

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
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CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
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PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
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ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
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SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

I have no guests to introduce at the current moment and so we'll proceed with—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Provincial Revenues

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The NDP sought re-election on the major promise that they would not raise taxes and weeks later brought in the biggest tax hikes in a quarter of a century; this we know is fact.

Now, those broken-promise tax hikes are having a destructive effect on the Manitoba economy; this we know is fact as well. Inflation is the highest in Canada here. Wage increases are the lowest in Canada here. But while Manitoba families struggle with less, the NDP government seems to still want more.

Even without the proposed PST hike, government revenues are projected to rise by 13 per cent prior to the next election, and that is higher than eight other provinces. And with the PST hike included, the NDP raise will actually be the highest of all Canadian provinces.

So I have to ask the Premier: Why would he need the PST hike? Surely enough is enough.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is true that we've lowered small-business taxes to zero, the lowest in the country. It is also true that we've eliminated the capital tax for all businesses in Manitoba. For families, they're paying on average \$2,100 less a year for auto insurance, electricity and home heating, and we've increased the personal exemptions for families yet again, for individuals, spouses and dependants. So all independent verifications demonstrate that Manitoba has retained—remained its high ranking as one of the

most affordable places in Canada to live. We will continue to do that.

We will continue to provide consumer protection, but we will also continue to provide teachers in schools instead of cutting them like the member opposite was proposing to do, nurses in hospitals such as—cutting them like the members opposite were proposing to do, like taking two thirds of the new schools and all the new capital we're building, like Sage Creek school, and cutting it like the members opposite were proposing to do.

We're taking a balanced approach, educating our young people, providing them with proper schools and keeping Manitoba affordable.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier knew that taxes were far too high when he ran in the last election. That's why he promised not to raise them, but then he raised them and now we're battling with Québec for the highest in most categories.

And the fact is these tax hikes that he made last year are already damaging the Manitoba economy. By raising taxes and fees on essential items like gas and wine and beer and benefits and home insurance and car registration, what the government has done is increased its revenues, but it's done that by decreasing Manitobans' discretionary incomes.

Manitobans are losing purchasing power, but the NDP gets a 13 per cent raise even without the PST, and still they want more. Now they want a higher PST when our present rate's already higher than North Dakota, than Saskatchewan, than Minnesota.

Isn't 13 per cent enough? Why increase the PST as well? Who gets a 13 per cent raise around here? When the NDP negotiates with its workers next year, how will the government's tax hikes impact on the salaries? Can workers expect a 13 per cent raise next year?

Mr. Selinger: Just a little fact to enlighten the member opposite. The personal disposable income is projected to go up by 3.8 per cent above the Canadian average. Housing sales have been among the strongest in the country, new builds and residential construction among the strongest in the country, retail auto sales among the strongest in the country, unemployment rate third lowest in the

country. Manitobans are seeing the economy grow at a time when it's flagging around the world and there's a great deal of economic uncertainty.

But to ensure that we are maintaining affordability, we are ensuring things like increasing the personal exemptions. We are ensuring that their bundle of essential services like heating and electricity are the lowest in Canada and their auto insurance rates are among the lowest in North America.

Those are measures we're taking to ensure Manitobans have an affordable life, but a job; the members opposite would cut their employment. They would lay off teachers. They would lay off nurses. They would lay off correction workers. They would cancel highways projects that build infrastructure. They have no provision to put money in place for flood protection for vulnerable communities—

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

Mr. Pallister: When we recess, the Premier won't need to visit Disney World, he lives in Fantasyland, Mr. Speaker. He makes up things every day in this House.

Seniors and working families and middle- and low-income families in this province are struggling. And they're struggling with higher taxes that were—that they were promised by this government they would not have to pay. And they're struggling with lower purchasing power because inflation is leading the country under this government's mismanagement.

But one group seems to be doing exceptionally well, NDP MLAs. Average wage growth in this province for working people was zero last year, Mr. Speaker, the lowest in the country, but NDP MLAs got a \$5,000 raise, and Cabinet ministers another seven to total \$12,000 increase in their compensation.

And the NDP government got a hundreds of millions of dollars of additional revenue from Manitobans and it's still not enough—it's still not enough. Only over there is a 13 per cent raise not enough. They want a PST hike too. They want \$300 million more from working Manitobans.

Will the Premier realize that he has a spending problem? Will he finally say enough is enough, or will he just admit that when it comes to spending other people's money his appetite is insatiable?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this is the member of—the honourable member of the Legislature that put out an article in his local newspaper demanding more infrastructure spending in his constituency. But at the same time as he's demanding more infrastructure spending, he's not supporting the new Waverley school that we've announced and we're prepared to build. He considers that superfluous.

He's—considers it unnecessary at the same time as he wants to cut teachers, at the same time as he wants to cut nurses, at the same time as he wants to cut people that work in hospitals, other health care professionals. All of those people, from his perspective, don't deserve to have a job, Mr. Speaker, because across-the-board indiscriminate cuts is his formula for everything—tough love, the big chill.

It may be the 30th anniversary of The Big Chill, but the film was good; his policies are bad.

PST Increase Infrastructure Spending

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): What the members on this side of the House want to cut is the number of NDP spinners that are out there and the vote tax. That's what we want to cut.

Mr. Speaker, when this NDP government broke their promise and forced the illegal PST hike on Manitobans, they guaranteed that the money would be used to fund Manitoba's critical infrastructure needs, including flood protection, municipal roads, provincial highways, new schools and better health centres.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us today: What definition of critical infrastructure is he and his Premier using today?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): In an effort to help the member for Charleswood to be accurate, what her leader has said he would cut is the Sage Creek school, Mr. Speaker. It's the Amber Trails school. It's the Waverley West school. It's the expanded doctor training and recruitment in rural and northern parts of our province. It's the Cancer QuickCare Clinic. It's \$622 million for roads and bridges in this—that's what they said they would cut.

They shouldn't try to candy coat that. He said it. It's in black and white. It's here. It's his record, and he should take responsibility for it.

Mrs. Driedger: What we're hearing is desperate spin from a desperate minister.

Mr. Speaker, this government guaranteed that the illegal PST hike would be used for desperately needed critical infrastructure.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us how painting a mural on a building fits the definition of critical infrastructure.

* (13:40)

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear that what's critical in terms of infrastructure is flood proofing and flood mitigation and protecting families, protecting businesses, protecting farmers from the ravages that we've seen in terms of floods. That's our commitment. I don't see the commitment opposite on that.

We've said that we would invest in schools, take the 1 cent on the dollar, invest in public schools in Manitoba, not cut public schools like her own leader has said he is going to do. We've said we'd take that 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase and we would dedicate it to building hospitals in this province, not cutting hospitals like her own leader said he would do.

I'll take our record on this any—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Well, one thing is clear, Mr. Speaker, is that this minister is not clear nor is he transparent with what they are committed to spend.

The NDP guaranteed that the PST hike would be used for desperately needed critical infrastructure.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us how garden benches and greenery around a pond fits into the definition of critical infrastructure. Or maybe a better definition would be slush fund to buy votes in the next election. Is that the definition?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, her envy is quite obvious.

We've taken the difficult decision to increase by 1 cent on the dollar the PST, and we have made the commitment that we're going to dedicate that money to critical infrastructure, roads and bridges and schools and hospitals. We've said we're going to be very transparent, and it's right there in Bill 20. We will stand in this Legislature and we will report to members opposite and to Manitobans exactly where that money is headed, exactly the benefits that those investments have produced.

This is good for Manitoba families. It's good for our economy. The members opposite have missed the boat on this one.

ER Service Improvement Plan Critical Incident Review Committee

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, details from the critical incident review committee's final report into the death of Brian Sinclair show there was no reassessment nurse on duty the night that Brian Sinclair died because that role got reassigned to other duties, even though the reassessment nurse role was one of the 49 recommendations of the Emergency Care Task Force in 2004.

Yesterday, this Minister of Health said that her primary concern is ensuring like—an incident like Brian Sinclair does not happen again, but the critical incident review committee on Brian Sinclair says that when an ER role is unfilled for any reason there seems to be no plan for how that absence is managed.

My question for the minister: Would she agree with the ER nurse who said this week that the conditions are right for another Brian Sinclair incident to occur?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I would begin by saying, as I have said from the outset, that what happened to Mr. Sinclair was a tragedy. It was a preventable death, Mr. Speaker, and the WRHA and others involved in the death of Brian Sinclair have said publicly that they take responsibility and they want to do everything that they can to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there were a number of reviews done in the aftermath of Mr. Sinclair's death. There were measures taken in the days after his death, in weeks after his death and in the months after his death, including recommendations from the critical incident review, the admin review.

And if there are more recommendations from the inquest, which we expect, you can bet that those will be followed on too.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister says that measures were taken, but today CBC News is reporting another individual like Brian Sinclair forced to wait hours for care at a Winnipeg ER just a few weeks ago. Now, this individual waited for seven hours while his condition deteriorated and his symptoms intensified. Article uses words like toxic

culture, chaos, chronically overworked to describe the ER.

So there's a clear disconnect between this minister's assurances that she gives and the stark reality of incident after incident after incident that comes to light.

If the recommendations of the emergency task force were successfully implemented, this individual would not have had to wait seven hours for care. Agree or disagree?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member yesterday, we know that Winnipeg ERs use national standards for emergency room triage and reassessment issued by the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, called Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale, or CTAS. We know that the national standards are used to triage patients and ensure that the sickest individuals are seen first. And this is done, and I'm quoting from the protocol, to ensure that a patient's need for care is reassessed while in the emergency department.

Most ERs across the country have their triage nurses fulfilling this role. In Winnipeg ERs, indeed, we have hired additional nurses specifically dedicated to reassessment to work on improving care wherever possible.

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

Mr. Friesen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister says that the recommendations from the review—the critical incident review of Brian Sinclair have been implemented.

But according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, implement means to carry out or fulfill something, accomplish especially to ensure actual fulfillment by concrete measures. Five years after Brian Sinclair, this minister is hooked on semantics. She tells Manitobans she has implemented recommendations, but they are not in place.

Will the minister admit today that the evidence shows that she broke her promise to Manitobans and failed to improve ER services?

Ms. Oswald: The member is incorrect. As I said a moment ago, according to CTAS standards, triage nurses across the country conduct the reassessment role. In Winnipeg, after the tragic death of Brian Sinclair and through recommendations from the Emergency Care Task Force, additional nurses have been hired into our ERs to do that reassessment task.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if, indeed, there is a traumatic situation—three critical patients from a car accident, for example—these nurses may be temporarily reassigned to deal with that trauma, but at that time the existing triage nurses carry out that reassessment role.

Will there be more work for us all to do in health care? Always. Are we ahead of the game in terms of hiring in our ERs? We absolutely are.

ER Service Sustainability Prairie Mountain Health

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): A recent FIPPA information request indicates there are now 19 emergency rooms closed in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, a memo from the Prairie Mountain Health region dated May 22nd indicated that there is significant concern regarding the sustainability of services along No. 3 Highway due to physician vacancies. In the course of this session, we have been warning the minister about the deteriorating situation along Highway No. 3. The minister has known since the spring that the situation in the area is only going to get worse. Communities along No. 3 now face a 1 in 3 emergency on call.

Why has the minister allowed this deterioration in emergency care in this region?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As I have said to the member opposite in past, we know that recruiting emergency physicians to rural and remote environments, not only here in Manitoba but across Canada, is very challenging.

We know that the Prairie Mountain regional health centre has developed a plan in partnership with communities to keep as many of these ERs open with on-call rotation as possible. Yes, they are actively recruiting, Mr. Speaker, more doctors to the region.

We have seen a net increase in doctors to Manitoba every year since taking office, a total of 562 net new. That's over 120 in rural Manitoba.

Yes, there's more work to do, but a net gain is far better than a net loss as was the case under members opposite.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, 14 years later and the situation gets worse.

We've had 19 ERs closed and many others on limited service. For example, the communities of Killarney, Boissevain and Deloraine now rotate

emergency care. People in the region have been directed to call their local hospital to find out which ER is open. Many residents now face an hour drive to find an open emergency room. Clearly, residents of the region are concerned with this newer lower standard of care.

Is this the new standard of emergency health care that Manitobans can expect from now on?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I say to the members opposite that at no time would I suggest to the member that recruiting to rural and remote environments isn't a challenge. It is for sure a challenge not only here in Manitoba but, indeed, in every jurisdiction in the nation.

We know that other jurisdictions have made the decision to close their rural hospitals outright in order to not have to deal with this issue. This is not the decision that we have taken, but it is a great challenge.

We do know that the Prairie Mountain Health centre has met with council members in Killarney and Boissevain. They've met with councils in other communities, including Deloraine and Melita.

We know they continue to focus on recruitment. They have hired six graduates from medical schools in Manitoba and Canada in the last year, but, yes, there's more work to do.

* (13:50)

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Prairie Mountain Health region has at least 30 physician vacancies. These vacancies are clearly putting people's lives at risk. People are forced to travel great distances in search of an open ER. Communities such as Killarney are forced to recruit doctors and cover the related costs and expenses. The availability of emergency care continues to decline.

When will the minister deliver a realistic plan to fix ER care in rural Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I will say to the member that we do work with the communities and councils in-working in partnership to recruit doctors. The regional health authority does that as well.

There have been, Mr. Speaker, suggestions from some communities that a good solution would be to close some of the facilities in order to provide care in other facilities. We have not taken that decision.

It is challenging when there are more rural environments, but we know that families want to

have care close to home, and we're going to continue to work with our regional health authorities and, in addition, continue to augment EMS through more highly trained paramedics and, of course, the inclusion of the STARS helicopter.

Municipal Amalgamation Request to Withdraw Bill 33

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Last night was the first night for public committee hearings into Bill 33, the forced amalgamation bill, decreed by the NDP. Mr. Speaker, 79 written submissions, 39 oral presentations were all unanimous in their call to withdraw Bill 33 and start over with meaningful consultation with Manitoba municipalities.

Now, will the minister heed these presentations and pull Bill 33?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I thank my critic for the question.

No, the bill is not going to be removed in any way. And, Mr. Speaker, we have enough flexibility built into this legislation to address a number of concerns. In fact, Dunnottar, Victoria Beach, Winnipeg Beach were intending on bringing forward some amendments with regard to taking a look at these unique communities, and we've shown the flexibility by listening to people.

We-[interjection] You know, we hear a lot of yapping on the other side, but, quite frankly, when I gave them the opportunity—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have cautioned members of the House before, and I'm going to caution the honourable Minister of Local Government. I've said many times I want this to be a respectful workplace, and the words that he just chose were in—clearly, in my view, disrespectful. And I'm going to ask him to withdraw those words targeted towards another member of the Assembly, please.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I apologize for using that language, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: All right. The honourable Minister of Local Government, to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you.

The point I was trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that members opposite are very much like Doug Dobrowolski in the AMM. We've consulted with them; we've talked to them. But members opposite feel like three amalgamations over the last

hundred years, when a buggy carried grain across Manitoba and those—that's when the boundaries were determined. Things change in a hundred years.

But members opposite are a do-nothing party: no hydro dams, no hospitals, no schools, no teachers, no nurses and no amalgamations, no vision whatsoever.

Mr. Pedersen: And the minister wonders why there's no respect from the municipalities for him.

Mr. Speaker, 118 to zero, and, if I can quote the minister, that's none, nada, squat, nothing in support of this bill. Last night, on the first night of public hearings, we listened to presenters 'til 1 a.m. The minister couldn't even wave his magic wand and come up with even one presenter to support his draconian bill.

At what point—just what does it take for this minister to finally concede that Bill 33 is fundamentally wrong, pull the bill, start over with respectful consultations with all municipalities?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Mr. Speaker, no, there is no magic wand—no magic wand. And sometimes it takes some leadership and some courage in this province to actually move things forward and do things. It's not going to take a lot of tough love and sprinkling of pixie dust to get things done in this province. It takes a government to stand up.

Yes, there are hard decisions to be made. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has done so with regard to the 1 per cent PST. We hear requests from the members opposite all the time how they want bridges and roads and hospitals and recreation centres in their backyard. But there is only one government, and there is only one way to do it, quite frankly, and it takes some leadership. It takes some leadership to do these things, as it does with moving Manitoba ahead with regard to amalgamations.

We've listened to Manitobans, we respect their opinion, and we're going to move ahead with amalgamations.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, there's a difference between dictatorship and leadership.

And at the presentations last night, voluntary amalgamations can work. That was a common theme. Voluntary amalgamations can work, and it was a common theme throughout many of those presentations.

Yet this minister and this NDP government have decreed that they know better. They refuse to listen.

They're going to enforce forced amalgamations on local governments.

So when will this minister finally pull out the earplugs, start listening to the majority, pull Bill 33 and begin rebuilding the working relationships that he personally has destroyed with Manitoba's municipalities?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, it's absolute nonsense. The working relationship we have, not only with AMM. We worked on many files together and we'll continue to do so. On the Building Canada Fund, we worked closely on negotiating and working closely with the needs of municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, we respect the views of Manitobans coming to Manitoba—to their Legislature in a unique process in Canada to give their opinions on any piece of legislation they wish. We're not only listening to them, we're hearing them. We're showing that flexibility in the legislation we've got. We're prepared to move on some amendments.

We asked members opposite for some input, and the only thing they had to say was that we don't want to do anything. And that's been their approach since 1999, a do-nothing party, a government—or an opposition wanting to be government that—

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

Municipal Amalgamation Government Intention

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): What is absolute nonsense is the reply by that minister.

The community of Plum Coulee is a growing community and has a strong municipal government. They're democratically elected to serve the people and do so honourably. This involves listening to their constituents, something this government does not do.

The Minister of Local Government has introduced legislation, and though he says he will listen to municipal governments, he does the opposite. There's no consultation.

Mr. Speaker, if there's no cost savings for the municipalities and municipal governments, why are they being forced to amalgamate?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): You know, we've worked closely. The member opposite said there's no consultation. We've travelled Manitoba with AMM to the mayors and reeves meetings, also to the regional meetings,

not only on the Building Canada Fund but on amalgamation and other issues, listened to hundreds of municipal leaders, and we've told them we want to listen to them, including the committee hearings last night and tonight and possibly even tomorrow.

We will continue to listen to Manitobans. We respect their opinion. We respect the leadership that have been elected in these communities, and we'll continue to do so. Every minister on this side, every MLA on this side have listened to their constituents and members of the public on many different issues. This government is consultative. We want to speak and listen to people and we'll continue to do so.

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

Mr. Graydon: Again, what we got was nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Plum Coulee has just finished a municipal development plan, along with Gretna, Altona and the RM of Rhineland, and got an award of an 'elexen'—excellence for this plan, and now they're being called dysfunctional. The community has also worked on a plan to annex some land for a new subdivision, and now they're being called insolent children. Their community identity, their heritage and their personality is being threatened by this minister, all to satisfy his own arrogance.

Mr. Speaker, if there's no cost savings to the municipal governments, why are they being forced to amalgamate?

Mr. Lemieux: Now, we've talked often about the efficiencies that are needed within the municipalities. We've heard that from municipal leadership themselves, and we know that any savings that are going to take place, Mr. Speaker, we—and the intention is, of course, that those dollars will be put back into services for their citizens and for the taxpayers and the ratepayers in those areas. And we've made that clear right from the very beginning, and so any efficiencies that are found, economies of scale, we know that those dollars are going to go back to providing better services, which Manitobans deserve, quite frankly.

* (14:00)

So for years and years, Mr. Speaker, depopulations happen, regrettably, and many of these municipalities have reached their peak in population 70 years ago and they've been declining ever since. We've been working very hard on rural economic

development to help—help these communities. We just see this as another piece in the puzzle to help these communities, you know, reach their true potential.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about bringing forward amendments. He could have done that before the hearings and saved a lot of people a lot of mileage.

Respect is a word that this NDP government doesn't understand. Democracy is a word that we talk about a lot, but it's one that the NDP throws out the window.

The minister insisted he wanted to listen, to work with municipalities and work with their objections. These municipalities have been called insolent children; they've been called dysfunctional; they've been called howling coyotes because they want this minister to understand that he is wrong and that he is arrogant.

Mr. Speaker, there are no cost savings to the municipalities, to any of the local governments. Why are they being forced to amalgamate?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the convoluted logic of the member opposite says, listen and—listen—listen to people, and then on the other hand, he says, no, don't listen to people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we are listening to Manitobans. That's why the committee process exists to listen to legislation. It's not a waste of time, as members opposite seem to point to, why bring in amendments. We waited to hear not only from members opposite with regard to amendments and making the better—this legislation better, but we're listening to Manitobans. We listened to many presentations last night from Dunnottar, from Victoria Beach and other communities on how we can make the legislation better.

Is it perfect? No, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly not perfect, but we're going to do the best job we can to work with municipalities, consult with them and continue to work into the future with them. Thank you.

ER Services

Respect for Diversity

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there are continuing concerns over the lack of sufficient change in Manitoba's emergency rooms since Brian Sinclair died.

Today, CBC has exposed concerns that very unfortunate forms of discrimination have existed in our emergency rooms. Common use of terms like not bed-worthy may be fading, but in critical matters of emergency health care, any delay in care or treatment resulting from discrimination can result in death.

What assurances can the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) provide to all Manitobans that the ugly emergency room culture described by the CBC has changed to treat all people with equal respect, dignity and access to treatment?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

Use of those terms that he's put on the record are completely unacceptable. We do not in any way endorse them. We actually think they're very inappropriate.

This is part of the culture we're trying to create in Manitoba, not only with Bill 18 but across all of our schools and institutions and public institutions, that all people should be treated with respect, that diversity should be respected.

This is part of the professional training that's being offered to nurses and other health-care professionals who work in a variety of institutions across Manitoba. They do get professional development. Professional development does focus on not only the technical parts of doing their job but the human relations part of doing their job and the respect for diversity and the respect for human rights. These are fundamental things that need to be done in all jurisdictions here in Manitoba.

The member will know that we've amended the human rights act to address issues of social differences in Manitoba. That legislation gives a wider ambit to consider any concerns.

But the most important thing to do is to do the training and to help people understand the conditions that people come into the emergency rooms with, their history, their background, their culture, their language, and with that kind of knowledge, they can be more helpful and more empowering of those patients to meet their needs.

Minister of Health Resignation Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for seven years the Minister of Health has said that she's been improving our emergency rooms. And yet today CBC tells us a story of Rob Courchene, an

Aboriginal amputee in a wheelchair with a bladder infection, who had to wait seven hours in order to be catheterized.

Five years after Brian Sinclair and only just a few weeks ago, Mr. Courchene's story sounds far too similar to that of Mr. Sinclair. Mr. Courchene grew sicker and sicker before he finally got attention.

The Premier has, time and time again, failed to act. I ask the Premier: When will he ask his Minister of Health to resign and replace her with a minister who can make sure our emergency rooms are working properly?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, any incident such as the member described is obviously something nobody in this House wants to happen to any patient coming into our system, which is why we, in the very early days, made very significant investments in emergency rooms all across Manitoba to improve their capacity, which is why we put extra resources in place for emergency room physicians, which is why we put extra resources in place for triage nurses to do assessments and to do follow-ups on that. All of these things have been done to improve emergency room operation.

In addition, to take pressure off emergency rooms, we've innovated with QuickCare clinics around Manitoba so the people that have non-absolutely urgent needs can go and get a service on an extended-hour basis throughout the province of Manitoba.

So QuickCare clinics, better training, more support for emergency rooms, these have all been measures we've taken.

Is it perfect? No, it is not, and, unfortunately, some incidents happen. But where they happen, they're investigated, solutions are looked for, corrective measures are taken and the system acknowledges responsibility and addresses those concerns so that they can't happen again. And this is the kind of culture we want to create, a culture of accountability, responsibility and constant change to improve the quality of service in our—

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, when I called for the Minister of Health's resignation yesterday, her smug response was, and I quote: "That was cheerful."

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes. I know that you have been cautioning us in maintaining a respectful environment in this Chamber. I know earlier this session you cautioned us on that. I would ask you to share that caution with the member for River Heights.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Government House Leader, I listened very carefully, as I always do, to both the questions and the answers and the debate in this Chamber.

I must say that the word that was chosen by the honourable member for River Heights causes me some concern. Perhaps it is not an unparliamentary word, but I think we've all agreed that we're making some significant progress here with respect to respectful language, and the word that was chosen by the honourable member for River Heights was very close to that line.

And so I'm asking and I'm cautioning him—and, in fact, all members of the House—when you're rising on a question or on a response to it or as a part of your speeches here, please pick and choose your words very carefully because it can inflame the situation here, and I'm sure members don't want to have any degradation of decorum in this Chamber, because we've made some very significant progress here. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, the honourable member for River Heights, to continue with his question.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, family members of Brian Sinclair and others who've had problems in the emergency rooms deserve better than comments like a petty joke. Manitobans have been patient with this government. We have waited not 34 hours but 14 years for the improvements we should have to our emergency rooms, and they are still not where they need to be.

When will the Premier replace this minister with someone who can do the job and get our emergency rooms working properly?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, not only have there been additional resources put into emergency rooms in terms of triage nurses, in terms of a patient advocate,

in terms of the availability of interpreter services and additional support to attract and train and have ER physicians available on a regular basis—seven days a week in many cases—but the WRHA takes their responsibilities very seriously and we are very supportive of them.

This Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) is considered one of the best ministers of Health in the country. Practices—the practices we have put in place have been copied in other jurisdictions in Canada. They've come to us to learn from them.

We have never said they're perfect. We do not like to see any of these incidents occur, but where they occur we do everything we can to ensure that they do not occur again, and that is exactly the culture we need. We need a culture of constant learning and accountability to ensure these don't—things don't happen again.

And it starts with the quality of professional training and ongoing professional development that we have for all the people that work in these systems. Many of them work under high degrees of stress. They work shift work. They work with very challenging situations coming into their door. They need the support. They need the respect necessary to ensure that they can do that work.

And I can tell you the across-the-board cuts the members opposite were proposing would not make any of these situations better, only worse.

*(14:10)

Polar Bear Denning Areas Federal-Provincial Agreement

Mr. Clarence Petterson (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, polar bears are an international symbol of Canada and Manitoba's North.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is working towards more environmental protection, better tourism management and enhanced research opportunities for one of the world's largest polar bear denning areas.

Can the minister inform the House of the memorandum of understanding recently signed with the federal government on this important environmental issue?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I'll thank the member for the question and the interest.

Yesterday we were able to announce with the federal government that a memorandum of

understanding has been concluded between Parks Canada and Conservation and Water Stewardship that will allow and formalize and build on past work to ensure that we share research, that we share monitoring, that we have common approaches in terms of protocols in dealing with polar bears, for one, and, as well, that we share facilities and, indeed, that we have compatible approaches when it comes to tourism licensing.

But I think yesterday—the announcement yesterday was a great example of federal-provincial co-operation for both wiser spending and environmental protection.

Keeyask Community Centre Project Update

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

Mr. Speaker, today is the 6th 'weekiversary' of the TCN Keeyask Centre ground baking—breaking ceremony announcement by the honourable Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, the NDP member for Kildonan. In fact, it was August the 6th the NDP member for Kildonan promised a sod-turning for the Keeyask Centre in two weeks, or on August 27th.

In fact, I table this map for the minister's photo album of shame, and in it it says, proposed site for new Keeyask building.

Now that we've tabled the map, perhaps the minister could direct someone—whoever he gave the \$7 million to—that it's time that they do the sod-turning and build the TCN—the Keeyask Centre, which he committed to more than several years ago.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the member on many occasions, the responsibility for the building of that centre is that of the community, who've decided—who make the decision in terms of the contractor and the date. And he could easily phone the chief; I've provided him the chief's card, the chief's number. He could come to my office, phone the chief.

I think they've got arrangements made for that, and I'm happy to provide him with that information since it's their responsibility.

Mr. Schuler: The issue is, Mr. Speaker, that not just hydro ratepayers but also families and members of the TCN First Nation believe that they have a right to have some accountability for \$7 million which was given towards a community centre, something that

was supposed to host programming and take care of issues within the community.

The minister, six weeks ago—today is the 6th 'weekiversary'—he got up and said, in two weeks' time there will be a sod-turning ceremony, on the record, in Hansard.

I would like to ask the minister: Why, again—over and over and over again—does he break his word? What happened to the \$7 million? Where is the Keeyask Centre? Why won't he be accountable?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as indicated to the member, it's the responsibility of that community to set the date and time and establishment of that for the contract. It's also a community, the member ought to know—I know he probably doesn't know that that community was actually evacuated because of fire.

But, Mr. Speaker—and it—and, you know, the—it is interesting. I'm looking at the fact that, you know, the member might be surprised to know that we're actually paying less on a monthly basis for our hydro in Manitoba than we did in 1994. In 1994 we were paying \$80 a month and now we're paying \$69 a month.

So not only are we building hydro for the future, providing services to First Nations, providing jobs, providing clean energy, but our hydro rates—if the member would look in the annual report on the front pages—our annual rate, we're actually paying less, inflation-adjusted, in 2013 for hydro on a monthly basis than we did—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

Now time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Suicide Prevention Day

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day. It is an important time to stand up and advocate against mental health stigmas and promote suicide prevention initiatives. And, in fact, the Canadian theme for 2013 of Hope and Resiliency at Home and Work builds on the international one of Stigma: A Major Barrier to Suicide Prevention.

As we know, families play an important role in our lives and provide crucial support at times when it is needed most. Workplaces, too, can provide

support, and when combined with families, there is enormous potential to promote people's growth, wellness and resiliency.

The Hope and Resiliency campaign works to develop and foster the capacity of families and workplaces to support mental, physical and spiritual wellness. Families and workplaces play critical roles in helping individuals develop the skills and abilities they need to cope with the unavoidable stresses and life challenges that can occur at any time.

Hope and Resiliency campaign aims to give tools to families and employees to start the conversation about mental health, develop awareness about mental health issues and how we can all help protect and care for each other in times of crisis.

On this World Suicide Prevention Day, communities all across Canada will be helping individuals, families and workplaces join in conversations which promote and provide hope and the capacity to cope at home and in the workplace. Makes me very proud to know that Manitobans will be taking part in such initiatives as being held in Brandon and Winnipeg. And at a time when Bill 18 committee continues every night and presenter after presenter continue to show painful stories about being marginalized and targeted and being isolated because of physical appearance, academic performance, ethnicity and disability, it's more important than ever to recognize that we must focus our efforts to provide reassurances and send a message that there is always hope in the midst of pain.

Mr. Speaker, we must help bring about suicide prevention. It is an issue that touches the lives of all Manitobans, and I ask all honourable members to recognize the importance of such initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1960s Brandon Girls

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, women from across Canada are arriving in Brandon this month for the Ultimate Gathering of 1960s Brandon Girlfriends. Since the first 1960s Brandon girls reunion took place in 2003, every few years women who were teenagers in Brandon during the 1960s have been getting together to share memories and renew lifelong friendships.

From September 20th to 22nd, around a hundred women who came of age during the 1960s will be celebrating at the Victoria Inn. This year's gathering

of girlfriends is the fourth so far. Participants will get together for a weekend that Donna Hogeland, event organizer, describes as the ultimate 1960s pajama party. Donna came up with the idea after a big gathering to celebrate her 40th birthday and has organized each Brandon girls reunion since.

Staying true to its 1960s history, the gathering is for girls only, no boys allowed. The Brandon girlfriends will be singing school songs from their respective high schools, squaring off in 1960s-themed dance contests and having a hootenanny Saturday afternoon where they'll perform folk and protest songs from that era.

This year's fundraiser is titled From Sockhop to Sock It To Me. On behalf of the Westman Women's Shelter, each—every woman attending the Brandon Girlfriends Reunion will bring a pair of new socks and a donation for the shelter. This mindfulness of others shows that the Brandon girlfriends reunion is not just about rekindled connections with other women who share teenager memories and experiences. Through this event, the girlfriends are also extending a hand outside of their immediate community to help women of the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, this is a special idea put forward by the women of Brandon in the Westman region. I'd like to congratulate the organizers and participants on an excellent event and wish them the very best for a great reunion later this month.

Thank you.

St. Malo Warriors Hall of Fame

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, hockey is a staple of small-town life in Manitoba. Local legends take to the ice every weekend in their communities, hoping to defeat their small-town rivals. Every so often teams come along that break records, win championships and make their communities electric with excitement.

In 1972-73, St. Malo Warriors were that team. The Warriors walked through the regular season with 18 straight victories and eight more victories in the playoffs, clinching the league crown with a remarkable 26 straight victories. Without an arena to call their own at the time, the team played all of their games in a rink in St. Pierre, and the fans followed them down the highway, and what—wherever they went a dedicated fan base followed them.

The team was led by a pair of 16-year-old stars, Rich Gosselin and Art Coulombe. Coulombe had a

remarkable hundred points in 18 games, averaging nearly a hat trick a game and 5.5 points, taking the league-scoring title. The previous year's scoring champion took the title with 55 points. So Coulombe took the title rather impressively. At 16 years old, he was easily one of the youngest players in the league. Only adding to the depth of this achievement, Gosselin had 96 points while teammate Gerry Preteau added another 90 points.

*(14:20)

This year, the 1972-73 St. Malo Warriors will be inducted into the Manitoba hall of fame in October. While this team's accomplishment took place some time ago, they live in the community of St. Malo and are an inspiration to the community in which they live. Members of this team will see their names alongside some of the other Manitoban hockey royalty in the home of the Winnipeg Jets at the MTS Centre.

I would ask all my colleagues to join me and my constituents in congratulating the '72-73 Hanover-Taché Hockey League champions, St. Malo Warriors, on their induction into the Manitoba hall of fame.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Transcona Centennial Square Official Opening

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise today to celebrate an exciting development in the Transcona community. The new Transcona Centennial Square park was officially opened yesterday. The Transcona Centennial Square project was initiated in 2012 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the city of Transcona—founding of the city of Transcona. Now, this square will add character and vitality to the growing community, providing an important multi-purpose community space for year-round special activities.

I was pleased to see the MLAs for Rossmere and Transcona join me at the official opening of this town square-style public park on Regent Avenue West in the heart of Transcona. It includes an open-air theatre stage, memorial clock tower, a farmer's market area, benches and landscaping. I'm sure the people who live, work and shop here will enjoy these enhancements for years to come. It is critical that we work with our community partners to support neighbourhood revitalization. I am proud to inform the House that the Manitoba government has provided \$500,000 for this project through the Manitoba-Winnipeg Infrastructure Fund, part of the

Province's long-term capital funding for the city of Winnipeg. The Province also provided \$200,000 for the related streetscaping project in the downtown Transcona area that complements the Centennial Square development.

Projects such as these benefit mature neighbourhoods and contribute to the vitality, safety and health of the community throughout Winnipeg. This creates a strong anchor for our communities, families and business. I would like all honourable members to join me in thanking the Transcona Business Improvement Zone and team of organizers for their dedicated work on this project which will be a huge asset to Transcona.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Age-Friendly Milestone Award—Teulon

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): On June 25th, members of the Teulon Age-Friendly committee travelled to the provincial Legislature to receive Age-Friendly Milestone award.

This program recognizes and rewards communities that have shown dedication in the promotion and development of age-friendly initiatives and recognizes achievements in becoming an age-friendly community. Cherise Griffin, town councillor, and Josie Lindley, committee chair, represented the town of Teulon at the award ceremony. Both were thankful for the award. They noted that, while Age-Friendly in Teulon just established itself in 2012, they've undergone many initiatives to make the town more user-friendly for everyone of all ages. The town has an age-friendly committee that includes the Metis association. The group works with other localizations—local organizations to promote age-friendly ideas.

Their age-friendly action plan includes outdoor spaces and building age-friendly communication and information as well as community support and health. They have developed a brochure for the town, installed handicap signs and put on benches. They have also put in walking trails, specifically at Green Acres Park, and have gone out and painted all the curbs yellow to help with depth for seniors and help who are sight challenged.

While embracing this spirit of age-friendly initiatives, they have contributed to enhancing the health, independence and well-being of all Manitoba seniors, all of which promote healthy aging. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the town of Teulon on receiving this award and commend this

group on their commitment to support seniors and contribute to healthy aging. The town of Teulon's commitment to support older adults truly make them deserving of this honour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to moving on to grievances, because I think that concludes the members' statements, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Berlin, Germany, Sarah Heinz and Marvin Hartmann, who are the guests of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn). On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

Grievances? No grievances, we'll move on to—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

(Continued)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you resolve into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

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

The committee has before it for consideration the motion concurring in all supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

On September 9, 2013, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for concurrent questioning in debate on the concurrence motion: Justice; Immigration and Multiculturalism; Children and Youth Opportunities; Energy, Mines and Innovation; Culture, Heritage and Tourism; and Health.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): And I would like to raise a point of order regarding a question that was brought to me by a member opposite from Lakeside yesterday.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, on a point of order.

Mr. Kostyshyn: A question that was asked to me by a member opposite from Lakeside regarding the question relating to David Slack and Janet Slack and the question—it was my misinterpretation of the question being asked, so, for the record, I would like to clarify the question that was brought forward by the MLA from Lakeside.

I would like to clarify my response to basically sum it up by saying that the question brought forward is now being—or it has been—being investigated by the Chief Veterinary Officer and has continued to be investigated by the Chief Veterinary Officer, and in due response, will respond to member opposite in appropriate time matter.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank the honourable minister. It's not a point of order, but we appreciate the clarification.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Chair, I have a few questions for the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism. I would like to ask the minister when the lease was signed for the space in Northgate Shopping Centre for the provincial nominee application centre that was promised during the last election campaign.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): That lease would have been signed with MIT, Infrastructure and Transportation, who would be dealing with government leases.

* (14:30)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thank you very much, but somebody from Immigration and Multiculturalism must have given a directive to MIT to enter into an agreement for office space in the Northgate Shopping Centre for her department. So who gave that permission to MIT to negotiate a lease, and when was that done?

Ms. Melnick: During the last provincial campaign, there was a commitment to expand immigration services in the northwest corner of the city of Winnipeg, and we did move forward on that commitment. In between the commitment and the situation today, we know that there was a decision made by the federal government to unilaterally change a lot of what had been organized over the last 12 years in the province of Manitoba around immigration, that specifically being the unilateral cancellation of the settlement services annex in the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement. When that happened, we made a commitment to maintain services at the level that they had been. We made a commitment to do the best that we could in that area.

The federal government had wanted to take over settlement services as of April 1st of this year, 2013. That has not happened. They've realized we have quite a complex system here in Manitoba, and so they have taken responsibility for some of the settlement services and some of the other related services such as English as an acquired language, but there is still a lot of change going on.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I wonder if you'd ask members of the House, if they'd like to converse, to go to a loge because I'm actually having trouble focusing on the conversation here.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism has the floor.

Ms. Melnick: Thank you.

So we had—we came up with our commitment. We—through MIT, which is proper procedure, an office was acquired. Because of the vast changes that have been made since we acquired that—leased that office through MIT, we have tried to find better ways to maintain services. So this is actually a very good example. I'm glad that the member is raising this on the floor of the House.

We looked for a more efficient option of delivering immigration services, newcomer services, in the northwest of Winnipeg, and we've decided to co-locate with an adult learning centre which is nearby, and we will continue to work in this way to try to provide as many services as we can under the current and future conditions within regional areas that we know are important.

So I just want to make the point that the commitment to improve services was, in fact, made

during the last provincial election, and that the Department of MIT has been dealing with the actual management of the property, leasing and all of the work around that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And was the lease entered into—maybe the minister could tell me how long the lease was for, and was the lease entered into before the federal announcement was made or after?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I think those questions would be better put to MIT.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I don't know why we have a minister responsible for Immigration and Multiculturalism. She doesn't seem to have anything to do. It's not her responsibility to know what's going on, to know what office space her department requires.

So I guess that justifies the—*[interjection]* Well, I mean, I don't know why the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) is chirping from her seat. I have as much opportunity to put comments on the record as any member of this House does. And I have the right to deserve respect from the Government House Leader rather than trying to bully and intimidate.

I have said before that we need a bill in this Legislature—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: —that will prevent the government's side of the House from bullying members of the opposition.

Mr. Chair, I'm asking a very direct question to the minister that has responsibility for the Department of Immigration: When did she direct MIT to negotiate office space for the space in Northgate Shopping Centre?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, the—again, I'll just restate that there was a commitment made during the provincial election. There was office space that was retained. If the member's interested in getting the details, it would be a good idea to go to MIT who are the department that do deal with the leasing.

I'm the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism, and my focus is dealing with people coming to the province of Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program and making sure that when people come that they are fully welcomed, that they are counted in as full citizens of Manitoba

and that we provide the services such as the settlement services, which we were able to provide up until the unilateral withdrawal of the federal government from the settlement services annex.

It's really a shame that the member feels that it's funny to laugh about the withdrawal to settlement services, that it's funny to laugh about newcomers coming and receiving good services. That's certainly not our perspective on this side of the House.

Also on this side of the House we have a very strong team ethic and we work together so that when there's a commitment made during a provincial election we review the commitments and we make sure that the appropriate department deals appropriately with making sure that that commitment comes to bear for people. In this case it was a leasehold in northwest Winnipeg, and the focus of our last year and half has been on trying to maintain as good level of service as we had before.

You know, I thank the previous ministers of Immigration and Multiculturalism and this administration and the people in the department for the incredible work that they did in establishing what has become known as the Manitoba model which was seen as the best model not only in the country of Canada, but beyond. And we've been working very hard, again, as a team, to maintain as best we can that model. But it has been very difficult, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and to thank the settlement services workers and to thank the newcomers for hanging in with us as we've been through this last year and a half.

So the member may not like the answer, but, again, MIT deals with the acquiring of leasehold deals with the signing of the leases, deals with all the issues around government properties and the leasing of properties.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wonder if the minister could tell me whether the budget of her department is paying for the lease of that space that is vacant—or has been vacant and unoccupied for over a year now.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I think the question would be better put to MIT. I believe that they would have full answers for her. Rather than guess and perhaps give misinformation on the floor of the House, I would respectfully refer the member to MIT.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But I know MIT has a role to play in office accommodation for government and those costs are charged back to departments within government.

So my question is, she has a budget, she should know what is included in her budget, and can she tell me whether her department has been paying for the leasehold improvements for over a year on office space that is sitting empty?

* (14:40)

Ms. Melnick: I can undertake to confer with my colleague in MIT on this question. I can take this under advisement.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for making the commitment, finally, to take something under advisement and get back to us, and I look forward to answers from her on this space.

Can the minister indicate to me what the partnership is with the learning centre and where that learning centre is located in northwest Winnipeg?

Ms. Melnick: It's a co-location with the adult learning centre which is located on Jefferson Avenue. I don't have the exact number. I can undertake that—to get that for the member opposite as well, if she would like. We think this is a very good arrangement. It is providing, of course, adult literacy services, English as acquired language services as well as services for folks who might have questions about, well, the myriad of questions that one might have when they are coming to a new community, coming to a new country—so support services in that way, paperwork may be an area where they might have a lot of questions, moving from a more temporary status to, for example, temporary foreign worker to be applying for permanent residency, perhaps, ultimately, going for Canadian citizenship. So it's a—it's quite a wide array of services.

Again, the co-location is something that we're looking more and more towards. Earlier this year, I was very pleased with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to be at the opening of Manitoba START, located on Portage Avenue, which is providing, again, a full service for newcomers, even through the website, where people are able to go onto the Manitoba START website, find out if Manitoba would really be a fit for them. We also have a walk-in service up on the seventh floor of our Notre Dame offices. So, again, there is a lot going on in Immigration that is focusing on maintaining or, in the case of Manitoba START, actually improving services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the minister indicate to me: Is there money in her budget to support staffing in that learning centre and is there financial resources in her budget to support that adult learning centre?

Ms. Melnick: Well, as I mentioned in question period yesterday, no employees lost their job because of the co-location. We made sure that staff were moved over from the original location to the co-location. We don't want to send a chill through the civil service and have people being laid off, having cuts come into place that will hurt not only newcomers and the services that we're wanting to provide them, but cuts within the civil service itself. The half a billion dollars that the members would like to bring in in cuts may even affect newcomers coming to Manitoba. Newcomers know that they can come and get services that they need.

We're not perfect, but we keep trying. We also know that newcomers who come to Manitoba need health care. So we're not looking at laying off nurses or closing down centres, closing down locations that provide health care like quick clinics, for example. We also know that newcomers come with a dream of something better for their children. They come with the dream of a better education, which is why we're making sure that we're not bringing in cuts that would lay off teachers. You know, teachers have done a tremendous job over the last 12 years. You go into some classrooms, and there could be children from any one of the almost 200 countries that people have come from to choose Manitoba.

I know post-secondary education is also important, and that's why, in—our government, for post-secondary education, brought back bursaries, brought back grants, have done a lot to encourage Manitobans from wherever they come to achieve post-secondary education. I believe the Minister of Advanced Ed said in the House yesterday that this is the highest number of post-secondary registered students we've ever had in the history of our province. And we want newcomers to feel a part of that, as well.

Health and safety: we've worked very hard on the WRAPA legislation, to make sure that recruiters who may not have the best of intentions in bringing people to Manitoba, will be monitored. And that there is a way for newcomers, if they are feeling that they're not being treated well in the workplace, that they can come to this government, that there can be an investigation done. And that they too can live in healthy and safe work environments, which is what we all want.

So, when the minister talks about budgets, I'm very happy to talk about what we're doing on this side of the House. And, if the minister is concerned

about budgeting, just remind her that her and every member of—her colleagues on the other side of the House, again, this year, stood and voted against the budget, which provides all these services to all Manitobans.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And the minister said at the beginning of that answer that people—no one lost their job and people were moved from the first location to the adult learning centre. What was that location that they were moved from? How many staff were moved? And where were they moved from? Where was the primary location or the first location?

Ms. Melnick: Well, I can undertake to get that for the member. I don't have the exact number of individuals who were there. It was the shopping centre that the member has referred to. If she really wants the specifics and that, I can certainly take under advisement to get that for her.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the minister for that.

So was she telling me that that office was open for business? The one in Northgate Shopping Centre. Was it open for business?

Ms. Melnick: We had planned to open the shopping centre location. Between the time of planning and the time that we would have been opening, we were staffing up, we were getting ready, changes occurred. We decided we needed to look for another location. So there may have been some work that was going on there, but the concerns around budget, which I know the member is very concerned about, was a concern for us. The concerns around service delivery was also paramount for us. So, between gearing up and the changes that we decided to make to co-locate, certain steps were taken.

But again, I'd rather take under advisement, I know the member's looking for some specific information. So I may get a date wrong, I may get a staff number wrong. Rather than do that, I'd like to take this question under advisement and get back to the member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the minister just indicated in that answer, that the office was never open. So there weren't any staff moved or co-located from that office that was never opened. And I think she answered the question before that, indicating that there was staff that were moved from that office. So I think she must be a little out of touch with exactly what is happening. And we'll go back and listen to her answers.

But now it's clear. The office was leased; the space was renovated. And I know that in November and December of last year that space was completely equipped with desks and workstations and computers and phones. It was ready to be opened. And that was last November. That was long after the federal government made the changes in funding. That office was sitting there fully equipped.

I know that in June of this year, that office was gutted. Who paid for all of the lease-hold improvements and what happened to all of those desks and those computers that were in that office back last November?

Ms. Melnick: Well, I'm not sure from the member's response to my last response, if she's still wanting me to take this under advisement to get back to her. I'm a little confused with what she's putting on the record here.

* (14:50)

But, again, I think it would be best to stick to my original response, rather than surmise to find—to go back, get information that she's wanting.

The materials that were in the office were redistributed.

I don't know if the member is wanting more specifics on that. She seems to be going back and forth between feeling that she knows all the answers and then continuing to ask answers. So perhaps she could clarify whether she wants me to continue to take under advisement what I understand to be her questions or whether she feels she has provided her own answers sufficiently.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thanks, Mr. Chair, but I mean the minister is obviously confused. She's very confused, and I can understand because she's embarrassed. She's embarrassed that they have leased space, that they had the office up and operational six months after the federal government made its announcement, and they continued to work and keep office space open and ready for business and then made this decision, this spring, to gut the office and move that furniture. This speaks of incompetence at the highest degree. This is a minister that's incompetent and doesn't seem to know what's going on in her department.

I'm asking some very direct questions. When was the lease entered into? When were the leasehold improvements done? How much did they cost? How much did that cost the taxpayers of Manitoba to

furnish an office that was never opened, an office that was never going to be opened because the minister in her own words has said that they changed their plans as a result of the federal government's decisions. So those plans were changed, but this government kept going on its merry way using taxpayers' dollars, wasting taxpayers' dollars, and spending thousands of dollars, putting leasehold improvements into an office they knew they were never going to open.

So my question is: When did they lease the space. How much did they spend on leasehold improvements? When did they gut that office, and what is happening to that space that must have a lease that maybe they can't get out of? Maybe she can indicate to me and find out for me: Is there a lease? Is that space going to be used by government in some other way or are they trying to buy out of that lease?

Taxpayers in Manitoba deserve an answer, and I'm hoping that those questions are clear enough that the minister can attempt to get back to me with just some very basic simple answers on those questions.

Ms. Melnick: Well, I've undertaken probably four or five times, so maybe the confusion's on the other side of the House to come back with the information. I'm not embarrassed in the least about our record on immigration. I'm not embarrassed in the least about our fight to maintain settlement services within this province. I'm not embarrassed in the least to talk about the wonderful work that is done by the settlement services workers.

The embarrassment should come to members opposite who stood in this House and refused to stand up for Manitoba, refused to stand up for the 125,000 newcomers who have come over the last 12 years. There are members on that side of the House who represent communities that are not only surviving but thriving because of the newcomers who have honoured us by coming and staying. I'm not confused about anything, nor am I embarrassed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know the minister may have a response for me, but I guess I would say to Manitoba taxpayers, if we have a minister that is so arrogant that she isn't embarrassed that they have wasted thousands of taxpayers' dollars on an office that has never opened, maybe she should rethink what her government is all about because Manitobans are tired of the arrogance and the high-handed give me your money, I know best how to spend it, and then we waste it. We'll take your money and we'll waste it.

Work a little harder. To all those new immigrants, work a little harder. We want you to pay more taxes, and we're going to take your money and we're going to waste it. I would say to her that she should be embarrassed.

Ms. Melnick: Well, when we talk about the definition of waste, we saw the Leader of the Opposition maybe 10 days ago, two weeks, issue a press release saying that staffing hospitals was a waste, building schools was a waste, investing in recreational centres was a waste, investing in our teachers was a waste, investing in the very infrastructure of this province—highways, roads, bridges—that investing in flood protection was a waste.

I think we have a very different definition on this House about what is an appropriate way to be spending money, and it's to build this province. It is to build this province in a way so that we continue to have people stay, to have people come. You know, I remember members opposite were very concerned about the stadium. Well, last week a sold-out crowd, a Bombers win, that wasn't good enough for them either.

So I think that there are real differences between that side of the House and this side of the House, and I'm proud to be on this side of the House.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Looking to ask some questions of the Minister of Justice, obviously, and the first question we have to do would be with the announcements that have been made with the Dauphin Correctional Centre. I see that the minister in Estimates instructed me to go talk to MIT and ask the question there because he didn't necessarily have the answers that I was asking him about. But I do see that he is quoted in a press release talking about the land selected for construction of the new correctional centre that was donated to the province by the City of Dauphin.

And so I would wonder why the—if the Minister of Justice can make these announcements about the new facility, why can't he answer particular questions about them?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, we covered it in some detail in Estimates that, although Justice will ultimately be the tenant of the new Dauphin Correctional Centre, Justice does not build the facility. We don't tender the facility. Justice does not have architects, doesn't have engineers, does not

have the capacity to build a correctional centre. And that function, as it is for many other capital projects that our government—the extensive list of capital projects that our government is working on—for most departments it's MIT that handles that.

So, certainly, we've been very pleased to announce that there will be a new larger jail built in Dauphin. As I think the member's pointed out, we're very pleased that we've got a good partnership with the City of Dauphin. Dauphin has been prepared to donate what we think is very appropriate, useful, serviced land which we hope will allow the process to be accelerated, and we're certainly looking forward to that process going ahead for the benefit of our correctional officers, for the benefit of inmates to make sure that they have a more modern, safe facility, but also as we discussed at some length in Estimates, to try and find ways to make more differences when individuals are incarcerated, to try and provide more space, more ability for individuals to gain some capacity, to make some changes, to address some of the deficits in their life so that when they are released from jail they're better able to reintegrate into their communities and, hopefully, to enter into or enter back into the workforce.

Mr. Helwer: Will the minister's department be involved in the planning of this facility at all?

Mr. Swan: Yes, we will. I will certainly be involved in working with MIT to discuss some of the attributes we would like to see in a new facility in terms of what the cells will look like, in terms of the different program space, the other amenities. We'll certainly be informed by how other expansions across the system have worked.

As the member's aware, the Women's Correctional Centre was an entirely new build, and in some ways I think that that can be a model for what we'd like to do.

On the men's side, there have been a number of expansions to existing facilities which is in some ways different. But we're also going to want to provide our input into how those new additions have worked to make sure that we satisfy a number of competing goals in terms of safety for inmates, for the staff that work there, getting the best results but also trying to keep an eye on the costs overall.

* (15:00)

Mr. Helwer: The—it has been some months now since we last spoke about the proposed Dauphin Correctional Centre, and, at that time, there was very

little information available. I'm wondering if the minister has any further information available at this time in terms of the size or the date that the—it's planned for construction or when they'll be releasing contracts, RFPs, that type of thing.

Mr. Swan: No.

Mr. Helwer: All right. Does the minister have any idea when they—might be some planning taking place for this facility?

Mr. Swan: Yes, we'll be working with MIT. There's a number of steps. First of all, as I think we went through in some detail, we know that there is a gap that this will help to fill in terms of our capacity. We will be providing our input as to the attributes we'd like to see a new facility have and we'll be moving ahead to work with MIT. We'll certainly involve the city of Dauphin in those discussions. I will certainly be providing more information and give residents of Dauphin their chance to provide their input. I think it's fair to say that there's a certain degree of welcomeness in Dauphin to replacing a very, very old and, frankly, inadequate correctional centre with a newer correctional centre. Certainly, it's the prospect of jobs, but I do believe it's also the people of Dauphin recognizing they can be part of something quite exciting to get better results within our correctional system.

Mr. Helwer: There's been a good deal of information talking about movement of inmates recently in the media and in other areas that have been released. Can the minister address what the primary cause of that large amount of movement in the inmate population has been?

Mr. Swan: Well, I think—I did reread the Estimates transcript from several months ago, and I actually had put some comments on the record about transfers. There are a number of reasons why inmates may be transferred from one facility to another. The largest single reason, which accounts for more than half of all the transfers, are transfers from the Winnipeg Remand Centre out to other facilities. Generally, what happens is that if somebody is arrested and they're detained in Winnipeg or in the surrounding area, they will come to the Winnipeg Remand Centre. They will then, once they've been processed, they may stay there for the time being, or they may well be sent out to Milner Ridge or Headingley or one of the other correctional facilities. That in and of itself is more than half of all the transfers that take place.

There are other reasons why transfers may occur. Sometimes, there may be individuals who are—who have geographical connections to a certain area who may have more family members or other connections in those communities, and it may be deemed advisable for everybody. There are also cases where transfers will happen to seek better programming. We had a good chance in Estimates to talk about the Winding River therapeutic unit that's now operating at Headingley Correctional Centre. There's now 150 beds or so which are provided to assist people with addictions issues. And I would not be surprised if there's been individuals, for example, from the Brandon area who've been housed at the Brandon Correctional Centre who've been transferred to Headingley to try and take advantage of those services, which I think—I'm sure the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) would agree is very helpful, because if people are going to be released back into his community, I know he wants them to have the best possible level of service and rehabilitation for the time they spend in the correctional centres.

There may be times when there are transfers because, as we've been openly acknowledging, there are challenges with the population, both in numbers but also in terms of the nature of the people that we are bound to house and to protect. There may be other circumstances where we know there are going to be events which make transfers necessary. And I'll give a very concrete example. As the member knows, the MIOCTF initiative has resulted in a number of takedowns of organized crime in the city of Winnipeg and across the province of Manitoba. Before one of the major operations, not that long ago, corrections actually moved ahead of those arrests being made to free up space for the individuals we knew that would be arrested to come in. So I suppose those are the myriad of reasons why there can be transfers—a little bit because of programming, a little bit because of some pressures, a little bit because of the need to maintain safety and security for correctional officers and for inmates, and some major operational reasons, when we know there's a major police event that's going to take place, that's going to put pressure on the corrections system.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are violent offenders often transferred through our system and is—are there different standards in place when that occurs?

Mr. Swan: Well, look, I'll sort of return to an example; if somebody is a violent offender and

they're picked up in Winnipeg, they're likely first to go to the Winnipeg Remand Centre. It would not be surprising if they spent a certain amount of time at the Remand Centre and they're then transferred out to another facility. Those transfers are generally handed by—handled by sheriff's officers who are well-trained and well-equipped. I know that the correctional officers and sheriff's officers use the utmost care in transporting all prisoners, whatever their alleged crime may be or what they've been convicted of doing and so there are careful protocols for anybody who is being transferred.

Mr. Helwer: We've heard about critical incident reports recently in the media, of course, in the medical system and there are assaults on staff that do take place in our corrections facilities, unfortunately.

Is there a similar type of incident reporting that occurs when there are assaults on staff from inmates?

Mr. Swan: Yes, any incident that involves an assault on staff or an alleged assault on an inmate is certainly taken seriously by Corrections and steps are taken to investigate the incident and to put in place measures, if any can be found, that can try to reduce the likelihood of that happening again. So, generally speaking, that is internal to Corrections, to try and make sure that there is a safe environment for the staff that work there, as well as for the inmates that we're bound to house and protect.

Mr. Helwer: Does Corrections keep statistics of those types of assaults?

Mr. Swan: Not that I'm aware of, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Helwer: Is that not something that the minister thinks would be useful in terms of gauging the interaction between staff and inmates and making sure that facilities are safe for staff?

Mr. Swan: Again, we take any incident of this type very seriously and when an incident happens there is an investigation that's conducted and we use the results of that investigation to see if there's better protocols that can be put in place, better measures that can be put in place.

Mr. Helwer: While overcrowding is obviously something that would have an impact on those types of assaults and what can—other than moving inmates around or announcing new prisons—what is the—what's the intent of this minister? How can he look to reduce overcrowding in our prison system?

Mr. Swan: Well, I know what won't work. Won't work if we take the advice of the Leader of the

Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), whose advice was that he would cut civil service positions, including correctional officers, across the province. What wouldn't work would be take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition who suggested he would impose a hiring chill when individuals retire or move on. I know that wouldn't work.

What I know is important is to continue making sure that our correctional facilities are properly staffed and that the people who staff are properly trained. That's why we've invested considerable resources in hiring up to make sure that we have enough correctional officers to provide a safe environment for other officers as well as for inmates. Those are investments that we have made. I know the member and all of his colleagues have voted against those investments. That's too bad. We are, as I've indicated, moving ahead with a new jail in Dauphin to increase the capacity of the system, and I know we discussed it some length in Estimates, and I'm happy to continue the discussion today of a number of the different procedures we're putting in place to speed up the velocity of cases moving through the system.

* (15:10)

We know that in our system we have inputs. When somebody phones the police for assistance, we want the police to be able to investigate. The police, frankly, do a very good job of investigating and that has resulted in increased inputs despite a drop in crime. We know that our investments in Crown attorneys have continued to make sure that cases are prosecuted to the fullest, the most appropriate extent. That is an input. We know that things like our investments in the warrant apprehension unit—rather, the Warrant Enforcement Unit, have increased the inputs into the system.

We talked at length about the things that we're doing to speed up processes through the courts, to move people through the system more quickly. That is another piece of the puzzle in making sure that we have a safe environment for staff and inmates in our correctional system.

Mr. Helwer: Well, in dealing with overcrowding, remand is often a topic of discussion and moving them through—moving individuals through the system faster, as the minister has mentioned, is one way to deal with it.

Number of Crown attorneys is an area that we have touched on. Does the minister have a ratio of

number of Crown attorneys to judges that he'd like to see, and where are we at this point?

Mr. Swan: Well, we've continued to increase the number of Crown attorneys each year. We've made some commitments to our Crown attorneys, and we've embarked on a fairly ambitious plan to, first of all, to retain our articling students who show promise, to attract individuals who may be Crown attorneys in other provinces, to attract lawyers who may be on the defence bar who want to come over and work for the Crown, and those numbers have gone up.

The base number of Provincial Court judges has actually not expanded in some time, but what we have done is instituted a senior judges program, and what that program does is it allows individuals who've had a career on the bench who've retired from the provincial court to continue on working on a part-time basis with the court. I know the chief judge was very excited about this program, was very instrumental in encouraging us to do that. I was very pleased that my colleagues around the Cabinet table gave me the ability to bring forward legislation to accommodate that, and also the equivalent of another judge's salary to make sure there's more resources.

The judges have been very, very good partners in terms of finding better ways to do things. The judges, for example, were very helpful at coming forward with ideas on how we can utilize our courts most effectively. They've been very, very, helpful at working on other procedures to speed things through the system so that we—you know, to be frank, so that we get as much as we can out of the individuals who work in our system, whether it's judges, Crown attorneys, defence lawyers, and, of course, the court clerks and sheriffs.

So I suppose if you look at the ratio, the number of Crowns per judge has increased, but also the efficiency of both the Crown attorneys and the judges has increased as well.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us what that ratio would be, or if that's not possible, how many Crown attorneys are employed in Manitoba and how many judges?

Mr. Swan: Yes. I was just trying to find the exact number of Crowns right now. I know in 2012-2013 there were 156 full-time Crown positions. That has increased this year. I'm trying to recall if the delays in passing the budget are preventing us from adding Crown positions. So I would have to just take the

increase for 2013-2014 as of right now under advisement. I know that the opposition's delays in passing the budget were actually creating difficulties for us in hiring and retaining Crowns, but 156 was the number of 2012-2013 with, I believe, 41 Provincial Court judges. That would work out to about four Crowns per judge, for what that's worth.

Mr. Helwer: Well, my understanding is there was a special warrant that the government put forward, and they felt they could live within the means of that warrant and that would meet all their needs going forward for several months. So, if the minister is saying something different here, perhaps it's something we should deal with in the House as opposed to in a one-off comment.

However, we have—or, Mr. Chair—we do have a number—another of areas of repeat offenders that have been in the media lately, and some of them have to do with sexual offenders and, obviously, we have asked in the past if the minister would be looking at using electronic monitoring for sexual offenders, and we have seen nothing come forward.

So would the minister care to comment, in the light of some recent re-offences and attempts to re-arrest some of these people, if that is an area that he would be interested in looking at and perhaps put into force?

Mr. Swan: Yes, just to clarify something from the preamble to the member's questions. The special warrant allows us to continue spending at the same level as was spent before. When we've been attempting to add resources and add positions within the system, it actually does create problems. So, if the member wants to have a longer discussion about that with any one of my colleagues, I think we'd be happy to talk about some of the challenges.

In terms of electronic monitoring, of course, we have all the way along monitored the pilot in which we have had youth who've been charged with car theft outfitted with the electronic monitoring devices. As we have promised and as I spoke about in Estimates, we believe that the next area to consider and to expand the program to would be domestic violence offenders. And, indeed, there has been, to the best of my knowledge, there's been a situation where a judge has ordered the domestic violence offender, when released into the community will be released on the condition that he have an electronic monitoring bracelet. Where appropriate, Crown attorneys will be making that request and we'll be seeing how that goes.

But I do want to repeat one of the concerns about electronic monitoring. Electronic monitoring, in my view, is not a substitute for somebody who is truly a danger to the community, to be out in the community, and I don't want to suggest for a minute that we sell electronic monitoring as being an alternative to people being incarcerated if they are truly a risk. That's why youth car thieves have been a—the great place to start because in many, many cases, we have serious concerns about those young offenders, but under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, it's been very challenging, despite the best efforts of the police and Crown attorneys to have those individuals remain in custody. It was the right place to start. Again, the results have been, I would say, positive but not overwhelming, and we think we're now ready to move ahead and we are moving ahead with the domestic violence offenders.

Mr. Helwer: Well, in at least one of the cases, I believe, possibly two of those cases of sexual offenders where they are repeat offenders, the police were looking for an individual and could not find him because his parole had been violated, and certainly in that case would the electronic monitoring not have possibly prevented the second or third, however many sexual offences that this individual did perpetrate? And, indeed, I believe in two cases there were young children as young as the age of 13 that were assaulted by these individuals. So the minister should, I think, look down the road here and see if this is, indeed, something that would be useful in protecting victims.

* (15:20)

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm glad that the member pointed out that the case he's talking about, individuals who've had parole violations. I won't question the wisdom of the parole board, the federally appointed body which makes those decisions. But when somebody receives parole and is living out in the community, the member needs to know that Manitoba Justice and law enforcement in Manitoba don't necessarily know where that person is, and there isn't necessarily an opportunity to take any steps. And, indeed, my understanding was the federal government had an electronic monitoring pilot which they cancelled.

So, if he would like me to raise that with Minister MacKay and Minister Blaney when I meet them in—at the next federal Justice Ministers meeting, I would be—I'd be more than happy to bring that forward from the member for Brandon West.

Mr. Helwer: Well, I think that we need to look at the victims and how they have dealt with the issues here, and those are the people that we need to protect, obviously, and it's a little bit frightening when the minister says that the justice system and the law enforcement system isn't aware of where these offenders are. I think the public would be hesitant in accepting that excuse, but, nonetheless, that's the statement that the minister put on the record that we don't know where they are apparently.

So it would seem that electronic monitoring might be an opportunity to keep the public safe, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Swan: Well, look, if the member has problems with the parole board, he should call his Member of Parliament, although I guess he doesn't have one right now, but his new Member of Parliament when that happens; it may be somebody he knows well.

But let me just respond again to explain that in the cases the member has raised in this House and is raising again, a decision has been made by the federally appointed, federally constituted, federal parole board to release somebody into the community. When that is done, there is no notification given to Manitoba Justice. There is no step that Manitoba Justice can take, and there is no guarantee that law enforcement is aware.

When somebody comes to the end of their sentence, if they are serving that in the community because the parole board has decided that that's an appropriate disposition—and I'm not going to comment on the rightness or wrongness of that decision—there is no automatic way that Manitoba Justice becomes aware.

So I have the member's comments on that. I share his concern about public safety when the parole board makes decisions of that type. And, again, if he would like, I will raise that with the federal government and we'll see if the federal government has a better solution. If the federal government wants to restore their electronic monitoring program for people who are being monitored by the federal parole board, I'd be interested in seeing how that happens, and perhaps we can give some of our experience here in Manitoba. I'd be happy to speak to the minister and any Correctional Service of Canada individuals who may want to get their program going again. I think that's a positive step.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

An Honourable Member: La Verendrye.

Mr. Chairperson: La Verendrye, my apologies.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I could move chairs if you want.

I have a few questions of the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities that I'd like to ask.

I'll start off by agreeing with the minister that early childhood investments get more bang for your— for their buck than program dollars spent later on.

Almost of the—almost a third of the babies born in Manitoba are born into low-income homes, troubling statistics given the trickle-down effect of poverty on success at school, health and job prospects. The facts that a huge chunk of the population faces a dismal future has critical long-term economic implications for this province.

Does the minister feel that the increase in the PST and the addition of PST to home insurance and other increases in taxes are doing more harm than good for low-income families in which, eventually, will hurt the children and youth of this province?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the member for La Verendrye for the question.

And I think that we've been pretty clear that we're going to continue to invest in programs and services and front lines that matter most to Manitoba families.

And speaking from someone who represents a riding that, you know, deals a lot with low income, and having a background, born and raised in low income, I'd like to let the member know that the investments we actually do make in supporting people, particularly young people and early-childhood development, make an enormous difference.

You know, the—in contrast to that, we know, and I know, and I know that members opposite sometimes shriek when we talk about the 1990s, but the reality was in one budget they cut 53 organizations that service—that provide service to low-income children, youth, families, particularly, women organizations. And the member should know that that actually makes—that was actually devastating. In fact, they pretty much wiped out almost every friendship centre across the province.

You know, we've continued to invest in prenatal supports. We've invested in stop the clawback on the National Child Benefit. But on top of that, we continued to invest in programs like our Healthy Baby program or Families First home visiting program.

And so, speaking from experience and someone who's travelled the province, talking to many of our partners on the front line, the member should know that those investments make an enormous difference in people's lives.

Mr. Smook: Would the minister agree that raising the rental allowance for EIA recipients to 75 per cent of the median market rent would help this situation and eventually help the children and youth of this province?

Mr. Chief: I would like to let the member know that the Minister for Housing and Community Development would probably be the best person to answer that question.

Mr. Smook: Does the minister not have an opinion on that?

Mr. Chief: I mean, I'm—I would gladly talk. I have lots of opinions. I have lots of thoughts. But I was hoping that we were going to talk a lot about children and youth opportunities, and all of our investments, and all the things that we're doing here in this department. I know that my colleague and the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross) will gladly answer the questions that he has.

Mr. Smook: The majority of the minister's budget is spent on programs to external agencies that deliver programs and services. Could the minister explain to me how these program are evaluated, and whether or not these programs are achieving their goals?

Mr. Chief: Well, first, yes, the department does fund and support and work with an incredible amount of organizations in the communities, including, you know, the foundations like the United Way, The Winnipeg Foundation. We work with family resource centres. We support friendship centres. A lot of Aboriginal non-profit organizations. You know, organizations like the Boys and Girls Club.

And so, that in itself, is one of the things in terms of travelling the province, doing consultations, having dialogues, talking to these organizations, we know that the parents, that grandparents, that the

coaches, that the people who live in their own communities often are the ones who help deliver the service. And they have said very clearly, continue to work with us, continue to invest, and continue to believe in the work we're doing.

With that said, part of that is to continue to improve on the programs. But to continue to improve the programs, we have to make sure that we continue to work with and invest, which again, is, of course, in contrast to what members opposite have done in the past.

What we do is that our—the organizations that we fund have ways in which they measure the service they provide in a variety of ways. But also through our office, we—through our department—we also do a lot of investment on research, evaluation, data collection, within our department. But we also make sure that we partner with external post-secondary institutions like the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

*(15:30)

So the ways in which we measure come directly from the organizations we fund based on the outcomes that they're looking for. We do that through our Healthy Child Manitoba office as a department, but we also make sure that we do independent studies on the programs and services that we provide—the resources that we provide organizations and our partners to deliver.

Mr. Smook: There are a lot of programs that are government funded and government ran—run. I'm just wondering, are there evaluation reports for these programs and a list of these programs available, and would the minister be able to provide me with them?

Mr. Chief: Well, there are—with the organizations in which we fund and partner with, they measure the ways in which they're making the biggest impact in their communities. And their goals and outcomes, they work with us on that. We also look to measure and collect data and evaluate and through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet we actually just released a report publicly, so you can look at how Manitoba children are doing, and, on top of that, we actually work with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy as well to do that. So many of these evaluations and the way in which we collect data are often already made public, and I know that I tabled a report on how Manitoba children are doing. There's lots of great information in there as it relates to a lot of the organizations we work with, depending on the

scope in which the member is asking whether it be in early childhood development or crime prevention.

I know that working with the Boys and Girls Club, as one example, our local YMCAs, they would also collect stats and data, and you can probably—locally and talk to them as well to get information, but evaluations and data collection and research is ongoing. But I do want to let the member—I want to assure the member that we do make these reports public to the point where the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet—actually, as the Chair of that, I actually provided that here in the House.

Mr. Smook: A little bit better than \$8 million was announced for mentorship programs. Was this new money or were programs cut to allow these programs to be financed?

Mr. Chief: Yes, we actually, as part of our mentorship announcement, we—that—just so the member knows, that's how 13,000 young people get to be involved in mentorship. In fact, as we look at the start of school this year, that becomes incredibly important. In fact, as part of that, our mentorship—our Manitoba mentorship programming, that includes over 20 different types of mentorship.

And one of the things that we have done as a government is to make sure that young people are developing their skills and talents, and so we want to make sure that if there's an interest in recreation and sport that they have the programming and supports and people to build those skills and talents in the areas of science, in the area of culture, in the area of the arts, and so there's 20 different types of mentorship.

One of the things that we know mentorship does is it increases academic achievement for young people because it extends their school day. It often leads to employment, summer employment, and also brings clarity to a lot of these young people and what they want to do for the future. And it also, as the Minister of Advanced Education would know, it actually increases the amount and improves access to post-secondary education. So we're really proud of the announcement of that. You know, we didn't cut programs to do that. That was a pattern, so the member knows, that his government took, but that's not something that we did.

Mr. Smook: The minister's doing a very good job of deflecting the questions. Like, I asked, the \$8 million, is it new money or is it replacing other programs?

Mr. Chief: I thought I did a pretty good job of giving him a pretty detailed answer on our approach on mentorship. We continue to invest in mentorship. We continue to work with—and those investments come in partnership.

So we work in partnership with organizations like United Way, like the YMCA, like with our schools and schools divisions. We provide—with post-secondary institutions, with individual people, coaches that are delivering services in their communities, parents directly.

We know that the reason that we continue to invest is because we know that it improves academic achievement and we know it improves access to post-secondary. We know that it builds safer and healthier communities. We know it gives young people something positive to belong to, and so not only do we continue to invest in it, but we also continue to improve those programs in partnership with the people in which we're doing it with, which is parents and grandparents and people who work in family resource centres and people who work in our schools.

And so the investments we make are not investments where we cut and then reinvest it into mentorship. These were—this is an investment that we have made and we continue to make.

Mr. Smook: The Manitoba mentorship programs are no longer available, according to a Manitoba document, and replaced by CareerFocus. What was the reason for this?

Mr. Chief: Well, first off, just so the member knows, Manitoba Mentors is still available to students. One of the advantages that we have in Children and Youth Opportunities is that we've been able to bring together lots of the different kinds of mentorships that might have existed in one department previous to CYO being created by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and so there might be some confusion by the member opposite, but Manitoba Mentors is still a signature program with our mentorship model.

But we have been able to combine, as we know and as I said, a good mentorship program provides great supervision. It provides skill building and it provides a good structure. And so part of that, when you're investing in mentorship there are some direct connections to things like career opportunities, to summer employment opportunities, to giving young people some clarity on where they want to go.

On top of that, in terms of mentorship, including Manitoba Mentors, we have been able to draw upon support from other levels of government as well as the private sector.

And so as these things have come together and as we've created some efficiencies on it we've been able to support more young people. But if you want to connect mentorship to careers, it just makes a lot of sense because you're building skills. You're giving young people the opportunity to be mentored by someone where they can start thinking about, well, maybe that's something that I can become.

In fact, just recently in the Winnipeg Free Press we just saw a group of young people who get to work as part of our After School Leaders program—which, by the way, includes mentorship at True North Sports & Entertainment. And not only did they get mentored by people in that organization, but that organization now has, in turn, hired them, and so now they've built the skills. They've got the experience they need. They have the connections and now they're actually working in—for True North, and that's part of our model and having a department like this helps us build that kind of momentum.

Mr. Smook: What is the funding value and the number of youth that would use the CareerFocus Program?

Mr. Chief: Well, we have, actually, in terms of our investments around giving young people thinking about how—where they want to go in terms of a career, where they want to go in terms of building skill around employment opportunities, if he's asking specifically for the number for CareerFocus, a lot of the things that we actually do around supporting young people would directly take young people down the path and build those employment skills and get them thinking about careers. But, specifically around CareerFocus, I don't have an exact number in front of me, but I would gladly get him that information.

*(15:40)

Mr. Smook: So the minister will provide me those numbers, as well as on for you—MB4Youth, if he could provide me those as well. And since we're—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry. Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for La Verendrye.

Mr. Smook: I have a couple questions in regarding The Green Team. We've had some discussions over

this—over this session, and the minister keeps informing me that no changes were made to any of the recipients of programs. But yet I've had a few phone calls in regards that people have said their granting was cut.

Would the minister provide me a list of hours and dollar values and the people receiving Green Team funding for 2013?

Mr. Chief: Yes, I—once again, I've answered in the past on Green Teams. The Green Teams, as we know, and as the members opposite knows, and I think everyone in the Chamber knows, is an incredibly popular program, and I think it's popular because it's effective. It actually not only gets young people working and earning some money but it actually helps them build some skills and do some incredible things in their community. And I know it's one of these youth programs and I proudly say that it's probably the envy of—it's the kind of envy in the country when you have a program like that.

We do continue to invest in that program and we continue to look at ways of improving that in partnership with our organizations. Just so the member knows, that there are nearly 500 organizations that receive support and apply for Green Team funding. That gets a thousand students working every summer, and for the last 12 years, from 2000-2012, that's, you know, that would come out to close to 15,000 young people.

So, we'll continue to partner and we'll continue to look at improving and we'll continue to look at ways, in a responsible way, if it's possible to expand it. We do continue to work with organizations. We do continue to work with the best way to support communities through that one specific program. But there's many other programs, of course, and we just talked about mentorship. We just talked about After School Leaders, in other ways in which we support young people for summer employment.

Mr. Smook: Does the minister mean that, yes, he will provide me with that list for 2013?

Mr. Chief: I can provide more details for the member on Green Team.

Mr. Smook: Thank you. I have a few questions in regards to the expenditure Estimates for the Children and Youth Opportunities. In the reconciliation sheet, it's showing last year's numbers. And, for this year's, it's showing a number of different numbers, like, say, for instance, money's transferred in from different organizations.

And I'm just wondering: Does the minister have the numbers for this year of what will be transferred in for—from different areas, from different ministries?

Mr. Chief: What I can tell the member as it relates to his question is that the financial reporting—and I do want to assure the member that the budget has been prepared in accordance with the direction from the Department of Finance in keeping with general accounting practices, as have all departments, and with regard to the member's question, I would be more than happy to arrange for a more detailed answer on it. When it comes to some of the pieces in here in terms of those general accounting practices, I just want to make sure that I don't say or give him some information that isn't articulated in the right way.

Mr. Smook: The reason I ask this question—it seems that income doesn't seem to show very well in the Estimates book but yet the expenses are fairly good. But, when I look at the Estimates book from 'Manito'—from the Local Government, it's showing on page 46 that youth and child will be receiving \$2.4 million from urban development initiatives for this year. But yet that number really doesn't appear any place in there, and I'm just wondering, are there any more abnormalities like that, or what are the numbers for this year, if the minister could provide me with that?

Mr. Chief: Once again, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to arrange for a more detailed answer for the member. Want just let him—assure the member that the budget has been in and prepared in accordance with the direction from the Department of Finance and it does keep in general accounting practices, as have all departments.

And so if he sees something as an anomaly, I will make sure that he gets the information that he needs and to understand why it's like that in the budget.

Mr. Smook: Yes, one more question for the minister. I know that we're trying to be as careful as we can in how we spend the money. Has the minister been asked to cut his budget in his department?

Mr. Chief: I think—you know, I think one of the things that there has been an advantage of and I think we've been able to show that in this department in Children and Youth Opportunities is, in fact, how much we've been able to generate funds from other partners.

And, when you see the expenditures going out—over 80 per cent going into and working with our current partners like the Boys and Girls Clubs and continue to work with the United Way, The Winnipeg Foundation—one of the things that our investments have done, it's been able to generate a lot more support.

So the Province would come to the table with some financial support and then you'd often see the federal government come on board, then you'd often see the private sector come on board, and that's what's really exciting. In fact, one of the—one of our partners that we just currently got to see and partner with is True North—but—the Winnipeg Jets foundation, where we're putting in some initial funds and they're putting in funds and then we service more young people.

I certainly been asked—in terms of the economic situation we're in globally, nationally and, of course, provincially—to make sure that we work in partnership with as many people as we can to maximize every resource we have in our department, and I think we've been able to do that.

We proudly, as an example, get to work with Right to Play. We put in initial investment and the private sector put initial investment and a whole group of young people—some of our poorest young people in Manitoba—now get extra access to sport, to recreation, and it builds relationships.

And so I'd like to let the member know that I haven't been asked to look through a lens and say, hey, Kevin, can you start cutting. I've been asked to make sure that we can maximize every dollar that we have, and that's why we've seen an incredible amount of partnership and support from the private sector, including—actually, I do want to say for the record, Dave Angus, in early childhood development as it relates to supporting low-income families, who represents thousands of businesses.

That is the kind of approach we have taken and that's what we know—parents, what grandparents, what seniors, what people who work in family services, what Aboriginal leadership—that's what they're asking us to do and that's what we've done.

Mr. Smook: I understand that the minister works with a lot of great organizations that he's partnered with, but there's also a number of organizations that they're just funding directly. What steps are in place to monitor those programs? Like, is there a cap on how much money the organization can use for

administration? And how are these programs monitored? Like, who monitors them to say whether they're successful or not? And it might only be a small program, but all the little dollars—and I'd like to know what steps are in place to check these situations out?

Mr. Chief: Just for the record, Mr. Chair, the member told me that the last question was going to be his last question, but I'll gladly keep going.

* (15:50)

You know, Mr. Chair, a lot of these organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs for—as an example, local YMCAs—in fact, the majority if not all organizations we work with have been around for quite a while. They do have reputations. They do have governance models around boards. Part of the organizations in which we fund have to have regular financial audits done. They have to report back to their community partners. We are not the only funder; they have federal partners; they have charitable partners like the United Way and others.

And so—and on top of that, of course, we do have people who work in our department that provide support when support's necessary to support organizations around things like around accountability. And so, when we actually look at, you know, organizations and the structures that they have, they are organizations that are in good standing as non-profit, community-based organizations with people sitting on their boards that have regular board meetings.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We do have people who work with them on that. Often, what we do on top of that is we make sure that when support on top of that is asked around evaluations or collecting data, that we're meeting the outcomes together. And so we continue to work with those partners. We continue to work with the community members that help us deliver service.

Mr. Smook: I may have to continue asking questions until I get an answer because the beginning of my last question was not about partnered organizations but about organizations that are wholly funded by his department. What steps are in place to monitor those funds?

Mr. Chief: Well, the organizations in which we work with are partner organizations. And if they're receiving funding, then there is a board set up.

They're a non-profit organization that have financial accounting principles in it. They have reporting mechanisms back to the community. We have, of course, outcomes that we're looking to get, and we have people in our department that work with the organizations to make sure they're meeting the outcomes in which our agreements are assigned or we're supposed to do.

And so, when we actually look at the member—when I'm actually listening to the member's question, on top of that, on top of those things that we do directly, we also do things like how Manitoba children and youth are doing. We also partner with the Manitoba centre for house policy and others to improve and find gaps where support can be also driven to fill in some of the gaps in our community.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Chairperson, just asking a question to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism and see if she has any answers from yesterday, now that we're just a shade over 24 hours ago.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Been waiting patiently for and so eager to provide my answer as promised to my critic.

My critic, the member opposite, the honourable member from Lac du Bonnet's asking about Travel Manitoba, if the staff of Travel Manitoba are considered civil servants. I was given the response that employees of Travel Manitoba are not civil servants.

Also, the critic was asking for the number of staff at Travel Manitoba. I was provided figures. There are 30 staff, which includes—inclusive of part-timers.

As well, I have further addition to the response about the scope of duties of the Tourism Secretariat. In our department, the Tourism Secretariat is responsible for tourism development which is achieved through leading provincial tourism aid—strategy, development and implementation, managing funding programs for regional tourism organizations, and implementing grant programs to stimulate product development and increase tourism industry capacity. So those are the promised responses to my critic.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Assistant Chairperson—Deputy Chairperson, and thank you, Madam Minister, for getting me those answers.

Just a quick question, Madam Minister, how long have you been a—been the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism?

Ms. Marcelino: I was appointed to this position in November of 2009.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Minister. Just a quick question, in regards to yesterday, just looking back on some of the answers because as today, as the Minister for Multiculturalism had mentioned earlier, there's a few conversations going on, and so I just wanted to reread some of your answers just so that I had a good handle of exactly some of the things that you put on the record yesterday.

I know that during the long weekend you did make it out to Pine Falls—Powerview—Pine Falls parade, and we ended up spending a few moments having great conversation and you had mentioned how our area of the province was—you found that it was very pretty and a very beautiful area. Now, you had also mentioned when I'd asked what certain things or initiative—initiatives that the regional tourist associations were taking—taking place or in charge of, you had mentioned that, and I quote from Hansard yesterday: "As the member knows, Manitoba is a beautiful province and we have so many tourist attractions in almost all regions." So I'd just like to know, and I already know that you think that my region is very pretty and beautiful, but is there a region that maybe just doesn't necessarily tweak your mind?

Ms. Marcelino: I think I'm biased, and thank you for the question, it's—I'm biased to say that Manitoba is the best place in the world, and so far I haven't been to any place that I don't consider worthy of promoting that place to friends and family.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, so, thank you. So, then, we'll just chalk that up to just a slip of the tongue because we do know that that does happen once in a while in this House, right, Madam Minister?

So, back to another question that I asked you yesterday in regards to the Waabanong Anishinaabe interpretive centre, and I had asked you which contractor had won the tender and also how much that tender was for. I was wondering if you were able to—or if somebody within your department was able to provide you with that answer as well.

Ms. Marcelino: As mentioned yesterday, it is being—the request for information on the specific contractor and the amount of the contract or the bid was being—has been transmitted to the right department. That's

something that cannot be obtained in a day, as I did mention very clearly yesterday, so you will have the response. We're looking at a few days here. And also I have an amendment, yesterday, to my response. I did mention that I only received one critical or one contrary opinion on the PST, so I asked staff to look at all the past emails and they were able to get one, two, three, four emails sent to me—one, two, three—five emails sent to me that are expressing concern about the PST or very strongly saying they're against PST.

So I would like to add that information and provide that information to you.

* (16:00)

Mr. Ewasko: You would think, I mean, if it was just one email you would remember that, and if it was more than one email it's sort of interesting that you wouldn't remember that you had more than one email as far as a complaint or a concern in regards to the PST increase considering it was such a hot topic. We have gone through quite the taxing summer and—but I do accept you amending your answer and putting that on the record, Madam Chairperson.

So switching gears here a little bit, I'm just wondering, when was the last time there was a comprehensive review of the arts and culture in Manitoba?

The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau): The honourable member of culture—I'm sorry, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to respond to the statement that I've just mentioned. The reason why it didn't strike me as an email that I—that would really catch my attention, because those emails were same emails that every other MLA received. I think these are even sent to—copied to members of the opposite side. So it didn't register to me. If it were someone that I believe are, kind of, heartfelt, not based on a script, as it is these are uniformed script. So it didn't catch my attention. That's why I thought there was none of—there were no emails that I've received that would really hit me or touch me.

And, as I've said, I made efforts to talk to constituents and I'm very delighted that the constituents I talked to were appreciative of the efforts being done by this government—except for one person, and as I've mentioned, he wasn't from my constituency.

About the question on regional tourism—oh, about the arts funding, there are no comprehensive study yet being done. But our department is in constant communication with all the major stakeholders such as symphony orchestra, royal—Manitoba Theatre Centre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and many other organizations such as Manitoba Arts Council and several community organizations about the direction of arts in Manitoba.

So for your question, if there's a study being done apart from the ones that are being done by these various stakeholders, our department has no particular study made.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay, so just for clarity there, Madam Minister, so there is a study going on or there is not a study going on?

Ms. Marcelino: Not by our department. But specific stakeholders, for example, the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation undertook a study, but it's for their organization, specific to their organization. But a global study from our department right now, besides the communication—the consultation we're doing, no written study has been done.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Minister, who makes the decision about who gets the grant funding from the Culture, Heritage and Tourism portfolio?

Ms. Marcelino: Just like other departments, it's being done by the department or the civil servants whom we thank for being non-partisan, for being professional and for being dedicated and qualified in their jobs.

Mr. Ewasko: Does the minister have a copy of the total list of recipients?

Ms. Marcelino: They are a long list and I could provide the critic a copy of all the grants that my department has provided to the many organizations in the province.

Mr. Ewasko: That'd be great, thank you, Madam Minister. I'll wait for that in the upcoming weeks.

Deputy Minister Cindy Stevens, is she paid out of the Culture, Heritage and Tourism portfolio or out of the minister for—from Assiniboia?

Ms. Marcelino: The Deputy Minister Cindy Stevens is both the deputy minister for CHT and Healthy Living. Both departments share in the salary of the civil servant.

Mr. Ewasko: So then, Madam Minister, in the Estimates booklet then the line would be half-and-half then?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have a copy of the Estimates book so I couldn't respond to the question. But I will provide an answer once I see the Estimate book.

Mr. Ewasko: Now I know I'm going to get some boos and hisses from the government side for this question but it is a little bit interesting that we're here in concurrence and you wouldn't come to concurrence with a copy of the Estimates book. But—sorry—[interjection]—my Deputy—or Assistant Chairperson, just musing to what the House leader had commented as she walked by me here. No, I will not make the minister stay after school. I guess we'll continue on with another question then, and if she could provide me just a little bit more detail in the answer in regards to her deputy Cindy Stevens as far as where those—where the—where her salary does come out of specifically I'd be greatly—that'd be greatly appreciated.

Ms. Marcelino: I would provide that information as soon as I get back to my office.

Mr. Ewasko: That's fine, thank you, Madam Minister.

Now, in regards to Travel Manitoba's regional info sites, my understanding is that there's going to be quite a few of them that are being closed down. Can the minister confirm this?

Ms. Marcelino: Travel Manitoba has plans for their information centres that is still under study so we don't have the figures as to how many will be closed and, if there were to be info centres to be closed, it would be for very good reasons because they have found out that they have better bang for the buck, for example, if it were in social media or other promotional activities besides an info centre.

* (16:10)

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Minister. How many of them are going to be actually—what's going to happen with the buildings after they've been closed?

Ms. Marcelino: I don't have the information as to how many will be closed, so I couldn't provide a response to that particular question. I will take it under advisement.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Minister, Travel Manitoba chose to acquire an Explorer Quotient licence in

April 2012, with the intention of using it as a primary market segmentation tool. Why the EQ licence?

Ms. Marcelino: That particular program is—has proprietary rights. The particular organization eludes me right now, but I could provide you who owns the proprietary rights to EQ. But Travel Manitoba is convinced, because of research as well as the success of—there were 'sev'—before Manitoba took up EQ, other jurisdictions have been—have already applied to their program the EQ process, and quite successful. So Travel Manitoba decided to take up the EQ, or the Explorer Quotient.

Mr. Ewasko: Has the minister seen any improvement in the results so far since Travel Manitoba has obtained that licence?

Ms. Marcelino: It's still very early to see the results because they have just signed up for EQ, and I'm confident there will be results because of the kind of program that has shown positive successful results in other jurisdictions with very similar situations as Manitoba.

Mr. Ewasko: One last question for now, and if we have some time later on, I'll get back at it, but, Madam Minister, what's your Explorer Quotient?

Ms. Marcelino: I think I'm someone who would go for—the word eludes me—but someone who would participate fully and engage fully in a particular place, like take in all of the music and all of the food and all of the scenery of a particular place. But there's a term there, but eludes me right now.

Mr. Ewasko: Just so the Madam Minister knows, I'm a gentle explorer, and I'm going to turn it over to the Health critic right now. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I have some questions for the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). First of all, because we've already been on the subject of Brian Sinclair in the last number of days in question period, I noticed that one thing that has come out from the critical incident review committee's final report into the death of Brian Sinclair has been the fact that there was, in some cases, less than a full complement of staff—staffing in ER. And I know from reading the reports of this committee report that there seems to be—it seems to be the case that at the time when Brian Sinclair incident took place, nursing staffing shortages took place about 19 per cent of the time.

And I know that's five years ago, but I wonder if I could ask the minister: Where are things at now,

and how often is it the case that there is less than a full complement of staff that staffs an ER?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question, and it does afford me an opportunity to speak with him a little bit on the subject of the critical incident report, which has been the subject of some discussion in the media over the last few days. Certainly, we know that the centre concern—central concern with this issue and any medical critical incident that occurs in our health system, that the central concern, of course, is discovering what happened to the best of the system's ability and to work very hard to ensure that this situation does not arise again. That's certainly the approach that has been taken with the tragic death of Mr. Sinclair, and, indeed, it is the overall approach that's taken with critical incident reviews.

Critical incident legislation was recommended following the inquest into the pediatric cardiac deaths in the 1990s, so that when an error does occur, it's quickly identified and the changes are made as soon as possible. I would alert the member—he may know this already but he may not—that at the time that that legislation was brought forward, all parties in the Legislature supported the legislation, which did clearly include the fact that critical incidents would be reported, they would be investigated, and the investigation reports would not be released publicly and would not be used in court. This was the core and at the centre of this legislation that was aimed at affording our medical staff to come forward to identify errors and to have a level of comfort that they could do that and they could feel safe, that patients could feel safe, that families could feel safe to share their perspectives fully so that the health-care system could learn what happened.

So I want to be very clear about the fact that while, indeed, a critical incident review did take place and, indeed, disclosure was made to the family, as appropriate, that, entrenched in the legislation, in the law, is the tenet that these particular reports would not be used in court and would not be made public for that very reason. So I want to be clear with the member about that fact.

I also want to let him know that we put quarterly summaries listing every critical incident—those go online and, if needed, and this is another important point that I think has been missed in this dialogue, public patient safety alerts can be issued without delay. If there is an issue that arises that, you know, can be found and fixed in an instant, then those

public safety alerts are provided. We, in fact, share them across Canada. So I just think that that's important to get on the record on the subject of the critical incident review itself.

Now, broadly, we know that during the inquest there will be a number of issues that will be explored concerning staffing levels, concerning literally every inch of the room that Mr. Sinclair travelled, and we want very much to know anything that can be known about improving the system. I can let the member know, as I believe I have done in past, that the weekend that Mr. Sinclair visited the HSC emergency room that the WRHA did publicly release just two or three days after, I believe, that the staffing levels during his time in the ER were as follows: 87 per cent of the nursing shifts were filled overall on Friday, and 97 per cent were filled overall on the Saturday. And a month after that time, I asked the WRHA to confirm that these numbers, through their investigations, did, indeed, hold, and they did confirm that these numbers were, in fact, accurate.

I can let the member know also that during that time there was a full complement of doctors working in the emergency room, in case that's his next question, and I am of the understanding that today there is only one nurse vacancy at the HSC ER, and, of course, recruitment efforts are going on. So staffing levels today are very strong, but, of course, this is something that is—undergoes continuous evaluation based on the level of acuity, based on the level of traffic in the ER, and the HSC itself and the region broadly are tasked with doing evaluations on appropriateness of staffing levels. And you can be assured that that's under close watch.

* (16:20)

Mr. Friesen: So after a considerable preamble, I thank the minister for the answer to the question about where we are now in terms of having the amount of time, that we have less than a full complement of staff staffing an ER.

Now, the report that's become public indicates that it's of great concern that when a role is absent for any reason there is no plan of for how that absence will be managed. And it says further, that within the staffing shortages it's understandable that the role may not be replaced, but there does not seem to be any plan for mitigating the risk associated with losing that role function.

Now, I asked the minister some questions that went in this direction today in question period.

I would just ask her to respond to say what is the risk-management plan for managing when roles or staff are reassigned or unavailable? Is there indeed a risk-mitigation plan and do staff know about it, are they made aware of that?

Ms. Oswald: And again I will say very carefully to the member that I'm going to be quite cautious about speaking specifically to details in the critical incident document that has been released publicly, and inappropriately so, just because it is indeed the law.

But I can say broadly that—and I'll repeat what I've said to the member before—we know that the emergency rooms in Winnipeg use the national standards for emergency room triage and reassessment. This is a fact. It's the CTAS scale—the scale—Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale—and that is a protocol that's issued by the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians.

So it's a national standard that's used to triage patients and ensure, of course, that those that are the sickest, those that need the most immediate care are the individuals that are seen first, while at the same time—and I'm quoting here—ensuring that a patient's need for care is reassessed while in the emergency department. So, you know, those standards of CTAS that are applied are indeed what is the protocol in our Winnipeg ERs.

Most ERs across the country have their triage nurses conducting the reassessment function; that is the standard practice across the nation. And so, of course, the protocol is if a triage nurse is busy—this would be the case in other jurisdictions in Canada—then another individual would be set in place to be taking care of those standards.

Now, as I said earlier, in Winnipeg, following the ER task force and then, again, following the tragic death of Mr. Sinclair, we provided funding for additional triage nurses to be dedicated primarily to that reassessment function. So, augmenting the staff—that is to say, going above and beyond what the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians require in or ask for in jurisdictions across the nation—so those additional staff, again, have their primary dedicated task to reassessment to monitor patients during time they might be waiting to be seen by a physician and indeed will have them re-triaged should their condition change over that time.

Now, it is true that these dedicated reassessment nurses from time to time will complete their tasks of reassessment, ensuring that this happens every hour

or more frequently as they find appropriate given the specific circumstances of a patient in the waiting room, that these individual nurses will have completed their task and will be reassigned to a more acute situation.

I cited an example earlier today, a car accident with three individuals, you know, critically injured, for example. Those nurses will be reassigned to deal with a trauma that is in flight. But that specific task, as assigned by the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, that standard for triaging and reassessment, is to be taken over then by the triage nurse. So there are to be protocols in place to cover off this issue. And, of course, we rely on the expertise and the medical judgment of our front-line providers to assess when a traumatic situation requires more hands on deck and when the reassessment—dedicated reassessment nurse can go back to his or her post and continue that reassessment.

So if they've been reassigned to a trauma, that doesn't mean that reassessment is not occurring. It means it would be occurring by another individual during that time. That's the protocol in place, and, indeed, any kind of risk management concerning patient care and the assessment and reassessment of patients in an emergency room or, indeed, on a ward in the hospital, these kinds of risk management protocols would be the responsibility of the hospital, and they would do that in consultation with their medical professionals to ensure that the best possible care is being provided to individuals, whatever their circumstances.

Mr. Friesen: The government has recently, or more recently, announced new MRIs for the communities of both Selkirk and Dauphin. And I would like to ask the minister, if she would respond, to indicate what criteria is used to determine the priority for where MRIs should be located in Manitoba. Specifically, what I'm asking the minister to do is to comment on why Dauphin and Selkirk would have been prioritized and not, per se, Thompson. And on what basis is that decision made to rank priority for those projects and in the process of ranking, is DSM, is Diagnostic Services Manitoba actually consulted? Do they weigh in and provide an opinion on where they feel the best dollars would be spent to provide MRIs for Manitobans?

Ms. Oswald: I got a little involved in the first answer, and I neglected that I have some items that I can give to the member based on our last

discussion. Would it be permissible with him if I do that swiftly just in advance of answering his question?

Mr. Friesen: That'd be fine.

Ms. Oswald: There were some questions that were raised during Committee of Supply that—and I have an answer or five that I want to give him.

One question concerned the total number of physicians for Southern Health-Santé Sud RHA in the region four years ago versus today. In fact, I may suggest this might have come from one of his colleagues, so I would respectfully ask him to bear with me; I just can't recall. So I'll provide him with this answer, but I can tell him quickly that the total doctors four years ago were 120 in Central RHA and 45 in South Eastman for a total of 165. Currently, in 2013, there are 180 in the now Southern regional health authority.

I can also let the member know that private practice physicians obtain a billing number from Manitoba Health to practise provincially, so the numbers above might not, indeed, capture those family physicians in private practice, that is to say, family doctors, in the regions that aren't affiliated specifically with the RHA. And I can give that to the member.

I can also give to the member information concerning budget information for Interlake and North Eastman and Churchill. I have links for him to look at and can assure him that I've had them checked and that they are available for him to review, but I have the links for him to get that information. So I have that here.

I can also give to the member information concerning consultants who provided assistance during the amalgamation process and their compensation. There were two consultants for the amalgamation effort that provided assistance during the merger process in fiscal 2012-13. Felicity Chappell provided assistance on HR matters, and her fees during '12-13 were \$35,256. Avis Grey was the project manager for the amalgamations, and her fees during '12-13 were \$52,830. So the total external consultant costs were \$88,086, and I can give this to the member.

* (16:30)

I can also give to the member information concerning vacancy rates by month for Manitoba Health staff over the last two years and I can give to

the member 36 boards and councils to which I appoint members. There are numbers of members on each and this approximately 62 jillion other details the member asked for, this information is up to date, I believe, to the end of August, and so I provide that for the member as well.

On the subject of the issue of making determinations about diagnostics MRI in Dauphin and in Selkirk, certainly we work in partnership with our medical professionals and, indeed, with our RHAs in looking at travel patterns of patients, patients that travel out of RHAs for specific services with an effort to repatriate those services wherever—or those patients wherever possible to get those services closer to home. So there is certainly a discussion that goes on with the RHAs. There's a discussion that involves the Diagnostic Services Manitoba. They offer us advice and, of course, the Department of Health is engaged in making those determinations as well.

So there—we have, of course, as the member would likely know, many communities that advocate for MRI or CT or any number of capital investments, and we do rely on the community health assessments and the intimate knowledge that our regional health authorities have of their citizens to work to develop different strategies for putting infrastructure into different places in Manitoba. So it—there are multiple groups that are engaged in these discussions.

Mr. Friesen: What date is set for the MRI to be functioning in Selkirk?

Ms. Oswald: I would have to consult. I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I commit to the member to get back to him as soon as I can get it.

Mr. Friesen: Are there any interim plans to locate an MRI at Selkirk sooner rather than later? Are there efforts under way to accelerate? Even if the minister can't point to a definite date, are there efforts to expedite getting an MRI up and running in Selkirk and, if so, could she comment on that?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I thank the member for the question. Certainly when we look at diagnostic services across Manitoba, we pay close attention to the advice that our medical professionals are giving us. As well, of course, we pay attention to not only wait-lists, but, more importantly, one would argue, wait times for access to diagnostic services, and we really have ongoing conversations with all of our regions concerning any potential plans to put in temporary diagnostics where we feel they need to

happen. We had a surge in Winnipeg. Actually, we've had a couple of times where temporary MRI have been set up. There are times when MRI or CT scans run for extended hours, for example, during times when we see a surge. So to be fair, I would say that these conversations are going on almost all the time about when is the appropriate time to use a portable MRI or CT, when is not an appropriate time to do that.

Equally as important, I think, to let the member know, is a national dialogue that's going on concerning appropriateness of testing. And MRI scans tend to be at the centre of that discussion, I find, of late, where professionals are getting together to discuss the fact that, on one level, many physicians now view the MRI as the gold standard for diagnostics, while other medical professionals suggest that, actually, they really aren't, and that sometimes MRI scans are being called for when other modalities would be more appropriate.

I'm not a doctor, so I cannot speak to the veracity of this. But one item I hear consistently raised is the frequency with which MRI machines are used to diagnose back pain, where this might, in fact, not be the best journey. So there is a national dialogue. Certainly, it was something that was raised at the health innovation working group that was chaired by premiers Wall and Ghiz to really drill down into making sure that our medical professionals are leading others in terms of appropriateness. So, while at the same time we're looking at capacity building where appropriate—and there have been very preliminary conversations about whether or not something like that at Selkirk would be appropriate—those discussions are very early on, I would say, but they aren't non-existent. So there have been some discussions about that. At the same time that that conversation is going on, there are conversations about ensuring that the ordering is appropriate.

I know, just last—my last quick point. The member the other day raised an eyebrow at me, I guess, about allowing nurse practitioners to—*[interjection]* It might have been both eyebrows, I do concede that point—about nurse practitioners having access to ordering MRIs and having concerns about the numbers of tests that would be ordered. And it's a fair question, I would say, to ask, but I want to assure the member that lots of work has been done in analyzing the data for the ordering of MRI scans since we opened up that possibility to family doctors to order them directly instead of through a specialty. And what we are not seeing is a great surge of

inappropriate tests. We see doctors across the province ordering two or three scans for their patient load. And the assessment is actually very appropriate in terms of how these are being ordered. Where we do see a crush of ordering of MRIs tends to be with the specialists—also, arguably, the tougher group to tell not to order MRIs. So, in summary, don't worry about the NPs; they're going to be fine.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): One of the things that I've heard some concerns about recently is what appears to be a gap in critical incident reports, that under the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority you have not only hospitals and care homes, but you have clinics, Access clinics, private clinics, and you've got doctors' offices that the WRHA, when given a critical incident report from a clinic, is saying that this is not a hospital and therefore you can't file a 'clitical' incident.

So I would ask the Minister of Health, you know, what she is doing or going to do about this gap in coverage for critical incident reporting.

* (16:40)

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, we know that we were leaders in the nation in ensuring that critical incident reporting was hap—I believe we were second in Canada to make the reporting and investigating of critical incidents law. And the member will, I suspect, remember that he did support that, that law.

Since the mandatory reporting did start in 2006, we have worked with the RHAs and front-line providers to ensure that reporting and thorough investigations, with a view towards learning, happens, and happens in a way that is going to achieve the stated goal, which is, of course, to try to avoid errors.

We have, since the time that the legislation was brought forward, introduced new steps to create even more transparency, which would include: quarterly online critical incident reporting; annual patient safety reports, which I believe is the first of its kind in Canada; formalizing, as I said to the member opposite earlier, the ability to issue province-wide patient safety alerts; to ensure rapid province-wide responses would happen in the event of a major gap being identified; websites; and so forth.

And this critical incident protocol and all of the issues that I did mention, do, indeed, apply to our RHA-run facilities, which, indeed, would include clinics.

Private, fee-for-service doctors' clinics certainly do create a bit of a challenge. But, of course, there is always a path that a patient can pursue directly through the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I think as we learn more and more about the efficacy of critical incident reporting, there will be an appetite, not only in Manitoba, but, indeed, across the nation, for looking at ways to expand the tent under which critical incident legislation applies.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister.

It seems to me that the WRHA should have coverage of critical incidents in physicians' clinic as well as WRHA-run clinics, and that this would be essential in terms of getting a full picture of the medical errors or critical incidents that occur.

The second question I have for the minister relates to the Crisis Response Centre. How is the minister assessing whether, in fact, the Crisis Response Centre is effective? And the procedures at the moment for a person coming to the Crisis Response Centre is—do they need to go through a physician or a hospital, or can people go straight there?

Ms. Oswald: People can go directly to the Crisis Response Centre. Certainly, with a new entity, arguably, the first of its kind in Canada, there are multiple kinds of evaluation and data collection under way at present. That would include: paying close attention to the assessment times; paying close attention to the nature of the patients that are presenting at the Crisis Response Centre; paying close attention to capacity in dealing with the nature of the issues that present.

It's also worthwhile to reiterate that the mobile crisis unit is housed at the Crisis Response Centre. So should individuals elect to call, they can be dispatched to individual's homes in those circumstances that, the member well knows, would be more appropriate to have a visit from a professional than to try to transport a person that is in crisis.

There are circumstances that we will be looking at in a more fulsome way in terms of when and if it's appropriate for police to be dropping people at the CRC, and also paramedics.

Mr. Gerrard: Post-mort-partum depression has been much in the news and I just would ask the

minister what she is doing in the way of prevention of postpartum depression?

Ms. Oswald: Well, certainly, I think that this is a longer answer than anybody in this room is going to tolerate, least of all the clock at the Clerk's table. But, bearing in mind the time that I do have and being respectful of others that might have questions, I would, first of all, wholeheartedly agree with the member that, following the tragic case of the young mother and her children in our community that I think shook our entire country to the core, we have begun a new—an assessment of all of the possible interventions that are currently in place for new moms to identify if indeed there are gaps.

We know in some respects we are the envy of the nation in terms of the percentage, high—very, very high percentage of moms and young families that are visited immediately following birth. Certainly, I can say personally when I had my son, there was probably nothing—maybe aside from my husband, I should put on the record—that I appreciated more than the visit that I got from the public health nurse to provide me with comfort and advice, lots of it, and the level of contact that we have with public health nurses is, as I say, very, very significant. But we know that all of these factors together, the investments that we have in our Crisis Response Centre, the investments that we make in partnership with the Women's Health Clinic, the investments that we make in midwives, the investments that we've made in the birthing centre, which, of course, has seen thousands and thousands of prenatal and postnatal patient visits, the investments that we make through Families First, the investments that—towards flourishing in our regional health authorities, all of those together, education in our education system, education in our doctors' offices for one reason or another didn't save those babies and didn't help that mom.

And so, if the member is asking me, are we done, are we finished, are we satisfied? I don't think you can ever be satisfied when something like that happens and affects us all in the way that it did. So we are taking advice from our Women's Health Program. We're taking advice from our psychological experts to see if there are ways that we can be augmenting the kinds of services that we can provide, and at the heart of that—and I would be interested in the member's view on this—at the heart of that, I believe, is working across society to drive away the stigma associated with mental health concerns and mental health crises and letting young

moms know that it's okay to ask for help and it's okay to say I'm afraid or I'm anxious or I don't know what to do. I think that there's a lot of shame involved in the hearts and minds of women if they think they're not doing a good job and that they are afraid to speak up about that, and I think it's incumbent on all of us to find ways to break down the barriers and take away the stigma of mental health crises and extend a helping hand to those that might need it and to be able to identify that which people work very hard to hide.

So there's lots of work that's being done and likely everywhere there's lots of work that we can still do, and I'm very open to learning about what we could be doing.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one comment to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and then I've got a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief).

It would appear that there's a particular problem in doing—getting prompt catheterization for people who are, in particular, amputees. What happened with Rob Courchene waiting for seven hours—this is extremely painful and also dangerous. He was starting to vomit, and it would seem to me that the minister might well ask to some of the people in the WRHA to look at what the protocol is for making sure that those who are double amputees get their catheterization quickly, specifically.

* (16:50)

Now, my question for the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities has to do with the work that he's, I know, doing on the prevalence of FASD, and if he could give me an update on whether he has had success in being able to measure the prevalence of FASD.

Ms. Oswald: I guess—thank you, very—Mr. Chair, I know the member has addressed a question to one of my colleagues so I'll be brief.

I want to provide assurances to the member that when there are media reports or issues that are raised from members opposite or calls to my office concerning care that folks believe has not been appropriate, I've—I certainly do view it as my responsibility to review the details of cases as best as we're able to ascertain those details, ensure that all of the information that is presented is presented in an accurate and forthright way. And he has my 'ensurance' that I will do that in the case that he has raised.

And I certainly do take to heart what the member is saying about rapid access to care for all individuals that are needing assistance with catheter change or any such matters and also to seek ways to augment the various points of access for individuals to be receiving good primary care in this regard so that situations do not get to a point where emergency intervention is needed.

So I take to heart what the member is saying and, certainly, he has my assurance that this case and the issue at hand will be reviewed, and, you know, I thank the Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities for letting me use his time.

One, two, three, go.

Mr. Chief: Yes, first I'd like to thank the member for River Heights for the question. I also do want to say for the record that when it comes to FASD, I do thank the member for taking the time to meet with me and giving me some advice and people to connect with. I did appreciate the meeting that we did have.

As a—member probably knows, is that we do, of course, have a comprehensive strategy when it comes to FASD with regards to prevention and education and diagnosis, also support services. But a big part of that is, of course, the research, the data and making sure that as we do work on FASD that we can find ways to provide that to our service providers.

Manitoba actually—there is a Canada FASD partnership throughout the country. There has been a lot of emphasis in western Canada. I certainly have taken the time to meet with other ministers in other jurisdictions. Canada—Manitoba was able to take a lead in prevalence as it relates to FASD and looking at how our province can have a lead in the research around prevalence rates.

We continue to be a funder with the Canada FASD partnership and work with leading researchers, people who lead on collecting data on how we can measure prevalence. We produced a video in partnership with talking about prevalence rates in the partnerships. And I'll currently be, actually, talking more about it on a national scale with other partners in other provinces.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I'll ask one more. I—the member—the Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities, there's been an issue of, is there relationship between vitamin A and FASD. I wonder if the minister has looked to see whether there are

actually any deficiencies of vitamin A in people in Manitoba.

Mr. Chief: Yes, as it relates, you know, when we look at the overall strategy for FASD, a big part of what we do, of course, is looking at the various ways in which we can measure prevalence, the ways in which we can diagnose FASD, the various ways we can provide supports and services to families, and a big part of that is actually making sure that we're investing in, not only research, but organizations that can provide service.

What I can do is—for the member from River Heights is to get some information on FASD as it relates to vitamin A so we can give him—so I can give him a more detailed—and more information on it.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I do also want to put a few questions on the record. Over the last weeks and months we've been discussing with the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, the NDP member for Kildonan, about issues that concern Manitoba Hydro ratepayers.

We've seen the highest rate increase in the history of Manitoba, 8 per cent in one year, and I think hydro ratepayers are concerned, especially since under this minister and under this NDP government's rule we now are going to have a regime where hydro rates are going to increase at a minimum of 4 per cent a year, and that's a minimum. Considering that one year we saw an 8 per cent increase, most—I think most hydro ratepayers are concerned that perhaps it will be more than 4 per cent. But for sure they know that for the foreseeable future it's going to be 4 per cent every year, which if you look at statistics you will find that that is far greater than the cost of living increases most people get on their paycheque, if they get an increase.

And people are falling behind and I think ratepayers have a right to be concerned. And they have a concern about accountability, and they see where monies are being forwarded and nothing is there to show for. In fact, we have seen many families and leaders of First Nations come forward and present documents. They've been in the Legislature; they've been in the gallery; they've been present and wanting answers, and we have a minister who refuses to answer. He believes that first you point blame at the federal government; then you point blame at everybody else in the province, and you try to blame anybody down the food chain and whatever you do, you do whatever you can not to

take any kind of responsibility, and that is, I think, a concern.

I've tabled for this House photos of sewer and water, and I don't wish to spoil anybody's supper, but we're actually talking feces and urine backing up into bathtubs after a sewer and water system had been committed to by this minister and by his government, and to date there is nothing there. No money has been forwarded. There is nothing there. And I think that hydro ratepayers understand that there are obligations and contracts that have to be fulfilled, and they appreciate that. They appreciate that some lands had to be flooded for hydroelectric dams and for that there was to be compensation. What troubles them is the fact that monies are forwarded under this minister and under this NDP government and nothing, nothing to show for it.

So I think, probably, the question that is on the minds of hydro ratepayers, I think the question that's on the mind of TCN First Nations and leadership, they would like to know: Where is the \$7 million or, conversely, where is the Keeyask Centre, the TCN Keeyask Centre? Thank you.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I think the ratepayers in Manitoba are very pleased to see that our rates are the lowest in the country, and that rather than going to market rates, as the member opposite wants to do, and/or privatize Manitoba Hydro, they're happy to see that we have standard rates that are going to be produced.

The member's been exploiting the issue of TCN for some time by putting some information that he received from one of the councillors in TCN who is unhappy with the way that things are going in that community, and he's been putting forward documents, that same document from the same person on a regular basis. The member ought to phone the chief. I've advised him to phone the chief. He's afraid to phone the chief. He's afraid to get the truth, and it is unfortunate that he's causing an issue in this House that doesn't necessarily have to be an issue. We have the lowest rates in the country. We will—

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

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

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