

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 10, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act (Council on Post-Secondary Education Act Amended)

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that—the Attorney General, that Bill 2, The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act (Council on Post-Secondary Education Act Amended); Loi sur la protection de l'accessibilité aux études universités (modification de la Loi sur le Conseil de l'enseignement postsecondaire), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Selby: This bill assures affordability, accessibility and quality within our universities. It establishes a clear process to be followed related to professional fees, ancillary fees and other fees to ensure that there are protections for students from unreasonable increases while providing three-year funding to universities to provide predictability for their planning.

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

**Bill 20—The Planning Amendment Act
(Inland Port Area)**

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I move, seconded by the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 20, The Planning Amendment Act (Inland Port Area); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: From the outset, all CentrePort participants have agreed that a consistent and streamlined development approval process is critical to the success of the inland port. The CentrePort lands are both in Rosser and in Winnipeg, and currently each municipality follows a different

development plan process—or approval process, sorry.

The Planning Act provides authority for the Province to establish a special planning area by regulation and identify areas of special provincial or regional significance. When an area is designated as a special planning area, no development can take place in the area unless it is consistent with the planning procedures and requirements identified in the special planning area regulation.

Currently, the special planning area provisions of The Planning Act do not apply to the city of Winnipeg. This bill will amend The Planning Act to apply to special planning area provisions to CentrePort lands within the city of Winnipeg. Thank you.

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

Any further bills?

PETITIONS

**Personal Care Homes and Long-Term
Care—Steinbach**

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

The growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and from family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by J. Giesbrecht, L. Wiebe, H. Reimer and hundreds of other Manitobans.

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

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH No. 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by T. Kun, K. Poncsak and S. Burton and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Access to Clean Water for Manitoba First Nations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Many Manitobans living in First Nations communities do not have the same access to clean water as the majority of Manitobans.

Manitobans living in First Nations communities with poor sanitation experience poor health.

Lack of access to clean tap water will continue to increase health risks for Manitobans in First Nations communities.

Too little has been done in the last 12 years by the provincial government to ensure all First Nations communities in Manitoba have adequate water infrastructure.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier consider advocating and partnering with the federal government to ensure all First Nation communities have access to clean running water for all their homes.

To request the Premier to consider working closely with the federal government and First Nations communities to address and erase the massive water infrastructure gap that exists on many First Nations communities in Manitoba.

J. Levy, B. Pritchard, M. Bayer and many, many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Manitoba Family Services and Labour for 2012-2013.

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I am pleased to table the 2012-2013 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Yes, I'm tabling 12 copies of the Order Paper questions as contained on the Order Paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Day

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note the upcoming Manitoba Day on May 12th. This year, we not only recognize the 142nd anniversary of the

province of Manitoba being created, there are also some other important anniversaries worth noting.

It is the 200th anniversary of the Selkirk settlers arriving in Manitoba, and a special exhibit commemorating that is on display at the Manitoba Museum.

There are numerous other displays and events occurring in recognition of Manitoba Day throughout the province. This year is the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the Town of The Pas. One hundred years ago also saw the final expansion of the boundaries of the province of Manitoba to include northern Manitoba. The postage-stamp province reached the 60th parallel and the Hudson Bay. Until then, northern Manitoba was part of the Northwest Territories.

Northern Manitoba has a long history of resource development, sadly, much of which did not involve or benefit the residents of that region. This government has changed the rules of engagement and will continue to partner with communities to maximize local benefits from such development.

* (13:40)

Even today, much of the region's untapped resources and strategic assets, such as the only northern port in the country, have not been fully considered. Our provincial Northern Development Strategy works with the communities that lack proper infrastructure and job opportunities that exist elsewhere.

Earlier today, at a ceremony honouring the 100th anniversary, we heard Métis musician J.J. Lavallee perform for the first time in public his new song, "Home is Manitoba," a remarkable and appropriate tribute to the significance of this celebration. University of Winnipeg president Dr. Lloyd Axworthy and Dr. Gerry Friesen both spoke on the development of the north. As well, the provincial archives have put on display in the Rotunda of the Legislature some historic maps that show the evolution of the boundaries of this province.

We were pleased to hear from descendants of the 1912 Olympic athlete, Joe Keeper, from Norway House. Following his proud record at the Stockholm, Sweden, Olympics, he went on to serve Canada in World War I.

Northern Manitoba has a long record of fostering world-class athletes and war veterans who have served this country with distinction in war and

peacetime missions around the world. It is particularly fitting that we recognize these veterans today as this tradition continues. The father of the member from The Pas was one such veteran from World War II, while the member's son, Frank Charles Whitehead, also had a distinguished record of military service. My own executive assistant, Chad Anderson, in the visitors' gallery today, has served in the United States Marine Corps and has been on numerous tours around the world, including in Iraq in 2008-2009.

Personally, I've been honoured to represent most of the east-side communities as the member of Rupertsland, now Kewatinook, since 1993. I have seen first-hand the poverty and challenges many in our province face. In spite of these challenges, we are extremely thankful for living in a prosperous province like Manitoba. The spirit and determination of our citizens is what makes our province a great place to live.

Our government recognizes the value and the importance of northern Manitoba and pledges itself to see the north truly achieve its dreams. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today in response to the minister's statement commemorating the 100th anniversary of the final extension of Manitoba's boundaries. I certainly appreciated the invitation to attend today's event at the Legislature marking this historic occasion.

As the minister has noted, arriving at our present-day boundaries took many years. When Manitoba was established in 1870, it was one-eighteenth the size it is today and was affectionately known as the postage-stamp province. During the next few years, thousands of settlers came to Manitoba to take up homesteads offered to them by the Canadian government. The growth of the west led to the decision to enlarge Manitoba. In 1881 the boundaries were extended to include about five times as much land as the original province. Final expansion north took place on May 12th, 1912, giving us the present-day boundaries.

Marking this anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of northern Manitoba and northern people to our identity. Manitoba's early economic and cultural roots are deeply tied to the north with the development of the fur trade and interaction between First Nations people and European traders. Our Aboriginal communities have

formed the bedrock of northern Manitoba. They have been willing partners in initiatives aimed at conserving the environment, fostering economic growth and development, and preserving their culture. Today, the keystone province is a symbol of strength among Canada's continental arch, a place where residents can freely pursue their interests within the parameters of the law established by this fine institution.

This celebration provides an opportunity for Manitobans, who now inhabit every corner of this land, to reflect on our past and revel in our future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join others in celebrating 142 years of Manitoba history.

History actually goes back a long time before that, but 142 years ago was when we became a province. And there have been remarkable achievements in the 142 years since then, and we are here to celebrate those. And, in particular, we're here to celebrate those which occurred in the north, because it's also the 100th anniversary of when the boundaries were extended up to the 60th parallel and to the Hudson Bay.

But we also need to remember that there are still many in this province who are suffering. And outside the Legislature just before this Legislature sat, and, I suspect, continue, are representatives from many First Nations communities who were very severely affected by the flood last year, and many of them are still not able to live in their homes and communities.

And so, even as we celebrate today, Mr. Speaker, we need to remember those who continue to suffer because of the circumstances and because of what's happened in the last year. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Government Justification

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Regular Manitobans are angry, and quite rightly so, about the fact that as far as we know to date, four NDP insiders have received preferential

treatment in getting free tickets to Winnipeg Jets games through provincial Crown corporations: the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh), the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), and now we know, the long-serving chair of Manitoba Hydro, hand-picked by the Premier to play that role. All received privileged access to tickets and free tickets when they were originally issued.

At the same time as NDP insiders are getting free access to Jets games, this Premier brings in a budget with the most punitive tax increase in a quarter century on everyday working Manitobans, the same working, average Manitobans who desperately would've loved the opportunity to attend Jets games.

What does the Premier say to those regular Manitobans who are dealing with the most punitive tax increase in a quarter century as his pals line up for the Jets games?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I say two things to the members opposite and the members of the Chamber.

First and foremost, the policy of allowing anybody who's on a board or any minister or any MLA—that matter, to receive professional sports hockey tickets in Manitoba, for the first time in the history of this province, that has been put an end to by the members on this side of the House. That's—that is the—that's the big change. And we still make policy for the members on the other side of the House and how they will set standards for their own caucus.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, with respect to affordability for Manitobans and keeping Manitoba as an affordable place to live, the member might recall that just yesterday we had a minister that brought in a bill that will ensure that Manitoba's auto insurance rates, home heating rates and electricity rates will remain the lowest in the country over the next four years, the lowest in the country.

He will also have heard a member stand up today, the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby), that is bringing in legislation to ensure that tuition fees at post-secondary institutions do not go higher than the rate of inflation. These are real measures to help all Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Again, getting past the Premier's rhetoric, the reality is this: after 12 years in power, the NDP government policy is penalize everyday

working Manitobans with the highest tax increase in a quarter century as NDP insiders get taxpayer-funded, front-row access to Winnipeg Jets games.

I want to ask the Premier if he will explain to Manitobans who are working hard to pay their taxes, who he promised he would protect with no tax increases in the recent election campaign, how he justifies piling on the most punitive tax increase in 25 years, the most punitive increase since Vic Schroeder was in government, at the same time as Vic Schroeder's getting free tickets to Jets games.

Mr. Selinger: I think the Leader of the Opposition's skipping over some very important decisions that were made in this budget.

The basic personal exemption for every Manitoban has been increased by \$250. The basic personal exemption for every spouse in Manitoba has been increased by \$250. The basic personal exemption for every dependant in Manitoba has been increased by \$250. The member did not acknowledge that in his description of the budget.

* (13:50)

The educational property tax credit for senior citizens is at the highest it's ever been in the history of Manitoba at \$1,025. Our sales tax remains the second lowest in the country. Our gas tax remains the second lowest in the country.

Manitoba maintains its position as one of the most affordable places to live anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the reality of what's contained in the budget, by the Premier's own admission, is that government revenue is going up because they're increasing taxes on working Manitobans.

They're increasing the gas tax, Mr. Speaker. They're increasing vehicle registration fees. They're expanding the base of the PST. They're increasing a range of other fees and taxes on everyday Manitobans. And, in fact, the tax increase in this budget represents about \$184 million, which happens to be equivalent to about \$160 for every man, woman, and child in Manitoba.

Is it just a coincidence, Mr. Speaker, that the \$160 increase in taxes on the people of Manitoba is equivalent to one Jets ticket for his friends across the way?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the increase in the basic personal exemption for every individual, the increase in the basic personal exemption of \$250 for every dependent and every spouse, all of those measures were taken to ensure Manitobans remain one of the most affordable places to live in the country.

The increase in the property tax credit for seniors is very different than what happened when members opposite were in government. They took a property tax credit of \$325 and reduced it to \$250. We now have a basic property tax credit for every Manitoban of \$750 and for seniors, \$1,025.

The difference is dramatic, Mr. Speaker: \$1.2 billion of tax reductions over our term in office, while members opposite, when they were in office, nickelled and dimed Manitobans every year; their personal disposable income declined every year they were in office. Personal disposable income in Manitoba over the last decade has continuously grown.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Access to Winnipeg Jets Season Tickets

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, of the 1,408 Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Winnipeg Jets tickets, 176 are unaccounted for; well, that is, except for the tickets that went to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation. Of the 440 Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Winnipeg Jets tickets, 320 are unaccounted for; well, that is, except for the tickets that went to the Minister for Conservation.

Can the minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission tell us who the other Winnipeg Jets tickets went to, or could he just table the list today?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): This is a good opportunity, again, to remind the member for St. Paul, and all members opposite, that it is this government that is moving forward strongly with a very fair framework that would govern these kinds of situations, Mr. Speaker, that would provide clarity for not only members in this Legislature, all members in this Legislature, but also the Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first year with our Winnipeg Jets back home where they belong. I think everyone has learned a lot about that transition to an NHL team. We're going to learn from that and make

sure that we have a framework in place that is fair for Manitobans.

**Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation
Access to Winnipeg Jets Season Tickets**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, Mr. Speaker, they created the problem and now they have to fix it. Well, of course, they're going to come out with a policy; they're the ones who got so deep in the glue that would be expected of them.

Of the 340 Manitoba Public Insurance Jets tickets, 168 are unaccounted for; well, that is, except for the tickets that went to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

Can the Minister of Justice tell us who the other Winnipeg Jets tickets went to, or will he just table the list?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): I suppose the other way to look at this—that if we had followed the advice of members opposite, the Jets wouldn't have come home in the first place and there wouldn't be this problem, I guess, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member for St. Paul has asked a question. I think he's entitled to hear an answer.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I noted—I noticed they're very touchy about that topic.

The fact of the matter is a lot of people are very excited about the Winnipeg Jets being here. They're looking forward to—they're looking forward—I'm sure we're all looking forward to a good Blue Bomber season, on both sides of the House.

What we are also looking forward to, and I hope members opposite are also looking forward to, a policy that is clear, that is fair, that is good for Manitobans, that supports professional sports in this town, but at the same time ensures that the tickets that are available are fairly distributed to people who deserve them, not—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

**Manitoba Hydro
Access to Winnipeg Jets Season Tickets**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): All of the 176 Manitoba Hydro Winnipeg Jets tickets are unaccounted for; well, that is, with the exception of the tickets that went to the former NDP Cabinet minister Vic Schroeder.

In the freedom of information request, Manitoba Hydro states that, and I quote: Your request is refused. No definitive list of ticket usage exists. The non-existence of the requested record is a deemed refusal.

Just for the record, Manitoba Hydro clearly states that the list is non-existent. However, yesterday in the House, the minister responsible seemed to have knowledge of who did and did not use Winnipeg Jets tickets. Clearly, he has a list of who got the Winnipeg Jets tickets.

Can the minister clarify that the list of Jet tickets recipients does exist, and will he table it today?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): It's pretty clear to me that on CJOB the other morning, the member for St. Paul was pretty clear when he said that MLCC and others use them for promotion and that kind of stuff and we have no problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, he has one statement, one position outside of the House, and he comes into the House with, all of a sudden, a more righteous position. I'm not going to engage in the kind of speculation that the member opposite is doing.

What I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, is what we've been consistently saying about this all along, and that is this: This government, not the government previous, not the government that Conservatives could have done something about this situation, not that approach, our approach is to put a framework in place that is fair, a framework in place that is—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

**Cabinet Ministers
Payment for Winnipeg Jets Season Tickets**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): We know that three NDP Cabinet ministers jumped the line to get free Jets tickets, those tickets paid for by hard-working taxpayers of this province. The Finance Minister says all the tickets that were given to the ministers were paid back, but he will not tell us when.

When did the ministers pay back for these tickets, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): Well, it's strange that the member for Morris makes two assumptions. First, she assumes, incorrectly, that the taxpayers paid for these tickets. Then she assumes that the tickets were paid for by the ministers. Well, Mr. Speaker, she's right that the ministers paid for the tickets. The ministers paid for the tickets. For the member for Morris to try to portray it any other way is just incorrect.

But this does lead back to the main fact, and that is that this government is bringing forward a framework that will be fair, a framework that will be clear, and there will be no doubt that ministers and MLAs and executives and board of directors with the Crown corporations will be—will not be offered, in the first place, these tickets, and if they are, they will refuse these tickets.

Mrs. Taillieu: These three NDP Cabinet ministers did get free Jets tickets paid for by taxpayers of Manitoba. On April 23rd, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) admitted in committee that he took Jets tickets from Manitoba Lotteries for the January 12th game. Just like other ministers, he would not say when he paid for the tickets.

Was it before the issue became public on March 21st? When was the cheque written?

* (14:00)

Mr. Struthers: Well, again, I would ask the member for Morris to be very careful in the way she terms her questions. She is incorrect to imply, incorrect to maintain, she's incorrect to state, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this Cabinet had tickets paid for by the people of Manitoba. That is incorrect. I wish she would get that right. But I understand it doesn't fit into the narrative, the political narrative that the members opposite want to promulgate, but the facts don't back up the suppositions made by the member for Morris.

Mr. Speaker, we are going—we are bringing forward a policy that's going to be clear. We're the first government to do that. The members opposite wouldn't do it. Members opposite have had the chance over the last few days to say they'd even support us in this, and they've remained quiet on—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, while this government was busy raising taxes on fees on hard-working Manitobans, they were at the front of the line to get Jets tickets. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh) admitted yesterday in Estimates that he got four Jets tickets from MLCC. He said he paid for them in early April, but the Jets game he attended was on February 7th. This minister had no intention of paying back these tickets until it became public that he got those free Jets tickets.

Will this minister admit he was going to use the tickets for free until he just got caught?

Mr. Struthers: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, to try to make the connection between tax increases and Jets tickets is incorrect as well. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) just made it very clear, and given the math that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) put forward, it's very clear that Manitobans come ahead in Budget 2012. We have a basic personal exemption worth \$250 over the next four years, for a total of a thousand dollars.

The facts of the matter are this government will be the first to bring forward a framework that will deal with all of the complaints that the minister—members opposite have and it'll be a fair framework that ensures that Manitobans will have access to Jets tickets and to Blue Bomber tickets.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Regional Development Corporations Funding Cancellations

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, last year in Agriculture Estimates, the minister for Agriculture said that the regional development corporations were really knocking the ball out of the park. Yet, on April 30th this year, out of the blue, seven regional development corporations received a letter saying their funding is cut by this government. For years, these economic development corporations have contributed to the economic and social well-being of communities across the province. They've been innovative, they've been well managed, they've been well organized and they've done it all with negligible funding from this government.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Minister of Agriculture axed the funding to these seven regional development corporations when his predecessor acknowledged the fine work that they're doing?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Thank you for the question being raised by the MLA.

I'm very proud to say that regional development corporations have done their job and we've been in existence in the 1960s. And as you know, you know, as time moves along changes have to be addressed, and today the government has chosen to readdress the issue brought forward and we want to continue working with the local developments. But I also want to ensure the member that we have alternative agencies and alternative plans to move forward with the community development corporations.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the Dear John letter that's sent to the seven regional development corporations says, Manitoba remains committed to the front-line rural economic development services. These seven RDCs received on average a measly 70,000 bucks from this NDP government. They operated on a shoestring budget, and yet with vision and determination and co-operation and faith that \$70,000 was multiplied and went to tourism, business development and project management.

Mr. Speaker, how can this minister write a letter saying that he's committed to regional development for rural Manitobans when he's busy pulling the rug out from under them?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd like to inform the member also—maybe should do some research. As I said earlier in my comment is the fact that we do have alternative programs that are in place much sooner that's being offered through the previous. And I'll indicate a couple of them: There is the rural entrepreneurship assistant program through MASC; there is Canadian Manitoba Business Service Centre; Business Start's loan program; young entrepreneur—or youth entrepreneur programs; but also, Canadian Youth Business Foundation. So what more can we do? We're trying to be accountable. Thank you.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I assure the minister that I've done my research; on page 135 of the Estimates, it indicates \$490,000 cut from this program and only \$97,000 restored under a new program, a drop of almost \$500,000.

Mr. Speaker, on April the 19th, this Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood up and he said, it's a partnership and the partnership is working; don't break it if it's working. Yet grant assistance for the RDCs has been

cut more than in half while ministers are focusing on more pressing matters like getting Jets tickets.

This program represented only a tiny fraction of Agriculture Department's budget, but rather than cut his department's rising administration costs, this minister cuts a valuable program that's having a working effect, strengthening rural economies and benefiting a larger economy.

Mr. Minister, it's not too late. Will he do the right thing today? Will he restore the funding, put his money where his mouth is and send a message that he is committed to economic development after all?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Again, Mr. Speaker—and I just want to ensure that we do have staff in place at our MAFRI staff office who assist, who have—but when we want to talk about economic development in the province of Manitoba, have—has the opposition forgot what happened to the Canadian Wheat Board? How many 'josses' have been lost because of the Canadian Wheat Board? We want to talk about the upcoming other issues; community pastures. Are you going to affect other people in the working environment in the rural province of Manitoba? I do respect the rural development corporations, but I think there's other issues that we need to address, and I'm—as Agriculture Minister, I will work forward to helping out the Canadian board people that are going to be laid off, as we read recently in the newspaper. Three hundred people will be losing jobs this month. So is the members across not concerned about that as well?

Thank you, minister.

Flooding (Lake Manitoba) Regulated Lake Level Standards

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the regulated levels of Lake Manitoba are supposed to be between 810.5 and 812.5. On May the 7th, the lake was still at 813.4. In 2000—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members, please, to allow the member for Agassiz to pose his question.

Mr. Briese: In 2011, this NDP government intentionally raised Lake Manitoba to 817.5. That decision caused widespread flooding. Recently the NDP said that 817.5 is the new standard for Lake Manitoba and that residents, First Nations, farmers and ranchers must build beyond the 817.5 limit. This

week there has been more confusion over what the final level will be.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit today that the flood was man-made and intentional and that the new lake levels have nothing to do with reality? Will he admit that he has no clue what the levels of Lake Manitoba should be going forward?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite would want to reflect on what happened last year. We had historic flooding on the Souris River; we had three crests on the Souris River. We had historic flooding last year on the Assiniboine River in the range of one in 300–one-in-350-year flood. And it wasn't just in Manitoba; it was in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and I'd remind the member opposite what happened to our neighbours to the south, and they're still dealing with the terrible flooding in Minot, North Dakota.

Mr. Speaker, we had unprecedented rainfall in many areas of the province in May, which already added to significant conditions. So I don't think the member would want to put on the record anything other than the fact we were dealing with historic flooding conditions last year, including on Lake Manitoba.

And what we do, Mr. Speaker, after every flood, we rebuild; we make sure that we build to the flood of record. I've already put on the record that while that's the interim level, we also have the review which is taking place this year in terms of the lake levels. There may be a permanent level that is different from that, but I wouldn't want the member opposite to underestimate the degree to which we as Manitobans dealt with unprecedented, historic flooding last year. But we will meet that challenge.

*(14:10)

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the minister that they raised the levels of that lake to protect other properties.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the government said Lake Manitoba flood victims have to rebuild to 822 feet. This week, the minister reiterated that the Lake Manitoba regulation review committee will be making recommendations on operating ranges. The committee may well recommend a level that is lower than what the Province is currently advising flood victims to rebuild to.

On Tuesday the reeve of the RM of Grahamdale told the CBC that local governments like hers have difficulty advising people how to proceed because it's unclear what the NDP government is going to set the lake levels at.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister assure flood victims that the new operating levels for Lake Manitoba is established sooner than later so they can start rebuilding?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, perhaps as we head into Manitoba Day, to remind the member opposite of some of the history in this province of dealing with floods.

The historic flood of 1950 led to a commitment to mitigation, Mr. Speaker, but we didn't stop there. When we had the historic flood of 1997, the provincial government worked with the federal government and municipalities and people in the Red River Valley. And what happened in 2009? We had flooding that was worse than 1950, with 100,000 evacuees, 10,000 homes destroyed, and not one home was flooded in the Red River Valley.

What was the response in '97? It was to build up the flood defences, which we will be doing, Mr. Speaker, following this flood. But it was also to bring in the requirement that there was a rebuilding of the historic flood level plus two feet. The two go hand in hand.

We'll be doing the same in Lake Manitoba, and we will be working on further mitigation to protect—

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

Need for Second Outlet

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, in all those other cases he just referred to, the water wasn't diverted intentionally by mankind. They turned the Assiniboine diversion at Portage into the new Assiniboine River. They changed the whole path of the water.

Mr. Speaker, the millions that will be spent to raise properties to new levels still does nothing to protect the damaged hay land, pasture and cropland. Farmers and ranchers need to know if there will be a plan that will allow their operations to be viable once again.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government not do the right thing? Remove the risk of a 2011 flood ever happening again. Allow the residents around Lake Manitoba to start rebuilding their lives and

livelihoods. Build a second outlet out of Lake Manitoba.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know if the member perhaps was aware of what's happening, but you can't separate Lake Manitoba from Lake St. Martin. What we did this year is we built an outlet from Lake St. Martin, which helped reduce the flooding levels by one and a half feet already up to this point on Lake St. Martin and 2.8 feet on Lake Manitoba. The issue of an additional outlet will be part of the consideration by the task force that is reviewing future flood mitigation.

But we will not, Mr. Speaker, do anything other than what we did last year in 2011, that is, work with the affected communities. We built the outlet last year. We targeted November 1st; we built it on time, on budget. We've already made a difference for Lake Manitoba, but we won't stop until we get—rebuilt the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba. I wish the members opposite would be on board with that historic rebuilding effort.

Flooding

Property Inspection and Recovery Process

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of residents around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin are still out of their homes due to this government's man-made flooding. Many are now entering their second year of being out of their homes.

Other flood victims need property inspections before they can begin rebuilding, another process that's been held up for months and months. The government finally awoke from its slumber and hired a few more inspectors this week, and that's cold comfort to flood victims waiting to rebuild their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister responsible: Why has the inspection process become so cumbersome under his government's watch? Flood victims deserve answers.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to reflect that the first stage of dealing with any flood situation is to be fighting the flood. That's what we did last year, and I'm pleased that the member's talking about additional areas like Lake St. Martin, because I certainly would warn again that if we only talk about one lake instead of the other, the two have to be dealt concurrently.

But what I want to stress is we've already seen a significant drop in the lake level. A lot of that, Mr. Speaker, was because the building of the outlet. That's when you can get back into properties. This is the time in where—of year when you do it.

And we've got 30,000 claims, Mr. Speaker. We have brought in additional staff. The announcement earlier this week was on top of staff that are already being brought in. This is historic flood recovery. It's going to be triple the number of claims of 1997, the biggest recovery since 1950, but we are going to work with Manitobans until we get every Manitoban back—back to normal.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, the city of Minot, North Dakota, suffered severe flooding in 2011, as well, and the minister has referred to it. But their residents have seen much more co-ordinated action in terms of compensation flowing, damaged buildings being removed so rebuilding can start, and the Army Corps of Engineers is working on dikes and diversions to prevent future damage. Manitoba flood victims look at the situation south of the border and wonder where—why we haven't seen the same level of commitment here.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Why has it taken so long to get the needed inspectors in place so the rebuilding process can begin?

Mr. Ashton: The member opposite may want to take a drive down to Minot and ask some of the flooded homeowners what level of compensation is available in the United States compared to Canada; it's approximately \$35,000. Here in Manitoba, it's over \$200,000, Mr. Speaker.

And I would put on the record that we certainly wish our neighbours in North Dakota well. We certainly wish our neighbours in Saskatchewan who faced historic flooding last year.

And, I want to remind the member, this is historic flooding. But what do we do as a government, Mr. Speaker, what do we do as province? We pull together; we make sure we have assistance and compensation in place.

I don't think the member opposite would want Manitobans to have the Minot, North Dakota, standard for flood protection. I would hope people in Minot would have the kind of coverage people in Manitoba have.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, Québec experienced serious flooding in the spring and summer of 2011, as well, yet the recovery process had moved along quickly enough that there has—some appraisers now—some appraisers are now being sought to work here in long-delayed Manitoba flood claims.

The minister says he understands that people want to move forward with the rebuilding process but his own government has created many roadblocks. It taking months to get property inspections and months to deliver compensation cheques. And, there are still tremendous uncertainty over what the regulated level of the lake will actually be.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Can the minister assure Manitoba victims that this recovery process is actually speeding up, or this will be another smokescreen and—towards another broken promise?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to stress one thing: When it came to the challenge of 2011, the clear message from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin was to reduce the lake levels. By working day in, day out, 24-7, we have now reduced the lake level of Lake Manitoba by 2.8 feet over—at what it would have been and Lake St. Martin by 1.5 feet. So, we've met that challenge.

In terms of the rebuilding, I want to stress again that we've already paid out \$650 million, either in flood-fighting costs or in terms of compensation.

By the way, we're working co-operatively with the federal government. Thus far, we've received \$50 million from the federal government in terms of that. And, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Portage la Prairie has asked a serious question and I'm sure he deserves to hear an answer to his question. I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Please allow the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to complete his response.

Mr. Ashton: We listened to the people around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and have reduced the lake levels. And one of the reasons we've appointed the Lake Manitoba regulation review, is the people have also said we need to review that, in the light of the experience of 2011, and the fact that we can now make a difference in terms of lake levels because of action that was already taken by this government. So we've been there in terms of the flood fighting and,

Mr. Speaker, even though it's historic with 30,000 claims, we'll be there in the recovery as well.

First Nations Communities Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Today, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg revealed the soaring rates of homelessness in our city under this NDP government. Also, under the Premier's watch, there's a soaring rate of homelessness in northern First Nations communities because of the lack of adequate housing.

Additionally, there are 1,400 Manitoba homes with no running water. Hundreds of children live in overcrowded conditions with outdoor toilets or only a slop bucket in their home instead of a toilet. Is it any wonder that the dropout rate on First Nations is a staggering 50 per cent?

* (14:20)

I ask the Premier: When will he take the lead and budget the dollars to start retrofitting northern homes so that they will have running water?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member has asked this question in previous days in this Legislature, and we've indicated to him that we've put money into the training side of the budget to allow First Nations people, in the communities where they lack running water and sewage treatment, to get the training they need to be involved in doing the projects.

We've indicated that we've invested in the road on the east side so they can have access to services and goods at a lower price. We have things called the Frontiers Foundation that are in there, testing new technologies to provide clean water and sewage in those communities, and we look to support them as well. All measures are being taken on this side of the House to help the people in those communities.

The member knows full well that when he was a federal minister, that he had the opportunity to invest, through the federal budget, in those First Nations communities in clean water and clean sewage, and he didn't do a thing.

Government Response to Flood Evacuees

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, back in the '90s it was an Ontario-Canada agreement, but there was never a Manitoba-Canada agreement, and in 12 years under his watch, there hasn't been a Manitoba-Canada

agreement to put clean water, running water, in First Nations communities.

Mr. Speaker, today on the steps of the Legislature, were many Manitobans who do not live in their homes because of flooding on their land caused by artificial flooding, as a result of this government's actions. Too many have not been able to have proper schooling as a result. There are continued problems at the exact same time the Premier was on the other side of the Legislature in a photo op.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Did the Premier actually go and speak to the people whose lives have been so devastated by the choices his government has made? Did he bother to meet with the families who've come here, whose lives have been so profoundly devastated by his government's actions?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I have met with members affected by the flood, including First Nations members on several occasions. We have extended very specific help to them. That's why we're building temporary housing, brand new housing, in Gypsumville, Manitoba, so that people can get out of hotel rooms and as close to home as possible as quickly as possible. That's why we bought the Halaburta [*phonetic*] lands, so that if they want to rebuild in the Lake St. Martin area, they can rebuild on higher land outside of the range of potential flooding. That's why we built the channel as—on an emergency basis last summer and into the fall and got permission from the federal government to declare it an emergency public works project.

And we went ahead and built that project, which has resulted in Lake Manitoba being down nearly three feet lower than it would have otherwise been, and Lake St. Martin being down a foot and a half than it—lower than it would have otherwise been. We've taken action, the member sits there and ignores the fact that in the '90s, when the deal was being done in Ontario, as a minister in Manitoba, he did nothing.

Mr. Speaker: The member for River Heights, final supplementary.

Child Poverty Reduction Strategies

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Time and time again, this Premier has failed to stand up for the people of Manitoba. There are people demonstrating, homeless as we speak, because this Premier hasn't acted. Today, Manitoba has among the worst test

scores in the nation, including math, science, and reading. Has it occurred to the Premier, with so many Manitoba children living in poverty, including the hundreds with no running water, in overcrowded homes, that their ability to learn is profoundly affected by the policy choices his government has made.

I ask the Premier: Why has the Premier spent millions of dollars over the years advertising the NDP and its Crown corporations instead of effectively addressing child hunger and the children and the children's needs in this province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the first and most significant thing we did to address hunger for children in Manitoba is we added back the National Child Benefit to all families in Manitoba. It was completely clawed back by the leaders—by the members of the opposition, ensuing—including some members that were in Cabinet that time. That's how they dealt with the recession. They clawed back benefits from the lowest income Manitobans in this province.

And when the member was a—was in the federal Cabinet, they ended the Canada assistance program, which required all Canadians to have the necessities of life. They took that standard away from federal-provincial cost sharing and social assistance rates.

So, if the member is serious about addressing crime, let's start with the tremendous erosion of programs that was left in this province by the members of the Conservative Party and the federal Liberal Party. We put the National Child Benefit back; we've put housing in place; we've put programs in place for families; and we ensured that 57 per cent of lone parents in this province were lifted out of poverty.

Crompton Greaves Power Systems Signing of Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I have been very patiently awaiting any questions from our worthy opponents on the futuristic development of our province on economy and jobs.

So I would like to really remind the House we are here to build our province also, and I would really appreciate the House to hear something from the very, very hard-working Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines on the recent announcement of

signing an MOU with Winnipeg-based Crompton Greaves Power Systems, which is one of the top electric transformer manufacturers in the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add, Manitoba has been very successful attracting the international investment community for the last few years. It takes time—

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, in addition to world-class companies like Rolls-Royce that has said Manitoba's the best place in the world to do business, we were very pleased to sign an MOU with Crompton Greaves and its holding company from India, a company that, in fact, has assets of four—sales of \$4 billion, who also want to expand their business in Manitoba where they provide and build transformers and electrical equipment for the future.

We signed an MOU on research and development and the future of electricity, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking at the future with an international company where we had executives in from India, from Belgium, from England and from around the world to sign an MOU with Manitoba, like we've done with Rolls-Royce, like we've done with Pratt & Whitney, like we've done with Mitsubishi, making Manitoba a world-class spot to do business, and we'll continue to do that into the future.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Deer Lodge Curling Club

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, curling is a Canadian institution, and many Manitobans eagerly look forward to the curling season and the many bonspiels that liven up the winter months. In St. James, we are lucky to have the Deer Lodge Curling Club which has been an important fixture in the local curling scene since 1918.

In the late 1950s, members set their sights on a new location close to the St. James Civic Centre. The new building was entirely constructed with volunteer labour. This enthusiastic, co-operative spirit continues among Deer Lodge curlers, as

I learned when I attended the club's annual windup on April 20th.

Everyone came to the windup to award this season's winners and enjoy a meal together. I had the chance to welcome the curlers and try my hand at a few curling jokes before everyone sat down to eat a delicious meal prepared by the club kitchen.

Deer Lodge Curling Club is open seven days a week during the curling season to accommodate games for men's, women's, mixed, seniors and juniors teams. They host many lively social events, including bonspiels, banquets and even an annual golf tournament.

Community members love the Deer Lodge Curling Club because they offer leagues for all skill levels and levels of competitiveness. As a sport, curling is unique its—in its inclusiveness and ability to appeal to all ages. Deer Lodge caters to curlers as young as six years old. Mentors, coaches and local families work hard to support junior curlers and encourage a love of the game.

Curling promotes not only teamwork, but good sportsmanship and an excellent attitude towards competition. As they've grown up, many Deer Lodge club members have gone on to win national and provincial championships.

I would like to thank Deer Lodge community—sorry—Deer Lodge Curling Club members for inviting me to join in the festivities at their recent windup and for providing leadership to members of the curling community and the wider community of St. James.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Beaverlodge Elementary School

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Beaverlodge Elementary School on an amazing accomplishment, that of attaining Earth School III status. This feat means the accomplishment of another 1,000 Earth projects to bring their total to 3,000 Earth projects, qualifying Beaverlodge to be recognized by the SEEDS Foundation of Canada as an Earth III School. They are one of only four schools in Canada to attain the status of Earth School III.

SEEDS was first established in 1976. In 1989, a new goal was established that said: SEEDS will work towards the development of a society that understands and is committed to actions leading to

wise stewardship of resources, resource utilization and the environment. In 1991, the GREEN Schools program was begun, which encourages students to be environmentally responsible and to take personal action at school and with their families.

* (14:30)

I remember, in 1999, when Beaverlodge was first recognized as a Jade School, having completed 250 projects. It was recognized as an Earth School in 2006, having attained 1,000 Earth projects, and Earth School II in 2011, having attained 2,000 Earth projects. They have come a long way and worked very hard.

Some of the last 1,000 projects included the following: reducing paper by using less; reducing waste in schools by having litterless lunches; reducing energy used by encouraging active transportation and turning off lights; reducing chemicals that go in storm drains; increasing awareness of water issues with Save our Lakes activities; learning about nature and expressing learning through art; growing sustainable gardens with a butterfly garden, native species garden and a chemical-free food garden; taking public transportation for field trips and sharing buses for field trips so buses are full.

This is an awesome accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, that makes Beaverlodge one of only four schools in all of Canada to have attained this status. Way to go, Beaverlodge. You are taking care of our planet and we truly appreciate it. Charleswood is proud of you all. Keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, connecting seniors with support services helps ensure they can continue to lead happy, healthy lives within their communities. For the past 19 years, the Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council has served the communities of Brooklands, Weston, Tyndall Park, Garden Grove and Meadows West, and has provided a valuable link between seniors and the support services they desire. As our society ages, organizations such as this should be commended for their ongoing commitment to connecting seniors to services and ensuring that Manitoba seniors are well taken care of.

The Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council is a community-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to support and promote healthy, active and independent living among seniors by connecting them with programs, services and community.

The range of programs they offer is quite impressive. Programs like Call In provide daily phone calls to independent seniors living alone to check in on their health and safety. They also provide many opportunities for transportation to events and appointments through their Escorted Transportation Services and Cab Clubs.

Weekdays at the Bluebird Lodge, they host the Congregate Meal Program that provides an affordable full-course meal and helps seniors connect with each other and enjoy the shared experience of a meal. Alongside these and many other programs, they find the time to connect seniors with legal help, tax services, tenant resources services and home maintenance referrals.

Organizations like the Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council help provide essential links between seniors and the services they need. I want to recognize the council for the role it plays and ask for leave to include the names of the council's co-ordinators and volunteers with this statement in *Hansard*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to include the names in the *Hansard* proceedings? [*Agreed*]

Harvey Sumka—community resource co-ordinator, Elizabeth Leronowich—tenant resource co-ordinator, Eugene Sleeman—community meal co-ordinator, Fay Regush, Emile Paul, Al Wirth, Wes Thomson, Judy McKelvey, Cherry Abad, Jan Burdon, David Traill, Pearl Bickerton, Becky Lange, Muriel Dei Cont, Frances Benzelock, Linda Morcilla, Cecile Wagner, Gladys Fisher, Lilian Frost, Marissa David, Ray Warner, Courtney Mandock, Nicole Brolly.

Manitoba Soccer Association Awards

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the Manitoba Soccer Association's 2011 Annual Awards Banquet held on March 3rd, 2012 and the Manitoba Soccer Association's 100th anniversary this year.

The banquet was an opportunity for the soccer community to honour the achievements, dedication and ability of those players, referees and volunteers

who contribute on an ongoing basis to the development of soccer in Manitoba on and off the field.

I would like to congratulate all the nominees and the winners at this year's historic awards ceremony. Many of these awards are based on merit while others are based on service. but all together these fine individuals have helped contribute to 100 years of growth and excellence for the beautiful game of soccer right here in Manitoba.

The MSA president's award was presented to Fred Van Dongen for his significant contributions to the sport of soccer in Manitoba. The MSA life membership award was presented to Walter McKee for his significant lifelong contribution to the sport of soccer in Manitoba. Mackenzie Neufeld received the Harry Harwood award for merit for an outstanding youth male player. Laura Carroll received the Lorrie Thompson award of merit for an outstanding youth female player. Ivan Garcia was awarded the Frank Capasso award of merit for an outstanding senior male player. Aisha Alfa was awarded the Christine O'Connor award for merit for an outstanding senior female player. Ricardo A. Rodriguez received the Mario Perrino award of merit for an outstanding referee. Peter Manastyrsky received the Frank Major award of merit for an outstanding official. James Silva was awarded the Dave Zacharias award for merit for an outstanding coach. Len Fabris was awarded the Vic Batzel award of merit for an outstanding youth volunteer. Norman Anderson was presented the Ralph Cantafio award of merit for an outstanding senior volunteer. Sean Drain was presented the Fred–Dr. Fred Stambrook award of merit for an outstanding volunteer.

We wish to thank all the sponsors of the banquet and the Manitoba Soccer Association and wish all the winners and nominees the best of luck in the future, and particularly wish to congratulate the Manitoba Soccer Association on 100 great years of soccer here in Manitoba.

On behalf of all members of the Assembly, we congratulate all the winners and the soccer–Manitoba Soccer Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, on May 3rd, more than 950 people gathered at the Winnipeg Convention Centre to celebrate extraordinary Manitoba women. The 36th

YMCA-YWCA Winnipeg's Women of Distinction Awards drew a record number of nominations for women who use their talents, vision and determination to make Manitoba a better place to live.

These women are recognized as leaders in their fields; they work in the arts, education, business and sciences, and many other fields. They advocate on behalf of the environment, youth, and other women, drawing our attention to issues we cannot afford to ignore. Many of the nominees are exploring new territory and encouraging other women to enter fields that have traditionally been dominated by men.

The Women of Distinction Awards recognize the contributions these women have made and the effect their efforts will have on future generations. We are fortunate that these women have chosen to make Manitoba their home and that they are improving the quality of life for people all over the world.

To ensure we continue to support women striving to make a difference, the proceeds from the event will support community programs that empower women and youth.

I ask all members to join me in thanking the YMCA-YWCA Winnipeg for organizing this important event. I would also like to congratulate the Women of Distinction nominees and award recipients. Each and every one of them has worked to enrich our community and inspire us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for the names of the award winners to be read into *Hansard*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the names to be included in the *Hansard* of these proceedings? [Agreed]

Arts: Catharine Teichroew, arts educator and advocate; Circle of Inspiration: Dianna Bussey–government official, Diane Redsky–Aboriginal leader, and Joy Smith; Culture: Tina Chen, University of Manitoba historian; Education: Karen Botting, teacher and administrator; Leadership: Jeannette Montufar, engineer and urban planner; Public Awareness: Anna-Celestria Carr, Métis filmmaker and artist; Science: Maureen Heaman, national women's issues researcher; Voluntarism: Chau Pham, Vietnamese community leader and

doctor; Healthy Living: Janice Lukes, trail and cycling fundraiser; Young Woman of Distinction: Amanda Furst, international community advocate in Africa; Winners of awards of promise, which carry a \$2,000 scholarship for graduating grade 12 students: Gerrie Hammond Memorial Award—Alana Robert, lives in Westwood, attends St. Mary's Academy, and Prairie Award—Kelby Loepky, lives in Morden, attends Garden Valley Collegiate

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to, prior to grievances, draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have Mr. Doug Martindale, a former member for Burrows.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before I ask you to move us into Committee of Supply, I'd just like to remind the House that this Committee of Supply is taking place this afternoon. Estimates will also be considered tomorrow morning as per rule 4(5). And with that would you move us into the 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 (Concurrent Sections)

CONSERVATION AND WATER STEWARDSHIP

* (14:40)

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

As previously agreed, questions for the department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I know yesterday we were into the watershed land use areas of the Estimates, and I had asked the question on the number of staff years dedicated to the protected areas establishment. And I just wondered now—I'm not sure if I got an answer on that one or if that's where we left off. I could go to *Hansard*.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Yes, I can't recall the specifics. I think the question was what staff were dedicated or what resources were dedicated to the protected areas initiative, and the department advises that there are three FTEs, full-time FTEs, with the protected areas initiative.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you for that. The department's targets and goals for the new protected areas in 2012-13, Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask the minister if he could just provide us with an update on what the department's targets and goals are for the new protected areas in the coming year.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the department looks at making sure that we have a representative protection strategy that recognizes the different biodiversity of the province, and particularly areas that may be more vulnerable. And as a result, there is then a process, sometimes protracted and sometimes not, with stakeholders, including First Nations, Métis and others, to identify new areas for added protection.

Right now there's a couple of initiatives ongoing. One is to expand the eco reserve lands in Manitoba. And so we're nailing down some approaches there that I think will serve the future well.

And, as well, I've asked the department to look to see longer term, not just for this year but on a multi-year basis, what is the potential for specific sites, you know, what's the number, what's the characterization of those protected areas, so that we can ensure with the senior official oversight that there are plans in place with the consultations necessary, recognizing the experience that we have had with consultations that sometimes you have to invest some good time in that and work through some of the issues that we've discovered are often very important to be dealt with before designations occur.

So those are two initiatives, the expansion of eco reserves that's moving along and a longer term view so that we can make sure our resources are properly deployed.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. I just wondered if—of the proposals that are there, how many are protected areas that are currently in development? Is there developments going on in some of those protected areas?

I guess we'll just leave it at that as a start.

* (14:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the last three parks that were added were Nueltin Lake, Colvin Lake and Birch Island, and there was some very significant hectareage there that became protected. We are—so I've asked the department to look to see—of the park reserves that are currently mapped out, what are the likely timelines that are required to move ahead. We have also, of course, had Little Limestone and Fisher Bay; we've—we continue to have some discussions with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness folks about those.

And I'll also just add that the wildlife management areas, as well, hold out potential for additional hectareage, and so we're looking at that and I anticipate that we'll be able to announce some expansion of that in the short time that lies ahead.

Mr. Maguire: Thanks. The—yes, the—just of the proposal for protected areas that's currently under development—the minister's alluded to that. How many of these—and I remember the announcement of the last three parks that he talked about here, and quite supportive there. I wondered if he could just outline for me, of all the parks and park reserves that have been put in place and, you know, developed, I guess, or put in place since around 1990, what kind of management plans each one of them might have? Or are there management plans for them?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, just to start with the current management plan development, Birds Hill park has a draft plan that has been—or framework that has been put out there for public comment and there has been a scheduled meeting at the park. Was it—where was it? The Sun Gro Centre—I'm sorry, it wasn't at the park. And so there's feedback that is coming in as a result of that. So that is in hand, and that's Manitoba's busiest park, so it's good that that has been prioritized.

Seven provincial parks have now completed their management plans. There's about 600,000 hectares. Two provincial parks have plans in progress, one of them being Birds Hill. And over the next five years or so, the plan is to have all parks with management plans in place. And so, efforts are

underway to make sure that the necessary consulting arrangements are being nailed down, and so the work is progressing.

I—just add that the—there's been some park reserves designated—13 park reserves designated since '99, and four of those now have been converted to provincial parks, and one of the park reserves has been designated as the—oh, yes—Asatiwisiipe Aki Traditional Use Planning Area. And, well, one new unprotected provincial park has been created, the South Atikaki, since '99.

There was some information about the other park reserves that we had. Where was that? I'll just put that on the record then. And, in terms of the park reserves, Goose Islands, Grand Island, Kinwow Bay, Pelican Islands, Pemmican Island, and Sturgeon Bay park reserves were renewed in December '11 for another five-year term, as was Walter Cook Caves Park Reserve in March of 2012. We just did that.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for that. Can he provide me with a number as to how much land has been set aside in conservation easements over the last five years as well? I know there's been some out my way, and other areas, and I just wondered how much land has been involved in that program.

An Honourable Member: Over?

Mr. Maguire: The last five years.

Mr. Mackintosh: The numbers we have are since '09, so if the member will accept that and—unless he wants us to go back and rejig the numbers, but that's what I have available right now.

First of all, the NCC—they've secured over 6,700 hectares of private land in southern Manitoba, basically. The land has been secured, and five of the eight target areas that we spoke about the other day. The areas are Riding Mountain Aspen Parkland Natural Area, the Tall Grass Prairie Natural Area, Whitemouth River Watershed Natural Area, the Oak Lake Sandhills and Wetlands Natural Area, and the Pembina/Tiger Hills area.

And in terms of the Habitat Heritage Corporation, they've acquired 600 conservation agreements on approximately 110,000 acres of private land in agro Manitoba. They've actually provided information on the breakdown if the member would like it. There's a breakdown here. For example, there's 55 thousand acres of the 110 that are wetlands and associated habitats. Wetland restoration is 1,500 acres. Habitats for species at risk, especially

grassland acres, are 45,000 acres. Watershed protection lands, especially areas identified in the CDs integrated watershed management plans, 3,700 acres.

As well—and we had a really good discussion about this with the corporation. Twenty-five thousand acres of lands are groundwater-recharge areas for the Oak Lake, the Assiniboine delta, and the Winkler aquifers. I think—that really got me thinking about the importance of us looking, to a greater extent, at aquifer management planning in Manitoba. I was down in Winkler, and I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the Winkler Aquifer Management Plan. The—of course, a key part of that is how to protect the recharge area, but I think we've got to spend more time, put more effort, into facilitating the development of those plans that, of course, will cross several municipality boundaries—those square boundaries—and conservation districts. But I think that that does hold out some great potential for us to better protect groundwater in Manitoba.

* (15:00)

Mr. Maguire: Thanks, Mr. Minister, for that. I'm quite familiar with the Oak Lake one, the aquifer out there. Their biggest problem was trying to get the aquifer back below the surface of the ground last year, and it's a little bit better this year. But, without being facetious, there's a great deal of work that can be done in that whole area of recharge and a number of areas, and look forward to seeing more around what we can do in that whole area because it's an important area to those regions and it is a great source of water for not only potable use but other purposes in industry in Manitoba as well if it's managed properly.

So I'm going to—my colleague has some questions in regards to the watershed areas.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): We touched briefly before on the issue of integrated watershed management plans. I was wondering if you could update me on how many are completed, and I know that basically the southern third of the province is the target area. In the north we haven't really initiated the process yet. Where are you at in terms of how many are completed, how many are in process and how many remain to be done?

Mr. Mackintosh: Ten are done; two more are near completion; and 11 are in various stages of development.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The target number to be completed is the total of these?

Mr. Mackintosh: Oh, well, 23 completed, given that 10 are already completed.

Mr. Wishart: Now you have a fund that we have used in the past to fund various project called the Water Stewardship Fund, and how much funding is available for that in this fiscal year? Has that gone up or down, and could you give us some examples of recently completed projects from this fund? We only have information back in '08 and '09, so it's a little out of date.

Mr. Mackintosh: I've asked the staff to get the list of the allocations because it's important. If the member says that the latest information that may be available is '08-09, that has to be corrected and there should be an updated list. So, if they find that today, we'll put that on the record. If not, we'll provide it to the member, but the fund had 175,000, I'm advised, in it last year and that 175,000 I'm advised is in the allocation this year.

Mr. Wishart: And, yes, a later update on that on the projects would be acceptable. We'd like to be as current as possible.

I did want to move on to funding for the conservation districts if I could, an approach to landscape management, water management that we certainly support. The closer you get to the ground, so to speak, in terms of managing water, certainly the best response you get and the better planning you often get.

I wanted to ask the minister what his plans are for the future on the conservation districts, what the funding currently is, and what direction they see the funding going in the future.

Mr. Mackintosh: The conservation districts program, which I'll just put on the record I'm very eager to hear first-hand of their works and meet and see some of the efforts as well. It's certainly been highly regarded. Everybody I've spoken to has the highest respect for the work that is done through the conservation districts. So the provincial grant in '11-12 was \$5.615 million and this year the amount available is up to \$5.736 million, and I think we had briefly spoken about some of the initiatives that were in line to get some enhanced support, and so I think that's on the record already.

Mr. Maguire: I just wonder if the minister could give us an update in regards to some of the

Aboriginal relations in regards to park development and that sort of thing. An update on the department and its obligations with respect to the duty to consult in regards to First Nations groups and the development of any policies around that. If he could just provide me with an update on where the department is at with any talks that are ongoing in that area.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, certainly the era that we are now in is very different than the pre-section 35 era where changes, sometimes very significant, were made to—that impacted on treaty and Aboriginal rights including as a result of the development of protected areas of which parks is one of them.

I think that as we've come into this new era, the case law is starting to better clarify what the responsibilities are of the Crown in right of the Province, for example, and for the federal government as well. This government certainly welcomes and respects the movement—the rightful movement towards respecting the fact that we have a duty to consult and, of course, what that means has been a big part of the developing case law.

But what we have been looking at as a department amongst other departments and because there's a cross-departmental working group, for example, and, of course, ANA has a role and, you know, I'm familiar of the Innovation, Energy and Mines role when it comes to initiatives advanced through that department as well. We've got to look to see how we can make this most effectively work for the parties. We've got to make sure that we effectively put consultation processes in place that are timely for everyone's sake and that are, certainly, meaningful as intended by the law as it's developed.

* (15:10)

The experience recently, I understand, has been a very positive one when it comes to Fisher Bay Provincial Park and we learned a lot from that. I was—I had the honour of meeting with Chief Crate about that process, and I think we are learning as we go. I've also had the honour of talking to representatives from other jurisdictions about how they approach the consultations that are required and, perhaps, there's more learning that we can do there as well.

So I think that this is a, certainly, an emerging area and an area of change. And it's one, I think, that is only now becoming more recognized in the mainstream, if you will, or by the broad array of

stakeholders that have an interest in the ecological diversity of the province and, as well, the economic development of the province. So we've had experiences with a number of initiatives that have had their twists and turns as a result, and I say from each and every one of them we've learned. We've seen, for example, when it comes to moose population management that it's very important to engage in the consultation process with Aboriginal communities, not even because of the section 35 requirements, but because we have learned that it serves an awareness and educational function with the communities. And when we have, for example, stresses on certain populations, we all have to remind ourselves as stewards of the earth, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, that we all have a role to play.

And so we have seen, for example, I think in GHA 26, for example, I've heard feedback that the consultation process with the affected communities there certainly elevated the awareness and sensitivity to the need to address population declines of moose there. We also had, I think, a very successful outcome before I came along in the Duck Mountain areas.

More recently, I learned some tremendous and valuable lessons with West Region Tribal Council when it comes to consultations for the Dauphin Lake fishery. And I think we had a breakthrough where the tribal council provided some commendable leadership in identifying conservation efforts that could really make a difference to ensure that the Dauphin Lake walleye fishery rebounds fully, because that really is the mutual objective.

So just to conclude—because I think this is the conversation or the remarks that he was welcoming—we are really vigilant and interested in how we formalize the section 35 requirements. At the same time, we are seeing that there are benefits that perhaps were unintended that we welcome.

Mr. Maguire: Because of those changes, that's why I asked the question, Mr. Chair. I think there's been a lot of changes in those areas and a lot more discussion with some of the First Nations folks.

I certainly did appreciate the opportunities I had. And I know the minister alluded to the game hunting and the GSAs, the areas here. You know, we did work with some of the First Nations people as opposition in and around Swan River and the 14-18, 13(a) was—and 13 was added by Minister Blaikie at

the time to the outright bans on hunting for moose in some of those areas. That wasn't where I was going, but since the minister raised it, you know, I think it caught everybody by surprise to think that some of the First Nations there would say we don't want people hunting in our areas either in these areas. And, you know, when I read the resolution from that one group in the House in question period at that particular time, it was certainly just to raise the awareness of the fact that there was more co-operation and awareness in some of those regions to be able to move forward on some of these mannerisms and, I think, with some of these projects.

And I think it's opened up some discussions in other areas. I know you're doing work in game hunting area 26 as well, with some of the, sort of, not total bans, but bans on hunting in some of those areas. And I think that the priority here has to be to make sure that we've actually got moose to hunt or look at down the road.

Some of these First Nations people who've said it's not—I mean, the people that were coming to me to say that we want the ban on weren't even hunters. They said we want the rights for our families to be able to go out down the road and have moose to be able to be there to even look at. And some of those areas were pretty devastated.

So I appreciate the minister's answer. I appreciate being able to develop, further some of those relationships, and I know that, because the government does have a role in those areas and we need to be able to make sure that they are included in any kinds of discussions in those areas.

One of the—and so, just before I go to the next—the some of the changes that you made, can the minister outline to me, just in particularly to moose, if there's any change in adding more GHAs into that area or more total bans that they're looking at in other regions?

Mr. Mackintosh: When it comes to moose, the current closures will continue on as we re-evaluate any impacts on populations. I've heard that, from NROs in the GHA 26 area, that they have been very pleased with how that has unfolded, but what we have to do is move to a better province-wide approach that ensures that we link up some of the efforts that have worked, and, of course, move from those that haven't worked as well.

We know that, in areas where there are closures, that we have to ensure a good complement of natural resource officers so that there is both a deterrent and an enforcement presence. We have looked at the use of infrared technology to determine if that is more effective than other approaches, and the jury's out on that, I can advise, but the thinking will continue.

We have, particularly in GHA 26, looked at decommissioning of roads as an approach. And there have been approaches in terms of our predators, as well—or, well, the wolves, for example. Deer tags have been increased, and I think there's a lot more awareness, like, as I said, both in the Aboriginal communities and with the Wildlife Federation.

* (15:20)

There's been some research that is to develop on wolf and bear predation with the University of Manitoba, and they've, you know, been looking at the impact of brain worm. But when it comes down to the future, the department is putting together a framework for how a province-wide strategy can be concluded so that we have a solid, more all-embracing approach rather than just dealing with this on a GHA-by-GHA basis, recognizing, of course, that the implementation of closures will continue to be on a GHA basis with some regional differences in application. But the more comprehensive approach is important to proceed with.

The other experience that we have had recently is the development of the regional committees on moose management. That really is what nailed it in the Duck Mountain area: First Nations, the local sports groups, Métis, some scientists, trappers. So I think we're finding, you know, what combinations are important to have there and can assist in recovery.

There's also been additional funding made available for surveys in the Duck Mountain, Porcupine Mountain, Swan, Pelican and in GHA 26 so that there are more surveys done on a regular basis. So I didn't want to leave that off of the list of efforts that are under way.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Mr. Minister, the—through the Chair.

There were a number of issues that, you know, when the announcements came out about some of those GHAs there were some commitments made by the government in regards to—in March 2011, of

investing \$800,000 in the moose strategy in those areas. And I wondered if he can tell me if those—that full \$800,000 has been allocated and, if so, how is it being used?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the allocation was divided up to enforcement staff, which comprised a large part of the—one of the single largest allocations followed by aerial surveys and wildlife staff in addition to enforcement staff. There was some allocation to Aboriginal participation. As well, there was an allocation for aerial surveys for wolves and enforcement operation—like the operational costs—and the wolf removal program, the road closures and posting and some of the operational costs for the wildlife work. So that comprises the allocation.

Mr. Maguire: And so my next, you know, the question is: Was the \$800,000 fully utilized, then, and part of it was in the aerial surveys, or was it used in other areas?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that the expenditures, actually this year, are expected to be approximately \$824,000.

Mr. Maguire: So that is an ongoing program then? There was 800 last year; it's ongoing again for another 800 budgeted for the amount this year. Can the minister provide me with the number that they budgeted for in 2012-13?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that \$824,000 was budgeted for this year, and it's in the base, which means it's ongoing.

Mr. Maguire: There was two new—I believe, they were looking at—wildlife biologist positions to be put in place in last year's announcement as well. I'm assuming that they're both in place and will continue to be in that area. And can he just tell me where they're based out of?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised there are two wildlife biologist positions that were established—as a result, one on the east area and one on the west area.

Mr. Maguire: Okay. I was of the understanding that there was to be two announced for the Swan River area and the GHAs up there. Is that—but it was two overall, and there's one on each side. Is—that's what the minister just indicated. I wasn't sure if it was two, or if there was two plus one.

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised the distribution was two NROs and one biologist in the west, and in the

east there's one NRO and one biologist as a result of that particular funding allocation.

Mr. Maguire: The minister alluded to the aerial surveys of wolves and that sort of thing, and I wonder if he could elaborate on what work has been done through this past winter on that as well. I know that there was, I think, some areas protected, probably more so in game area 26. From what I understand, there was a lack of snow and it made difficult—difficulties in tracking. And I just wondered if he can provide me with an update on where they're at with those wolf surveys in relation to the moose populations as well.

* (15:30)

Mr. Mackintosh: The answer is, yes, the surveys were conducted this winter. And the results, actually, were that there's a—looks like a conclusion of about 120 on the west side and 74 on the east side in 26.

Mr. Maguire: Those were moose numbers that the minister's just—*[interjection]*—or those are the wolf ones, yes. And are there plans to continue to do those along with moose surveys over the next five years, or what are the plans in those areas?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mr. Maguire: And so that'll entail any of the—their current plans are to continue that. Are there plans—are there surveys that are under way? I imagine that the—have they finalized all of the information that they would've had from this past winter's survey? You just provided me with the wolf numbers, but.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, as part of the continuing program, while there were difficulties because of the weather conditions in 26, the Porcupines were flown, in 13 and 13A, and so the numbers were, for this year were—came in at 817. I—there was a release that went out just a bit ago. I don't know if the member saw it, but we can get a copy for the member as well that gave some overview in terms of what the trend appeared to be, but there was, from the numbers, when you look, for example, at '07, the number was 731, and then was up to 1122, 817, so there is some stabilizing, it appears, from those numbers.

But we have to be vigilant, and there's no direction here that enables the removal of the closure at all at this point. But, you know, I can undertake to get that released to the member because it did set out, I think, a more—better narrative of what the department was discovering.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, anyway, I just pass it on to the minister as well, and I think that the department is aware, but when I was there talking to these people about, you know, when they said that they wanted a total ban on hunting in some of those areas, you know, I was suggesting three years, and theirs—their reply to me was, no, they needed it for at least five. But, as you say, there's no clear direction there yet, but it is good that it's been on for the year here, and I think that'll probably give us some direction.

Were all of the surveys that the department wanted to do last winter able to be done? I know you mentioned that there was difficulties with snow—lack of snow, I should say—in some areas.

Mr. Mackintosh: In 26, we—the department advises that they did go out with the infrared technology. They did some flights there, but they are tending to the conclusion that the data is not as reliable as they would have expected. So I think, as I said earlier, I think the jury's out on that and—but we don't want to give up on that technology, but there are certainly some questions as to whether it has enhanced our abilities or not. So we'll look at it further.

Mr. Maguire: There were some incentives for local trappers to look at harvesting wolves and that sort of thing, and I wondered if the minister can provide me with any information as to whether it had any impact or the desired effect and any numbers of—comparing the 2011 wolf kill to that of 2010.

Mr. Mackintosh: Based on modelling, the population was 100 in '09-10, and based on '11-12 survey, the estimate is 74, and that is—that would be in large part because of the removal of 43.

And then, when it comes to the Ducks, population for '09-10 was 102 and for '11-12, it's down to 70 and 73 were taken out.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, that's over that two-year period of time?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's as a result of the program this year.

Mr. Maguire: Okay. I'm just going to move on to one of the things that was looked at. It was the establishment of a moose advisory committee. Can the minister just give me an update on how it's coming and if it's been formed and who's sitting on that committee?

Mr. Mackintosh: Earlier I just talked about the kinds of groups that are represented, but we can get a list of the specific groups and their correct names for

the member in terms of the—was it the Ducks and is that what you were asking? Yes, so we can provide that, but it would be the Wildlife Federation, of course, First Nations and others that I spoke about earlier.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, if you could just provide me with the names of the individuals that are representing each of those groups on the moose advisory committee. It's good to see that it's been established and going. I sure appreciate that. And how often does it meet and like what are they dealing with? What are they achieving?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that they have been meeting and they decide at each meeting, I guess, what their schedule should be to go from one meeting to the next in terms of their availability and their scheduling.

* (15:40)

Mr. Maguire: So is there a bylaw or a—there's a number of so many meetings a year that they have or are they meeting monthly or bi-monthly? And I just wondered—excuse me—some of the topics that they might be dealing with in regards to—I'm assuming it's to deal with populations and that sort of thing.

Mr. Mackintosh: Our understanding is that they have met, of course, just both before and after the closure, and their interest now, of course, is leaning more to recovery efforts and trends. But perhaps the member would benefit from us making some inquiries, and we can do that through our regional folks to see what their meeting schedule has looked like.

Mr. Maguire: Okay, thank you. If he could provide that, it'd be great.

Conservation closures: the—just a comment from the minister on the long-term plans in that area and how effective they've been and what kind of enforcement activities that they're looking at.

Mr. Mackintosh: I didn't want to repeat what I had been saying earlier, but I think the efforts are paying off in the Ducks, and I have heard first-hand from the region in area 26 that that has gone very successfully in terms of both the lack of problems and the level of awareness now.

Of course, the level of awareness is achieved through a number of methods, and I talked about the consultation role, but, as well, of course, through signage. But I think that there's been a buzz in the

local communities amongst those that are concerned that have elevated the knowledge about the closures and the population stress. So it—there's no reason why we would conclude that this isn't a successful way to deal with declining populations.

And, of course, I want to reiterate, as I said earlier, that the deployment of NROs in those areas is really important and—both in terms of their visibility and their actual, you know, follow-up to any reports of any concerns. But I know from GHA that there's been very little reports of any lack of respect for the closure, and that's a good sign. So, as I say, I spoke first-hand to one of the NROs that is deployed in the area, and they actually said they were pleasantly surprised and—but I think that the effort there is paying off.

Mr. Maguire: Well, I appreciate that and I think that that was partly why a lot of the people there, hunters from all—whether they were rifle, bow and arrow, muzzles, lodges and outfitters, all of the people that I met with, Métis, First Nations and others, wanted a complete ban because, then, of course, anybody that's in there with a moose is subject to—they have no real—no reason to be there, and so I think that that's been a plus.

So I appreciate the fact that they're—that with the NROs in there, you know, with our natural resource officers, we'll have a—more of aware of it. I had the opportunity to drive some of those trails with persons in that area a year ago myself, or a year and a half ago, I guess, and look at the devastation that they were talking about at that time, and I think that there is a—that I'm glad to see that the report is that it is working in those areas.

There were concerns around individuals that might be taking moose out of the particular areas unlawfully at the time, basically by local citizens, and I'm glad to see that that may have stopped as well. Has the minister had any indication that this is putting more pressure on some other areas that might presently have moose to, I guess, see that some of these folks that may have not been curtailed but taken up their cause in other areas?

Mr. Mackintosh: I can say that there is concern, and I heard that from somebody at a Wildlife Federation meeting, for example, that that could be the result of closures in some areas. So we're going to be vigilant on that, but I think that really is a good reason to move towards a comprehensive approach.

While there might be concern about the pressures from people moving, the—there are other species that are available for hunting that we have to keep in mind.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, and we certainly are aware of those. I just wanted to ask the minister and, maybe, perhaps, a final question in this area. The temporary conservation closure that was put in place in January here in the Pine Falls area, south of Bissett, you know, there's—not everybody's always happy with these things, but it—there's some folks that felt it didn't go far enough, maybe didn't go as far as some of the other complete closures.

Can the minister just provide me with his response to those kinds of concerns?

Mr. Mackintosh: I think it's only fair to say that there was a complete closure in the two areas where there was critical habitat identified by science, and, as well, of course, there have been road closures in the area that I think are—have proven to be, so far, a good approach, as well, to ensuring a robust effort there. But, again, as I said, anecdotally, the closure appears to be working. It's being respected, and our NROs are deployed there to make sure that they continue their vigilance.

Well, perhaps I could share this map. I don't know if the member has the map, but the—it's colour-coded, and it explains how the GHA was approached, and so if he has any further questions, we certainly could arrange for a briefing. We did have a briefing with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation with our now-acting Wildlife director, which I think was important, as well, to explain the approach. And so, if the member wants any further information, we can provide that. So I'll just leave this with the Clerk.

Mr. Maguire: I just want to go back to the Aboriginal Relations just for a second here. There was—I noticed in the supplementaries there, that there's one full-time equivalent increase in the Regional Services and Parks for the western region in the realignment for Aboriginal Relations policy development, and I just wondered what all this position entails.

* (15:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: The department operationally thought that it was valuable for the Aboriginal relations FTE to be available for serving a broader

geographic area and broader policy development needs than as a regional deployment.

So I understand that it really was about rationalizing or making best use of an important FTE.

Mr. Wishart: And moving on, we'd like to talk a little bit about the WNO initiative on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Want to know where you're at in terms of activities, in terms of how many of the planning processes, the land use planning processes, are completed, and how many remain to be done? And if you can outline briefly some of the activities of the WNO Secretariat and where its direction is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes. I'm advised that the WNO communities that are interested in moving ahead with planning are entitled, then, to, you know, support. And he asked questions about the secretariat. It's there to provide that land use planning support and for oversight.

I'm advised that the four World Heritage site communities have essentially completed or are at least very near completion of their traditional area land use plans.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, and does that include, then, Poplar River and their proposed land management plan, or that's a separate process, is it not?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes. That includes Poplar River, and I'm advised that they've completed their work.

Mr. Wishart: The other three have not yet completed their work then—they're in the process?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that, yes, Poplar River is completed as well. Black River is completed. Little Grand—Bloodvein, I'm sorry, Bloodvein. Bloodvein is completed. Little Grand Rapids is completed, again, Pauingassi is very near completion, and, indeed, they expect its completion in the next few weeks.

Mr. Wishart: And these weren't a requirement to be included in the application for World Heritage site then? They did not have to be completed before the application?

Mr. Mackintosh: The short answer to the question is that the completion of the management plans wasn't necessary in order to submit the bid, but an overall management plan for the World Heritage site was submitted that comprised the whole general

area, and the individual plans, we advised, would be completed soon.

The nomination materials did include, then, the Poplar and Bloodvein plans, and, over the next few weeks when Pauingassi is in, Pauingassi and Little Grand will be submitted to Parks Canada. And Parks Canada sends it on, then, to UNESCO.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for answers. So that'll—there'll be additional information submitted over a short period of time or is it going to be a while before everything is completed? Is there more besides what you've just referenced?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'm advised that everything that was necessary to be in the bid materials was included, but the additional two plans will be sent there, and it's expected within the next few weeks, like, perhaps the next month, at the outside, is what I'm advised by staff.

Mr. Wishart: I want to go back a little bit to the WNO Secretariat. A big part of their role, of course, was helping in the development of these and gathering information for the application.

Will that secretariat continue in a different role in the future? Will its size change? And exactly how is that being funded? Entirely by Conservation or is it a shared process?

* (16:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: The priorities were those initial four communities that we talked about. But there are the other communities that now will be the greater focus of the secretariat in looking at the land-use plans for them.

Mr. Wishart: So the size of the secretariat will remain the same? And how is the funding done again? Is it entirely from Conservation?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, as I recall, the question was, what's the funding source for the secretariat, and it is provincial.

An Honourable Member: Your department entirely?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Chairman, are there any contractors that are being, in terms of developing these regional management plans, that are being paid for out of the secretariat as well, or is it staff-only activity?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Province doesn't engage in contracts with WNO, but there is a grant to WNO Inc. and so the—which is the council of chiefs, so they may well, and expectedly would, have some contract work being done to pursue their objectives, I'm presuming so.

Mr. Wishart: You're referring to the \$2.5-million grant that was given to WNO Council of Chiefs, back in 2007? Is that the amount that you're referring to? The grant?

Mr. Mackintosh: There was a—the 2.5 was a multi-year commitment.

Mr. Wishart: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

How many years?

Mr. Mackintosh: Over five years.

Mr. Wishart: So, if I understand this correctly, just so I'm clear on it, it's half a million dollars per year for five years, terminating this year. The work has terminated at the same time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, and this year the allocation is \$250,000.

Mr. Wishart: So is this all the monies that the WNO Council of Chiefs has received from the provincial government to do this work?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes.

Mr. Wishart: So, based on your reduction in funding and the fact that most of them appear to have finished their resource management plans, we've pieced together enough that we will, shortly, have a broad-area plan for the east side—for the resource management on the east side?

Mr. Mackintosh: The expectation is that there will be more communities that will have their plans completed.

Mr. Wishart: But no additional funding is provided for that. They're providing their own funding to do the additional work?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, well, it's under the \$250,000 from the Province.

Mr. Wishart: Okay. Thank you. I'll perhaps leave this for now, because I know my colleague from River Heights has a few questions he'd like to ask.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I asked the minister a number of years ago, his department was involved in an alternate land-use service plan in Blanshard municipality.

Can the minister provide, you know, the start date and the end date and whether there's been a report on the results of that program?

* (16:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we can check for the member with MAFRI. They were the lead on that initiative and determine the status of the report. But it certainly looks like this is the kind of a pilot that can provide some good information and some informed strategies as we proceed.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. The department is involved, I know, with flood prevention around Lake Manitoba, providing grants of, I think, up to \$40,000 to help with flood mitigation of—and prevention around homes, including raising homes or putting in rocks or various other activities.

The—can the minister provide me how that—an insight into how that program is working?

Mr. Mackintosh: The responsibility, as the member should know, for flood reparation, flood forecasting, is now with MIT. It's been consolidated in MIT, and, of course, MAFRI continues to have a role with regard to agricultural compensation programs. But the reorganization of the government on January 13th made that change so that we have a more streamlined and consolidated effort in the—in MIT.

So we've moved from three departments to two departments that are the—that have major responsibility in respect of flood compensation and mitigation.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. So that whole program which was under Water Stewardship is now under MIT, and there is nothing left of it in Conservation or Water Stewardship now.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, and we had some discussion earlier in Estimates that the member could reference as well.

If he wants any further information, we can provide that, but the responsibilities that he's talking about certainly have been transferred to MIT. The approach generally is that Conservation and Water Stewardship retains responsibility for water quality and the flood issues are vested in MIT to join many of the programs that were there. So it really follows the experience of the last year, and in particular, in terms of better organizing efforts around the impact of flooding in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. May I ask the minister, does the department of Water Stewardship and Conservation have any role whatsoever now in flood prevention?

Mr. Mackintosh: Water control works are now—are vested in MIT, and rightly so, as infrastructure. And I'll say that the Surface Water Management Strategy that's in development and efforts to better develop upstream retention of water is one that Conservation and Water Stewardship can have some role with obviously, as well as MAFRI. But in terms of the water control works that—the traditional notion of the water control works now are vested in MIT.

Mr. Gerrard: And in the budget estimates, what amount of money is there provided for water retention?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I guess it's important to define what the member means by water retention, because the MIT responsibility for water control infrastructure, such, you know, as dams, for example, are budget items that MIT has within its budget.

The retaining of water on the land, on the other hand, and efforts to enhance wetlands protection, of course, continue on with Conservation and Water Stewardship. But, if the member is looking for the water control works that—such as dams, then the questions are rightly for MIT, and I think I should also remind the member that conservation districts under the jurisdiction of this department and the appropriate legislation continues to be an important part of Conservation and Water Stewardship because the benefits of the work of conservation districts is about drought, it's about nutrient management and drainage, generally. So the 18 conservation districts in Manitoba, you know, allocate, certainly, one to—I think—\$1.5 million in terms of land-based water retention initiatives.

Mr. Gerrard: Is that one to one-point-five million dollars of land-based water retention initiatives—is that the direct funding of the initiatives or is that administrative costs or what is it? And is that in this year?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, that's this year. For example, the '12-13 budget in respective conservation districts is 1.46 million I'm advised, and the provincial share is \$1.1 million—oh, yes, just for water retention.

Mr. Gerrard: So the provincial share is \$1.1 million and that's just for water retention. Is that in this fiscal year?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the total allocation for conservation districts is up this year. We had a discussion about that earlier. It's about \$5.7 million, but the allocation specifically for water retention projects is \$1.1 million from the province, but the conservation districts are, this year, planning \$1.46 million. They have other funding sources as well, as the member probably knows.

Mr. Gerrard: So what the minister is saying is that for putting in a dam, it depends very much on the size of the dam, where it is and so on. So, for instance, at Pellys Lake, which is southwest of Treherne, whether you're looking at putting in two dams, I think the conservation district has a primary role there, that cost—is that included in the 1.1 or 1.4 million dollars?

Mr. Mackintosh: The department advise that they would look at whether that was a conservation district initiative or whether that was a Province of Manitoba initiative, and we can get back to the member on the funding source for that particular works.

Mr. Gerrard: I would appreciate that, and, you know, if you can provide more clarification on the distinction for what is one versus the other that would also be helpful.

The—I know one of the things that the minister has been involved with is the request or the proposal for peat mining in provincial parks. What is the current status of that, and—

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

Mr. Mackintosh: There was an application for a peat mine in the Hecla/Grindstone park, and, as a result of the process that's in place, there was public feedback that was solicited and obtained and the—there have been, as well, applications under appeal for some peat operations in the general area, and so that really has compelled an examination of all of that and, looking at the, you know, a cumulative view, and so there have been some necessary consultations that have flowed from that, both with regard to the Aboriginal stakeholders and commercial interests.

* (16:20)

Mr. Gerrard: When is a decision expected on the—whether or not there would be a go-ahead for peat mining in the provincial park?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the consultations that are ongoing, as I said, with the Aboriginal and commercial interests will determine that, but it's my

understanding that discussions have been happening and are moving forward. So it's my expectation that we'll be moving to some conclusion in the near future on that.

Mr. Gerrard: And when is the surface water management strategy expected to be completed and delivered?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we had a discussion about this earlier in Estimates as well. The scoping session and the summit was held on April 3rd. That was comprised of about 144 representatives, particularly from conservation districts and the rural municipalities and others and environmental NGOs and academics and government and agricultural reps. And that helped to scope out what the issues were that had to be addressed through a comprehensive strategy.

And as we spoke about earlier here, there—it's necessary to be tying in the wetlands and peatlands aspects and making sure that we're dealing with the surface water management in a way that we haven't in the past. We definitely have to look at everything from governance in Manitoba to how we better guard against drought and nutrient runoff that is a top priority.

The stakeholder engagement that was started at the summit will continue. There are ongoing meetings with the key stakeholders and that's expected to happen until at least the end of August or early fall. And public input, as well, has been invited through the website. So, as a result, I think by—as a result, by the end of summer we should have a good sense as to the issues that have to be fleshed out and we should have a good timeline in mind by, I think, by that occurrence.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, when is the phosphorus expected to be removed from the sewage of Winnipeg to help Lake Winnipeg and is—are things on track to be able to do that by the legislated time?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the south end licence was issued in the last few weeks and the north end licence application is expected and required by June 16th.

Mr. Gerrard: It's required to be completed by June 16th. Is it on track to do that?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, it's—I should clarify, it's not the licence application per se, it's the City's plan, as per The Save Lake Winnipeg Act, and that is

expected on June 16th, and we have no information to suggest otherwise.

Mr. Gerrard: There's a legislative timeline for having that plan implemented so the phosphorus is removed. Is the City on track to meet that legislative timeline?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the June 16th date is the one date that's important for the City to comply with. And when we—when the Province receives the plan, they'll analyze it to determine its effectiveness.

Mr. Gerrard: So what the minister is saying is that, you know, it could be 2016, it could be 2018, it could be 2020 or it could be 2025 before the plan is actually implemented.

Mr. Mackintosh: So, as the City proceeds with the South End plant, the plan to be submitted by June 16th to the Province will outline what the City's strategy is, as proposed, and at that time we'll be looking at what's contained in it and determine the timelines that are required.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister mentioned the South End plant, but I think he's talking about—June 16th is the North End plant.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the June 16th date is for the submission of the North End plant. The South End plant, the environmental licence was issued in the last few weeks—I think the last couple of weeks.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the North End plant has taken a long time. What would be the minister's goal in terms of ensuring that the phosphorus is out of the sewage at the North End plant, because that's a major contributor, to help Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, clearly, the interest of the Province is to see the enhancements to the North End plant as soon as reasonably possible, as soon as physically possible. And that's why we're looking forward to seeing what the City is planning to do in its application—or in its plan.

Mr. Wishart: Just going back briefly to the World Heritage site, and we had determined what was remaining to be sent forward in terms of the proposal. When—now that that's been completed, and it was a monumental task, I understand, how many staff man years or full-time equivalents were used up in the process of putting that together? And do they remain in—as part of that process or have they moved somewhere else?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I understand that there were three land use planners that bore down on that effort, and they have, now, other responsibilities. We talked about earlier the need for the other land use plans to be completed.

Mr. Wishart: Okay, related to that, there was a trust fund established in, I think it was, October of 2009, that the Province contributed \$10 million towards. And its—or its goal was to use that to gain some additional support for the development of the World Heritage site, and there was quite a sizeable campaign that was run on television. We all saw it run for a long period of time frequently—Land That Gives Life campaign?

Could the minister update me as to how that was funded?

Mr. Mackintosh: The—first of all, I think there were two parts to the question. The first one is the \$10 million trust fund, and the contributions to date are \$2.5 million.

* (16:30)

The second question, I understand, is the funding for the campaign, and I will double check on that one, but the—it's their document. Their annual report indicates \$445,000, but that doesn't set out specifically the, you know, whether that includes more than the ads that the member was referencing. So we can make some inquiries to determine if that amount can be broken down.

Mr. Wishart: I would appreciate that from the minister. So you made a \$10-million donation to the trust fund with the target being \$20 million to raise?

Mr. Mackintosh: That's—there was a \$10 million trust fund commitment made, and \$2.5 million has now flowed to that.

Mr. Wishart: So is this so much per year or is it matching money? I guess that's where I was headed as well. They have to raise matching money before they get it. Is that the arrangement?

Mr. Mackintosh: So my understanding is that the amount isn't matching.

An Honourable Member: Is matching?

An Honourable Member: Is not.

Mr. Wishart: So if it's not matching, how do you determine how much to give to them per year? It's just so much per year? Is it a long-term commit with an annual amount?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the \$10-million provincial commitment will be staged over the—over those years, and I don't think there's a predetermined amount for every fiscal year, but the 2.5 was the first amount that was put in. It was over—the term is five years but the annual contribution may not necessarily be equal.

Mr. Wishart: So the term is five years, and you mentioned that \$2.5 million had been your commitment. The fundraising campaign, The Land That Gives Life campaign, how much did it raise? You have the annual report there. What did it raise?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that, because the corporation is, of course, responsible for providing those numbers, we'll ask for that. We just had some information about some recent gifting, but we just want to make sure that we're not scooping them or we're not making announcements on their behalf when it's their responsibility to do that. So we'll make those inquiries.

Mr. Wishart: My next question actually was how much have they given out and so, yes, there is some limitations on that. But we would like to be very clear on how much was raised by their advertising campaign because we do understand it was a funding—fundraising campaign, and how much was actually spent on that campaign are two numbers I'd like to get clarified.

If I could move on from there, I know that the long-term goal here is to—once the road connections and all of the management plans are in place, to have a visitors' World Heritage site destination somewhere on the west—or on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, at least that's our understanding of the long-term goal. What details of a plan to accommodate any visitors have been put in place and where is that process at?

* (16:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that a visitor centre was contemplated in the Poplar River plan, and while there's been some preliminary work done in terms of the concept, there hasn't been the business plan or any dollars flowing for that.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Do they have a timeline? I know that this is kind of open-ended in terms of the east-side road project and actual completion until there is a destined—or goal in terms of when they hope to have it done, but

have you given some thought as to when you will be developing this plan? And the reason I ask that, in a few other jurisdictions around the world, when we've had World Heritage sites and access was improved, they actually had issues with too many people and not enough ability to handle the influx. And would we have that problem? Which would be great, I guess. Are we thinking about that and do we have a plan in place to deal with that?

Mr. Mackintosh: The short answer is, is that it really is expected that this will remain a very, very remote area of the world, if not the province or the country. The nominated area is like 33,000-plus square kilometres, and the east-side road is over on the one side closer to the shore. And so, there's not an expectation that we're going to have the kind of problem that the member's been referencing.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister.

I wonder if you've been referring to their annual statement. Is that something you can share with us, the annual return of the corporation and the trust fund?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm just advised that the information was online.

Mr. Wishart: If you could give us the specifics for that because I certainly have looked.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we'll get that to the member as soon as we can.

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the response and will look forward to getting that from you.

I'll turn over to my colleague here.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Just a question, Mr. Minister, on the Gardenton diversion.

It was built in 1929 and, as you are aware, in 2011, it was deemed that it could—*[interjection]* Thank you very much—that it could rupture, and there was a special dike built during the flood of 2011 and the dike has been now taken down, but could you tell me at what stage we are of repairing the Gardenton diversion?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I'm advised that MIT has responsibility for that now.

Mr. Graydon: How far back would their responsibility go? How many years back would it go?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the department advises that any staff that were responsible for that control works were transferred to MIT. So the same people that were on that before are on that again now. There's no—been no change. That area was moved en masse to MIT, I'm advised.

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister tell me what responsibility he would have, then, with—in regards to American drainage?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, the—we certainly track projects that could have a potential impact on Manitoba, and where there is such a problem identified, North Dakota officials are made aware of that. There is a process in place in North Dakota, and perhaps the member's talking about the same concern that has been brought to my attention. And so there are appeal mechanisms, and we've worked with the municipality in that case to make sure that the proper paperwork was done and we make sure that the doors are open in terms of any redress.

But we also work with MIT on this as well. It depends on the nature of the issue because I know the member just raised it as a general concern. So I think the—hopefully, that will address the questions.

And, if the member has any concern about a particular work on the American side or one that's on—that's impacting on Manitoba, we certainly could arrange for officials to meet and provide a briefing and make sure that any of his questions are fully addressed.

Mr. Graydon: I look forward to the briefing and I'll take the minister up on that.

But what I would ask him to do is to make sure that his officials understand where the Roseau River comes from. And it doesn't come from North Dakota; it comes from Minnesota. And so it would be best, if we do have the briefing, that we have the proper information to start off with. There is a drainage program going forward there and I think that that information needs to be all on the same table at the same time.

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, you see, there I made an assumption that he was talking about a water—some control works that was different than the one that he is now referencing. The other one that we had concern about did involve North Dakota, but we certainly are aware of the—of where the Roseau River comes from.

Mr. Graydon: And I would like a briefing on the one from North Dakota as well, because that's in my riding as well. And I'll turn this over to my colleague, Mr. Maguire. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to thank my colleague for that as well, because those are important areas that we need to get information on in regards to the—our adjoining neighbours in water flow.

Just a couple of quick questions in regards to the World Heritage site as well: How many provincial government staff—was there any government staff seconded to work with Pimachiowin Aki on this project, if any?

Mr. Mackintosh: I am advised there weren't any secondments.

Mr. Maguire: Yes. In regards to—it was September 2010, there was an announcement of about \$2.5 million that were announced for an interpretative centre at Hollow Water First Nation, Waabanong Anishinaabe Interpretative Learning Centre.

Can the minister give me an indication of what the status is on that?

Mr. Mackintosh: The Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism is the lead on that.

Mr. Maguire: Does he know if there's any First Nations people working on that, or if—whether the project is under way or not, or would that all be in the other department?

Mr. Mackintosh: I'll defer to Culture for the answers on that.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to ask the minister about the type of analysis that's undertaken by this department to determine how many visitors—I think you were looking at that with—the UNESCO—my colleagues, at the same area that you were just talking on.

So I think with—in regards to Crown corporation land policy, I'd like to ask whether there's any reviews that are currently under way with respect to the Crown lands policy in the province?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes. There's a Crown lands deputies committee, and they look at issues as they arise. I don't know if that's really what the member was getting at, but if there's a specific issue or concern, perhaps we could address that.

Mr. Maguire: Thanks. I was just wondering what reviews are under way, what departments would be involved, and what the purpose of the reviews are, just—there would be different departments, I understand, that would be involved, and I just wondered if he can provide me with which departments are doing them—reviews, and what each review is being—is dealing with.

Mr. Mackintosh: There may be one that MAFRI has been working on that may be classified as a review of Crown lands, but we don't have all the specs on that one. We could get back to the member and advise him if there are any sort of overall reviews that are taking place with regard to Crown land use.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, that would be fine, if he can provide me with anything that the corporate land use—not corporate, Crown land policy that the government has in regards to projects that are on the go, which departments. If you can provide me with a review of that, that would be good.

I'll move on to, I think, the—there's a question or two here I'd just like to ask in regards to the current number of resource officers, as we move into regional support services. I don't have too much time left for the day, but I was just wondering if there was a current number of resource officers employed by the department, and the current number of vacancies of resource officers in the province. We've talked earlier today about some of the ones being hired in other areas, but if—wonder if there's a—if overall there's a number that he could provide me with.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, there are a total of 119 NRO positions in 43 communities. There are currently 10 positions vacant.

Mr. Maguire: Can he give me an update on the special investigative unit and the canine team that are under his responsibilities? Have there been any changes in respect to their funding and staffing levels in those areas?

Mr. Mackintosh: There are no changes to report on the SIU, but there's been an addition to the canine resources and there's one in—there's a canine unit in Grandview, and now there's one in Beausejour.

Mr. Maguire: Has the one in Beausejour been recently added, then, or has it been there for some time?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, it's been recently added and I might want to just, on the record, compliment the

Natural Resource Officers' Association. They made a tremendous contribution and that's why we're able to have the dog.

Mr. Maguire: Can he just update me—can the minister just update me on the types of investigations and enforcement activities that they've been involved in lately?

Mr. Mackintosh: It can range from everything from illegal sales of fish. Of course, it's fish and wildlife. Sometimes police are, you know, called in to help, but I think that, you know—I don't know if the member had any particular angle he was looking for, but—did I say roadside checks? I think I did. Yes.

Mr. Maguire: So the minister's indicated they do use them for roadside checks, stops and that sort of thing, as well, when there's—looking for drug accounts and that kind of thing, as well?

Mr. Mackintosh: In addition to roadside checks, which are an important function, they have also served an educational role. They—you know, communities sometimes invite the NRO with the dog to events or to classrooms, and that provides, I think, perhaps an underrated role in terms of educating people in the role of NROs, respect for wildlife and habitat.

Mr. Maguire: There's a question in the area of page 51 in regards to the resources that are—that the minister has in this department. Does he feel that there's enough resources there to kind of control any kind of illegal, commercial traffic in fish and wildlife in these areas? Or does he feel that they could—I mean, you could always use more resources, but how many charges can he indicate have been laid in the last year as well?

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, I think, of course, we can get information on the charges. We don't have that at hand here, but the enforcement efforts are not just—

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

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

FINANCE

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the ever-exciting

Department of Finance. As has been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner, and the floor is now completely open for questions.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I was just going to start off by asking the minister if he, in fact, has any of the information that we have previously requested, and if he would provide that for us please.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Yes, I have some I can read into the record for the member.

She'd asked about provincial sales tax on insurance premiums and some—and a breakdown of some revenue items.

Sorry. I don't need to read it in. I can table this. I only have one copy of it—but that's easier we can do that.

An Honourable Member: That would be great.

Mr. Struthers: Tired of hearing my voice?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, honourable minister. We will make sure some copies of that are made and appropriately tabled then. Thanks to the Clerk for looking after that.

Mr. Struthers: I also have a list for the member for Tuxedo which I can table for her as well. She'd asked about a comparison, I guess, of the Manitoba PST—items that are charged the GST on, but not a PST. And there's—it's broken down into goods and services. There's a list of them, and I can hand that to the member as well. We're doing quite good on that compared to the—those feds, you know.

Anyway, the—I can also table for the member for Tuxedo a list of charges for licences, registrations, permits and other services that I believe she'd asked for as part of a request yesterday, some fee changes in connection with special operating agencies: office of the fire commission, the Property Registry and Vital Statistics Agency.

And one more sheet I can table for the member for Tuxedo, a list of fees broken down into departments: Conservation, Water Stewardship; Family Services and Labour; Innovation, Energy and Mines; and Justice; and Local Government—*[interjection]* Pardon me? Fees, yes. I think that's—should about cover it.

Yes, that was the information that the member had asked about the flood and some breakdowns there that were—we haven't got totally put together

yet, but, hopefully, as quickly as we can we'll get that to her.

Mrs. Stefanson: What does as quickly as we can mean?

Mr. Struthers: I was going to say by the end of Estimates, but I don't know when that's going to be. But how about we target for next week?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I mean, sooner would be better. I mean, I'm prepared to perhaps even move on with Estimates if the minister would be willing to provide that to us today. But, if you're not prepared today, then I would, you know, by the end of the week or early next week, if that's doable that will be fine.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, that seems like a reasonable target.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks to you both.

Mrs. Stefanson: And the one last thing, there's a question that I asked at the beginning with respect to the staff increases in the Department of Finance. I believe there was an increase in 20 overall, a net increase. I know that there were some people who retired and so on, but I think there's—there appears to be a net increase in staff of 20 people, or roughly 20 people, and I'm wondering if the minister could just indicate what the reason behind the increase in staff is, of an extra 20 people.

Mr. Struthers: There was no net increase in terms of FTEs. There were transfers in from Family Services—9.2 FTEs through the Financial Institutions Regulation Branch. There were 13 FTEs under Priorities and Planning branch from Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade and two FTEs transferred in from the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and that came from Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade as well, for a total of 24.2.

But there's, like I said, that—they were transferred in since Estimates last year.

Mrs. Stefanson: But those are now being paid for from the Department of Finance right? And no longer from the departments that they came to?

Mr. Struthers: That is correct.

Mrs. Stefanson: And what sort of services, I guess, are they—like, what's the reason for moving them from one to the other? Why is it more appropriate that they work out of Finance than in the individual departments?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I think the first one might be pretty obvious right in the title—Financial Institutions Regulation Branch. We thought that that makes a lot of sense to be connected to our folks in Finance. I think it makes a lot easier for them all to work together on their corporate regulatory functions that they all have. We think that it provides us a much better focus and synergy that—by having them in the Department of Finance and I think that makes a lot of sense.

Both in terms of the Priorities and Planning branch and the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has indicated that those two entities need to really focus on some key economic initiatives of our government, and we want those to be—we want those resources to be focused working together closely. They work a lot with the folks here in Finance in terms of putting together strategies for success when it comes to some of those economic initiatives that we think are very important to Manitobans.

So I think—I was very happy that those functions would be put together and would be put together in such a way that they can focus together on those economic initiatives that we want to have succeed.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: Are there, maybe, other departments in other areas? Have you done a review of other programs that are being delivered through other—by other ministers and departments that would be more appropriately done in this way under the Department of Finance? Have you done sort of an overall review of that to see where it would be more appropriate for those types of programs to be delivered under Finance?

Mr. Struthers: I mean, I certainly believe that our government's approach over the last 12 years has been an ongoing look at the reorganization of departments.

First and foremost, I know we always used to hear a lot of talk about how government sets itself up into silos and one department never talks to the other. I think we've made a lot of progress in terms of breaking down those kind of silos and including contact with other levels of government. There's lots of examples of—even, let's say, some of these key economic initiatives that I've mentioned in the previous question. They don't get to go forward unless we have some kind of co-operation, and if we

can't organize ourself in that way at the provincial level then we put ourselves in a weaker position to deal with other levels of government that we co-operate with. So that is ongoing.

I think back 12 years ago to when the premier of the day, Mr. Doer, took the environment department and resources department, put it together within Conservation and gave it a very strong mandate to move forward on a list of, you know, a to-do list of things to get done. So that kind of thought has been present right from the beginning.

And I will say, oh, yesterday, I kind of badmouthed, you know, the government of the 1990s, but I remember some of the reorganizations they did at that time that I thought did make some sense in terms of some of the innovation technology and trade and economic development combinations that they put together.

But my point is that the—we always look for opportunities to reorganize ourselves, to improve our success rate if it comes to economic initiatives or improve responding to values and priorities of Manitobans. I think it's incumbent on any department, any government, to do that.

So, as the 2012-13 budget year unfolds, you will see us asking people to always be re-evaluating and reassessing, coming up with ideas that improve the way in which we deliver programs. We'll be looking for ways to deliver programs differently, kind of with two things in mind. One, to make sure we're getting, you know, the services out there for Manitobans, but at the same time making sure we don't spend more than we need to and, in some cases, I think we can even save some money in changing the way we deliver some of the things that we do.

So every department, including Finance, will be looking at that, and I think that's an ongoing situation when it comes to delivering programs on behalf of the Manitoba taxpayer.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you, Minister, for the—for your comments on that.

I'd like to move on in the area of taxation now, and the first area that I'd like to talk about is the farm tax credit. And wondering if the minister could indicate what the cost is to administer that tax credit.

Mr. Struthers: I think I can partly help the MLA for Tuxedo on this. The benefit through the farm tax credit for Manitobans is \$35.6 million. That's money that goes—that ends up into the bank accounts of

Manitobans: farmers, in this case. What I can't give a specific number on for the member, and she'd have to go to Agriculture Estimates to find this because it's—the program's administered through the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation. They would be able to give her a specific number on administration. I believe that would be separate from the \$35.6 million because the \$35.6 million is money that goes directly to farmers.

Mrs. Stefanson: I wonder if the minister can indicate—there's always sort of an issue with tax credits because someone's paying first and then you're giving a portion back, but in this instance, as I understand, you have, and it's been your policy to remove the education tax on farmland and—altogether. So I guess, what is the point of having a tax credit where someone has to—the farmer has to put forward the money, then the government then returns it by way of a tax credit? Would it not just be better to just say, you know, no, you don't have to pay these taxes anymore?

Mr. Struthers: What we have to deal with in this particular case is that—is, like I was saying before, co-operation of another level of government. This is actually—it's not so much, I guess, a tax credit, as it is a rebate to farmers, a rebate of—to farmers who would have been paying—who would have paid municipal taxes. So this does complicate the process by which we go through this.

* (15:10)

So I think, as a kind of a practical matter and, I suppose, a matter of clarity, it make—it does make more sense to rebate that money to farmers and I think they realize that that is a real benefit for them. But, it's unlike other tax credits where we don't have the municipal level of government involved. So we find that this actually is probably the most straightforward way to do this particular program for farmers.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay. I guess there's also been, you know, I believe your—you ran in the election on removing education taxes for seniors, as well. And, I believe that has yet to be brought in. And I'm wondering, if there is a way to make it a little bit more simple for seniors and just have it removed and not done in a rebate way, which you talked about, or a tax credit solution to this.

What is your plan to administer that tax relief that you have promised in the last election?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I feel the need to be very clear, that there was a commitment that we made and it is a commitment that we will follow through on.

Having said that, we want to do it in as efficient a manner as we can. We want to make it as easy as we can for seniors, or any other—anybody else, farmers, or anybody else who benefits from these plans. We try to make it as straightforward and as efficient as we possibly can.

We're investigating ways now as to how to move forward with this. So, if the member opposite or any of her colleagues have suggestions on that, I'd like to hear them.

But, no doubt, we will follow through on the commitment we made and we will—we'll try to get the simplest, most straightforward process in place to benefit seniors.

Mrs. Stefanson: And, I mean, I would just think that the simplest way of doing it, is not to tax them in the first place. And, you know, you start getting into rebate and tax-credit situations, it's, you know, it's difficult for people and—in general. And so, I would think to try and make it as simple as possible would be the best thing.

But, of course, you know, I think, one of the most important things is actually to consult seniors' organizations themselves, to ensure that whatever way you do come out with this, that's it's done in a way that is most beneficial to them. And the people who really know that are the seniors organizations and groups in all the communities across Manitoba.

Is there a consultation process under way now for this?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I do appreciate that advice from the member for Tuxedo.

We are looking at the process by which we include people and bring in suggestions, and gather advice on the best way to move forward with the commitment that we made.

I know that the—always the topic of consultation comes up, and it's something that this government is committed to doing on a whole broad range of issues, and we do follow up on that.

So I appreciate that advice. And I'll be sure that it's part of the consideration as we move forward not only in what the final outcome is, the final result, but the process to get there, because I think she's right. The process to get there is an important part of this,

and I think seniors can have good advice in terms of what this commitment should look like.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'd just like to ask the minister when this process is going to begin, and when seniors can expect to see the benefit in their pockets with respect to this election promise that was made.

Mr. Struthers: We don't know the answer to the question, in terms of the process. What I've learned in my time in government is that we—as minister, I don't want to be making presumptions or assumptions about this before we get into the process of talking with people.

I don't want to set up a situation where we ask seniors to come in if decisions have already been made. I think we've got to—we have the—we've got to have the sequence right in this. I think if we're going to be talking with Manitobans, it needs to be a meaningful conversation. And so what you'll see happening over the next while is that there's discussions happening about the process that we go through. We'll go through the process and then come forward with the results of that process and our commitment as soon as we can move through the process we put in place.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Minister, it's—or Mr. Chair, through to the minister, of course, I'm a little concerned. It's been seven months since the election took place. I think seniors, you know, many of them went and cast their ballots based on promises that were made in the election. And I think it's very important that things move forward on this as quickly as possible.

I suspect that many of the seniors in Manitoba are expecting some sort of a movement on this as quickly as possible so that they'll be able to see it probably for this calendar year, either on their tax returns or however you're going to do it, whether it's through a tax rebate or credit or just simply saying, you don't need to pay this.

And so I'm just wondering if the minister can indicate what the plan is moving forward and what the time frame is for this, because I think seniors would like to know the answer to that.

Mr. Struthers: Oh, I think it's understandable that seniors will want to know a few things. And first and foremost is, yes, we will be coming through on the election commitment that we made. We've been very clear about that. Yes, we will have a process in place

that will lead to an announcement of what that commitment looks like. I can't give a, you know, a date and a time by which that will be complete.

But seniors can be confident that we're coming through with this commitment and that we will have a fair process in place to figure out the best way in which to come through with this commitment.

Mrs. Stefanson: And just moving on to the goods and services that are subject to the GST and not the retail sales tax. Thank you for—I thank the minister for the list. And we know, of course, that there was a list prior to the budget that was tabled, that was probably a little longer than this one.

And now there are a number of goods and services that are subject to PST, that PST has been expanded to those items. And I'm wondering if the minister could indicate, you know, are—can we expect that some of these—a list—or will he indicate whether or not because I know he's on the plan for next year's budget and so on, if any of the—if we can expect that any of these other goods and services that are subject to GST will then be subject to the retail sales tax in subsequent years.

* (15:20)

Mr. Struthers: Well, we think in Budget 2012 we've struck a balance. First of all, we've been clear. We're going to work to come back into balance, 2014-15 fiscal year. We understand that we can't do that only on revenue items or only on expenditure items. We believe you have to have—it's a balanced approach to coming back into balance, and we think we've hit that with the—with what we did in Budget 2012.

There are—we've been very clear in terms of the reductions—a 3.9 per cent reduction on the expenditure side. You know, another—a further \$128 million in year that we'll be looking for. You know, the number of departments, I—if my memory serves me correctly—10 departments that are—will be held frozen or less. We're determined on the expenditure side to bend that expenditure line downwards, but we're realistic enough to realize that we have to look on the revenue side, as well. So we've done that. We've tried to do that in as fair a way as we can. Rather than bumping up the percentage for PST we decided we'd look at expanding, as governments before us have done, expanding the base of the PST, which is the area that the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is looking at.

The first thing I want to say is that we're very focused on this year and on hitting targets and having a successful implementation of the 2012 budget. That's first and foremost; it's uppermost in my mind.

But at the same time, I think, you know, the member's asking us to look down a little further than that year, and I think that's good because it fits into the approach that we've had with our five-year economic recovery plan. You—I think what you'll see us getting ready for next year is the same kind of a balanced fair approach as what you've seen over the course of the first three years of our five-year economic strategy.

She will note in year 1 of that strategy, we were hitting and exceeding targets. We were doing better than what we had projected in year 1 of that five-year recovery plan.

Year 2: we've had our discussions about year 2, and the size of the deficit that occurred in year 2, and, well, we have our reasons. We've talked about the flood and we've talked about, you know, the economic downturn and those sorts of things that contributed to that deficit.

We've, in year 3, which is the 2012 budget that we're dealing with now, I think the member will note our determination to bend that deficit line back towards zero, and I think she can see that we're doing that.

The approach for next year will be much the same. We'll look at our success in this year's budget, and we'll be making decisions based on a number of things, not the least of which will be pre-budget consultations with Manitobans. And I think it would be fair—only fair for us, as government, to report back to the people of Manitoba, talk about the experiences of Budget 2012 in preparation for Budget 2013.

But we're not going to back off in our determination to come back into budget—back into balance. We're not going to put at risk health services and education services and family services. We're not going to start turning kids away who need our help. We're going to continue to invest in strategic infrastructure such as roads and bridges—and, I think, part of the infrastructure needs to be, you know, high-speed Internet—and those sorts of things. We're still going to continue that approach. So it may be next year at this time members opposite still aren't happy with what they see in terms of expenditures,

but we're not going to back off in supporting those things that matter most to Manitobans.

So—but we are also going to continue to be fair in terms of revenue increases. I think, fairness is a very important word when it comes to revenue. And I think Manitobans need to know that we work to keep our house in order in terms of expenditures if we're going to turn to them and ask them to provide us with revenue.

I think, at the same time—as was clear in the House in question period today, you know, members opposite had a number that they had pencilled in in terms of the amount per Manitoban for the revenue increases that they've picked out of the budget. In one—on January 1st, you know, to be fair—and to be fair—we had a \$250 benefit—a \$250 basic personal exemption that was a benefit to Manitobans, as well, that, I think, when you look at—when members opposite come up with their numbers in terms of tax increases, they need to also factor in the tax credits that we have provided for Manitobans at the same time.

We think it's a balanced way to approach this issue. If members opposite have some constructive ideas on how we can continue to do this, I'd be all ears.

Mrs. Stefanson: Certainly, we know that there was a promise made in the last election—another one here that— and it was not to raise taxes. It didn't say which taxes or anything else; it was not to raise taxes. And we know, from these—from the estimates of revenue, that you're looking at a 5.6 per cent increase in taxation. And, you know, it's—if we're just looking at the PST, the expansion of the PST is an increase in taxes to Manitobans. It's an increase in tax revenue, which is right in your own estimates of revenue and books. And, I mean, that is a promise that was broken. You talk about a balanced approach, well, to—between revenues and expenditures. Well, you know, you said you wouldn't raise taxes. One of the largest areas of revenues for the Province is, actually, through taxation. And in—you know, so that—and that's a 5.6 per cent increase from—over last year's budget.

So while, yet, you've—you're sort of—you're not—I mean, you've broken your election promise, already. And now you're saying that some of these goods and services that are subject to GST right now, and not the PST, those are likely in play to be expanded to next year, if what I'm hearing is correct from the minister, as part of their five-year plan. Because

five—their—part of their five-year plan is to expand the revenues, which is expanding the taxation, because that's what they did this year.

So is it—as I understand, from—you know, from your answer to the last question, it is your intention and that's part of your five-year plan: to look at other revenue sources through taxation; to expand, further, the PST; or to expand, further, revenue generation through taxation. Is that correct?

Mr. Struthers: I would caution the member for Tuxedo. To read that into my answer—again, it may fit the narrative of members opposite, which is a narrative of a tax-and-spend government—unfortunately the—in my opinion, at least, the facts don't bear her out on that.

* (15:30)

I've been really clear that we approached this budget year in terms of being balanced between expenditures and revenues. I don't think it would be honest for a political party to go forward and say they're going to come back into balance and not look at revenue opportunities. I would suspect if members opposite were in government, they'd be saying the same thing. Their track record when they were in government was to expand the PST to all kinds of things, Mr. Chairperson.

Our commitments in the election were very clear in terms of coming back into balance in 2014, in terms of sticking to our five-year economic strategy that we had put in place. I think the people of Manitoba were very impressed that we had a five-year strategy, that we had a plan, that we had put some thought into it.

What they weren't impressed with, I must say, is the Conservative Party who seemed to have multiple plans and multiple commitments running counter to each other, in terms of coming back into balance. You know, they had a resolution in the House saying they were going to cut deeply into health care and education and all those things that mattered to Manitobans. And that was their strategy right up until the very eve, I'd say, the eleventh hour. It might have been even 11:30 the night before the election was called.

And it wasn't like they were surprised by the election call. I mean, that was—that's been set for a while. So they can't use—we can't say we snuck one in on them or fooled them. I mean, at the very end of that evening on Monday, out comes this new

economic strategy on the part of the Conservative Party, to come back into balance, not in two or three years, four years, but 2018, way down the road someplace. I wondered if that, you know, were they going to do all that deep cutting and delay coming back into balance until 2018. I don't think anybody was sure.

But what people were sure about—what the people of Manitoba were absolutely sure about, is that they had a choice between a government who had an economic recovery plan—and we put it out there for people and we were honest about that and straightforward.

And they, on the other side of the ballot, they had a party who had at least two, maybe more, positions in terms of coming back into balance and how they were going to do it, and whether or not health care and education and family services and infrastructure was going to get thrown under the bus or not.

So I find it a little rich when members opposite get on high horses and start talking about political commitments, given their performance in this past election, layered on top of the same performance, election after election after election.

So what Manitobans can count on is that this government is going to work to come back into balance, 2014-15, like we said we would do. We're going to come back into balance by strategically investing in infrastructure and protecting health care and education and family services, and that we're going to—we will have a reasonable, fair approach to paying for the programs that we think are important.

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, I want to give credit to the minister because I think it takes a lot of courage to admit that they were dishonest in the last election campaign. And, in fact, that's what he just admitted to and so I thank him for that.

It was dishonest to promise not to raise taxes and then turn around at the first opportunity, the first budget that comes out, to raise taxes, in the way that they have. And so he is saying that that was dishonest, and I appreciate him for admitting that. And admitting also that their plan is to move forward through their five-year plan and come back into balance by raising taxes for Manitobans. And so, at least now we know, and the minister's on the record now, as indicating exactly how they're going to go about doing that.

And, of course, we think it's unfortunate because over the last 12 years, Manitoba's in the situation—the Manitoba government is in the situation that it's in because of this NDP government's policy to spend beyond their means. And they want now, average Manitobans, through—by way of taxation, to pay for their spending addiction.

And so, I think it's good that the minister has admitted that that is truly what their plan is. The five-year plan is to raise taxes to bring the budget back into balance. So they're—you know, and we know that they can't reign in their spending addiction, and so, unfortunately, average Manitobans will be left to pay for that.

And, you know, I will remind the minister that they've had record increases in revenues and transfer payments and so on for the last 12 years, something that was never seen in the 1990s. The 1990s interest rates were a lot higher than they are right now. And so, to service the debt back then was a different story. The debt was a lot smaller; in fact, half of what it is today. And yet, here we are, and interest rates were around 9—oh, between maybe 8 and 11 or 12 per cent, or 11 per cent then. And now we're at, you know, where we are now, at record lows.

But at some point that's going to change, and the problem is that rather than paying down the debt over the last 12 years, when they had the opportunity to do so, to—the NDP government chose not to. And I think it's unfortunate, and that's—you know, they just keep adding on to the debt to pay for their spending addictions. They tax Manitobans more to pay for their spending addiction. There is nothing that says that this NDP government has any plans to rein in their spending problem. And until they admit that they've got a problem and that, you know, and start to put in policies to deal with the situation, we're unfortunately going to be in a—in the tax-and-spend situation for many years to come. And so I think that's unfortunate.

But I do want to move on, Mr. Chair, and discuss the dividend tax credit briefly. I'd like to know, just briefly, I know a number of companies who issue dividends have plans called dividend reinvestment plans. And I'm wondering if the minister could indicate to me how this change in policy will affect those dividend reinvestment plans, if it will at all.

* (15:40)

Mr. Struthers: We're just checking the particulars on that question just now. It'll be a minute.

An Honourable Member: We could move on to others.

Mr. Struthers: We could. I'm not quite willing to move on yet after—there's a few things I think I must respond to in the—

An Honourable Member: I was just responding to you, Stan.

Mr. Struthers: And then you'll respond again, I know.

But, again, this is a case of the opposition wanting to have a certain narrative that they can talk about, a certain approach, a certain story line. Their problem is that the facts don't back them up, yet again. She can mention certain principles over and over and over again; it doesn't mean they're correct. She can repeat things a hundred times over; it still isn't correct.

The fact of the matter is, as we pointed out the other day, when it comes to expenditures we're about fourth—we're fourth best in the province—sorry—fourth best in the country in terms of our expenditures, and we have a record that I will compare against the Canadian average any day in terms of expenditures. And that—and we have a surplus deficit history over the course of our time in government and we've had a number of years where we ran surpluses.

And I think this is an untold part of the story that needs to be considered more, starting in '04-05, running through to '08-09, five years in a row our government ran surpluses. We took from those surpluses and contributed to our fiscal stabilization account so that when we have five years in a row that we've said where we'd be running deficits we can still finance and pay for the costs of borrowing. And I certainly hope that members opposite aren't advising me not to borrow money to be used to stimulate our economy and provide services for Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Chairperson, the fact of the matter is that right up—our history right up through Budget 2012, we've been very prudent with taxpayers' dollars. We've invested strategically money into facets of our Manitoba economy that have paid dividends in the long run and we've done that without making the mistakes of the 1990s in which draconian decisions were made that

exacerbated the economic downturn that took place. We aren't the government that sold a Crown corporation to pay for the sins of our bad spending decisions like the Conservative government did back in the '90s and we're not going to do that. We've made a very upfront, very honest commitment to Manitobans with a long-term, multi-year approach in terms of handling the finances of the province. We're sticking to that and we're going to make good decisions to come back into balance and protecting the things that matter most to Manitobans.

So I'll keep saying that. Maybe members opposite will believe me, but I have no expectations that they will. They've picked their story, they're sticking to it, come hell or high water, and that's where it's going to get, I guess.

Mrs. Stefanson: I suspect we'll just have to agree to disagree on that matter and I—and we do have a number of questions that we still would like to ask, so if we could revert back maybe to the other question later.

I do want to just go back to the retail sales tax for right now, just for a moment, and in the last election, the NDP ran on not introducing a harmonized sales tax in Manitoba, and what we see from this budget is that a number of the services and goods and services that the GST was applied to before has now expanded to also apply the retail sales tax as well.

And the minister indicated a couple of questions, or a couple of answers ago, that they will be looking at ways to increase revenues and that—that it could—you know, they're not going to rule out, you know, a further expansion of the PST.

Is it the intention at some point for the minister to—I mean, effectively what's happening is that there's a partial adoption of the HST in Manitoba as they expand further on applying RST to products and services that have the GST. It's one step in that direction. And I just wonder if the minister could indicate whether or not the plan is to implement the HST up front, or is it just to do it through the back door by way of expanding those goods and services that already have the GST and expanding the retail sales tax to those as well?

Mr. Struthers: Well, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is very good at deciding when she wants to start the clock ticking in terms of any of these issues that we deal with. I suppose one could make the argument that when her predecessors,

friends of hers that were in government in the '90s, really were moving towards an HST when they broadened the base of the provincial sales tax to include baby supplies. I remember at the time being part of a group that was very critical. Who taxes baby supplies? I think she could probably remember the discussions that took place back then. You know, that was—well, she may have been in high school, but people who have the same ideological approach to government that she has expanded the PST, didn't raise the percentage of it, but expanded it to include baby supplies. So she should, maybe, keep that in the back of her mind as she moves forward with questions on these.

The other thing that I've just given her a list of is a long list of items in which—a long list of items which her friends in Ottawa charge the GST to, that we don't here in Manitoba—that we don't in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Yet.

*(15:50)

Mr. Struthers: It's a long list, and I—maybe she's advising me that I should and maybe she's hoping that we do. I don't know exactly where she's going on this, but the fact of the matter is that there's a big difference between the list of items that we cover with our provincial sales tax, as opposed to the list of items that her friends in Ottawa, and her former friends—it was her friend Brian Mulroney that brought in the GST in the first place, if I remember, and stacked the Senate to get the job done, if I remember correctly—but anyway that's—she wouldn't even have been in high school in those days. So that may not be of concern.

But the list of GST—the list of services that the GST is applied to is a lot longer, and she has it in front of her, than what the PST is. We've been clear, and I—to their credit I think members opposite said the same thing in the election, that we weren't going to adopt the HST, and our reasons not to adopt—not to harmonize were very clear, in that we think that would cost Manitoba's—Manitobans and our economy too much. We saw the experience of other provinces and, you know, I'm not even so much thinking of the kind of political fallout that befell the BC government. But I'm thinking of other provinces who got—who I think were—harmonized their sales taxes and found they had less revenue and more headaches, and I want the member to know that I'm neither into less revenue nor headaches.

So we've been clear in terms of not adopting, not harmonizing sales tax. So we've been clear with that. I'm hoping that members opposite still have the same position, or like they did with their projections to rebalance, maybe that has changed in the meantime as well since the election. I'm sure there are people who voted for them on the basis of their position on non-harmonization. I hope there—I hope they still have that position today.

Mrs. Stefanson: And I also want to look at the PST on insurance premiums and the information that the minister has given me. It appears to me, through property liability and group life insurance, that there are only two other provinces in Canada that require the citizens in their province to pay PST on those services. Is that correct?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, for once this afternoon I can agree with my colleague from Tuxedo. They're Québec and Ontario.

Mrs. Stefanson: Is there—just trying to—you know, I—once again what concerns me is that we're always sort of one of the last in Canada when it comes to some of these things and, you know, it creates more of an advantage for people living in other provinces, when you start to tax them in such a way where in other provinces they're not.

And I mean this is very concerning to me when our neighbour, Saskatchewan, even Alberta, BC, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI, Newfoundland and there's no GST on these services, so nothing at the federal level, either. It concerns me that when we're already at a disadvantage in Manitoba that this adds a further burden to Manitobans and another reason why they might be moving and—to other provinces and—in Canada.

And just wondering if the minister would care to comment on why he would choose to put Manitoba in a further disadvantage to other provinces, other than Ontario and Québec, with this specific tax.

Mr. Struthers: I'm really pleased that the member for Tuxedo is—opened up the whole discussion about affordability.

I think Manitobans are very smart. I don't think they look at one very narrow statistic or very—one very narrow sector. I think Manitobans are very smart and they look at the whole ball of wax when it comes to affordability.

They—of course, they consider taxes; I think that's correct. They don't stop thinking when it—after that though. They take into consideration our Hydro rates; they take into consideration our home heating rates; they take into consideration our Autopac rates.

And that's why we—the member for Tuxedo's talking about our commitments in the election—that's why we made that commitment in the 2011 election, to bundle up those three—home heating, Hydro, and Autopac rates—bundle them up into one package and make it very clear to Manitobans that we will have the most affordable province when it comes to those three expenses that Manitobans face. Mr. Chairperson, that is a real benefit for Manitobans.

That's what prompts, you know, she mentioned our member—our neighbour from Saskatchewan. Well, our neighbour in Saskatchewan has said, on a number of occasions, including that—it was Saskatchewan's 2012 budget ranks Manitoba in the top two most affordable provinces. That's what our neighbours in Saskatchewan are saying. I don't think she's accurate to think that Saskatchewan's expecting a whole bunch of Manitobans to come flooding over the—over our borders to their province on the basis of the question that she just asked me.

Now, that doesn't mean I'm not going to be fair. That doesn't mean that we're not going to meet with representatives of the industry to talk about ways in which we can implement this decision, this budget decision fairly. And those meetings have been taking place. I think we've had some very good, very mature meetings with some very understanding Manitobans, Manitobans who represent a very important sector in our provincial economy.

The whole financial services sector of our economy is 11 per cent—no, sorry, 6 per cent. The financial services sector would be 6 per cent; I confused it with manufacturing at 11 per cent. But at 6 per cent, that is an important part of a very diverse economy.

So, to try again to tie this to the—to Manitobans leaving the province, to this not being an affordable place to live, to not having an advantage, I think members opposite have to start seeing the glass where it is, and that's half full, rather than half empty.

And the other—*[interjection]* I'm glad to see you're getting your glass filled up; that might put you in a better frame of mind, in terms of the approach in Manitoba's economy.

But the—you know, when in the budget itself we have the section on the Manitoba advantage, and, you know, we don't give ourselves quite as much credit as Saskatchewan does, but we say we're No. 3 at least, in terms of affordability.

So, Mr. Chairperson, we're going to continue to work with the investment community. We're going to attend—continue to work with the insurance community. We're going to—we've heard some of the concerns that they have in terms of retroactivity. We've heard some of the concerns that they've had in terms of administration and other challenges. We've come to agreements across the board. We've been talking with them in terms of an implementation date, which is important to the industry. So we're going to continue to work with them, and I'm very happy with the way those discussions have been going.

But to suggest that Manitobans look so narrowly at one statistic and then make a decision on where they're living, I think is pretty narrow-minded.

* (16:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: What is the administrative cost to transact an average land transfer in Manitoba?

Mr. Struthers: That specific information would be available through the property registry SOA. That'll be my colleague, ministerial colleague for Consumer Affairs—Healthy Living and Consumer Affairs. They'd be able to give you a more specific answer than what I could today.

Mrs. Stefanson: There is, for the property registry in the expenditures and revenues book under the SOAs, it indicates that it—is that—is it the property registry, I guess, that administers the land transfer tax?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, that's correct.

Mrs. Stefanson: One of the concerns we have and, of course, and this has been brought to my attention for many years now, is the rising costs of land transfers, the tax paid on that.

We know when it was originally introduced was under a previous NDP government in 1987, and at that time the average house—cost of a house in Manitoba was in the area of \$82,000, and now, according to what I see, it's—the average price of a house in Manitoba is about \$249,000. So that's a significant increase in, you know, the average cost of a house in Manitoba, and there's been very little

change since the NDP came in to adjusting for that. To transact a land transfer the fee is probably pretty minimal and—but when it's attached to the value of your home, then it ends up being very significant. I think when it was originally introduced it was meant to just cover the cost of the costs associated with transferring the land, the administrative cost, and back then it was about \$260, and now the average priced home would pay \$2,630 in land transfer tax.

On top of that, this was actually rather than making a decision to adjust this to make it fairer so that it's just covering the cost of the transaction, the NDP increased—and I believe it was the former, former Finance minister, the now-Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province that increased the land transfer tax threshold rate of—from 1.5 to 2 per cent in 2004, and the—and this kicks in at the threshold of \$200,000. Well, when the average house falls above that \$200,000, you're taxing the average Manitoban and increasing their taxes. And, you know, we've just heard that it's a very difficult tax. It's—well, it's—maybe call it an unfair tax the way it is right now, and it's getting worse, and it has over the years.

I wonder if the minister can just indicate, do you think that this is fair in terms of the increase which is almost a thousand per cent since 1987, and if he could indicate how he would go about dealing with this important issue? How does he answer this to Manitobans and justify this kind of an increase?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I—the first thing I want to say is that there have been people who've contacted me about this very issue, as well, and we try our best to get answers out to them in a timely fashion, with an explanation and rationale. We—and I don't mind doing that because I think, again, if we can get people to think broader than just this very narrow land transfer tax, and I don't even want to attempt to broaden it out to the big macro issues like we did before.

Even if we just look at our approach on this, every year we have benefits through tax credits that Manitobans realize. In—since 1999, this government has reduced property taxes by \$336 million, and that translates into annual property tax savings. You know, the member uses a pretty—I think a pretty close average. On 200—on a \$200,000 house, that's a \$1,412 benefit for that homeowner.

Now, one of the really, you know—when we look at this in terms of affordability for Manitobans, I think we do very well. As a matter of fact, we're in

the middle of the pack, when you look at the rest of the 10 provinces. We—and that kind of relates back to a discussion we had a little while ago about the HST, other provinces who factor in—when you factor in the HST to this discussion, we end up very competitive. I'm not going to try to pretend we're the best. I'm not going to let her categorize us as the worst. We're in the middle. That's where we're at.

But I think it's very important, in terms of her question about fairness, to point out that every year Manitobans collect those credits, and collect those benefits, as the result of decisions made by former Finance minister, current Premier (Mr. Selinger), and even the former minister, they've benefited through 12 years of those kinds of decisions makings.

* (16:10)

On the other hand, I—people who pay the land transfer tax pay it when they—when there's a—when they move. They pay it when they purchase a new house. So that doesn't happen every year. So this is a tax that is paid seldomly to the same people who benefit every year through tax credit decisions that our government has made.

So I think that—I think provides a better context for which the member opposite can struggle in terms of the concept of fairness.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the actual fact is that we have the highest land transfer rate in the country and so that puts us dead last when it comes to this issue. The rate—Ontario is the same but their threshold is \$200,000 higher. So ours at \$200,000 is—it puts us dead last in the country. And it doesn't keep us, once again, it doesn't keep us in a competitive environment in our country when we're dead last.

And so I would hope that the minister would take this very seriously. As I understand, people move an average of every five to seven years, and that's a significant tax hit on Manitobans. It also is a significant—it plays a significant role in—for those that are taking out mortgages. As we all know it's not very easy to get a mortgage and sometimes, an extra two or three thousand dollars makes a big difference. Well, how do they pay for the land transfer tax? And so it does affect mobility for people in our province, and especially when other provinces are way ahead of the game here and we're dead last.

I think it's incumbent upon the minister to look at ways to bring us back into—to being competitive when it comes to this—taxes in the province that are

keeping us uncompetitive or not competitive with other provinces.

So I'm just wondering if the minister could comment on what the long-term policy is to deal with the land transfer tax. Is it just to keep it the same at the status quo or is there a plan to look at moving us up a little bit from being dead last in Canada to being competitive?

Mr. Struthers: Well, my plan is, first of all, not to accept the—a very narrow interpretation that the member for Tuxedo just put on the table. I—I've indicated that we are at the middle of the pack. I totally suspected she would try to turn this into a dead last kind of an argument. But the—again, the facts do not bear her out.

When you look at the broad picture and you do a fair comparison of Manitoba to other provinces, we are in the middle of the pack. We—I don't know if she's correct or not in her assumption that people move every five to seven years. Even if she's correct or close to being correct, my argument still is that those same people get a lot of benefits every year through the tax credit system that we put in place, very substantial benefits accruing every year. And whatever that average move may be, I think it—this is a fairer way to approach this particular issue. And my approach is, you know, to—is to understand what I think one part of the—what the member said I agree with is that we need to understand what that impact is on Manitobans and make decisions that is—are beneficial for Manitobans.

If she's suggesting that we should do like other provinces, you know, not offer the kind of annual tax credit benefits that we do, I think she'll find a situation where Manitobans would be less better served. I think they'd be further behind if we were to take her advice on that.

So my assumption is that everybody around the table, whatever side of the table, are going to be advising us to take decisions that benefit Manitobans, and I don't see the benefit of the argument that the member brings forward. And I do see the benefit of continuing with an approach that every year puts money in the pockets of Manitobans, and then on a much less-frequent basis, applies a revenue item when Manitobans buy a house. So I think this works better in the long run for Manitoba families, so—but I'm—but I still remain open and interested in positive suggestions that the member could have.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just moving on here to a few questions to do with the debt.

What would happen—I guess what I'd really like is a schedule of the debt that's coming due over the course of the next couple of years, and so how much will be up for renegotiation or reinvestment? And if the minister could also just provide who the lending agency is, what the terms are, and the dates that those rates will be renegotiated, when the money's coming due.

Mr. Struthers: First of all, we deal with a consortium of banks, when it comes to our long-term financing, a consortium that consists of CIBC, TD, BMO, and RBC. We—over the next five years, our requirements, and these are in Canadian dollars, will be about \$2 billion each year that we will be looking in terms of borrowing.

I will quickly add that right after we presented the 2012 budget and then the member knows that last week I was in Toronto and in New York meeting with some of these same people, many more in addition to this, but these were part of the group, investors. You know, we would—it's vitally important that bond rating agencies understand our stability and our steady growth kind of an approach along with these—this—along with these—this consortium of banks that we deal with in terms of our borrowing. We don't want our—we want to keep our financing—our debt financing costs to a minimum. That is our goal, and we're going to work towards that.

* (16:20)

And I think I got very directly the feedback from them that they understand that we're on course, that we're not going to jump off a deep end anywhere. That we're—that we—that—and many of the quotes that we've got back from this consortium of bankers was that we're doing the right thing, in terms of both the expenditure side and the revenue side, and that the steady, stable approach of Manitoba is the right way to go. And that's not just something we learned since I became Finance Minister and presented a budget in 2012; that is based on a history with our government over the 12 years that we've been in government. They understand we're a diverse economy. They understand that there's a very good Canadian story to be told, and that the Manitoba economy is the most stable of the Canadian—in that Canadian context.

So I think it's a matter of us taking advantage of our advantages, i.e., diversity. It's a matter of us

making stable, steady decisions, which they give us credit for.

And it's a matter of keeping that good relationship with folks like the banks that I just mentioned, and making sure that bond rating agencies understand our story and continue to hold steady our credit ratings, which, I think, have been bumped up three times? Twice? Three? Holy smokes, I'm falling—not giving myself enough credit there, am I? Several—six increases over the 12 years of being in government in terms of our credit rating, so we fully intend to keep that solid reputation and make it pay on behalf of Manitobans.

Mrs. Stefanson: The minister mentioned \$2 billion a year over the next five years or so in borrowings. Is that just—are those refinancings of existing debt or is—does that also include projected new debt?

Mr. Struthers: Door No. 1: refinancing existing debt.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just wondering what—I mean, we're obviously looking at—we're in an era of fairly low interest rates right now, and is there an indication—I know there are some numbers out there about what a potential 1 per cent increase would be in interest rates.

Can you give me an indication—I mean, it's sort of based on how much debt is coming due in any given year and what new debt there will be, as well, but what—could the minister indicate what the projection would be if interest rates were to rise 1 per cent?

Mr. Struthers: To the specific question of the member for Tuxedo, we're—if there were to be an increased—increase in rates, if she asked about a 1 per cent increase, if that were to happen, it would affect the \$1.35 billion in floating—the floating interest that—amount that we have. So, of course—so then that would be a \$13.5-million increase. That's to answer her question, assuming a 1 per cent increase in interest.

Two things I want to—that I want to add very quickly to that. Mark Carney has been very clear that, in his estimation, if there's going to be increases they will be modest, not dramatic and that—and he's—I guess you can say he's doing his part to make sure that we have a, I guess, kind of a Manitoba approach to this whole thing, you know, steady and stable approach to setting of interest rates.

So he—and I would say colleagues of mine at the federal level as well, have that—have a moderate approach to that.

The other thing I want to add quickly is that last week we met with the chief economist at the Royal Bank, with RBC when we were in New York. He was very clear that they're not expecting interest rates to increase until, in his view, 2015. He wasn't—that was the morning that some unemployment numbers were released in the US, and I think he was concerned about a lot of things, but—especially coming out of that—those weak numbers that were reported that day.

But he was—and he—and, you know, he talked a lot about the American political situation and the Bush tax cuts coming to an end at the end of December and implications that a whole number of decisions may have on that, which, I think, probably further lent him to believe that in the US at least that—and of course, when they sneeze, we catch a cold. I understand that, but that their interest rates—he's not too worried about them till 2015.

So we're—in that context, you know, I think we've always got to be aware that that could have an impact on our bottom line. I think we always have to be aware that a decision by Moody's or Standard & Poor's, or any of the bond rating agencies could have an impact on our bottom line. They have signalled—and we'll continue to meet with them—but they've signalled that they're happy with the stability that is Manitoba, the stability and diversity.

We're not in the same boat as Ontario, and I don't wish any ill will on our friends in Ontario. They do have some challenges, but they're in a different position than we are.

And one of the things that they talked about was Ontario's long timeline to come back into balance, 2018, coincidence of all coincidences, same date that members opposite picked.

But they are very assured that we have a stable, steady approach that will do us good in the long run and mitigate if there are interest rate increases. *[interjection]* What's that?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Struthers: Dispense. In conclusion—your timing was good on that.

Mrs. Stefanson: And a quick question for the minister and I'm sure there'll be a quick answer here because—

An Honourable Member: I like to brag about Manitoba.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. He talked about the \$1.35 billion in floating rates, but you also talked about \$2 billion that's coming due every year, so that has to be taken into consideration when calculating how much we can expect over the next few years. It's not just the floating rate that will be affected, it'll be—it'll affect that—whatever that new rate is.

Now, I mean, perhaps now some of that, I guess it's more important to maybe ask: What is the average rate that's being paid right now? And the money that's coming due next year, what is the rate that's being paid on that?

And, perhaps, if you are refinancing anyway, I don't know if there's, you know, if there's a savings there, but if you could, maybe, just give us a little bit more detail there.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I—while the staff are following up and getting answers for her question she just posed, I can answer the question she pose—

An Honourable Member: What about the one from before, too?

Mr. Struthers: That's—exactly—she read my mind. That's exactly where I'm going. On stock dividends, you asked me a question.

Since 1985, the Canada Revenue Agency has treated stock dividends like ordinary dividends. So, as a result, they are taxable in Manitoba, and they're eligible for the dividend tax credit. I'm hoping that answered the question.

Mrs. Stefanson: No, I actually, it was—it's actually, and I don't want to belabour this because I—you know, maybe we could just, but if I—and you can endeavour to get back to me on it, but it was about—a question was on many stocks have—who pay dividends, have a dividend reinvestment plan.

And I just—I didn't know how that works in terms of—if the dividends are issued, is a—I'm sort of asking, how the—I don't think—I don't know if that has an effect on—if the changes have an effect on that at all in dividends that are reinvested in the company.

Mr. Struthers: We can check to make sure but I—my—but I think that doesn't—what we've done here doesn't have an impact on that, so—

An Honourable Member: Yes, okay. I just wanted to clarify.

Mr. Struthers: Right, okay, we'll make sure we follow up with something more specific.

Yes, we have some information for the member for Tuxedo. In terms of our maturities and our debentures, we—there's a number of different debentures that we work with. They range from an interest rate as high as 9.45 per cent, down to a low of five and a quarter per cent. We constantly—as they mature we renegotiate. We think that by—that what we've—over the course of this year, by doing that we've saved about \$4.6 million. So it rotates. We—they come off our books and we renegotiate at a better rate and you realize those savings.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, I'll try to be quick, Mr. Chair. I won't—I just want to talk about assets and capitalization rates, and such. I won't go into the issue of whether we should capitalize assets that aren't saleable, like roads, that's another discussion. And I see you have the valuation and depreciation set out there.

But, the question I have for you, is in terms of writedowns. There were considerable amount of damage done last year in the flood to roads and bridges. In fact, bridges that don't exist there at all. What have we done for our writedowns for those assets, and if you haven't, why not?

Mr. Struthers: The—every year it's standard practice that we review our assets. We review the assets and we—and if we find it necessary we will write them down. That occurs whether or not there's a flood; that occurs every year. What we look for: is there a reduction in their useful life? So it happens every year and every year we do write down. If we find we need to, then every year we write down as a result of that annual review.

Mr. Helwer: Well, last year, as the minister has mentioned often, was an exemplary year in terms of the impact on the province, on the flood. I've heard it numerous times. And, I'm surprised that you don't have an answer for this, in terms of the impact of the flood on our assets and what the writedown was. It should be a significant number in my expectation.

* (16:40)

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I mean, every year, after the end of March, it's standard practice, we review; we review the assets; we measure the reduction in their useful lives. It's all accounted for in a public—in Public Accounts every year, and that's the standard, whether there's been a flood or not that's the way we do it. The member could be right; the—maybe the member is right that, as a result of the significant flood, this year could look differently. But this is part of the normal practice that we do as a government.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

Resolution 7.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$31,292,000 for Finance, Fiscal and Financial Management, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,976,000 for Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,148,000 for Finance, Priorities and Planning, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,034,000 for Finance, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,843,000 for Finance, Net Tax Credit Payments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Finance, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

As mentioned earlier, the last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is

item 7.1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 7.1.

Yes, the floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No? Seeing no questions, we will move to consideration of this item.

Resolution 7.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,788,000 for Finance, Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Very good, thank you committee members. This now completes the ever-exciting Estimates for the Department of Finance.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

* (16:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): But the next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the department of Civil Service Commission.

Does anyone need a brief recess or shall we—

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I trust the minister has some civil service staff here today.

Mr. Chairperson: We are—[interjection] Yes. We can—if I can—we can recess for like five minutes or something until staff arrive. Shall we call a brief recess, five minutes and reconvene?

Mr. Briese: I only have two questions for them, Mr. Chair, or possibly three, and if somebody would guarantee me that I'll get the answers to those questions we could probably move on, but—

Mr. Chairperson: So—all right. In an attempt to facilitate what I think is being discussed around the table, might I suggest that we will go through the process. You'll each have an opportunity to do statements if you want to and questions can be posed, duly noted, followed up and we can proceed if the committee wants.

Mr. Briese: I'm comfortable with that, but I presume the minister would be the first one that would be making a statement.

Mr. Chairperson: Let's just finalize the process here. Minister, you're comfortable with what's—I've just outlined in terms of the process.

An Honourable Member: I don't have an opening statement.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, great. So then, just to go through this, we are now considering the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): No, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the honourable member for Agassiz have an opening statement?

Mr. Briese: I have a very short one. I want to congratulate all the people that work in the civil service. I think they do yeoman's duty for the people of this province, and I thank them very much for the work they do.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank both the minister for the non-comments and the member for the comments.

The floor is—sorry. Under—oh, sorry, just a quick—yes, so now, with opening statements dealt with, do folks want to proceed chronologically?

Mr. Briese: Globally, please. As I said, I only have a couple of questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Global discussion has been proposed. *[Agreed]*

Okay, we will now proceed in a global manner on this item.

Floor is open for questions.

Mr. Briese: The first question I had was, I have the civil service—total number of civil service employees for—actually for up to March of 2011 on a year-by-year basis. I'm wondering where that number might be for March of 2012 and if I can be provided with that figure.

I noticed there was a drop in numbers from March 2010 to 2011. I'm wondering if there was something moved out of the department or whether that was a cut down—an actual cut down on staff.

Mr. Struthers: Well, I'll endeavour to get both of those questions answered and we'll do it immediately.

Mr. Briese: My other questions pertain to the Manitoba Civil Service Commission Common Recruitment Initiative, which was—and I mentioned this yesterday, I want to know if it came in on

budget. It was budgeted—estimated costs were \$261,505. So I want to know whether that number came in accurately or if you came in close on that number, and the implementation date for the Common Recruitment Initiative was April, 2012. I want to know if it's in place, if it's been set up. That was the date it was supposed to be put in place by. I need information on whether that actually happened.

Mr. Struthers: Yes. I'll follow up with that and we'll make sure that we get back to the member for Agassiz quickly.

I do want to sneak a little comment in here and agree with him, in terms of the civil service and the value of the civil service to Manitobans, especially in light of some of the challenges that we faced over the last year since we were last in Estimates. So I appreciate his comments about the civil service and would quickly like to join him in that.

Mr. Briese: I thought I had you there on that one. I thought I had you beat on congratulating the staff, so—

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no more questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, members of the committee.

Seeing no further questions, we'll now proceed to consideration of the resolutions in this section of the Estimates.

Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,602,000 for Civil Service Commission, Civil Service Commission, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 17.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,000 for Civil Service Commission, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for the Civil Service Commission. So we'll now start Enabling Appropriations. Very good. So we've completed the Civil Service Commission Estimates.

ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the—is for Enabling Appropriations.

Does the honourable minister—oh, sorry. First of all, shall we proceed in a global or a chronological order?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Global.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: It's agreed that we'll go global in this section of the Estimates process.

Honourable minister, do you have an opening statement on Enabling Appropriations?

Mr. Struthers: No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Honourable member for Tuxedo?

Mrs. Stefanson: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No? All right. It is established that the floor is now open for questions.

Not seeing a whole lot of questions for the—on the floor for Enabling Appropriations, we will move to consideration of the resolutions.

Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,771,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,250,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal

Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,608,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Capital Assets, Internal Service Adjustments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes consideration of the Estimates for Enabling Appropriations.

Our next—oh—[interjection] All right. We got to do it all again. Yes, absolutely.

That concludes consideration of Enabling Appropriations.

OTHER APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): The next topic for the committee's consideration is Other Appropriations.

Is it the will of the committee to proceed in a global or a chronological order? Minister?

Mr. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Global.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable member for Tuxedo?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: Global. It's understood this will proceed in a global manner.

Opening statement by the minister?

Mr. Struthers: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Opening statement by the honourable member?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): No, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. The floor's open for questions.

Seeing no further questions, we can now proceed to consideration of the resolutions for Other Appropriations.

Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$70,024,000 for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$500,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 27.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,651,000 for Other Appropriations, Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

That concludes consideration of Other Appropriations.

EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Our next topic is for the consideration of Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Shall we go chronological or—[interjection] We have to close. Yes. Shall we go global or chronological?

Some Honourable Members: Global.

Mr. Chairperson: It is agreed the committee will proceed in a global manner.

Opening statements?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no opening statements, any questions?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, it is understood we're proceeding in a global manner. There's no questions. There's no statements.

We shall read the resolutions. All right, moving to Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,933,000 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs, Employee Pensions and Other Costs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2013.

Resolution agreed to.

The time being 5 o'clock, I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Thank you very much.

JUSTICE

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

Would the minister's staff and opposition staff please enter the Chamber. We're on page 143 of the main Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I know that we've kind of built a practice of, at the start of the day, trying to deal with any matters that were undertaken or left hanging at the end of the previous day. So I hope it's in order to move ahead.

Late yesterday, the member related an incident when he says that he viewed inmates watching pornography on television while on a tour of Milner Ridge Correctional Centre back on January 9, 2002. And I would agree that that was a serious allegation that, you know, that was raised, although raised with me for the first time yesterday, four months after it happened.

Certainly, I did take those facts very seriously, and as I undertook to do with the member for Steinbach I did some investigation. I'm quite satisfied that when the issue was raised on January the 9th it was taken very seriously by Milner Ridge Correctional Centre. I can advise that at no time has Milner Ridge subscribed to adult or pornographic television programming. I also am advised that the images that apparently were seen by the member for Steinbach were short-term, intermittent advertising in 30 or second—or 30- or 90-second ads which were on a television channel that was actually blocked on the satellite package. I'm told that Milner Ridge authorities weren't aware that those advertisements were available to inmates at various times, and I'm also told that steps were immediately taken to block the advertising and I understand that that remains the case.

It's also my understanding at the completion of the tour, the member for Steinbach was advised by correctional officials that inmates do not have access to pornographic television programming, that the issue of access to pornography or promotional advertisements themselves would be investigated, that the issue would, in fact, be corrected. Indeed, it has been. So, hopefully, that can clarify that matter from yesterday.

I know, as well, yesterday the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) had a number of questions about a particular file. I can advise that the individual in question had the opportunity to meet with Legal Aid Manitoba this morning, was given some advice about her file, including the foreclosure issue that the member for Charleswood reached. It's my hope that things will now move ahead and that the matter can be resolved in the normal way through the courts.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to thank the minister for the response on the question yesterday. I want to assure him and, you know, we have different forums that we can bring things up in this Legislature, and one of the reasons I chose this forum was because of the gravity of them and because I know that there are staff that are involved, and this is sometimes a little bit less heated of a forum, one might say, the Estimates process.

And he—what he says corresponds mostly to what I was told at Milner Ridge from the superintendent, in that it was inappropriate, that there was—they believed to be a mistake with satellite television. They were having issues with things that should be blocked and couldn't be blocked, and so that corresponds to what the minister is saying, and that the images were inappropriate and that he was going to take measures to correct them.

As I've said, in other forums, I took that—I took him at his word because he seemed liked a person who kept his word, and I never had any question about that nor any question about the staff at the correctional centres, having gone through, now, a number of different tours at the jails. Yes, that's a tough job, and it takes a special kind of person to do that job. And I've said that repeatedly and will continue to say it. A number of them, even today, certainly, have called and relayed different pieces of information, and we're concerned about a variety of things, the one the minister referenced being only one of those.

And I want to just assure the House, this Chamber, that my admiration for the staff who work in our correctional facilities is unparalleled. I'm glad that the situation was corrected. Again, I never doubted that it would be from the superintendent, which is why we left it with him to make the correction, and I'm hopeful that it's a learning incident and that the problem won't arise at other facilities.

We had a couple of questions related, and I know this probably drifts beyond corrections, and my friend from Lakeside might also have of questions regarding it, but there's been some issues lately in the news about gun registration and the potential for the Province to be keeping records. And there's been different reports and maybe some confusion that in terms of what role the Province has of keeping records when people purchase guns, whether that's similar in terms of the information that's collected with the gun registry. I know that some of the staff is federal staff.

I wonder if the minister can sort of give me a walk-through in terms of what the Province is doing in terms of collecting information when a gun is purchased in the province.

Mr. Swan: I just want to cycle back for a minute.

I know that the member put on the record that—he discussed that the gravity of the situation back on January the 9th. I'm a little lost, if it was so grave at the time, why he wouldn't have mentioned it to me or written a letter to me. I know we all play a role in educating some of the newer members of the House, and I know that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) is—was along on the tour, and I suppose I'm a little disappointed that if this is something the member thought was—that either member thought was important enough, I'm a little surprised that you'd wait for four months before bringing that up.

Again, I think we can all agree that the superintendent at Milner Ridge Correctional Centre acted quickly and appropriately. But, you know, I'm not going to impute motives to the member.

But moving ahead on the question that was asked about the gun issues, I can advise there is a—it's called a provincial firearms officer. There's one for each province, but that is a position which is federal.

My understanding is that that officer and any resources that go with it are managed by the RCMP, but they're not under the provincial police agreement that we have with the RCMP. It's a federal position. It's a federally managed program and it's a federally paid program.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I'm still confused, Mr. Chair, that the legislation that's brought down through Bill C-19, my understanding was that the registration would no longer be applicable. But yet, yesterday I did some checking and the officials at the store I was at said, in fact, that they still were not clear and they were still collecting that information on the sale of firearms.

So, if it's no longer the federal responsibility, then why are they still reporting to the Province? And is that information just to be—to clear it up, or what steps need to be taken so that these vendors can in fact, you know, have certainty about what the reporting period is?

* (15:00)

Mr. Swan: I mean, with respect to the entire issue of the long-gun registry, I mean, the Province never—was never a player. We made it clear that we did not agree with the long-gun registry, that not one nickel of Manitoba taxpayers' money was going to be spent on the long-gun registry, and that, if there were any steps to be taken under that registry, it should be the federal government prosecuting and administering it. And that was a position that we maintained throughout.

And, with respect to any residual issues after the passing of Bill C-19, I'm going to have to refer the member to the federal government, because it is not a Province of Manitoba program.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you for clearing that up. Mr. Chair, I do want to thank the minister for the response. So that I'm 100 per cent clear, then, the Province of Manitoba has no intentions or responsibility of reporting serial numbers or purchasers for long gun registers for new or existing guns. Is that correct?

Mr. Swan: No, we have no such plans. Of course, there are still federal requirements to obtain a firearms acquisition certificate, but that's a federal matter, and I can tell you we have no intention as a

Province of trying to preserve or resurrect a long-gun registry.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, and thanks to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for raising the concerns that he has on behalf of Manitobans.

I don't want to bounce back and forth between questions, but the minister sort of left a question about timing on the viewing of pornography in his jail that he is responsible for. And I did make it clear, I think, yesterday—I thought I did—and, if not, I'll make it clear today that I took the superintendent at his word that it was going to be dealt with. And I suppose you could have phoned him and told him to deal with it, but I believed him and I never doubted that he dealt with it at that time. But I did make a note that I would check back.

And I do remember, actually, yesterday, the—it was actually the Attorney General who asked whether I had any knowledge of any issues, and so I responded to him. At the end of the day, the fact that we haven't had committee for five months is in relation to the fact you haven't called the Legislature back for more than six months. So it's not the part of the issue if we're never going to sit, I guess, we're never going to be able to have these discussions. But I suppose, maybe, some of this is beyond your own powers. You're not the House leader or the Premier, and so I'm not going to sort of foist that responsibility onto you.

True enough, there's lots of other questions. So I want to go back to the issues of corrections. Is the appropriate staff—I hope they didn't go back upstairs. They did? I will—I'm going to try to—and I—because we've not had this in the Chamber before, this is a bit of a learning experience for me, but I will try to keep into the specific areas.

And this is important to the member for Lakeside and others in this Chamber to get the questions off on the gun registry, so I'll just return back to Corrections—ask the minister: The new women's prison that was built in Headingley, has he had an opportunity to visit that institution?

Mr. Swan: Yes.

And, again, I don't want to keep harping on where we were before, but I just—I want to say two things.

I mean, No. 1 is that I hope the member opposite is aware—and, for that matter, any members opposite—that if there is an issue that concerns them,

they can always write me a letter, contact me, email me. Maybe the member and I can talk at a Bomber game with tickets that we've both purchased with our own money. And I just want to make it clear that I would hope we have a good enough relationship that that's what would happen, and that's one piece.

The other piece, of course, is that we're all accountable as honourable members, whether it's in this House or whether it's things that we say to the media, so I just want the member to know that, you know, correctional officials, who do work extremely hard, will judge both myself and the member opposite on things that we say in the—in this Legislature, but also outside of the House.

So, with that said, I'll move on to the issue of the new women's prison. I have had the chance to visit it. I toured it before the facility was open for occupancy.

Mr. Goertzen: Sure, and I'd be happy to send the minister every concern that I get about the justice system—he can just, maybe, give me a number I can reach him at—I get about five a day. I'd be happy to speak to him every day about that if he'd like, and I look forward to a timely response on those five phone calls I give him a day.

The—and if the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Melnick) would like to add into this, she can certainly do that. She's caused enough trouble in the Legislature.

I—what were your impressions about the facilities at the women's prison in Headingley when you took the tour?

Mr. Swan: I'm sorry, could you repeat the last part?

Mr. Goertzen: Sorry. Part of the problem about doing this in the Chamber is it seems more feisty in the Chamber than it does in the committee room, and so that's maybe one of the pitfalls of it. What were your impressions of the women's prison when you took the tour?

Mr. Swan: Look, I mean, generally speaking, that we've built a facility which I think can be best called humane. The old women's prison out in Portage la Prairie didn't just stem from the last century, it stemmed from the century before that. Best practices in corrections as well as, I think, basic human rights, had strongly suggested that the old women's prison in Portage was no longer appropriate. The new Women's Correctional Centre, again, I think is far more appropriate for the realities of 2012.

Mr. Goertzen: The facility, before it was opened, or maybe after it was populated to some degree, did media come and take a tour of the facility?

Mr. Swan: Yes, there was a limited opportunity for media to enter the correctional centre and ask questions of correctional staff. We did provide some file pictures of the inside of the building.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I thank the minister for the response. When he says limited opportunity, what exactly does that mean? Were there only—they would access portions of the facility and sort of, how do they determine what they were shown or not shown?

Mr. Swan: Well, I mean, some of the limitations, again, were that there were no pictures to be taken and there was a tour. Media weren't permitted to wander about the facility as they pleased. There was a tour to show them the main components of the correctional centre.

Mr. Goertzen: I don't know if this would be common practice or if it would even be something anybody'd be interested in, but it's sort of a community facility. Before it's populated, I mean, is there any kind of an open house to let people know about this new facility, that people can sort of come and get the same kind of look at things that they had with the media, or is that something that wouldn't make a lot of sense to Corrections or wouldn't have a lot of value?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I mean, it's a—I—it'd be an interesting definition of a community facility. Generally speaking, I mean, there would be concerns with having something akin to an open house. Obviously, for security reasons, we don't know who'd be coming through the door and exactly what their interest would be. I can advise that various groups that provide assistance to women, both in correctional centres and after their turn in correctional centres, were invited to come and take a look at the facilities.

One of the advantages of the new correctional centre is that groups such as the Elizabeth Fry Society, to name just one, now have the ability to have more room to conduct programming while women are in the correctional centre, to try and to start making those changes in people's lives to try and reduce the likelihood of them returning to the correctional centre in the future.

* (15:10)

Mr. Goertzen: Sure, I mean, that's fair enough. I—you know, sometimes, these community—things that

show up in communities, draw interest and then sometimes you go—different groups will reach out and say, take a look at this. This would be unique, obviously. I understand that.

I know, talking to people who work at Stony Mountain—I know they sometimes have these days where they—staff will bring in people they can—they call it an open house and it's even populate, and they can sort of see it. You know, is there a value to that? I don't know, and I am just—sort of a question that I had, though: What was the final cost of the facility?

Mr. Swan: The final cost for the Women's Correctional Centre, including the facilities that'll be used by the federal government, or federal corrections, was \$79.5 million. That is for 193 beds which was up for the—up from the 100 that was originally forecast. And of that 193 beds, 168 are provincial inmates and the other 25 beds are for federal inmates.

Mr. Goertzen: Right, and so I think when I visited there, the federal portion wasn't populated yet. Is it populated now?

Mr. Swan: As of today, the federal beds remain empty. I understand that we're in the course of trying to finalize a memorandum of agreement with federal corrections, which will take care of the per diem rate, as well as all of the other matters from housing federal inmates in a provincial facility.

Mr. Goertzen: I was under the impression, and I may have been wrong, whether there was some sort of bridge letter of agreement that dealt with between the old memorandum and the new one, I guess, coming in to play. So is there nothing like that in place?

Mr. Swan: I think the member for Steinbach is talking about a general kind of agreement, called an exchange service agreement, that does exist between provincial Corrections and federal corrections. And that would take a number of circumstances into account when there happens to be a federal inmate who, for some reason, needs to be housed in a provincial facility or, I suppose, vice versa.

What I'm talking about is a specific memorandum of agreement that will deal with all of the circumstances of housing, and not just for short-term, but long-term housing of federal inmates in a provincially operated institution.

Mr. Goertzen: So, walk me through a bit the federal portion, then. Those are those cottages or, for lack of

a better terminology—I don't know if there's a more technical terminology—I call them cottages. Is—were those built by the federal government, then, or who built—who builds those?

Mr. Swan: The cottages—that's right, I think cottages is the right way to look at it—which were constructed at the new Women's Correctional Centre, they were built through the management of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. Those cottages were built under federal specifications to make sure that those beds meet various and sundry federal standards.

Mr. Goertzen: And so what are those standards? I guess you then consult with the federal government when you're building these things, or how does that operationally work?

Mr. Swan: Well, I mean, to put it simply, I mean that the federal corrections dictated exactly what and how it should be built. The work that was done by companies contracted by Infrastructure and Transportation, the design, the build, the outfitting, everything is according to federal standards.

Mr. Goertzen: So I guess I'm just unclear. So the federal government gives you—tells you what to outfit these with, what should go inside them, what—how big they're supposed to be. Is that right? And they're sort of working through the consultations with you, is that the—what you're suggesting?

Mr. Swan: In a word, yes.

Mr. Goertzen: So—and when I go through there and I see there's a, for example, a flat screen TV on the wall, the federal government has said: we need a flat screen TV on that wall.

Mr. Swan: Before you issue a press release condemning the federal corrections service, it's a simple fact that flat screen TVs are what can be bought, whether it's a provincial correction service or a federal correctional service. I think people expect both levels of government to act reasonably and try and get the best value for the dollars they spent.

Mr. Goertzen: So when I had communication with corrections services Canada, they indicated to me, and I'll review verbatim what they said, the entire planning design and build process was handled by Manitoba. So I'm in conflict in terms of what they're saying and what you're saying. They said that you planned it, designed it, built it and it was completely handled by Manitoba. So where's—I must be missing something, but just clarify that for me.

Mr. Swan: It was planned and it was designed and it was built to federal standards, federal specifications and federal approval.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, so then you indicated, you know, the flat screen TV, that would be the federal thing. So I asked them about that and they indicated that there is only one flat screen TV in the entire CSS system, and that was recently purchased at Grand Valley Institute. And it's only used for programming contained in a programmed room and it's not available for recreational use for inmates. So where's the contradiction there? I mean, you're sort of indicating how the feds said this. They're saying we don't have this anywheres in our system.

Mr. Swan: Well, to the best of my—well, it's a fact that those cottages were, again, built to federal specifications. I know the federal correction service has been involved each step of the way to make sure that construction has gone the way that they've expected, that those cottages are outfitted the way they expected to be outfitted. And I'm not aware of any concern that the federal correction service now has with the way those cottages have been completed.

* (15:20)

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you know, and sometimes miscommunication happens. I'm not entirely sure—I know it says—in response to the question that I posed to CSC, they said there was only one informal discussion between the Province and correction services Canada, where a correction services Canada official commented to Manitoba officials that he had concerns with sight lines, but there were no formal consultations. So I'm just—there just really seems to be a disconnect here.

Mr. Swan: Yes. I mean, again, we've got a facility built to federal standards, again, through the management of Infrastructure and Transportation. I'm advised there's been a series of meetings, a series of conversations, a series of exchanges between MIT, provincial correctional officials, and federal correctional officials.

Mr. Goertzen: All right, so I will just try to drill down a bit, because I—correction services Canada will want me to provide this information to them and I certainly will.

So you're saying that they instructed you that there should be flat-screen TVs in those cottages.

Mr. Swan: Again, there's been construction. It's been exactly what was asked for by the Correctional Service of Canada. If there is a concern raised by Correctional Service of Canada about the way that any of these cottages have been finished or outfitted or furnished, as of today I'm not aware of any concerns they may have raised. We're hoping we get the agreement completed and have federal inmates as appropriate in that facility.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I guess that didn't get me any closer to an answer. I thought I was pretty clear, but, you know, sometimes I'm not and the echo in here is not very good.

But you're indicating—because I want to make sure if—I will send this back to correction services Canada—that they requested that there be a flat-screen—large flat-screen TV in the cottages. That was their request. That's what you're saying, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Swan: Well, again, there's been a pretty complete set of discussions and meetings between federal corrections and provincial Corrections and, of course, Mi2 [*phonetic*], who are responsible for managing the construction. So I can tell you that, as of today, I'm not aware of any concerns that Correctional Service Canada has with any aspect of how these cottages have been constructed, how they've been finished. We're hopeful that we can get the memorandum of agreement done and there can be federal female inmates using those 25 beds at Headingley Correctional Centre.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, that's a yes. The corrections services Canada have said that the TVs, and there needed to be flat screen TVs, correct?

Mr. Swan: Yes, well once again, I can explain that that the Correctional Service of Canada has issued standards and, as of right now, we're not aware of any concerns that CSC, the correctional services of Canada, has with the way that these cottages have been finished. If there are other issues that arise, I mean, that could—I'm sure those'd be worked out before the memorandum of agreement is completed. But I know there's been a lot of work on both sides to get there. I know there's been several meetings, tours and, as far as I understand, the Correctional Service of Canada is satisfied with the way that the work has been done.

Mr. Goertzen: And I guess the minister, then, is saying that correction service Canada is in violation of their own policy because they have no flat screen

TVs in any of their facilities. So they'll be happy to know that the minister has admonished them as being in violation of their policy. I'm sure that they get that *Hansard* as quickly as it's available, and I'm sure that the appropriate officials will want to respond.

The—also in those cottages, I heard—*[interjection]* I'm sorry, Mr. Chairperson, I think the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Melnick) may have a question, yet I would yield the floor to her if she does. Oh, she doesn't have a question, so I'll continue on. Just chitchatting from her seat, I guess.

Mr. Minister, also in those cottages—it was raised to me this morning that—and I've seen the kitchens and they're quite nice. My own wife, I think, would be proud to have that kitchen in her home. The countertops—one of the people who phoned in to a call-in this morning, indicated those were granite countertops. I didn't take a core sample so I'm not going to try to indicate whether they are or not, but are those granite countertops in those cottages, or what kind of countertops are they for the kitchen?

Mr. Swan: Obviously, I'm concerned the member's going to misrepresent anything that I say, and as we try to conclude an agreement with the correctional services of Canada, which we think will be beneficial not just to the correctional services of Canada but Manitoba Corrections, so I'll take the member's question under advisement.

Ms. Melanie Wight, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Goertzen: The other thing that I noticed in those cottages, and I asked the corrections services Canada about this as well, and I'm sure there'll be another dispute here. The furniture that was in the living room right by this nice, big flat screen TV on the wall, which the minister says is the—somebody else's responsibility. Nice—well, it looked like leather furniture. Again, I didn't go and do a sample or that, but what kind of—the couches over there—was kind of material or kind of couches were those in these cottages?

Mr. Swan: Again, I'm very fearful of saying something that the member for Steinbach might misrepresent as we try to finalize the agreement with the Correctional Service of Canada. So, again, I'll take that under advisement.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and I don't want the minister to be fearful. I want to assure him, and, you know, I'd even copy him on email because he wants, sort of, daily contact on the five or six things that I get a day.

And I'm—again, just give me the personal number I can reach you at. I'd love to do that.

The issue around how these cottages were furnished. Are you indicating that this was specifically a directive of the federal CSC?

* (15:30)

And I want to assure you I'm going to send *Hansard* verbatim to them, I might even send it, you know, right to the top. I'm going to make sure they see every word, so you don't have to worry about that.

Everything that—how those cottages were furnished is a directive of CSC. Is that what the minister is saying? *[interjection]*

Are you still chattering? Holy smokes, you never stop.

Mr. Swan: Well, again, I'm not sure how many times I'll have to say this.

We have cottages which are located at the Headingley—rather at the new Women's Correctional Centre in Headingley. They are going to be used for federal inmates within the provincial institution.

We are very close to finalizing a memorandum of agreement, whereby the federal correctional service will pay a per diem. The cottages have been built, and they have been completed, in accordance with specifications of the Correctional Service of Canada.

For the questions of detail that the member for Steinbach has asked, I've given undertakings to try and get more information on that because I don't want the member for Steinbach to manage to get in the way of trying to conclude a very positive agreement, both for the Correctional Service of Canada and Manitoba Justice.

So I will provide those undertakings, and then the member can do with them what he wishes.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I can assure the minister I could do no more damage to the federal relationships between the province and the federal government than he and his government have already done.

The—just so I'm clear, we're going to get the responses back on costs of flat-screen TVs in the cottages, but I'm asking now, can we get the costs of the flat-screen TVs, whether or not it's granite countertop, the cost of the countertop, cost of the appliances within the kitchen of these cottages. They

were all new and the type of furniture and the cost of the furniture. That's the undertaking.

I know the minister won't have all that here, seems to be some dispute about, you know, who instructed what and what meetings took place. If he can provide those undertakings, I can assure that I'll do my part to get clarification from CSC.

Mr. Swan: I'm just advised here that, indeed, the Correctional Service officials have had the chance to tour the facilities as they now stand, and, again, I'm led to believe that there are no concerns from Correctional Service of Canada as to the way the federally mandated cottages have been completed.

So I've given the undertakings previously to deal with the issue of the televisions and the issue of the—whether or not there were granite countertops in the cottages.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, okay, so now—I mean, I'm having a hard getting an answer from the minister, and I'll try to be clear.

Can we get the cost of the televisions, the nature of the countertops and their costs, the cost of the appliances, and the nature and the cost of the furniture?

And I'm not going to add anything else to that because I don't want to—I want focus.

Mr. Swan: Well sure, I'll undertake to try to provide the information that's within the control of the Department of Justice, but I do want to put one caveat on that: I'm not going to let this interfere with Manitoba Justice concluding an agreement with the Correctional Service of Canada.

Mr. Goertzen: And I would certainly do nothing to interfere with that. I will promise the minister that I will take *Hansard*, and I—*Hansard* is accurate, as far as I know, in terms of what we say and whatever was said here. That's all that I will provide to those who might be interested in these answers.

Before I even ask the question, I'll have a—I'm going to ask whether or not the issue of accidents or releases, is that under Corrections?

Mr. Swan: I think the best answer I can give is mostly Courts, although there would be a Corrections element, so—

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Wight): Honourable member from Steinbach.

Mr. Goertzen: So is it—does the minister feels it's better that I wait until I get to the issues on the Courts before I ask those questions? I don't want the shuffle again, so—

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Wight): Honourable Attorney General.

Mr. Swan: Whatever the member prefers, we can get someone from Courts down here if you'd like to go through it now.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll just hold on, because I—valuable time this Estimates time is.

Electronic monitoring, is that under Corrections?

Mr. Swan: Yes, it is.

Mr. Goertzen: Excellent. Then we can proceed.

Can he give me an update on where the program is in terms of, is it no longer a test pilot? It is a full-fledged program? How many ankle bracelets are being used and the kind of individuals that they're eligible to be used on?

Mr. Swan: Well, I could advise that we're continuing to use electronic monitoring on young auto thieves, as we have continuously since 2008.

Mr. Goertzen: And what is the number of electronic monitoring devices that are available for use?

Mr. Swan: Twenty.

Mr. Goertzen: Is that the number that it was started with when it became a test pilot?

Mr. Swan: That's correct.

Mr. Goertzen: Is there any recent studies or analysis been done on the effectiveness of it? Is there any change? I know there's always been issues with these individuals trying to remove the bracelets; that's not a new thing. But is there any more recent statistics you can provide about the success of the program?

* (15:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, yes, at the outset is, as the member indicates in his question, there have been instances where youth, outfitted with the electronic monitoring bracelets, have been able to remove them. Of course, Manitoba Justice doesn't manufacture the devices. They're not manufactured in Manitoba. I believe that it's been a common issue elsewhere.

There are some statistics I can share with the Chamber. Up to the end of February 2012, I'm told that 77 potential cases were reviewed for the project.

Two youth who were in the project apparently have died. Eleven cases were deemed unsuitable. There were five exceptional cases received where no consultation or referral was received in advance. The net effect has been that 60 individuals have been outfitted with the devices between the start of the program in April 2008 and February 29, 2012.

I can get into some details of how compliant the youth have been. I think it's fair to say that youth response has been varied. Some have been very resistant and some have been very compliant. The latest number I have is that 24 of these individuals either tampered with in some way or were otherwise able to remove their devices. There were 41 instances where offenders tampered with or removed devices, of 24 individuals, 41 instances. Four youths removed their devices four times, which, of course, then triggers a response. And three youths were re-arrested for auto theft thanks to the use of the electronic monitoring bracelets. Another youth was arrested for other offences for break-and-enters with the device used to supply location information.

There have been over 25 instances of youth violating curfews where their sentence were suspended or charges were laid despite attempts to regain compliance. In fairness, there's also been examples where electronic monitoring has been used to exculpate or exclude youth from criminal allegations because the electronic monitoring bracelet let us know that the individual was not near the actor or the place in question.

So there's been 60 individuals with the devices. It seems to have been successful for some of those individuals. I think it's fair to say it's been less than successful for others.

Mr. Goertzen: And I'm going off of memory, which is always dangerous for me, and it's unfortunate I don't have staff because they're usually my memory on these things, but the—there was a study, or there was going to be a study done through the University of Manitoba, wasn't there, about the—about this? Was that completed? I can't remember. Or was that still pending?

Mr. Swan: No, it's not.

Mr. Goertzen: When was that study first commissioned? When did it start?

Mr. Swan: The report, as it is, is actually not specifically commissioned. It's part of a master's thesis that an individual is doing. So I believe that

the initial request to start work on the project was back in 2009.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, and, I mean, I guess it's—I don't want to rush anybody through their master's thesis, and then maybe that wasn't the best sort of avenue for it, but not to say anything disparaging about the person writing the thesis. I have no idea who it is. Any idea of when it—this might come to a conclusion so we can sort of get some analysis?

Mr. Swan: Sure. You know, this student is working under Professor Rick Linden, who is an individual who's been a part of some very successful initiatives. Professor Linden is one of the—was one of the driving forces behind the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. As the member knows, he's also been appointed the chairperson of the Manitoba Police Commission. So he is an individual we have a lot of respect for.

Certainly, I wish we had the master's student thesis done—we don't. Our hope is that it will be soon. But the key thing is that we've retained the program. We've been able to continue funding, so electronic monitoring has remained consistently a fact here in Manitoba since it was piloted in 2008.

Mr. Goertzen: I guess it's just, sort of—and I appreciate Dr. Linden—I think it's Dr. Linden. I had him as a professor myself, actually. He gave me an A in criminology. So I certainly got that one right, I think, and I've seen other things that he's gotten right.

The issue is the report, though, how long it's gone on. Is it concerning at all to the minister? I don't know if you know the data's going to be stale dated or, you know, a pilot that started so many years ago—and we haven't really had any, sort of, analysis. And, I know, this was, sort of, trumpeted as something that could give us some future direction. Is there any concern that it's taking so long and it might not have the same value when it comes?

Mr. Swan: Look, frankly, I wish that we had the thesis in hand to be able to go and pull out of it some conclusions.

Again, we've made sure that electronic monitoring has continued to be one tool that's available in the justice system in Manitoba. At this point, it's been limited to youth. We have made commitments to take appropriate steps to expand electronic monitoring in Manitoba, keeping in mind a number of different factors. I mean, electronic monitoring, I think, anecdotally, we can say has had some positive impacts on some of the people that

have the devices put on them. It has had no impact or negative impact, possibly, on other individuals.

Again, we've committed to looking to ways to expand the program. I just want to make it clear that whatever we do in electronic monitoring, we want to make it clear that, if an individual is a real risk and should be managed in a correctional facility, that's where they want them to be.

I know that some states in the United States have, perhaps, been more aggressive on rolling out electronic monitoring, and they've had individuals out in the community that I don't think the member opposite or myself, would necessarily want in the community. I know in some states there have been real challenges with individuals either charged or convicted of domestic violence being released into the community with electronic monitoring and then going on and committing violent acts against the victims.

So, you know, I think there's more to say on this and I'm sure we'll have further discussions on it. We don't have the work in hand that we'd like to be able to firm up exactly where we're going. The main thing is that I'm pleased, frankly, the government has been co-operative and retained the program. It's been a continuous part of the tools that Manitoba Corrections have to try and encourage compliance. Is it a perfect thing? No, it's not. We think there is, though, there's some value to it.

Mr. Goertzen: And I guess it's difficult in the absence of this long-awaited thesis, but there's been some use of the technology in Red Deer. And I had some discussions with people there, and they've used it in cases of domestic violence on the offender where they weren't given a custody statement, but where they were considered to be possible risk, and they reported pretty good success with it. In fact, they said they had no instances of people cutting off the technology. Now, they claim that the person that provides this technology, that it can't be cut off; that it's not possible for it to be cut off. I think, probably, some of it's the nature of the offender, so that's probably a part of it.

But, I guess, there's two questions. I mean, is there an examination of the different kinds of technology that exist now that might be more difficult to remove, and is there any consideration to extending it to offenders like those who are in domestic violence cases?

* (15:50)

Mr. Swan: Sure, and I'll try to answer both of those questions.

I mean, the first is—the question is, has there been examination of the types of technology that's available, and I can advise that Corrections is very engaged in that. The devices that we now use are from a leading supplier in Canada, but, as the technology advances, we'll always be keeping our eyes open to see if there are better models or better technologies that can be used.

Secondly, in terms of where the program could be extended, again, I use the example of domestic violence just as that, as an example. There may be circumstances, there may be groups of offenders where it could be possible. Before we would do that, though, we'd want to look very carefully at a host of things: of the risks of the offender group; and, as well, with the victim, we'd want to make sure there's a safety plan in place. We'd want to make sure that there was a level of comfort of victims of domestic violence before any individual would be released into the community with an electronic monitoring bracelet.

Again, I've got—I want to be careful that electronic monitoring doesn't become an alternative to somebody who should be in a correctional facility being out on the street. If it's an individual with whom we think we can get better compliance, better results and, as a result, greater community safety, then, that's certainly something we're interested in looking into.

So, we're still, I think, pretty early on in this story of electronic monitoring, and I'm sure, by the time we gather for next year's Estimates, we'll have a lot more to talk about.

Mr. Goertzen: I do share those concerns that the minister echoed, you know, and we don't want anybody who shouldn't be free to be out because of electronic monitoring. I think the concern is there's a lot of people who are getting out anyway, and there's nothing that is, sort of, between them and their next victim or a domestic violence incident, and that this might be a half step better than no step, and that's, I think, the concern,

And has there been any contact by the department with officials in Alberta to, sort of, look at what they're doing? I know we have a new—can't remember the position that Mrs. Hamilton has taken, but there's some sort of a policy guru now in the department. Has there been any sort of discussion in

Alberta—with Alberta about the success of their program on domestic violence?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I take the point the member makes about individuals getting out anyway and, of course, with the Youth Criminal Justice Act that the member for Steinbach and I have discussed frequently, I think, to both of our surprise as being on the same side many times.

Of course, any youth, no matter what their crime and what their sentence, is going to be in the community for some period of time. As I think the member and I agree, we think that there are certain youth who, by any rational view, are out of control, who are still released into the community, and it's up to Corrections to monitor them, and, you know, that's really why the electronic monitoring program started with young offenders, specifically auto thieves, because, frankly, there was frustration that the act wasn't providing the kind of management and the kind of control that would provide public safety.

At the second piece, though, is with respect to discussions with other provinces, I'm advised that, to the best of my knowledge, there haven't been discussions with Alberta.

Mr. Goertzen: On an unrelated topic but, hopefully, still under Corrections: Can the minister tell me—those who are working in the Corrections systems, who are in our facilities, how many individual grievances have been brought to the unions from Corrections staff?

Mr. Swan: You know, given the centralization of a lot of the human resources, that's actually a question best asked of the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, and I will direct it there. This is in my ongoing effort to surprise the deputy minister with some question that I haven't asked in the last six years, so, you know, full disclosure. Actually, I was reading the Estimates in Saskatchewan of their Justice Department, and this question was asked, so I just copied it. So there you go. The minister sometimes thinks I google, but I was actually reading the Estimates in another jurisdiction, and thought that was an interesting question. But I will bring it to the civil—[interjection] You know, it's a good form of research.

I think we're losing order, Madam Chairperson, so I'll call it back for you.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Wight): Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: The questions about just general numbers on Corrections, we sort of started off on a different track, and so this is where traditionally we would start. Can the minister indicate how many individuals are today in open, secure remand custody?

Mr. Swan: I got a lot of numbers. Could the member clarify where you want me to start, and I'll try to put the best information up there?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, and I imagine you have it broken down by institution, right? I mean, is that something that you could table as opposed to reading everything into the record? If you need to read it into the record, then read it into the record.

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, what I can do quickly is give the member the in-house populations in each of our facilities: Agassiz Youth Centre in Portage, population as of this morning, 140; youth in the Brandon Correctional Centre, five; Manitoba Youth Centre, 130; and youth in The Pas Correctional Centre is six.

Moving to the adult population, Brandon Correctional Centre, 358; Dauphin Correctional Centre, 81; the Headingley Correctional Centre, 812; Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, 406; The Pas Correctional Centre, 162; the Women's Correctional Centre, 184, and the Winnipeg Remand Centre 399, for a total of 2,402.

Mr. Goertzen: Can the minister give me some details in terms of how many individuals are serving their remand sentences as opposed to a sentence sentence?

Mr. Swan: Do you want a percentage or do you want a similar breakdown?

Mr. Goertzen: I'll take the percentage, and then trust my math later on.

Mr. Swan: For youth, the remand population is 64 per cent, meaning that the sentenced is 36 per cent. For the adult population, remand is 69 per cent; the sentenced population is 31 per cent.

Mr. Goertzen: So the minister is focusing on youth at 69 per cent remand. And how does that compare to last year or the year before? Has there been a reduction in the remand numbers?

Mr. Swan: That's something that I'll provide to the member as soon as possible and then, hopefully, by the start of Estimates tomorrow.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that. Now, this goes back to my reading of Saskatchewan *Hansard*, and, maybe I read it wrong, but I thought that they indicated in their own Estimates process that 37 per cent of the population in custody in Saskatchewan was on remand. That seems really low to me in compared to Manitoba. Is—how are we compared to the rest of Canada or is there something unique in Saskatchewan, or did I read it wrong?

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Swan: We don't have at hand a comparison of how other provinces are doing in terms of what percentages is sentenced and remand, so I don't really have an answer for the member.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, maybe overnight he or somebody else who doesn't have anything else they want to do this evening can maybe do a little checking and see if I'm wrong, because if I'm wrong, I wouldn't want to leave wrong information on the record. I take pride in not doing that.

The issue around remand in Saskatchewan—what was certainly true is that they indicated they'd had a reduction in their remand numbers, not massively, but it had gone down, sort of, 3 or 4 per cent in the last couple of years. It was difficult to see if that was attributable at all to the two-for-one elimination which I guess applies to offenders after February of 2010, I think, but is there any indication from the minister if our remand numbers are going down over the last couple of years in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Sorry, were you talking about the youth population or the adult population or both?

Mr. Goertzen: Not to be greedy, but I'll take them all, if women's, youth and adult, if you have them.

Mr. Swan: Well, the ending of the two-for-one credit actually doesn't impact on youth, so I don't expect that any province would have any impact on their numbers from that.

With respect to the adult population, there has been a small decline. I mean, I'm aware, anecdotally, that we've been here before when the remand population has been more than 70 per cent of the population in adult facilities. Earlier, I seem to recall it was down a bit. It was down to 66 or 67 per cent. The percentage today is 69 per cent, so there's been some positive moves recently but not a huge difference.

Mr. Goertzen: And I wasn't trying to imply that the two-for-one issue affected youth, but I would like those numbers, though, in terms of how many youth are on remand.

Mr. Swan: Well, as of this morning, there's 281 youth in youth centres; 101 are sentenced; 180 are on remand. I mean—I—we always get the snapshot, and there's actually some variances depending on which day of the week we happen to be doing Estimates because as—if individuals are picked up over the weekend and housed, they are obviously more likely to be remand because they're not being sentenced. So the number can bounce around a little bit even from the start of the week to the end of the week.

Mr. Goertzen: I wonder maybe with a general proposition, can the minister indicate—I—his predecessor, one or two ago, I think it was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was sort of optimistic about the elimination of two-for-one, bringing down these numbers. He's—I don't want to overstate it because he's a very understated individual, but he certainly said, you know, this is going to be the cure for our issue with remand and just hang on and we went, and fought, to Ottawa. And don't get me wrong. The issue of—from my perspective, the issue of the initiative of two-for-one was always the right thing to do from a policy perspective. I never held out as much hope that it would have as much impact on the remand numbers as the former minister did. Is there any—if this isn't—if that wasn't the solution, what's our problem? Why is the number so stubbornly high?

Mr. Swan: Well, you know, I, like my predecessor, I do hold out some hope that the ending of the two-for-one credit that it has had and will have a benefit. The difficulty is that there's a number of multiple issues that drive the overall population and the remand population in Manitoba and elsewhere. So I frankly do believe that ending the two-for-one credit, in addition to providing, I think, some more confidence for Canadians in how sentences are determined, I think it does provide more of an incentive for individuals to move their cases ahead, and I think that's also a positive thing. It is one of a number of moving parts that drive our prison numbers.

Mr. Goertzen: But it certainly doesn't seem to be the magic bullet that the former minister was trumpeting. But, you know, that's the former minister and I'm not here to pick on old political adversaries,

so I'm going to leave it at that. I know the Attorney General hasn't maybe made the same sort of comments that his predecessor did on that particular issue.

Can the minister tell me what the average length of stay for offenders is for the male youth and women incarceration?

Mr. Swan: You know, I'll try to provide the exact number, but I can advise today that the average length of time that an offender, a sentenced offender, remains in the system as a sentenced offender is roughly 60 days. Again, that may bounce around a little bit, but roughly 60 days. I'll try to get a better number on that as soon as I can.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that response, and I'll wait for the more accurate number. Although in comparison to Saskatchewan, and I don't want to make it sound like I have some sort of Saskatchewan envy here—not that this would be anything to be envious about—but they were indicating that their average length of stay was 100 days, and that seems quite different. Would there be—is there any sort of explanation in terms of that?

*(16:10)

Mr. Swan: I don't think I can speculate on that.

Mr. Goertzen: Right, and I mean, sometimes speculation isn't a good thing, so I can accept that. I can always speculate at another time I suppose.

The committee that's right now doing the status of the jails in Manitoba and what levels that was at, when is that supposed to report back?

Mr. Swan: In my opening comments, which I appreciate may have been a few more words per minute than any of us would have wanted, I had said I expected to have the final report soon and I'm certainly hopeful that we'll have a final report later this spring.

Mr. Goertzen: Those were fulsome opening comments, and I haven't had the chance to pore over *Hansard*, but I will. I assure the minister that I will go over them with a fine-tooth comb.

But the report—and I did attend the hearing in Brandon actually. It wasn't widely attended, but there were some people there. It also—and you mentioned in, I think, your opening report, it's going to have some recommendations on reducing recidivism or it certainly can extend to that. Is that correct?

Mr. Swan: You know, the committee was sent out to try to provide advice to the government on two questions. The first was: How much additional capacity to incarcerate adult inmates should be added to Manitoba's provincial correctional system over the next five to 10 years? The second was: What services, programming and skills training should be made available at provincial adult correctional centres to reduce the likelihood of recidivist behaviour and to increase the likelihood of successful reintegration into society after release?

So, in answering those two questions, we asked them to consider a number of different factors, which is why I thought it was very useful for them to not just hear from stakeholders, but to get out into various communities around Manitoba. At first is the current capacity and population of Manitoba's provincial adult correctional centres. The second was the age and condition of Manitoba's existing provincial adult correctional centres and the extent to which renovations or replacements may be required over the next five to 10 years, with special attention to be given to the needs of new immigrant and Aboriginal inmates. The third was those factors likely to affect the size of Manitoba's provincial adult correctional population over the next five to 10 years, including changes to relevant legislation, trends in crime rates and changes in the capacity of law enforcement and other partners in the justice system. Fourth, the current profile of Manitoba's provincial adult correctional population and any anticipated changes over the next five to 10 years. Fifth, the differing needs of and ability to provide services and programs to remanded and sentenced inmates. Sixth, the relatively short duration of the stay of inmates in provincial custody; seventh, the best practices followed in other correctional systems in Canada and elsewhere, in particular with respect to jail safety procedures with a special focus on correctional officer safety and specific strategies for suppressing and preventing gang activities behind bars, and finally, the financial costs and social impacts associated with its recommendations.

So we gave them two relatively simple questions, but we did provide them with a number of factors that we wanted them to take into account in producing that report.

Mr. Goertzen: So would part of it—maybe I missed it—would part of their analysis be any impacts on the federal legislation, Bill C-10? Would they be looking at—would they be mandated to look at what impact that might have?

Mr. Swan: Yes. As I said, one of the things they were asked to consider were factors likely to affect the size of Manitoba's provincial adult correctional population over the next five to 10 years, which would include changes in relevant legislation, Criminal Code being the main one, trends in crime rates, and also changes in the capacity of law enforcement and other partners. And as we add more police officers and add more Crown attorneys, we know that can have an impact on the jail populations.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister was on CBC Radio talking about Bill C-10 a little while ago, and at that point he'd indicated he thought—and I know he was, sort of, ballparking it, but the cost to Manitoba, federal legislation, Bill C-10, would be 4 to 5 million dollars. Is that still what the minister is estimating?

Mr. Swan: You know, I'd gone on CBC Radio after a report had been issued and we had some difficulties with the way the numbers were presented, and I take it we weren't the only ones. So I'd given a—and it was really just some comments on how difficult it is to predict the impact of changes. I know Minister Toews had given an example when we were at the federal-provincial meetings in Charlottetown just this year. He was given a number for how much the federal prison population would grow, and he told media assembled that the total number had been only about one-fifth of what had been projected. So, you know, the number I gave was sort of broken down on some figures from other people, and I tried to suggest if that was the case, what the impact might be on Manitoba.

So the main thing I was trying to get across was that there is great difficulty, whether it's the federal government or whether it's provincial and territorial governments, on trying to decide the—and determine the future impact of legislative changes.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister also indicated, I think, on that same interview, that while he's generally supportive of Bill C-10, and I appreciate that, that he didn't agree with everything that's in the bill.

Could he be more specific? Which portions of Bill C-10 don't you agree with and that you're concerned with?

*(16:20)

Mr. Swan: Yes, the member is right. I did express concerns with certain aspects, and in some way certain impacts of Bill C-10. So I'm happy to put those on the record. The primary concern with the legislation, the way it's drafted and it has now been

passed, although not proclaimed into force, is dealing with the changes to the federal pardon legislation, and on behalf of Manitoba I've said we support the amendments to remove pardons for convicted child sexual predators.

We do have concerns about other changes that are being made to, in some cases, take away, delay, or make it more difficult for individuals who have actually shown an interest in rehabilitating themselves and obtaining a pardon. When somebody is convicted of a crime and they do their time, and on any given case you and I and every other Manitoban may have a difference of opinion of what that penalty should be, when somebody completes that whatever their punishment may be, if an individual truly wants to be back in the community and wants to take steps to rehabilitate themselves, I'm not sure that the changes to Bill C-10 regarding pardons are going to help that happen. If an individual is effectively told you're never going to get a pardon or the delay for pardon is going to be longer, the concern I have is that it's going to impact on people's willingness to integrate into society and follow society's rules.

So I don't know that all the changes to the federal pardon legislation are going to have the impact that I think we want it to. We want any changes to the Criminal Code to improve public safety to try to reduce recidivism and, in many cases, provide a measure of prevention or deterrence from people breaking the law in the first place.

There are other related issues with Bill C-10 that—where we think it's still a work in progress with the federal government. We have been a strong—in fact, probably the strongest supporter of the federal government changing the criminal law in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act for tougher penalties for serious drug crimes. Those who have grow ops, who have meth labs, who sell drugs to youth and others, we think those are very serious penalties. At the same time, Bill C-10 will toughen penalties along a larger spectrum, and that is going to have an impact. It'll have an impact on federal prosecutions who're responsible for prosecuting drug crimes. Obviously, it'll have an impact on our remand populations and our sentence populations as things work through.

We think the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court has been a really positive process as a problem-solving court. We think that the ability of offenders who've been charged, even with trafficking, which is

a fairly serious crime, have been able to get into the Drug Treatment Court, and when they graduate we've experienced really good reoffence rates. The last reoffence rate that I heard for Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court was only about 12 per cent. I know it's a motivated population, but at the same time if we could use a problem-solving model to try and get results like that, I can tell you we'd be closing beds in our jails rather than opening new ones.

And there is federal funding for the Drug Treatment Court, and that is appreciated. On behalf of Manitoba, I've put forward the idea that we need the federal government as a partner. We'd like to expand the number of people that can go into Drug Treatment Court in Winnipeg. We'd also like to have drug treatment courts operating elsewhere in the country.

Of course, we've gone our own way with the mental health court, which actually began dealing with people this week. But we want a bigger commitment from the federal government, especially as the drug crime provisions of Bill C-10 take effect at some future date, to make sure that they're with us to try and provide a real alternative for offenders.

We think that a consequence of Bill C-10's going to be an increased demand on our province's legal aid system, and we're very concerned about legal aid funding and, in particular, the decreasing share of legal aid costs being born by the federal government.

Once upon a time, as legal aid programs were coming online across Canada, the federal government was an equal partner, and every dollar that Manitoba was spending on legal aid, about 50 cents was coming from the federal government. Over time—and this isn't a partisan comment against either party which has had control in Canada—over time the federal contribution's become less and less. And now the federal government contributes only about 16 per cent of the cost of legal aid in Manitoba.

When you look at the decreases in revenue from the Manitoba Law Foundation through no fault except low interest rates, Manitoba's share has continued to increase and increase. And, again, with—we joined with other provinces at the last federal-territorial-provincial meeting to call for more assistance from the feds in dealing with legal aid. Unfortunately, those requests have not been met. The amount of legal aid money which has been provided has been frozen once again, which is going to result

in a shrinking share of the costs by the federal government.

We also made our views felt on crime prevention. The federal government actually did some good and some very innovative things. And I'm aware of programs in the inner city of Winnipeg that, I think, have been very good at preventing youth from getting involved in criminal activity—in some cases, from intervening with youth that have been involved in criminal activity. Unfortunately, the federal government saw fit to effectively cancel those programs. There was a smaller pot of money which was reintroduced once each of those programs had laid off their staff and sent those youth back into their communities with limited success.

So there's some specifics on Bill C-10, the pardon issue. There is some related pieces where, I think, if we're going to continue a partnership, which in many respects has been very positive with the federal government on building safer communities, there's still some more investment the federal government needs to make to truly be a partner.

Mr. Goertzen: On the specific issue of pardons that the minister raised, is that a shared position with the attorney generals across Canada? Is that something that came forward from a ministers' meeting, or is that simply Manitoba's position?

Mr. Swan: I mean, every province has responded differently to Bill C-10. I know some provinces have blithely announced they don't intend to pay for Bill C-10. I'm not sure, frankly, how that works.

These concerns, all the concerns that I've just put on the record, were contained in a letter that I wrote to Minister Nicholson late in 2011 setting out Manitoba's position. You know, I don't think there was a great discussion about that concern. There was a great deal of discussion about the overall costs of Bill C-10. And, from Manitoba's point of view, the best thing that we think can happen to somebody who has spent time in an institution, whether it's a federal institution or provincial jail, is to find ways to get that person to a position where they can get a job.

*(16:30)

And I'm concerned that changing the pardon rules is going to make it more difficult to get people there. In Manitoba, we're blessed with a fairly low unemployment rate, although low unemployment is not shared in every community and not shared geographically. We know there's pockets of higher unemployment, but, overall, getting as many people

into our labour force is a good economic policy and, frankly, I think it's a good public safety policy.

Mr. Goertzen: And the minister may have made that letter public, and sometimes you do, and—but can you provide me—late 2011 was a bit of a blur. But can you provide me a copy of that letter that you wrote to Minister Nicholson?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can.

Mr. Goertzen: The entire issue of recidivism is under Corrections, is that correct?

Mr. Swan: Correct.

Mr. Goertzen: Then we can proceed without a massive shuffling of the deck.

What was the motivation for the change in terms of reporting how recidivism is recorded in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Following the intention to—of changing the recidivism methodology was actually to provide more complete and effective information to Manitobans, and I'm going to have to spend a couple of minutes to explain the issue.

For at least a decade, there was a measure of recidivism that was used in an—really for internal purposes. But I don't know if it was through the magic of the Estimates process or how it came to be that these numbers were then presented to Manitobans. And here, really, is the challenge with the old numbers. The old numbers used to count the number of charges laid over the total number of people in a particular pool of offenders.

So, if I can give an example—let's say that in a given month there are 10 young offenders who were in the Manitoba Youth Centre or Agassiz Youth Centre, who were then released into the community. Let's say among those group of 10 offenders, nine individuals did not reoffend, not a single issue with the nine. The 10th goes out and either is charged with a number of new offences or is charged with an offence and a number of breaches.

The way the numbers that had been presented for at least the past decade, maybe longer, were presented, would take the total number of charges, whatever the disposition, ultimately, over the number of people. So, if you take that example, there's 10 youth, nine of them do not reoffend; one of them has 10 charges laid against them. It would be 10 charges divided by the 10 people in the group, and the recidivism rate will come out as 100 per cent.

When we looked at those numbers, it didn't actually answer the question, but I think most Manitobans expect the recidivism number to provide which is what percentage of individuals in a chosen class are actually reoffending. So that's why, in many cases, you had recidivism rates, especially for youth, that were at 100 per cent. It wasn't that every single youth was out reoffending; it's the way we were counting the numbers. It resulted in anomalies like that where one youth could actually wind up the rate to a point that really didn't make sense.

I should mention that there is no national consensus on what a definition of recidivism should be. So, when we were setting out to come up with a more meaningful number, we didn't really have a national standard that we could look at. We did, frankly, go some ways towards the federal recidivism standard. What the federal government does, they consider recidivism to be the percentage of individuals returned to federal custody within two years. Well, getting returned to federal custody actually isn't a very easy thing to do in many cases, because you're going to be in a provincial remand facility first.

But, in any event, we thought that the two-year period was reasonable, and we thought that the test of returning to custody within a provincial jail, even on remand, was a reasonable way to come up with the numbers. So we've—I'm just—just a second. The test, then, for recidivism is being convicted and returned to a provincial institution, which is similar to the way the federal government does its counting.

So, again, the intention is to answer the question that Manitobans, I think, legitimately has when people are coming out of different kinds of correction situations: What is the likelihood of somebody in that pool being convicted of another offence? And we think that's the way to go.

So we tried to fix a system, which didn't answer the question, with one which we think answers the question in a reasonable way, roughly in keeping with the way the feds keep their statistics. And, again, there's no consensus of jurisdictions across Canada. But I can say what we're doing is roughly in the range of what other places are up to.

Mr. Goertzen: This would be the point, if this was on television, people would be changing their channels, because this is going to get a little bit too complex. I'm going to try this.

If somebody was—if you were going back and you were sending people who were released in January of 2009, and they were charged in June of 2010, so 18 months, but they weren't actually convicted for another nine months, so they would fall outside of that two-year window. So they would have been charged within the two-year window, convicted outside of that. They would not show up as a recidivist, if that's the right word. In the statistic is that correct, or have I missed?

Mr. Swan: As with the federal system, their way of counting that is correct.

Mr. Goertzen: And I guess my concern with that is that it almost gives an incentive, not that anybody would do this, but it's almost an incentive for a slow court system because the slower the court system, the less likely you're going to fall into that two-year window. I mean, would a truer look have been if you'd have extended, then, the window to three years, or to look back to take into consideration that it takes a long time for people to get through the system? Or am I not reading that correctly?

*(16:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, again, I mean, the same question can be directed to the federal government in their system, but, look, I can assure the member that the recidivism numbers are not what drives how we do things in Justice. As the member knows, we're very engaged in trying to speed up the court processes. We're very interested trying to innovate and find better ways to move cases through the system. We've embarked on a long-term strategy of hiring more Crown attorneys and support staff and court clerks to move cases through the system more quickly. So I don't accept that suggestion in the slightest.

Mr. Goertzen: But it's sort of like arguing math. I mean, when—so the drop in the recidivist rate, using the new calculation, can at least be partly if not largely attributed to the fact that people are being charged within that window, convicted with—outside of the two-year window. Is that correct?

Mr. Swan: Well, again, there's no national consensus in terms of the way that you do this. And we moved—again, being informed by how the federal corrections service comes up with its numbers, as well as other provinces—to come up with a number that we thought was reasonable. Again, I don't think the old system, where one person in a large class of people could almost single-handedly result in a recidivism rate as defined that made no sense. We

think that this is a better way to go. I mean, there are always numbers that—you know, there's different ways to—if somebody really was motivated to try and change results. That isn't what's motivating us.

We want to find a better way to let people know how the system works. We are open and accountable to, first of all, how recidivism is calculated, but, second of all, to what the results really are. I think it's instructive to look at the recidivism rate for different populations to see what—what's working and what is maybe not working so well. It's really difficult to try and compare apples to oranges. We've now got a much more, I think, logical system of how we determine recidivism in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Chairperson, regarding issues of correction, Minister Toews indicated yesterday, or the day before, that they were moving to a system of asking inmates who are getting paid within the federal corrections system to provide—I think it was a third or 30 per cent of that pay—for room and board, essentially for being within the prison system federally. I know it's more symbolic than anything else because it's not in the context of funding; it might not tip the scales one way or the other for CSC. But what is the minister's view of that sort of a model?

Mr. Swan: I can speak a little bit about the consideration, if I can call it that, that's paid to inmates' trustees, as we call them, who are involved in a number of different activities within the correctional system. And, frankly, if we didn't have trustees doing work, we would be hiring people from the outside and, I expect, at a greatly higher cost.

I've got in front of me the—under the correctional services regulation, what these inmate allowances are. There's six levels, based on the work that's being done. At the lowest level, level 1 is \$2.20 per day; the highest, level 6, is \$4.70 per day. The types of employment within the facilities—and I'm sure the member has seen these when he's been out touring around—would be cleaners, kitchen workers for preparation of meals, maintenance for outside grounds, garbage, recycling, tutoring other inmates, laundry, painting, upholstery, tailing—tailoring, computer, shops or barbers.

So we see this as a way to get inmates to be involved in these areas of employment. First of all, I think, good for the facility, because otherwise we'd be hiring outside staff. Second of all, a positive thing for the inmate to be involved with that.

So, you know, I haven't—I saw the comments; I haven't looked at it in any great detail, but I don't see any pressing reason why we would want to claw back what I think most people would say is a pretty modest level of compensation on a daily basis.

Mr. Goertzen: And, I think, again, as I sort of indicated, that it seems to be more symbolic, in a way, that individuals who are getting room and board sort of have some sort of responsibility at an equivalent level, percentage-wise, not in absolutely dollar value, of what the average person does who is law-abiding. But, if the minister thinks it's a bad idea, then that's a fair comment. I'll leave that on the record for him.

My friend from River Heights, who often asks questions in Justice, needs to do so today, because I believe he has some appointments with the federal leader of his party tomorrow and I don't want to do anything to stop the resurgence of the Liberal Party either in Manitoba or federally, so I will turn it over to him.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you to my colleague from Steinbach. And the minister has made some progress with the mental health court, which, I think, is hearing cases today or is starting operating today, if I'm not mistaken. This is something that I have certainly supported for some time.

I wonder if the minister can clarify what sort of mental health or brain health issues will be considered when somebody is—whether somebody is eligible or not in terms of coming before the mental health court.

* (16:50)

Mr. Swan: I thank the member for River Heights for the question. In fact, as fate would have it, the first sitting of the mental health court, I believe, was today. So we're very, very excited about the possibilities. Judge John Guy will be sitting as the mental health court judge. He has experience already with the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court.

There are criteria which were prepared by the steering committee, which involved a number of different stakeholders and, thankfully, it's—the member for River Heights—I will read the definition, which may be more instructive for him than for me. The guidelines are that the accused must suffer from a severe and pervasive DSM-IV access one mental disorder. That includes, but is not limited to,

schizophrenia, bipolar disease, anxiety disorders and severe depression.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if it would be possible for the minister to table or provide a copy of that guidelines for the court. Second, in looking at that description, when it includes schizophrenia and bipolar, would somebody who has a brain injury, for example, be considered where they have mental health or brain health issues as a result? Would somebody with a neurodevelopmental disorder, Asperger's syndrome, be considered? Would somebody who's got an addiction be considered? Would somebody with FASD, for example, be considered? Would somebody with ADHD be considered?

Mr. Swan: I think I'll be able to provide a copy of the criteria before we recommence Estimates tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock, but I can advise that individuals suffering from personality disorders, from organic brain issues such as dementia associated with Alzheimer's, or an FASD who don't suffer from an access one disorder, aren't candidates for the mental health court.

And just to speak generally about why that's the case, the goal, obviously, of the mental health court, is a problem-solving court, is to—instead of having the judge be the arbiter of dispensing justice, it's really to have the judge serving as part of a larger team. And for those individuals who've committed crimes because of their mental health issues, which we think can be treated and managed in the community, that's really where we want individuals in the health court to go.

So, for example, somebody who suffers from schizophrenia, it may be a condition that can be managed in the community without any undue risk as long as somebody, for example, stays on their medication and perhaps, part of the work of the mental health court is getting that person more resources in terms of community health or more resources in terms of housing.

Some of the challenges with other individuals who don't fall within that definition is that the condition they have isn't—it isn't really treatable, it isn't really manageable, and so that's not the focus of the mental health court.

Mr. Gerrard: So just to be clear, because when the minister was talking, I wasn't sure, entirely, that he was saying that dementia, FASD, organic brain

conditions, they are included or not included. I think he's saying not included.

Mr. Swan: Yes, those individuals are not included. The accused must suffer from, again, a severe and pervasive DSM for access one mental disorder.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, so I notice in the—some of the commentary around the mental health court that there is a—something here about treatment of addictions. The court will have the power to order treatment such as addiction counselling. So does that mean that somebody with an addiction would be—could come before the mental health court or would it be only if they had an addiction plus one of the severe mental health conditions like schizophrenia or bipolar?

Mr. Swan: Yes, as long as the individual is diagnosed with suffering from the mental disorder. The fact that they also have an addiction issue, substance abuse issue, doesn't disentitle them. They can still be part of the mental health court.

As I know the member is well aware there's obviously a lot of co-occurring mental health and addictions issues. So, yes, those individuals can be candidates to be part of this court.

Mr. Gerrard: And with such co-occurring disorders—in the past, we have had problems, at least in some areas of Manitoba, with the mental health issue and the addictions being looked at completely separately instead of being treated together.

Can the minister indicate whether there's a specific policy in this regard?

Mr. Swan: Look, I can speak to the mental health court. I mean, the purpose of having this new mental

health court is to take a problem-solving approach to individuals who commit crimes because of their mental health issues, which may or may not be co-occurring with addictions.

So the court is going to take a different and, I think, a very positive approach at treating all of the individual's issues and not simply looking at the mental health issue alone. I hope that's what the member is looking for.

Mr. Gerrard: So the—maybe the minister can describe a little bit more detail the sort of treatment approaches. I mean, would a centre like the Behavioural Health Foundation in St. Norbert, would that be one place where somebody might be sent or would it have to be in a hospital or, you know, what sort of treatment approaches would be acceptable?

Mr. Swan: Well, and that's the beauty of a problem-solving court like the mental health court which I should mention has been developed by looking at the best practices of the mental health courts elsewhere in Canada and elsewhere.

We're not the first province to come to the table of having a mental health court. Ontario and, I believe, British Columbia have also had some pretty good initiatives.

So the treatment plan is really going to be tailored to the individual. The idea is that the referral into mental—

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee. This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess and will reconvene tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 10, 2012

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