do it properly and protect the assets that have been used there—the aqua dams, I think, you're referring to—the big black ones which have been very successfully deployed this year. And I'm sure that we would probably want to take them down in such a way that they're reusable again in the future.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you for that. I'll await and see if the Minister of Justice gets back to me with a positive answer. I would think that the security that's at Milner Ridge, and because it's a minimum security, I believe that he would be able to find a workforce that he could work with in this type of an area.

I'll just ask one more question. There was a threat from a local producer or a local farmer at the time that wasn't happy with the diking that was going on and suggested that he might do some damage to the aqua dike. And so there was a 24-hour surveillance put on there by MIT, which was the right thing to do; there's certainly no question.

But, during the construction and during this 24-hour surveillances ongoing right now and especially right now, that if either one of the two people that are on surveillance—one is at each end of the aqua dike, if they need to use a bathroom, they have to abandon their spot and drive five miles to a bathroom. It's not the type of security that I think is needed, although I think the threat might have been a hollow threat, and one can't take that chance. But the fact that there are no portable johns on the site was a shock to me, and it's something that I will be bringing up with MIT, and I just thought that you might like to know that.

* (16:30)

Mr. Selinger: Yes, given the additional information the member's given to me, I'm going to flat out say, we're not going to consider putting low-security prisoners into even a remote area where there could be an additional security risk.

If the member wants to challenge my decision on that, I invite him to do that in writing, why he thinks his approach would be better. But I think the first obligation is to protect the public, and it sounds like we're doing that with respect to the threat on the existing Aqua Dams that are in that area. And so he should not expect any response from the Minister of Justice on that.

If he wants further consideration of moving prisoners outside of a secure facility to do any public works, I invite him to put that request to us in writing and then we'll—it'll be considered. But, failing that request in writing with a solid rationale behind that, we're not prepared to do that. We will dismantle that equipment in a way that protects the equipment and, at the same time, ensures that security issues in that area are attended to.

And if the member's saying that the security would be enhanced by having some portable facilities for people, for basic needs like that, we'll take that question as notice and, again, the member could approach the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) on that. But we've taken notice of that and I'll undertake to follow-up on that through my officials to see if there's any additional supports that could be offered for the security measures that are in place there.

Mr. Graydon: I want to thank the minister for that, and that's—that'll be my last question for today. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'd like to begin by asking the Premier the status of the negotiations with Vale in the mine in Thompson, in terms of what's going to happen in the future of the smelter and other developments at the site.

Mr. Selinger: Those discussions are occurring—there's a—as the member knows, there's a committee composed of local elected officials, the union, the provincial government, that have been working on this matter, and they've had discussions with the company in question about the future of that facility—those facilities. And I'd have to get an update on that for the member if he wants absolutely current information, but my understanding is that there's been several meetings and several options looked at for the future of that facility in that area, and the dialogue continues.

Mr. Gerrard: Since there's a threat of major job losses with the—as a result of the changes that Vale is proposing, what's the goal of the Premier in terms of, you know, what's the Premier trying to achieve in the negotiations?

Mr. Selinger: Well, we have said it's unacceptable to shut down those value-added processing facilities and lose those jobs. The company, at the time, stated that they thought that was the right economic decision for them to make, and the member will know that they made a commitment to build some alternative facilities in other locations in Canada. And they seem to have acquired some finance from the federal government to do that through the Export Development Corporation.

The member of Parliament for the area has raised those matters at the federal level in Parliament. We've raised our concerns directly with the company. The MLA for the area, and Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation, has raised those matters. Our Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak) has raised those matters. They've worked closely with locally elected officials and the union up there to make the case to the company about what could be done to preserve jobs in that area and continue to have a dynamic, value-added mining industry in the north.

Mr. Gerrard: I interpret the Premier's statement as that he's determined to keep the smelter opening and the value-added jobs going.

Mr. Selinger: We have said that we would prefer that, and we've made that very clear. The company, however, controls the assets.

Mr. Gerrard: Could the Premier talk about the—I think there's a development or a new potential mine at—I think it's Pipe Lake—along the highway between Wabowden and Thompson. Is that part of the discussions about what would happen there?

Mr. Selinger: Broadly, all the future opportunities for mining are able to be discussed as part of the discussions.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the Premier, you know, talk at all about, you know, what he sees as the potential in the Pipe Lake site?

Mr. Selinger: Well, according to the company, they think there's potential there. That's my understanding. I don't—I'm not privy to the specific geological information, but what we've heard is that they think there is potential for ongoing mining in that site, given some of the resources that they've discovered.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to move to a couple of questions on the one per cent transfer of the provincial sales tax to municipalities. Is this transfer based on population of a municipality or on the economic activity, the amount of sales tax generated in the municipality? What's the basis for the transfer to individual municipalities?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to check the specifics on that end of the formula. But broadly speaking, again, the commitment made in the budget was to transfer the equivalent of one per cent of the provincial sales tax to municipalities across Manitoba, which I understand is in the order of \$239 million, for infrastructure. There's additional resources made available to municipalities for maintenance, for operating expenditure, and other programming that they do. But this is intended for infrastructure, and the allocation of that is one that has historically had certain elements of it earmarked for specific types of projects, such as recreation projects for example, and in other cases it's been allocated without having it earmarked, for the discretion of the local municipality to use it.

And I think the member is going below that and asking on what basis, on a per citizen basis, is it a per capita transfer or is it on some of the basis of some other measure that's taken, or some other criteria, and I'll have to undertake to get the mix of criteria that are used for the member on the total transfer that's being proposed.

Mr. Gerrard: And what will be the status of the Northern Affairs communities with respect to this transfer?

Mr. Selinger: Again, you know, we make resources available to Northern Affairs for the challenges they have in terms of providing infrastructure, and the member will know that that budget has more than doubled since we've been in office and we have the ability to provide authority to them for a variety of infrastructure projects, whether it's water or sewer or roads, but the transfer we've talked about was

available to municipalities. The Department of Northern Affairs is a government department which we fund directly.

Mr. Gerrard: So I take it the Northern Affairs communities would not be eligible for the transfer?

An Honourable Member: I'll have to—I'll get information for the member on that but we make very significant commitments—

Madam Chairperson: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Martindale): The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, member for Burrows. Got that right for a change, as the member for St. Norbert leaves the room.

There is capital authority and capital resources made available to Northern Affairs communities over and above what is provided to municipalities for their specific needs.

Mr. Gerrard: I look forward to getting that information from the Premier in due course.

Question on the situation with Manitoba Hydro: I note for the last couple of years that the sales, the dollar amount of the sales outside of Manitoba, has been down and the results that the surplus of revenue over expenditures is much smaller than it was, say, eight or so years ago, and just wonder if the Premier can give us his view of what's happening here and what the long-run situation is going to be.

* (16:40)

Mr. Selinger: Well, I'm optimistic about the potential for further export sales for Manitoba Hydro, very optimistic, given some of the term sheets we've signed with our customers. And the sales fluctuate in terms of the value of those sales. There's certain long-term commitments that are entered into and there's also short-term sales that are made as well, and so the mix changes from year to year depending on how much power is available for sale. So I'd have to take a look at the long-term pattern there, but Manitoba Hydro is financially in,

probably, the best shape it's been in in more than 20 years, maybe 30 years, in terms of its debt-equity ratio, having achieved its target ahead of time, the 80-20 target, and also in terms of their retained earnings which, the last time I looked, were in the order of \$2.2 billion of retained earnings. So they've done well. They've been able to generate a surplus every year that has benefited the corporation.

But, in terms of the trend of those sales to customers outside of Manitoba, I'd have to get specific information and understand more thoroughly what that trend is. You're indicating to me it sounds like there's been a decline in export revenues. I think that's what you're hinting at and I'd—if you want to give me a reference on that, I'd be willing to follow up on that, but we'll take a look at that.

But, generally, I'm very optimistic about the future for export sales for Manitoba Hydro given some of the term sheets they've entered into and the growing demand for clean, affordable, and reliable energy in North America. There's a growing demand for power like that which, as the member knows, is part of the underlying discussion on where we route transmission facilities and whether or not we need converter stations. It's very clear to us that we need additional transmission capacity and we need additional converter station capacity and we need it in such a way that it doesn't tarnish the reputation of the product to the customers. So that it retains its reputation as a clean energy product.

Mr. Gerrard: In those revenues from outside of the province are a matter of record in the Manitoba Hydro reports and the Premier should be aware of the situation.

I note on the Manitoba Hydro website that when they talk about the Keeyask generating station, it says, if developed, and it sounds from the way that this is put on the Manitoba Hydro website that it's not a certainty. Could the Premier comment on this?

Mr. Selinger: Again, that relates to the term sheets being finalized as a contract for sale and then the subsequent necessity to build Keeyask. Again, I remain optimistic that there will be a go-forward position on developing Keeyask, and that will relate to further confirmation of the demand for the product by some of our export customers.

Mr. Gerrard: What would be the date that you might expect that there would be a confirmation that it's a go?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to undertake to get that information for the member. I don't have it with me.

Mr. Gerrard: I look forward to getting that in due course.

Can the Premier provide an update on the situation with the Devils Lake in the States and the agreement that I know that there has been some discussion about? What's the status of the agreement and what would be in the agreement?

Mr. Selinger: Well, as the member knows, Devils Lake has been filling up and getting higher, and it has no natural outlets and is causing considerable damage in the area where it's rising. And there has been probably in excess of a billion dollars spent in North Dakota to mitigate some of the impacts of rising Devils Lake. The concern Manitoba's always had is that there isn't a catastrophic, uncontrolled outflow there that would impact negatively water quality in the Red River and would flow into Manitoba.

And so the discussions are around how to manage that rising water there in a way that doesn't lead to a catastrophic overflow, particularly through the more polluted Tolna Coulee part of the east part of the lake—east end part of the lake. And the latest information I have is that the water is again rising this year, not a surprise, given how wet it is through the entire Red River basin. And there is growing concern about the potential for a catastrophic overflow. As a result of that, and even before this spring's events, the government of North Dakota has decided to proceed with an additional outlet towards the east end of the lake that would provide up to, I believe, subject to verification, 350 cubic-feet-a-second outflow, and with the kind of rock filter that they've got in place in the west-end outlet, and as part of that discussion, there's been some studies undertaken on water quality. And I believe it's—those studies have been undertaken under the, I believe it's the purview of the International Joint Commission, but certainly with federal input into it—federal government, United States federal government input into it—that are looking at whether there would be a negative impact from additional water from Devils Lake entering into the Red River water system. And those studies are—I believe those studies are coming to a conclusion, hopefully, this spring and we'll get some information about whether there is some serious negative consequences of additional water coming out of Devils Lake into the Red River system.

So that's one of the factors being considered. Other factors being considered are the management of nutrients in the Red River basin. This has impacts on Lake Winnipeg, for example, and also what sulphate levels would be and whether they would have negative impacts as well.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Gerrard: I'm a little bit puzzled about the Premier's suggestion that they're going to put an extra outlet at the east end because the east end of Devils Lake is the area—is the part which has got the higher salt concentrations, and as the Premier correctly pointed out, the existing one is on the west end and, partly for that reason, that it's got the cleaner water. But, you know, I look forward to hearing more because clearly, we don't want a catastrophic, sudden outflow because that would be quite dangerous, both for communities along the James River in the States, and potentially a big problem along the Red River Valley too.

Mr. Selinger: The member, I think, is correct that there is concern, both within North Dakota and outside of North Dakota, about further water coming out of Devils Lake and whether that water will be—the quality of that water, and whether it will have negative impacts on downstream communities. And so these are some of the questions that are being reviewed as they proceed with providing additional controlled drainage of water outside of Devils Lake.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the aspects of the budget last year was that he—when you took the budget for expenditures that was tabled last spring, and the latest estimate is that the government will be spending more than \$200 million over and above the estimated expenditure, I think the latest one was about \$242 million, if I'm not mistaken, I'm asking the Premier, you know, what is the expectation this year? Is the Premier figuring that there's going to be likely significant overexpenditure again this year?

Mr. Selinger: Well, one thing we do know is we're spending extra money on flood matters this year. And then the question is, what will be the level of recovery from the federal government under various programs, specifically under the Disaster Financial Assistance program? So we do have lots of pressures just in emergency management that are upon us at the moment.

Over and above that, we're very early in the new fiscal year, and just see what additional pressures there are, and to have an understanding whether—how the economy's doing and what revenues are being generated by the economy. But the budget is still not finally passed this year. We've gone through the original—the first two weeks of budget debate, we're now into Estimates, and that process continues. So all of those questions are questions that can be asked during the Estimates process, but the budget is tabled on reasonable assumptions of revenues and reasonable assumptions of expenditure. And then, like any budget, reality intrudes as you go along, and you deal with the challenges that reality provides. And the one challenge that we know we've got right now is additional costs for flood mitigation in this province.

* (16:50)

Mr. Gerrard: The budget contained about \$3 million for spring flood contingency fund. Is the Premier anticipating that that's going to be enough for—could it be significantly more than that?

Mr. Selinger: My understanding is is the money set aside for emergency measures, including spring flooding, is in the order of \$30 million. We know that we've probably spent—will probably spend in the order of \$70 million on the spring flood event and that there will be a recovery from the federal government. What's not entirely clear yet is what the level of recovery will be.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the concerns that I'm hearing from people around areas where there's flooding is that the flood is expected to be there for a prolonged period of time. And, clearly, under those circumstances, one of the people, or groups of people, who would be significantly affected were farmers and farmland. So what kind of plans has the Premier got in terms of addressing the situation with regard to farmers who are adversely affected by this?

Mr. Selinger: Well, as the member knows, under this government, we've put in place the excess moisture insurance feature in crop insurance, which will be a big benefit. That's the fundamental benefit that can support people when they're not able to have a crop as a result of excess moisture, which very likely could be the case this year for some producers. Over and above that, there is a—in the federal-provincial agreement there is an agri-recovery

program, but those programs are usually put forward on an annual basis specific to the circumstances that producers are facing.

Mr. Gerrard: One other aspect of the budget, I note that the coming year's budget that there's an anticipated transfer from the fiscal stabilization account of \$160 million. And that would rank as one of the larger draws on the fiscal stabilization account since the NDP government has been in power in '99. I wonder if the Premier would comment.

Mr. Selinger: Well, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was always put in place to provide a tool to deal with unforeseen circumstances in terms of the economy, in terms of other things that can impact on the finances of the Province. And we've maintained the Fiscal Stabilization Fund quite well throughout this—what's called the great recession. But we also said in our five-year recovery plan that we would use some of the resources in that fund to pay down the costs for some of the short-term deficits we're putting—that we've planned for in order to maintain front-line services in health care and education. And what I have noted so far is that in the first couple of years of that economic recovery we've done better than expected and, therefore, have had to run smaller deficits.

But, where we have put deficits in place, we've used some of the resources in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to pay for the costs of paying down debt, and that includes some of the deficits that have been incurred. So it's being, I think, appropriately used to manage our debt obligations in this province, and the member will know that in the budget we have debt and related payments this year of about \$438 million, which is, coincidentally, about equivalent to the deficit that we're projecting as well. So there's very significant resources in the budget to pay down amortization and interest on investments we've made in capital assets.

There's money being saved because of the way we've managed the pension liability for civil servants and teachers in Manitoba by funding more of the employers' obligations for that pension liability, and having pay-as-you-go contributions made for those obligations on behalf of the employers, for both teachers and civil servants. So our pension plans are in much stronger position than they have been heretofore when there was no pension payments made behalf of the employers. So we do have

long-term commitment to improving our infrastructure and appropriately financing that, and then when we—the discipline around each of those infrastructure investments is that the investment is amortized and paid for during the useful life of that asset. So, if it's a road, that road is paid off over the 20-year useful life of the road; if it's a building, it's paid off over the 40-year useful life of that building, and even some of those buildings continue to be in service longer than that.

These are accounting guidelines that we're following here to make sure that we have a discipline built in to how we use borrowing authority in this province to strengthen our economy and the institutions that provide services to people. So, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, we're fortunate, I believe it shows a draw that will leave about 500 million in the fund at the end of the current fiscal year. That's still a healthy liquidity to provide cash resources as required for potentially unforeseen circumstances that may come forward as we move forward.

Mr. Gerrard: I note that in the last two or three years that the summary net debt has been going up much faster than the actual deficit. I mean, for example, the deficit in core government operations projected for the two—2011-2012 estimate is that we'd have a core government deficit of, it shows \$464 million and a change in the net debt of \$1.56 billion. Is it the plan of the government to continue to borrow much more for building capital assets and other reasons in the coming years than has been the practice in the past?

Mr. Selinger: Well, we view borrowing authority as a tool to build the wealth of Manitobans. And so, when—if we borrow money to build hospitals, or schools, or roads, or water treatment plants or sewage treatment plants, those have to have a benefit to the public. And the borrowing authority has to be matched against the benefits to the public, and if the benefits aren't there, then often these projects are not proceeded with.

But, if a project shows a cost-benefit for the public, and we have \$37 billion of assets in terms of replacement value, and the summary net debt's in the order of \$14 billion, so we have way more assets than we have debt on them. So many of them are clear and unencumbered; many of those assets help grow the economy. The amount of money that we're committing to interest payments is about six cents on the dollar in the budget. It was over 13 cents on the

dollar when we came into office. And, when we came into office, the budget showed an expenditure on debt of about a billion dollars, and that was total debt payments of a billion dollars. This year it's in the order of around \$800 million, but much—only about \$256 million of that \$800 million is general purpose debt paid for through tax resources. The rest of that debt is paid off through Crown corporation rates. It's self-supporting debt that's paid for by the entities that have used that money to build their businesses. And so, you know, it's the fourth best debt-to-GDP ratio in the country. It's one that has come down from about 33 per cent of our GDP to about 25 per cent of our GDP. It was actually lower, and we'd taken it lower a few years ago, but with the recession we've made prudent decision to continue to stimulate the economy and build assets.

I was just up in The Pas this morning and saw the opening of a brand-new school in Opaskwayak Cree Nation through federal resources that built that school. But the idea was similar, that we invested in these public assets during a time of recession in order that we can come out of the recession stronger, better educated citizens, better roads, better hospitals and

schools. And so we've done that, and as we move forward, we'll bring the budget back into balance and continue to grow the economy in Manitoba, which is now projected to be a \$56-billion economy this year.

Madam Chairperson: A very short question, honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: For international students, are they part of the freeze at the level of rate of inflation? And if so, how is that going to be structured with the universities to enforce it?

Mr. Selinger: I don't believe the international student tuition fees are covered under that interest—the inflation rate cap. But students—international students—that decide to live in and work in Manitoba are eligible for the graduate tuition tax rebate program, which covers up to 60 per cent of their tuition costs if they live or work in the province.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee. This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess and will reconvene tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 28, 2011

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