

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

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

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 22—The Medical Amendment Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It's my pleasure to introduce Bill 22, The Medical Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi médicale, be now read a first time. Oh, pardon me, je m'excuse, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk). Thank you.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: The Medical Amendment Act is going to go a long way to work with our medical professionals and our medical community to improve patient safety, to continue to improve accountability and to work on processes for appeals and other such matters that will be of great importance to the citizens of Manitoba.

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

Bill 13—The Organic Agricultural Products Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, currently a new federal regulation for organic food production is providing assurances to international and national buyers that Canadian produced organic foods are certified organic. By creating a provincial standard for organic food production in Manitoba that mirrors the federal regulation, the Manitoba Organic Agricultural Products Act will provide the same assurances to Manitoba consumers.

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

Bill 14—The Government Purchases Amendment Act (Responsible Manufacturing)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the

Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), that Bill 14, The Government Purchases Amendment Act (Responsible Manufacturing); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les achats du gouvernement, be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, this bill updates the rules governing how goods are to be purchased under The Government Purchases Act. It also requires that suppliers of certain classes of goods to establish that the goods have been made in accordance with the minimum fair labour practices.

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Trunk Highway 2—Glenboro

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

As a result of high traffic volumes in the region, there have been numerous accidents and near misses along Provincial Trunk Highway 2, near the village of Glenboro, leading to serious safety concerns for motorists.

The provincial government has refused to construct turning lanes off Provincial Trunk Highway 2 into the village of Glenboro and on to Golf Course Drive, despite the fact that the number of businesses along Provincial Trunk Highway 2 have increased greatly in recent years.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider implementing a speed zone on Provincial Trunk Highway 2 adjacent to the village of Glenboro.

This petition is signed by David Prost, Val Ford, Daryl Ford and many, many others.

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

Provincial Trunk Highway 10_Forrest

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Provincial Trunk Highway 10 separates two schools and residential districts in Forrest, Manitoba, forcing students and residents to cross under very dangerous circumstances.

Strategies brought forward to help minimize the danger pose either significant threats to the safety of our children or are not economically feasible.

Provincial Highway 10 serves as a route for an ever-increasing volume of traffic, including heavy trucks, farm vehicles, working commuters, campers and the transport of dangerous goods.

Traffic levels are expected to escalate further due to projected industrial expansions.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to act on this situation by considering the construction of a four-lane highway that will bypass around the village of Forrest.

This petition signed by Patty Zolinski, C. Chamberlain, Val Thoman and many, many others waiting for a meeting with the minister.

Provincial Nominee Program

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The current government needs to recognize that the backlog in processing PNP applications, is causing additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families and friends here in Manitoba.

The current government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health-care workers to be able

to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province by improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program.

This is signed by S. Serrano, Barb Tuckett, Christa Smith, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2006-2007 Annual Reports for the Cooperative Promotion Board and the Co-operative Loans and Loans Guarantee Board.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report for MERLIN. I'm also pleased to table the Annual Report for the Industrial Technology Centre.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I'd like to table the following reports: the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2007-08 Revenue Estimates.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy Annual Report 2006-07 and the Manitoba Council on Post-Secondary Education Annual Report '06-07.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Manitoba Health and Healthy Living Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, the 2007-2008 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Film and Music Week

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): This week, October 1-7, has been officially proclaimed as Manitoba Film and Music Week in the province of Manitoba. This

distinction is twofold. First, we are congratulating Manitoba Film and Sound, Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association, Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association, as they celebrate their 20-year anniversaries. Secondly, this week we're calling upon all Manitobans to recognize, appreciate and celebrate the tremendous successes of our film and sound recording industries over the past 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally congratulate Carole Vivier of Manitoba Film and Sound, Sam Baardman from MARIA and Tara Walker from MMPIA for all that they do and their organizations have done and continue to do in supporting our film and sound industries in our province.

I'm pleased to quickly summarize some of the visible developments such as the growth of Manitoba's film industry since 1987. In 1987, the total film production activity for the entire year was less than \$5 million. Last year, in 2006-2007, Manitoba had \$114 million in film production activities. This was on 59 film projects, a far cry from the seven independent projects that were shot in 1987. For four years in a row, and soon to be five, the film industry has met or exceeded the \$100-million benchmark in annual production.

In these years of growth, we have watched our film companies expand and our filmmakers succeed with national and international awards and recognition. A prime example would be Guy Madden. Mr. Madden and his film, *My Winnipeg* breezed past several highly-touted films to grab the top prize for best Canadian film at the Toronto International Film Festival. Or look at some of our companies like Frantic Films, Buffalo Gal Pictures, Original Pictures and Eagle Vision, to name but a few and to witness the level of sophistication and production that is turned out by these hardworking companies.

Mr. Speaker, these achievements and accomplishments don't end with the film industry as I have witnessed first hand with the incredible people from Manitoba's sound recording industry. I firmly believe there's no secret formula as to why Manitoba's film and sound industries continue to grow and succeed. Certainly there are contributing factors like adequate funding support and new program development, but the real success story lies in the hands of the people who work in these industries on a daily basis: the musicians, the songwriters, the managers, the record producers, the

film crews, the directors, the film producers and all the people who work behind the scenes to make it happen one frame at a time, one note at a time.

I would like to thank the honourable members of this House for the opportunity to acknowledge Manitoba's film and sound industries and to extend their sincere congratulations to the Manitoba Film and Sound Development Corporation, the Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association and the Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I want to thank the minister for that statement, and certainly want to offer congratulations from this side of the House.

What we see today wouldn't be possible, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Premier (Mr. Doer) and I were both around in 1987 when the cultural industries office was started under an NDP administration. There was a cost-shared agreement with the federal government that was started in 1987, and I happened to have the great fortune of being the Minister of Culture from the years 1988-1993 when the federal government, at the end of the five-year agreement, decided to pull their money out of cultural industries and left us with the dilemma of what to do.

I want to indicate to the House at that time we believed in the sound and film industry here in the province of Manitoba, and we continued to fund the program rather than cut our funding. As a result, we've seen the growth and the success of that industry, and I think congratulations have to go to those that were here in 1987 and made that initial commitment and to those of us in the early nineties that continued our commitment without the federal funding.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to all of those that have been so successful; I know Carole Vivier was around in the days that I was minister, too, and she has continued to ensure that the industry grows here and is successful in Manitoba. So, hats off to all of those that have made this industry such a success and congratulations to them as we celebrate.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

An Honourable Member: Well, okay.

Mr. Speaker: I heard a no.

An Honourable Member: That was a yo.

Mr. Speaker: Well, thanks for the clarification. So I'll ask the question again.

Does the honourable member have leave?

An Honourable Member: Leave

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in the Chamber in paying tribute to the contributions of the film industry in Manitoba, the artists, the individuals who have been producing and managing in this industry, and the people who have worked, often behind the scenes, in making a contribution in one way or another. It's certainly been a success story, and it's a tribute to the many individuals who've been involved in making it happen. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

West-Side Hydro Power Line Land Transfer Agreement

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I hate to interrupt this vibe of non-partisanship that has engulfed the House from those statements, but I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we've seen over the last week that the NDP government has required Manitoba Hydro, against its advice, to embark on the construction of a west-side power line that is significantly longer than the east-side route which has been recommended and proposed by those who are experts.

The result of this decision by the Premier is going to leave a legacy of debt for future generations of Manitobans, and it's going to result in environmental damage to a significant degree, Mr. Speaker. He's put up several reasons to try to rationalize that decision, and all of those reasons on closer examination have fallen like a house of cards.

The real reason is that back in April this Premier entered into an agreement that effectively transferred a veto power control over one-seventh of the land mass of Manitoba to a select group of chiefs on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. He's handed them a veto under the guise of consultation under that agreement

dated April 3 of this year, one-seventh of the territory of Manitoba with no mandate from the people of Manitoba, with no debate, no ratification in this Legislature, and that veto is the reason that Manitobans are going to lose half a billion dollars. It's the reason we're going to environmental damage, and it is a veto that cannot be justified under law or under any principle. He's got other chiefs, eight First Nations on the west side. He's got untold Manitobans across the province, and he's handed a veto to a select group of 16 people.

How can he justify that decision to Manitobans?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I guess it's the right to misrepresent week here in Manitoba.

On the one hand, over the last few days he's been quoting various individuals from the east side that are part of the First Nations group that are proposing a Hydro line down the east side and, Mr. Speaker, he fails to tell Manitobans, inform Manitobans, that Hydro has said no to the proposal because it cedes ownership completely of the transmission line to a private company. Further, he fails to inform the public for his own convenient reasons that this proposal for private ownership of the transmission line that he is purporting to support would be \$200 million in revenue a year, again, allowing his argument on economics to fall like a house of cards. He also fails to tell the people of Manitoba with his ability to do so, Mr. Speaker, that at the press conference to announce the agreement on the east side, the Grand Chief Fontaine said, and I quote: This is not a veto. It's merely a way of putting it into action, section 35 of the constitution which we support; consultation is what we agreed to. The member opposite is on one side of this issue in supporting a private ownership of the Hydro line on Mondays and Wednesdays, and then he's on the other side against Aboriginal people on the right to consult on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the proposal that has come forward for private ownership of the lines on the east side of the lake is an easy one for this Premier to deal with. All he has to do is say no. It's provincial Crown land. It's land that is under the control of him and his government. This is a government that is elected to safeguard the Crown lands on behalf of all Manitobans and what he did on April 3 was give a veto to 16 select Manitobans, over one-seventh of the territory of Manitoba, without a mandate, without a debate in this Legislature.

I'll read him back the section from his own accord, section 3.8 that says the Province will develop regulations with First Nations governments' participation and approval with regard to planning on the east side. It's approval, Mr. Speaker, it's not consultation. He handed a veto to 16 individuals, any one of whom can exercise that veto against the will of a majority of people on the east side of Manitoba. It is the biggest land handover, it is the biggest land scandal in the history of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. He did it quietly because he didn't want Manitobans to know.

If he was a real leader and somebody came forward saying, we want ownership of the power lines, a real leader would just say no, we're building the power lines, we'll consult, we'll arrive at a fair deal but the people of Manitoba own the power lines and nobody else. Why did he give up his control to say no?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I believe there were members of the press gallery at the announcement, and they can play back the tapes where the language is very clear that there's no veto in this agreement.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite has mentioned various proponents of the east side in terms of ownership. He's been doing that all last week. I've got all his *Hansard* on that proposal.

I also believe that the member opposite would be fully aware that in 2004 we said we would be moving towards getting this east side and the boreal forest and the area adjacent to the east side established as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

I want to say, the member opposite asked questions last week. He may try to misrepresent this tomorrow, but Parks Canada has stated that this site is an excellent site for purposes of an east side—the east-side site is very important to maintain the features and necessary work for the following reasons: exceptional natural scenic values with wild rivers; extensive undisturbed boreal forest lakes and wetlands; intact boreal landscape demonstrating a range of ecological processing relating the glacial history and fire ecology; a good variety of species typical of the region, as well as one threatened species, the woodland caribou, and one species of special concern. Provincial governments are working

in the process of managing these lands with the First Nations people.

The First Nations people have also proposed extensive land surrounding the parks for inclusion under this site, Mr. Speaker. The First Nations are striving to protect their land, and it is imperative to ensure the well-being of their youth and their culture. *[interjection]*

Well, it's in Parks Canada. It's on the Internet. That's an invention that was made a couple of years ago. Please take a look.

Mr. McFadyen: That very same reference which is on the UN Web site refers to a parcel of land of 8,000 square kilometres, not the 34,000 square kilometres that they're now talking about. It was a 2004 proposal that dealt with land in Atikaki, Nopiming, and some land south of Atikaki, Mr. Speaker. That proposal was entirely consistent with running a transmission line down the east side.

He could have had a UN world heritage site and an east-side transmission line, so he's talking about territory that would not be traversed by an east-side line, Mr. Speaker, and he hasn't even bothered, in his haste to throw away half a billion dollars and the ability to power a significant part of the province of Manitoba, in his haste to do that, he hasn't even bothered to pursue the possibility of both a UN heritage site and an east-side power line. He should go back and take a look at the boundaries that are being referred to in that report.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier if he will commit today, given that he has—and we don't need to rewind the tapes from the news conference; we know what the news release says. The news release, in typical NDP fashion, doesn't exactly describe what the agreement says. The agreement says, and I quote, paragraph 3.8: "The Province will develop regulations, with First Nations governments' participation and approval, pursuant to existing planning legislation to assist with the implementation" of the accord, "the Regional Resource Management Boards, and the Traditional Area Land Use Planning."

They've been given a veto under this agreement over the planning regulations that provide them with a veto over what happens on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Why will the Premier not commit to doing the right thing, having a full, open, democratic debate, bringing forward legislation that would deal with the

ratification of this agreement, Mr. Speaker, because he cannot justify a secretive agreement to give away one-seventh of the province of Manitoba to a select group of Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, secret, a secretive agreement that's on the Internet, the materials that are provided in a press conference. We've been honest about this issue for a long time now. We have stated our preference. We have stated our preference up front. We had 82 meetings with First Nations people on the east side. We met with major environmental groups, and yes, we met with major Canadian environmental groups, Manitoban environmental groups. We actually met with—we're aware of what American environmental groups have said.

We have studied what happened when Québec went forward with a proposal on James Bay II, and, yes, Robert Kennedy Jr., and Matthew Cooncomb went down and stopped the project for 20 years in the province of Québec because people did not think about the customers, Mr. Speaker. Those who have not studied the lessons of history are bound to repeat their errors, and that's why we had full disclosure in the election campaign. We said to people, yes, the west side is more expensive, but, yes, we won't even get an east-side transmission line done.

Premier Filmon did not proceed with it. We know because of environmental issues, because of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, because of the issue of First Nations living on the east side, the whole issue of reliability. We know, over the longer haul, that it's better to have relationships, yes, with people on the east side but also with our customers on the south side, on the west side, and on the east side, Mr. Speaker. That's why we were honest in the election. That was the consultation that took place. We were honest. They didn't accept your ideas. They accepted our ideas.

Manitoba Housing Accountability

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): The Auditor-General, in his review of Aiyawin, said that this NDP government ignored red flags about overspending and inappropriate use of public money. The minister responsible for Housing yesterday in this House said, don't worry; everything's fine; the safeguards are in place to ensure this doesn't happen again. Mr. Speaker, does he stand by that statement today?

* (14:00)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, when you have literally hundreds of agencies that are put together by well-meaning, good-willed Manitobans in order to provide services to vulnerable Manitobans, you have a variety of skills and they need a variety of supports. They also have to be accountable, of course, for the flow of public dollars to those agencies. I understand that, in fact, in terms of agencies, there's 1,250 roughly, agencies, and if you count in all the licensed foster facilities, there are over 3,000 organizations and individuals for which the Family Services Department is accountable for the flow of funds.

So I end with this question, Mr. Speaker. Why would the member opposite have shut down the agency relations unit which would have ensured accountability for those outside agencies?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, we've learned that back in 2003—and I know the minister would know—a red flag was raised with this government regarding the North End Housing Project, who provides housing to low-income Manitobans. They ran a deficit of \$300,000 back in 2003.

What did the NDP do? They covered their deficit back then and the organization still to this day, four years later, continues to run a deficit and this government continues to bail them out.

Mr. Speaker, what has the minister done to ensure that the North End Housing Project has not become another Aiyawin?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, not only has the incumbent government put in place the new agency accountability and support unit, we are in the process now of doubling the capacity of that unit. As a result of concerns raised in the past, we're making sure that, indeed, we learn from shortcomings of the past no matter how far back they go. As well, in addition to that unit, service purchase agreements are an important part, as identified by outside eyes, of the way to better ensure accountability and we have vigorously pursued that.

In terms of North End Housing, Mr. Speaker, part of the effort has to be not only accountability, but as I said earlier, support. We have to give support to community agencies to do the job that they want to do.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I've also learned, and I know the minister would know, that many board members from the organization have resigned, that the organization isn't providing financial information to satisfy his department and that the minister continues to write a blank cheque.

Can the minister explain, Mr. Speaker, how he has allowed this to happen? Has he not learned any lessons from the Aiyawin scandal?

Mr. Mackintosh: This agency, Mr. Speaker, one of hundreds indeed has over many years faced challenges. I know Manitoba Housing has been working diligently with that organization to bolster its efforts to ensure accountability.

Indeed, problems continue and it is my understanding that the department is going to continue to work with North End Housing, and if indeed they cannot be made to be fully, shall we say robust in terms of the funding, the flow of dollars, then that may have to end in terms of that project, which would be unfortunate because they have been delivering some good housing projects in Winnipeg, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods.

Child Welfare System Minister's Response to Specific Case

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Deb Shorrock contacted my offices with extremely serious concerns about her niece who lives in Norway House. Allegations Ms. Shorrock has made lead me to believe that her five-year-old niece is at very serious risk. When Deb Shorrock contacted the minister's office on July 31, 2007, she was given the number for the northern authority and told to call them instead. Despite repeated phone calls to the authorities she has never received a call back.

Mr. Speaker, a child is at serious risk. Why did the minister ignore these terrible allegations, and why did he fail to ensure this little girl is safe?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, any time there are concerns about the well-being and safety of a child, that is a most serious matter and must be taken very seriously from all of those engaged in the child protection system.

I would, first of all, correct the record that we understand that there was a call to the office, and there was a referral to the authority and advised if she didn't get satisfaction to come back. She has written again. I have looked at the allegations. I'm

very concerned about the nature of those allegations and so today, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the Children's Advocate has publicly stated it's her information that there are safety plans in place and that the agency is actively involved at this point. The northern authority is also actively involved, she said. The Child Protection Branch is also actively—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, it is this minister who is responsible for the protection of children in care. It is alleged that a five-year-old girl has been a victim of vicious sexual assault by her half-brother who lives with her. But when those concerns were brought to his attention, this minister did nothing except give Ms. Shorrock a different phone number to call. No one should have to fight this hard for a child's safety.

Mr. Speaker, to hear allegations like these is heartbreaking for all members of this House. How could the minister ignore these terrible allegations?

Mr. Mackintosh: The member is wrong, Mr. Speaker. The allegations were brought to my attention late last week by way of a letter from the individual named.

Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate as well, today, has reported publicly that measures have been taken to ensure that the child is safe. I can further confirm with the House that not only is it important that people come forward with allegations when there's a reasonable basis to believe that a child is in need of protection but that that individual receive information back to assure the complainant that the matter has been fully and professionally investigated.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the Child Protection branch is facilitating a meeting with the authority tomorrow, and the complainant, Ms. Shorrock, so that she can see the follow-up as a result of her complaint.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, clearly, there is no accountability in the minister's office. He is responsible for the protection of children in care. There is no excuse for his failure. If Manitobans cannot get help from the Minister of Family Services, who can they turn to? The minister cannot pass the buck when there is a child at risk.

What is the minister going to do today to make sure that the little girl is safe tonight? Thank you.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, the member wants to read that kind of allegation. In addition to the meeting tomorrow to ensure that

there's a fulsome explanation that there has been an investigation, in light of the confidentiality and privacy interests at stake, I'm also advised, as a result of my discussion with the Children's Advocate today that she is taking a further look at this matter just to ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made.

As well, I should just add that it's important, Mr. Speaker, to reinforce the protocol that when there are complaints there is information back to the complainant. That is being undertaken in co-operation with the child welfare authorities in place in Manitoba.

Cattle Enhancement Council Council Chair's Salary

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The long-awaited annual report of the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council has finally made it public. It contains some startling information, especially when it comes to council chair, one Mr. Bill Uruski, a former NDP Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Uruski collected \$12,142 in wages from the council in the first 277 days of 2006. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture justify why a former NDP Minister of Agriculture allowed profit off the backs of struggling cattle producers to the tune of more than \$12,000?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): The member opposite has shown clearly that he opposes the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council despite the fact that producers have asked us to set up this council, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when you are establishing a council, there are many up-front costs and a lot of meetings that have to take place. I put a lot of credit into the chair that we appointed and for the work he has done to establish this council. As I have told the member before, it was from provincial coffers that we put in start-up money. Producers' money was not spent. The producers' money was not spent, and the producers' money is waiting for a project. The member is wrong to say that we have spent producers' money.

* (14:10)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the council's annual report shows Mr. Uruski's other expenses include \$907.59 for meals and entertainment and \$3,096.37—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: —for travel and accommodations. The combined wages and other expenses ring in to more than \$16,000 for this part-time job. To cover his cost alone, council has collected this \$2-backdoor tax on 8,072 head of cattle being sold within this province.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Agriculture think it is right for a former NDP Minister of Agriculture to be plucking more than \$15,000 out of the pockets of hardworking cattle producers and this minister has nothing to show for it?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, if the member would have listened to my first answer, he would recognize that I said that the money for Mr. Uruski did not come from the producers; it was provided for by government.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that the member opposite would say that people in rural Manitoba shouldn't participate and shouldn't have their expenses covered. We as rural MLAs have our expenses covered when we travel to meetings. Why is it that when we get volunteers—perhaps he wants somebody from the city to be the representative on their Enhancement Council so that we won't have travel expenses. That's not the way we work. We value the input of rural people, and we cover their expenses as rural MLAs have their expenses paid.

Mr. Eichler: This former Minister of Agriculture definitely is getting a patronage appointment. I can certainly see that. Mr. Uruski collects \$336 per day from the Manitoba cattle producers through the forced checkoff. Mr. Speaker, the same cattle producers are still burdened with 1,656 outstanding BSE loans for a total of \$61.7 million.

How does this minister justify this blatant mismanagement of cattle producers' money without any increase in processing capacity? The minister has pulled \$16,145.96 out of the back of the cattle producers' pockets.

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member should listen to the answers instead of reading questions that're prepared for him.

The member should listen to my first two answers before he reads his prepared question. I told in both those answers, Mr. Speaker, that the money collected from the producers was not used to establish the council. This government put in place money to establish the council because producers asked us to.

But, the member opposite talks about why we don't have slaughter capacity. Well, I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite can take full credit for ensuring that there is no slaughter capacity because they spoke against it. Every time we had a proposal for slaughter capacity, they spoke against it. Jack Penner said investment in processing was not a good idea. The member opposite took out ads to tell producers to take out their money. They are against slaughter capacity—

Auto Theft Anti-theft Programs

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The federal Conservative government has pledged to increase penalties for auto theft, provided, of course, Jack Layton and the federal NDP will let it go through Parliament. It's now time for the Minister of Justice to do his part and look to best practices in other provinces that have been extremely successful in curbing auto theft. Provinces have substantially reduced auto theft without changes to the Criminal Code.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to follow the lead of other provinces with respect to auto theft?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In point of fact, Mr. Speaker, the member ought to know, and perhaps his leader could inform him, that the Minister of Justice, Rob Nicholson, and Stockwell Day indicated that Jack Layton and the NDP supported the crime initiatives of the Conservative parties, and so he should check with his own leader.

With respect to auto theft, I'm very pleased that our numbers are down 25 percent this year, and the auto theft levels are down, the lowest levels in eight years, Mr. Speaker. Part of that has been the innovative programming that we utilized with the Winnipeg Police Service to increase police resources recently, another five added to the auto theft suppression strategy, plus all of the other strategies adapted from Regina which is different than the situation in Alberta or B.C. where they have chop-shop fests versus Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia where it's a lot of youth doing essentially, getting high joy-riding, and our particularly adapted approach has resulted in a 25 percent decrease.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the victims of auto theft are up. Attempt auto theft is up by 33 percent the first nine months. British Columbia has

implemented an effective bait car program in 2004, and auto theft numbers dropped in that province by more than 35 percent. During that same period of time, Manitoba, now without a bait car program, had an increase in auto theft by more than 25 percent. We're headed in the wrong direction.

So, I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to do his part? Why has he failed to implement a bait car program effectively in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: There was a bait car initiative in Manitoba. It didn't prove effective because of weather conditions and because of the fact that it was labour intensive, Mr. Speaker. I would point out to the member opposite that in Vancouver the bait car program, which cost \$5 million, resulted in 30 arrests, that's three zero, in 2006. Our auto theft suppression program has resulted in 964 auto theft arrests and 3,417 criminal charges for the same period of time for the city of Winnipeg compared to the city of Vancouver.

And, Mr. Speaker, why did members opposite vote against our initiative to increase police officers on our youth car suppression unit? Why did they vote against it in the budget and during the election campaign? Why did they do that?

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the minister fails to mention that the bait car program in British Columbia acts as a deterrence, and the results speak for themselves. Thirty-five percent less auto theft in British Columbia over a three-year period. The Minister of Justice and the Premier (Mr. Doer) were quick to travel to Ottawa to lobby for changes to auto theft laws that the federal Conservative government was already in favour of. British Columbia, on the other hand, was busy implementing a bait car program which was very successful in spite of existing federal laws.

So, I ask the Minister of Justice: Instead of pointing the finger of blame at Ottawa, why won't he point to successful auto theft programs in British Columbia? And why does he refuse to implement a bait car program here in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, Mr. Speaker, without any changes in the law that we've advocated, the rates have come down 25 percent. Secondly, Winnipeg police have introduced technology with respect to licence plate reading with respect to auto theft and decided that that was a priority of the Winnipeg police department. Thirdly, I will listen to the police

department, as I've said many times, one hundred times out of a hundred rather than members opposite.

We can do a number of things at the same time: change the laws; increase the penalties; put in place an immobilizer program. Attempts are up because people are having difficulty stealing cars. We have decreased it by 25 percent. A bait car option is out there. The police have said they want bodies on the ground. We've given them bodies on the ground; in fact, an all-time high of police officers.

*(14:20)

Freedom of Information Response Rate to Requests

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Yesterday, the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) asked the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism why we do not have a privacy commissioner in Manitoba, and the minister was left literally scratching his head.

Mr. Speaker, my question is about the other half of FIPPA, Freedom of Information. I ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and I hope this one isn't a head-scratcher, why the response rate for FIPPA requests fell from 85 percent to 66 percent in the past year and why complaints to FIPPA doubled.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, as I commented to our colleague from Morris yesterday, I reported that indeed our government is committed to being open and accountable. We've made information routinely available by putting Orders-in-Council on-line as of January of this year.

I would like to refer the colleague from Minnedosa to the results of a national survey by the Canadian Newspaper Association which looked at how well we're doing here in the province of Manitoba, Manitoba being more open than most. I can table that, Mr. Speaker, so I'm very proud of the work that we're doing here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the 2006 FIPPA annual report shows that delays are longer, response rates are down and complaints are up. It was extremely convenient for the NDP government to delay the release of the Spirited Energy invoices and focus groups until they were safely out of the 2007 election.

Mr. Speaker, we have been fighting for this information since November 2006, and this

information showed that Manitoba taxpayers were left picking up the tab for sustenance, like beer and wine, for those working on the Spirited Energy campaign.

I ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism: Why does he continue to allow his fellow ministers to abuse the FIPPA process?

Mr. Robinson: There are several questions in that line of questioning and I don't have all afternoon. I know that our time in Question Period is very limited, as you remind us, Mr. Speaker.

If I could just refer again that we're looking at a number of amendments that can strengthen the act that we're currently working with, including matters that—routine disclosures. We will be soon tabling reports of ministerial expenses as well, much as we do with MLA expenses, and I believe that's a dramatic improvement.

Again, I refer to what the *Winnipeg Free Press* and other newspapers across Canada deemed us to be one of the best in Canada.

Mrs. Rowat: A report that was three months late, a phantom privacy commissioner, Mr. Speaker, this government's abuse of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is a disgrace. It's no wonder that they don't want to update the act because right now they can manipulate it, today deny and demand fees for information.

Mr. Speaker, it's Right to Know Week, and I ask the minister, why is he denying Manitoba this basic right?

Mr. Robinson: As I've been saying, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work to improve the act. As in anything, there's room for improvement.

With respect to FIPPA, we will continue to work in supporting the work of not only government generally but also the public bodies that we're responsible for through our privacy risk medication project and through educational activities such as the access and privacy conference that is being planned for 2008.

Allow me to again refer to the newspaper article written on the 22nd of September, 2007. We're very proud of the assessment made of our province with respect to the access of information.

Bill 204
Request for Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, as Liberals we're determined to protect our medicare system from the problems and mismanagement of the NDP. To this end we need that patients and families have quick access to medical records in hospitals or personal care homes. There is no reason not to support our Bill 204 which would provide such quick access.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) whether he and his party will support Bill 204 to ensure that patients have access within 24 hours to their medical records when they're in hospitals or personal care homes.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As the member opposite is aware, we have been working diligently over time to increase accountability and to increase response time, and we've done that in a number of fashions. I know that the member opposite is well aware that current records from the health system are available, most of which are available now, within 24 hours. There are some cases of requests for records that are dated back many, many years where it would be quite difficult for individuals to access that information in 24 hours. We believe that that's reasonable, and while we are willing and open to looking at improvements, we do believe that an overarching 24-hour proviso would not be sensible.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the bill we put forward specifically provides for access to immediately available information, not some information which is hidden somewhere in an archive. Bill 204 is about sharing information with patients and families so that patients and families are full participants in care. It's about removing the anxiety associated with hiding and covering up information.

I ask the minister whether she will join us in moving to a more open health-care system in which patients and families are full participants in care. Will the minister not support Bill 204?

Ms. Oswald: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are very supportive of having an open and transparent system, and the record speaks for itself.

Since coming into government, we've put information on-line that was never provided prior to that, information concerning wait times, information concerning emergency rooms. Certainly, we concur with the member opposite that one of the most important things that we can be doing in a health-

care system is providing comfort to families that are frightened and concerned. And when families request information about their loved ones so they can participate, most times this information is available within 24 hours.

To absolutely insist that all records going back years and years before achieve that same result is not reasonable for the system, and so we have some difficulty with the contents of that bill, but, again, are committed to working with families so that they can participate in the care of their loved ones.

Provincial Nominee Program
Processing Times

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would question the ability of the Minister of Immigration to be able to administer the Provincial Nominee Program. There was a great deal of fanfare about shortening the waiting times, the processing times to three and nine months. Today, it takes longer, in many cases, to process a provincial nominee certificate than it does to process an immigration file in a foreign embassy here in the province of Manitoba. That is totally and absolutely unacceptable in terms of the general stream.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Immigration is: Will she recognize that the only way that she's going to be able to deal with the backlogs that are there is to add additional resources so that we don't have the thousands of families here in the province that have to go through the anxiety of having to wait, often longer here in Manitoba than what they would wait when their whole case, the issue, is being processed from a foreign embassy abroad?

When's the government going to put in the resources necessary in order to shorten those waiting periods?

* (14:30)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): We have the most successful Provincial Nominee Program in Canada. Our qualifications recognition strategy is revered across the country by all of the other jurisdictions. We've met our 10,000 target. Our processing times in our PNP are two to four months, Mr. Speaker, which is 70 percent of all of our applications that we receive here in Canada.

Every time this MLA stands up and puts this kind of misinformation on the record, he criticizes

the hard-working people in my Immigration branch, and he owes them an apology, Mr. Speaker, for putting this kind of information on the record consistently. He should stand up right now in this House and put it on the record that he is apologizing to the staff in my branch that are driving the most successful program in Canada. He should apologize now.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Outdoor Recreation Development

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the development of outdoor recreation facilities throughout the rural regions of our province is integral in providing opportunities for individuals to explore nature and maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

Furthermore, in addition to improving the general quality of life, outdoor recreational development occupies an important function in the local economy by helping to attract outside visitors to the area.

The development of the Langford Recreation Trails and the Fulford Winter Trails in the region just southeast of Neepawa will benefit the surrounding community in this multitude of respects.

Langford Recreation Trails, completed this past July, offer nearly 10 kilometres of trails for hiking, biking and other outdoor events and activities. The trails are located in a wildlife management area with co-operation from the Department of Conservation and the Whitemud Conservation District. The trails traverse a diversity of beautiful landscapes from dense, oak forest to open hills, flat prairies to shaded marshes. The natural appeal of the trails to both the local community as well as visitors is attested to in the fact that nearly 500 individuals have registered at the trails in the first couple of months of operation. The hard work required to transform this project into reality was carried out primarily by volunteers, including Skills Link Group, a Youth at Risk program; the Katimavik project; Muriel Gamey; Roger Cross; Merv and Janice Sumner. As well, Langford Reeve Kathy Jasienczyk deserves our recognition as she has been instrumental in securing the support needed to initiate the project.

The Fulford Winter Trails, which have lingered for the past number of years as a quiet community secret, will offer an extensive array of skiing trails, snowshoeing trails, two tobogganing slopes as well as a warming cabin. Taken together, the development of these outdoor facilities serves to enrich the quality of life within the local communities and all those who invested their time and effort in their production warrant our sincere thanks.

Business and Professional Women's Clubs

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, on September 28, I was thrilled to attend with many of my colleagues, including our Premier (Mr. Doer) and leaders of the opposition, a luncheon put on by the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Manitoba. The clubs recognized the historical significance of having almost one-third of our Manitoba Legislature represented by women. In the 2007 election, Manitobans elected more women as a proportion of our Legislature than in any other Legislature in Canada.

It was an honour to be addressed by the Honourable Pearl McGonigal, who was the first woman Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, first woman elected to the St. James-Assiniboia—now Winnipeg—City Council and the first woman to serve as Deputy Mayor of Winnipeg. Ms. McGonigal spoke about the challenges of women pioneers as they pursued public office. Having women in elected office is vitally important to ensure that the make-up of the elected Legislature is reflective of the electorate.

As one of the 13 women in the Manitoba NDP Caucus, I am proud to be one of the MLAs who can serve as role models for the young women leaders of tomorrow. Through us, young women have living testimonials that they too can be lawyers, business executives, community leaders and elected officials.

I wish to extend my thanks and those of my colleagues to the BPW Clubs of Selkirk, Thompson and Winnipeg for organizing the event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Louis Riel Day Naming

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the schools in my constituency that took part in the campaign to name the new February stat holiday. Schools from Austin, Baldur, Crystal City and Killarney took part.

Killarney School even picked the winning name, Louis Riel Day, and earned themselves a \$1,000 grant for their school.

Mr. Speaker, while Killarney chose the winning entry, and I congratulate them for it, I would also like to make note of suggestions of the other schools, which I think are all wonderful suggestions. Austin Elementary chose Children's Day, which I am guessing is a response to Mother's and Father's Day. Baldur suggested Keystone Day to recognize our place as the Keystone Province, and Mayfair Colony suggested Province Pride Day, which shows their support for Manitoba.

There were two suggestions from the town of Crystal City, which is also the hometown of the Premier's Director of Communications, Mr. Jonathan Hildebrand. I thought Heritage Day and Crocus Day were both great suggestions. I know all of our members would have enthusiastically supported Crocus Day, and wonder why the Province didn't give it more consideration. I hope Mr. Hildebrand was also pushing for his hometown's suggestion of Crocus Day with the Premier (Mr. Doer).

While Crocus Day was not the winning entry, I ensure Crystal City Early Years that I and the entire PC caucus will continue to remind the government of the importance of our provincial flower, and the NDP government will not be allowed to forget about Crocus anytime soon. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, today is the 138th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. Born in 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from his early childhood held in the belief of truth and non-violence as weapons to fight for freedom and civic rights. By holding to this belief, Gandhi led the movement to liberate India from the mighty British Empire without the use of guns, military tanks or bombs. Instead, India's independence was won by non-violence, civil disobedience, tolerance and peaceful protests.

Gandhi's conviction that all violence was evil and could not be justified for any cause did inspire several civil rights movements and freedom fighters in the whole world. Martin Luther King's civil rights movement in the United States and Nelson Mandela's anti-apartheid stand in South Africa both drew on Gandhi's example. Their success in achieving freedom and civil rights clearly demonstrated that

non-violence and civil disobedience, not machine guns, were the tools to be used to fight oppression.

In honour of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, the United Nations General Assembly, on June 15 this year, has adopted the resolution that today, October 2, be declared as the International Day for Non-Violence.

Mr. Speaker, even at this moment when I speak these words, violence and terror are destroying lives of innocent people throughout the world. In these turbulent times, I believe we still have much to learn and practise what Mahatma Gandhi taught us.

He showed us that people from different faiths, cultures, and multinationals or multicultural communities could exist very peacefully together. We would do well to take Gandhi's non-violence and truth to become our model to build a better world for all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

Provincial Nominee Program

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting listening to the answer that the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan) gave today. What the Minister of Immigration doesn't realize is that what we're talking about is hundreds, if not thousands, of Manitobans that wait patiently while this minister underfunds the resources that are necessary in order to adequately do the paperwork that's necessary in order to try to speed up the processing of cases.

I find it shameful that a government would try to pass the blame on to anyone else other than the minister who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that those resources are in place.

Mr. Speaker, every other day I am being asked by individuals throughout the province of Manitoba as to what's happening with their file. These are individuals that have been waiting for months, in some cases that have exceeded a year. That is somewhat of a shame given that the government only years ago, three years ago I believe it was, who had this giant press conference, talked about how important the program was to them and that they were going to develop these streams and they were going to ensure, I believe it was three months and nine months, nine months being the general stream.

Today, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the hype that was given by the Minister of Labour and Immigration, this is just not true. There are far too many people that are waiting longer to get a Provincial Nominee certificate issued to them today than they would wait while their case is being processed in Immigration abroad.

For many years, when the NDP were in opposition, we were critical of the government in Ottawa for taking so long in processing cases. I would ask that this government take the question seriously, add additional resources to the Provincial Nominee office, and stop making a joke of the process, Mr. Speaker, respect the question as was being put forward. The minister should do the right thing and tell Manitobans, or tell this Legislature, in terms of what the actual problem is, and that's the resources. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is Private/Public Health Care.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) and the title of the resolution is Private/Public Health Care.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the Committee of Supply?

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

Madam Deputy Speaker and the Chairs, please proceed to respective rooms that you will be chairing.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the committee of supply please come to order? This

section of the committee of supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Madam Chair, no, I think in the interests of being expeditious I will not begin with an opening statement.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Just to indicate that I'm very honoured to be given this position of critic for Advanced Education. I'm looking forward to the time that I will have in it and the opportunity to contribute to the discussion around advanced education and literacy in the province. I feel very, very privileged to be able to have the chance to delve into this issue and to address the many facets of it. So I'm looking forward to my first set of Estimates in Advanced Education.

One question, I guess, would be around the area of global discussion and—[interjection] okay. That's fine then, thanks.

Madam Chairperson: Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply, and we thank the honourable critic for her opening comments.

Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 44.1(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 44.1. At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Ms. McGifford: I do take the opportunity to welcome the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) to Advanced Education. I know she's a very experienced person, so I do look forward to working with her.

I also take the opportunity to introduce my staff. With me at the table is Elaine Phillips, who is the acting deputy minister of Advanced Education and Literacy. Immediately behind Elaine is Claude Fortier, who is the executive financial officer. Seated beside him in the orange blouse and black suit is

Susan Dean, who is the manager of University Relations with the Council on Post-Secondary Education; then, Ray Karasevich, who is the manager of College Relations with the Council on Post-Secondary Education; then, Dave Reich, who is the manager of Financial Services from Manitoba Student Aid.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

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

Mrs. Driedger: I'd recommend a global discussion. It'll make it, I think, go a lot faster.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I don't object to a global discussion in and of itself, but I don't want to keep staff here for long periods of time. So, if there's some way we could try not to be global even though we're willing to be global, I'd appreciate that very much.

Madam Chairperson: Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Driedger: In terms of the political staff in the minister's office, I wonder if the minister could indicate who they are and how long they've been with the minister, and if any of them changed since the last set of Estimates, if she could indicate where the ones that have left may have gone.

Ms. McGifford: I believe the member said with regard to the political staff. Is that correct?

At the last Estimates, my special assistant was Cristiana Frittaion, and Cristiana has returned to complete her education. I have a new special assistant whose name is Jeremy Read. My executive assistant as of the last Estimates, Patrice Miniely, is on maternity leave, and so, in Patrice's stead, there is another woman whose name is Amelia LaTouche.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to thank the minister for that information. I note from the last set of Estimates that there has been some change in the organizational chart of the department. It appears that there's a flattening of the line of those—you know, in comparison to the previous year. I wonder if the minister could just go over how the organizational chart has been changed and the reasons there that might be behind that.

Ms. McGifford: I don't have the chart from the year before. I don't think that there's been so much a flattening as there has been a change, and that is that the training part of the department is now with

Competitiveness, Training and Trade. Consequently, the remainder of the department, yes, is more or less flat. I don't think that's dramatically different from the old reporting system. My staff is agreeing that it isn't dramatically different.

I think what the member is noticing is that, while the department is different in nature, it's not necessarily different in its organization. It has basically been quite flat. It's not a large department in terms of various branches. It's a large department in terms of money, but not in terms of its divisions.

Mrs. Driedger: When the minister was making introductions I note that the deputy minister is no longer Mr. Botting. Is that correct?

Ms. McGifford: Yes. Dwight Botting, who was the deputy minister, retired on June 30 of '07, and Elaine Phillips has been acting in his stead since that time.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether Don Robertson is still the chairperson of COPSE?

Ms. McGifford: You know, I suppose I shouldn't have said that Elaine Phillips has been acting in Dwight Botting's stead. That's really not accurate. She's been acting as the deputy minister.

No. Don Robertson also resigned as of June 30, 2007.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate who might now be the new chair of COPSE?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I can. The new chair of COPSE is Dr. James Allum.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, was Dr. Allum on COPSE prior to assuming the chair?

Ms. McGifford: No. He wasn't. He was, and still continues, to work at the City of Winnipeg and also taught at the University of Winnipeg.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what he taught at the University of Winnipeg?

Ms. McGifford: I think it was Canadian history or else it was environmental history. I know he has expertise in both those areas.

Canadian history, that's been confirmed.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm assuming, then, that he's already assumed his positions on COPSE. Would that be correct?

Ms. McGifford: Yes. I signed the Order-in-Council this summer, and I think it was for his assuming the position in August or September. Yes. There was a

hiatus between the time when Don Robertson resigned and James Allum began, and I believe that his start date or beginning date was September 1, and so any COPSE business that required the chair was, I believe, handled by the secretary of the Council.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it unusual for the chairperson of COPSE to assume that position without any past experience on COPSE? Have previous chairs actually been on COPSE for some time to understand the workings of it, rather than coming in cold?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Don Robertson came in cold. He hadn't been on the council before he was appointed chair. That's the only other person who's been chair since I've been the minister.

*(15:00)

Mrs. Driedger: I would indicate that I had the opportunity to attend the University of Manitoba AGM, and I was very impressed with their achievements and their efforts and their dreams, and I do want to compliment the minister on her kind remarks made about Emőke Szathmáry at the AGM. I thought they were well-chosen words to acknowledge the contributions that Dr. Szathmáry has made to the position and her passion and commitment. I thought the minister captured that very well.

It was interesting to hear some of the innovations that are happening there and also the future dreams that they have in terms of what they would like to achieve. I was particularly impressed that they were looking at a bachelor of jazz studies, which I think would certainly complement and strengthen Manitoba's place within the jazz—oh, what would be the word?—would certainly make Winnipeg a jazz centre, Manitoba a jazz centre, as it already is, but it would certainly strengthen our position in Canada in terms of that.

It was also interesting to hear about some of their, actually, very exciting and innovative ideas that are in the planning stages for the Centre for Innovation in Healthcare System and Process Design for Quality and Safety. Having been the Health critic and a nurse in my past life, certainly, I think a centre like that is definitely what is needed for the future in improving health care as we see many drastic changes happening in health care.

The other new innovation in the works or in the planning stages, at least, is the new Arctic Institute of Manitoba, which will consider the downsides of climate change and look at ways to keep our north

strong and free, as they had indicated in their presentation. Those two areas certainly caught my attention during the AGM, and I think they're very exciting. My concern certainly would be that any of these three could be lost if there is not sufficient funding that is going to be provided to, in this case, the University of Manitoba.

As the minister knows, we are all fairly new in our critic positions, and so my only opportunity to date in meeting with any of the post-secondary institutions out there is with the University of Manitoba. I look forward to future meetings that I would have with the other post-secondary institutions because I know that, once I meet with them, I will have a clearer idea of some of their visions, their strengths, their concerns, as I was able to glean from meetings with the University of Manitoba in attending their AGM.

Certainly, what I've learned from discussions with various people about programs at the University of Manitoba is that if there isn't an improvement in funding to the University of Manitoba, they are going to remain status quo in terms of programs, so we may not see these kinds of innovations move forward that are currently in the planning stages and I would have some concerns about that.

I know that Dr. Szathmáry, following the AGM, was making some comments about the underfunding of post-secondary education by this government as something that was a major concern of the University of Manitoba, and I'm certainly aware that other universities are also making those same kinds of expressions. In the newspapers, we see that the Brandon University is expressing some serious concerns as well. What they are both indicating, from my understanding, is that they are saying that cutbacks by this government have been so bad that they can't catch up with the money that is flowing to them and that it's compromising their ability to deliver world-class education. They do not feel that they are able to keep pace with other Canadian institutions any longer.

I would like to ask the minister what she's doing to address some of these serious problems which seem to have been created over the last eight years of her government where there has been a tuition freeze, and the government has only partially funded the operating requests of these post-secondary institutions, which is now causing these serious statements of underfunding. Now we're in a position

of hearing that staff positions and programs may have to be cut.

So I would like to ask the minister what she is doing to address these serious problems which these universities are saying have been created.

Ms. McGifford: First of all, I thank the member opposite for her remarks about my remarks regarding Emőke Szathmáry, and, of course, they were very heartfelt. She, I think, has made a wonderful contribution, not only to the University of Manitoba, but to the province of Manitoba. I am, certainly, one of her greatest admirers and have great respect for the way in which she promotes the university, and I think does it in a very egoless way. With all due respect, I think egolessness is not necessarily a characteristic of university presidents, but she sure has it, so I really congratulate her on that.

Now, the member made some remarks about programming at the University of Manitoba. The member talked about the jazz program, and I am told that the Council on Post-Secondary Education has approved the jazz program.

I am also told that there have been no requests for funding for the Arctic Institute, nor from the Centre for Health innovation. I know that the Arctic Institute is headed by David Barber, and I believe that he has considerable federal research funds, as well as participation from the University of Manitoba, the university of Laval in Québec, Manitoba Hydro and, perhaps, from Hydro Québec because both universities and both public utilities are very interested in global warming.

Indeed, I was very fortunate about a year and a half ago to be invited by the president of the University of Manitoba to go to Churchill and visit the Amundsen, which is the boat that does a lot of the research in the Arctic. It was a fascinating experience. One of the wonderful parts about that experiment on water that I know the member will appreciate is that they have a student component where high school kids from around the country come and do experiments with the scientists. One of my students—not one of my students, a student from Churchill school was there too. It was quite interesting to meet her and talk to her. So it's a wonderful research project in Manitoba.

Now, the member had said that the universities are complaining about cutbacks. I don't think any university has ever used the word "cutback" because there have been no cutbacks. There were cutbacks in

the '90s, but since we've been in government, university funding from 1999 to 2007 has gone up about 51.5 percent. Now, that may not be what the universities want or feel they should have, but that is not a cutback in anybody's language and I don't think they'd ever use the word "cutback." As I say, they may feel they need more, but they've never said that they've had cutbacks.

I'm told that in 1999 the University of Manitoba's operating budget or the operating dollars from the province were \$166 million, and in the last budget '07-08 that amount had increased to \$234 million. So that is not a cutback. That's a heck of a good increase. So, yes, the universities and, indeed, the colleges—although we're talking about the universities here—may not feel that they've got the money that they want, but indeed there have been no cutbacks

* (15:10)

A couple of years ago, we began negotiating a multiyear funding agreement that was for the years '06-07, '07-08 and '08-09. In '06-07, the universities and colleges received a 5.8 percent increase, which is pretty healthy when you also consider that was the last year of the municipal property tax break. The universities got about 7 percent. Last year, the increase across the board was 7 percent and in the forthcoming—I shouldn't say last year, excuse me, I meant during the current budget, the one that we're now discussing—7 percent. In the forthcoming year, '08-09, there's a commitment of at least 5 percent. So it may be more, but it certainly won't be less.

This level of funding is historic, not only in the level of increases, but it is historic in that it's a three-year funding plan which has never been done before. So, we think we've done very well by universities and colleges. We think we work very well with them, and we're very proud of the fact that student participation has grown considerably since 1999. It's up by 35 percent in universities, and I think it's 33 in colleges—I'm getting the nod—33 percent in colleges. So, Madam Chair, these are extremely important achievements for the economic future of Manitoba and, indeed, the economic present. Thank you.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate if there is a current review of post-secondary funding in Manitoba right now?

Ms. McGifford: Well, currently, Madam Chair, the institutions are presenting their estimates to the

Council on Post-Secondary Education. The process is that the estimates are presented in the fall. The council gathers all the information, processes it, meets with the council members, makes a recommendation to the minister, the minister then takes recommendations to Treasury Board, and Treasury Board ultimately is the authority and makes the decisions. So, it's quite a long process. It doesn't happen overnight. So I wouldn't say it's a review, but I would say it's the budgetary cycle is kicking off.

Mrs. Driedger: Once the NDP got into government, a tuition freeze was put in place, and since then, in looking at all of the operating grants year over year, and in this case I will just reference the University of Manitoba, they've only been given half of what they've needed. So it does not look like there was any backfilling of the tuition freeze dollars that the university might have, well, definitely, would have needed. When the tuition freeze was put into place, that money basically has not been given to the university in any other form. It appears that year after year, except for maybe the last year, the operating grants were half or less than half of what the university has requested

In my mind, it sounds like that would be very difficult, then, for any university to properly function because the requirements they have are not being then funded, and when they're not funded, they are not able to move forward with some of the programs or addressing many other cost items that the university would have. Eventually, a university's going to hit the wall, and it sounds like, with the University of Manitoba—and by extension, I would imagine it can be happening to the others—that they've reached a point where they are hitting the wall because they are being seriously underfunded and that is going to compromise the quality of education and the ability to compete with other universities in Canada.

I wonder if the minister would care to make a comment on those observations.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I do want to make a comment, and the member's quite right. There was, first of all, a tuition reduction in the 2000-2001 budget, a 10 percent reduction. I do want to make the point that since 1999, government has backfilled that 10 percent reduction so that in addition to the operating dollars, we have over the years supplied \$96 million to our institutions to compensate for that reduction.

As one of my staff has just pointed out, Madam Chair, in the year '06-07, for example, we had promised initially a 5 percent increase. We went up to 5.8; the 0.8 percent could also be understood as a compensation for the tuition.

You know, when the member says that the universities got half of what they needed, I'm not quite sure what that means, because I think you could probably walk into any average family in Manitoba and say: Do you have as much money as you need? And they'd say: Oh, we've only got half of what we need.

With the greatest respect for the institutions, they could spend a lot more money than any government could possibly give them. I think they would probably spend that money well, but that's if we lived in the best of all possible worlds, and no one does.

So I return to the point that I don't quite know what the member means when she says that the institutions got half of what they needed. They are still going. The University of Manitoba, yesterday, announced in the paper unprecedented capital projects. We know about the exciting capital projects that are taking place at the University of Winnipeg. I'm sure I'll see the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) on Friday at ACC.

So there are all kinds of exciting capital projects. So we don't get the impression, when we look at a 35 percent increase in students in universities, a 33 percent increase in students in colleges, capital projects here, there and everywhere, we don't get the impression that the universities and colleges are falling down. In fact, they look like they're doing rather well.

I might add while I'm talking here, that not only do we have responsibility for funding universities and colleges and their operating dollars, and I could throw out here the new University College of the North, but we have a responsibility to students. If it weren't for students, universities and colleges don't really have much purpose. I'm sure we'll get to student aid, so maybe I should reserve it for them, but students have been extremely important, extremely well supported by this government in many innovative ways.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate for me whether or not these would be accurate numbers? In '01-02, I understand that the university requested an

operating grant of 6.8 percent and received a grant from the government of 3.6. Would that be accurate?

Ms. McGifford: It could well be. We don't have the information going back to—was that '01-02?

An Honourable Member: '01-02.

Ms. McGifford: We don't have that information here, but I think we can provide the member with that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I'll go through, then, the information I have, and if she doesn't have it here now, I would be okay with getting it at some point in the near future.

But the information I have year-over-year, and as I indicated, '01-02, the University of Manitoba requested 6.8 percent and got 3.6 percent. In '02-03, they requested 5.7 percent and got only 1.7 percent. In '03-04, they requested 5.3 percent and got 2.7 percent. In '04-05, they requested 5.1 percent and got only 1.7 percent. In '05-06, they requested 6.5 percent and got a 2.25 percent. In '06-07, they requested 8.9 percent and got 5.8 percent.

* (15:20)

So, if the minister could check her information and see if my numbers are accurate, I would appreciate that. That is what I was referencing in my last question to the minister is that the University of Manitoba has been requesting operating grant increases that have, certainly, been in some years way off the mark in terms of what they got from this government.

That is why I am indicating and have said they've only been given half of what they've needed. In many cases, it's not even half. So I think what I would assume the university has done year over year, as any budgeting mechanism that would take place in any business, would be to look at what you need and you fairly put forward what that budget should be. You don't base it on frivolity, but you base it on the needs of your business. In this case it's the business of teaching students. It seems that the university has been given far below, in many instances, what they have asked for.

Could I ask the minister—and she's saying that, for instance, in '08-09 they have been given a 5 percent commitment—where the number 5 percent would come from then? Is it just pulled out of the air? It's certainly far off from what the university is indicating they need in order to move beyond the status quo. If they are only given 5 percent, which is

well below what they're asking, then we're going to have to assume then they're not even going to be able to meet the status quo, that there will have to be some cuts of some kind made by the university.

So can I ask the minister where the 5 percent, or where her numbers have come from year after year, because they're quite far off from what the University of Manitoba has said they needed in order to properly operate.

Ms. McGifford: I just want to once again point out to the member that there's a little bit of difference between the definition of the words "need" and "request." I want to underline the point again that, as I said, you could go into any home in Manitoba and people would say this is what we would like, but that may not necessarily equate with need.

Universities, like every other institution, Madam Chair, are competing with other institutions, not just educational institutions, but public schools, all kinds of other publicly supported agencies sometimes for some scarce dollars. I don't think that they necessarily expect that all their requests will be met. I think they would like that. So would we all, but I don't think that they necessarily expect that they will be met.

I should also point out to the member that inflation rates are between 2 percent and 3 percent. The requests that she has read off—and I think they're probably right. Those requests are probably accurate. I'm sure the member got those requests from accurate information. Anyway, the inflation rates are between 2 percent and 3 percent, and the requests from the University of Manitoba, indeed for most of our public institutions, are far in advance of inflation, but those are their requests. They may not necessarily be the same as need.

Now, the member asked me about the numbers for '08-09, '07-08 and '06-07. In the budget year '06-07 we negotiated a three-year funding window option, I suppose, with the universities and the colleges. This was in response to requests from the universities and colleges who said that it was very difficult to get funding for one year only and that it would be much more compatible with their needs if they had multiyear funding so that they knew what they were getting and obviously could manage their budgets.

So, in response to that, we negotiated a then deal of 5 percent for the next three years, but it was an at least 5 percent. I point out to the member again that

in '06-07 it was 5.8 percent, and I indicated that we certainly saw the .8 as a way of compensating for the tuition freeze, which we had backfilled up to the 1999 levels. Then there was an added 1.2 percent in municipal property tax breaks.

In '07-08, we had promised at least 5 percent, but we provided the universities and colleges with 7 percent and in the forthcoming year, the last year of that multi-year funding arrangement, it's at least 5 percent. So the numbers were part of the negotiating process from the '06-07 budget year.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us if it is true that some faculties have been forced to cut back the number of labs offered in order to manage within the dollars they've been given?

Ms. McGifford: We're not aware of that. Indeed, the member may or may not know that the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, this year, increased lab fees to students, and so I'd be very surprised if they cut them back, but we're not aware of that.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it true that the University of Manitoba hasn't been able to increase its supply budget for over a decade despite inflationary costs?

Ms. McGifford: You know, this is a level of detail that we don't get into with the University of Manitoba. As the member knows, it's a self-governing body and we don't get into the details of its supply budget.

Mrs. Driedger: Is it true that a lot of the lab equipment is obsolete at the University of Manitoba?

Ms. McGifford: I am informed that some of the lab equipment needs to be updated and that was the reason given for the increases in the lab fees by the institutions. I think we're talking particularly about the University of Manitoba here, are we not? Yes.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate when the last time was that she met with the University of Manitoba to talk about their budgetary needs?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I've seen the president twice this week and I am going to see her tomorrow. We usually talk about the budget. Now, if you're talking about a formal meeting, I think we probably met in June to talk about—a post-election meeting in June. Of course, I do want to point out that the Council on Post-Secondary Education is the arm's-length appointed body, government-appointed body, and the body that usually deals with the universities. I kind of wish it was a little bit more arm's-length, their

whole operation, but the presidents do, of course, want to speak to me and they do speak to me, and they do speak to the Premier (Mr. Doer) and they do come to our caucus. We've had several presentations by the university, various universities, at our caucus. So, we do see an awful lot of them and as I say, I think I've seen the president of U of M twice this week and I'm going to see her tomorrow. In fact, I saw her twice yesterday, once today, and once tomorrow. We have very, very intimate contact.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us if maintenance dollars at the University of Manitoba come out of the operating grants?

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to tell the member that I am informed that the Council on Post-Secondary Education had a meeting on September 5 with—*[interjection]* September 25 with officials from the University of Manitoba, and I'm assuming that they presented their estimates for next year at that meeting. I haven't discussed those estimates with the council as yet. I don't know whether the University of Manitoba gets its maintenance dollars from its operating budget. Again, that's a level of detail that we just simply don't have about the institutions. I think they'd be quite insulted if we asked them that question.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell me whether or not she meets with COPSE, or representatives of COPSE?

* (15:30)

Ms. McGifford: Does the member mean by COPSE the board members or the secretariat?

Mrs. Driedger: My question would be related to, I guess: Is there a mechanism whereby COPSE, at any level, meets with the minister to relay some of the concerns that would be brought to them in terms of funding needs by the universities?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I meet with the secretariat staff quite frequently. The secretary to COPSE is not with us today. Sid Rogers is in Brandon, I believe, hearing Estimates. I meet with Sid or I see Sid on one issue or another, I would say, once a week, at least once a week. As far as the members of the council are concerned, I go to the council maybe three times a year and speak with the members, but I don't meet the actual council members any more than that.

I think it would be fair to say that with the secretary and with our two staff people who are here

today, we have an ongoing dialogue on university and college matters.

Mrs. Driedger: Would some of these concerns or questions that I've raised, seeing as they are significant concerns with the University of Manitoba, would they have been raised with COPSE and therefore relayed then to the minister or does that level of information not get to the minister?

Ms. McGifford: Madam Chair, I think I mentioned earlier to the member that after the Council on Post-Secondary Education has completed all its Estimates and processed them and met with the council members and devised their recommendations and proposals and elucidated their ideas, et cetera, then the council has an appointment with me and comes and discusses the concerns that have come up, the budget, et cetera.

But, again, I do hear of some of these things on an ongoing basis as well.

Mrs. Driedger: We have heard over time that the class sizes have grown substantially at the University of Manitoba. It's not just because there's been an increased number of students. While there has been an increased number of students, there haven't been enough professors to break the class sizes up into more reasonable sizes. So what we've seen are growing class sizes. I would like to ask the minister what discussion and concerns she has heard related to, or around, this area of large class sizes and how it might be affecting the quality of education.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I know that there is discussion across the country about large class sizes. I know that when I was a student, and that was many years ago, many of our first year classes were extremely large, and I'm sure that many of them remain so. I know that with increased enrolment, institutions have used more teaching assistants to deal with their undergraduate courses, presumably at the early levels.

It is strange that I haven't heard. I can say with all honesty that I haven't heard about escalating sizes of classes, that that's been a problem. I haven't had a student call my office about this. We do get a lot of students who call the office about various concerns, often student aid, but I haven't heard that this is a problem. I haven't, so, I'm sorry, that's what I can say about it today.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate why we are seeing more classes taught by sessionals or grad students, and not by professors? Is it because we just

don't have enough professors to teach the increased number of students?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I think it's good news. It's because enrolment has increased so dramatically, but I do want to point out to the member, as a former graduate student who taught many classes of first year English, I think I was a pretty good teacher. I think a lot of those young teaching assistants do a really good job, and I wouldn't assume that because they're not tenure-track professors they're not doing a heck of a good job. I think that they are.

You know, in institutions like the University of Alberta, Calgary, for example, they've actually moved further and further away from any kind of undergraduate education. Most of the undergraduate, or a good part of the undergraduate education there is at Ian MacEwan school, and I'm sure there are a lot of graduate students working there. Graduate students teaching is not only good for graduate students, and I would argue very good for students because the graduate students are really in contact with what's exciting about, well, in my case, literature, and they also make some money which helps them with their grad studies. So, you know, there's a positive way of viewing it.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm told that because of a lack of funding, caretakers are forced to clean areas that are twice the size of the industry norm. So I have two questions about that.

Does the minister find that acceptable, and are these caretakers unionized?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I have to say I have no information about caretakers. Are we on University of Manitoba again? I have no information about the caretakers at the University of Manitoba and what their cleaning areas are. I don't know whether that has been brought up at the Council as an area of concern. My staff is saying, no; it hasn't been. I don't know whether the caretakers are unionized. I think they probably are. I'm getting a nod of agreement from my staffperson here. I think they probably are unionized. I don't deal with the caretakers union, I deal with the president of the university, and sometimes with her immediate vice-presidents, but those are the people I talk to. They decide what they're going to speak to me about, and they haven't brought up caretakers.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I, too, talk to the president on a fairly regular basis at Brandon University, and I'd like to bring Brandon University

into this particular discussion. I'd like to thank my colleague from Charleswood in allowing me the opportunity, and thank the minister in advance. Unfortunately, I will not be at ACC on Friday. I have Estimates myself, and I have to be here. I would much prefer to be with you, Minister, at ACC. It's very exciting.

An Honourable Member: I'll eat a chocolate for you.

Mr. Borotsik: Actually, I've got my wife going, so I think she's probably already got dibs on the chocolate, Minister, but maybe we can get another one for both of you. It's a very exciting opportunity that we have with ACC, and I'll discuss that at some time.

Brandon is very fortunate. We're very pleased to be able to call Brandon University and the Assiniboine Community College home. I recognize and, certainly, those institutions recognize, that education is going to be our road map to the future, and I don't think anybody in this room would disagree with that comment. It's something that's extremely important. In order to maintain that road map for the future, however, we have to make sure that the proper funding, the proper finances are in place so that they can provide the necessary education, a world-class education, so that the students who are enrolled in those two institutions when they enter the work force have the proper education and the proper training. That's why I'm here today.

* (15:40)

We did talk, and I heard my colleague from Charleswood talk, with respect to the budgetary process and certainly the requirements. I also heard the minister say that there's a differentiation between need and want. All of the information that I've received from my president and certainly the administration of Brandon University is the budget that they're putting forward right now—and yes, in fact, COPSE is in Brandon today. I've just confirmed that.

Everything they put forward in their budget requirements is need. They're not necessarily wants. If it was wants, it would be substantially higher than what the 2008-2009 projections are going to be. Right now, as we sit here, the request from Brandon University will be for an additional \$2.6 million, which equates to approximately a 10 percent increase of what the funding is currently being provided for

by the provincial government. The minister has indicated that, in this particular budget year, the government is looking at a 5 percent increase over last year. However, the need and not the want is 10 percent. Does the minister see only 5 percent going to the university? Because, if she does, I'm told that the ongoing operating and the ongoing needs currently will not be met under the current 5 percent requirement.

Ms. McGifford: I'm sorry that the member won't be there on Friday. I think it will be quite a special event, and I'm looking forward to being there myself.

I actually didn't use the word "want." I used the word "request," and perhaps they're slightly different. I'd like to remind the member that we're discussing the budget for '07-08 and not '08-09 and that I said at least 5 percent. But, further than that, of course, I can't speculate on the '08-09 budget. The budget will be read by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on a date to be determined, and I know the member will be there listening intently to see what emerges in the budget, but I can't speculate. Of course, we in government are at the very beginnings of the budgetary process ourselves, so, even if I had information—I don't have any information to speculate on, so, other than to give the member the assurance that our commitment was at least 5 percent.

Mr. Borotsik: Unfortunately, the backfilling of the funding that was put into place for the 2007-2008 budget year was not sufficient for Brandon University. They are falling dramatically behind in their operating costs. They have a capital grant that comes from the Province on an annual basis for repairs, equipment and maintenance which was alluded to by my colleague with respect to science equipment, lab equipment. That capital grant for those purposes has been around \$250,000 and has been at that level, I'm told by my president, for the past 20 to 25 years. There's not been any increase. However, Madam Chair, the equipment requirements are substantially changed and substantially higher right now.

The reason why there are additional levies and fees being put into place right now is because the science equipment that's there currently, particularly the science labs are being affected, is not keeping up to the standards, and when the students graduate and leave Brandon University as well as the University of Manitoba, they're not dealing with the same types of training that's required going into industry.

The \$250,000 per year over 25 years—and we're not talking about going forward; we're talking about going back now—does the minister feel that that's adequate, that there shouldn't and couldn't be some increases, even in this budget year, to try to alleviate some of the deficiencies that they have in the science equipment?

Ms. McGifford: One of the reasons for the fees was, as the member says, to augment lab equipment, et cetera, and I don't see anything wrong with students contributing towards their education and the consumables that they use in labs.

Madam Chair, I'm not talking about totally paying for them, but I don't see anything wrong with a modest contribution. The increases in lab fees have been very modest; I think they were \$30 a course. So I don't think that's wrong. I think that a consumable in a science lab, it's something that's necessary for that lab, just as a textbook might be for another kind of course, so I don't have a problem with that.

Having said that, I think that we are concerned about the capital budget. We are preparing a capital plan, and that's ongoing.

Mr. Borotsik: I congratulate you for that because it's certainly necessary in order to maintain our education standards.

Speaking of that, Madam Chair, there is in my opinion no correlation between a tuition freeze and enrolment into a university. I use as a statistic Saskatchewan universities right now. Saskatchewan tuitions currently are 55 percent higher than they are in Manitoba, in Brandon University particularly; 55 percent, a full 55 percent higher in the University of Regina as opposed to the university at Brandon.

Madam Chair, the enrolment in the University of Saskatchewan is booming is the term that I was given just a few hours ago, yet the enrolment in Brandon University will be down 0.6 percent, 0.6. There was anticipated at one point in time that it was going to be down 6 percent; it's now 0.6 percent. But if you look at the two, a higher tuition fee and a very, very large enrolment as opposed to a frozen tuition and a decline in enrolment.

Does the minister see a correlation in those areas as opposed to what the government is seeing as a correlation with higher enrolments and lower tuition fees? It just doesn't work.

Ms. McGifford: Again, as I said, the enrolment in Manitoba universities has gone up by 35 percent.

Now the member is quite right that it is starting to level.

Now the member is saying he doesn't believe—I understand him to be saying he doesn't think there's a correlation between reduced tuition and that increase. Further, the member says that as he looks across the country and has cited, particularly Saskatchewan, there have been increases in enrolment, too. That's correct, but Manitoba has had the largest increases in enrolment in the country. They are in excess. I've just asked staff to look for the comparative figures. If we don't find them today, I can find them and send them—we can locate them and send them along to the member. But the increases in college and universities in Manitoba have been in excess of those in other areas.

Mr. Borotsik: I didn't do that one.

I'd like to shift gears a little bit, and, certainly, my last question with respect to this topic. The tuition freeze, needless to say, is a policy decision of this government. They've implemented it and they continue with it. Is there within your department and within your own purview at this point in time a suggestion that you would look at or at least review the impacts of that tuition freeze and how it's affecting, either on a positive basis or a negative basis, all universities within the province of Manitoba?

Ms. McGifford: Well, we, of course, examine the tuition freeze and its impact every year. You have noted, the member has noted, that enrolment is beginning to level. So I think that's an important consideration. I don't know if the member is aware that a couple of weeks ago the Premier (Mr. Doer) spoke on CJOB and was very clear that the tuition freeze is considered from year to year, and I think the Premier has always been very clear in his public pronouncements that the tuition freeze is not here forever.

The member may not know that there have been great pressures from various student organizations for us to legislate the tuition freeze. Because of the Premier's statements, of course, we've always resisted that, but I think I'll just leave it there.

* (15:50)

Mr. Borotsik: We all know that the ultimate end goal is to have the best education for students going into our post-secondary institutions; that's the goal, the best education, whether it be the best equipment, whether it be the best professors, whether it be the

best infrastructure that they have. That's the goal. How it's achieved financially, whether it be from backfilling of the government coffers or whether it be from tuitions, I think, is a decision that you have to make.

I'd like to switch gears a little bit with respect to capital. The minister had indicated earlier—and she was quite right. I read the article. There was some \$66-million worth of capital projects that are now being undertaken in the University of Manitoba.

We have, in Brandon University, a capital project that has been accepted and, certainly, has been approved by the provincial government and that's the Wellness Centre at Brandon University. Currently, there is, I believe, \$2 million which has already been agreed to and another \$1.6-million additional funding that was a tie-in with the YMCA and Brandon University.

As I am sure the minister is aware, the YMCA and Brandon University have broken off their potential partnership. I guess my question now is—the \$1.6 million is still going towards the original agreement of the Wellness Centre, and that whole total capital project is in excess of \$7 million, so there's probably going to be requirements of other funding. Is there a plan for the government to be at the table for all of that funding for the Wellness Centre?

Ms. McGifford: Well, as the member has observed, the Council on Post-Secondary Education is in Brandon today, and I'm sure that President Visentin will be speaking about that. Other than saying that, it's very preliminary to speculate on anything else.

Mr. Borotsik: I would have hoped that there was some speculation. It would be nice to have the commitments made.

Ms. McGifford: I'm a great rule follower and I'm a member of Treasury Board, so I would never consider speaking publicly about monetary promises without having checked with my colleagues in Treasury Board and with the Premier (Mr. Doer). Speculation is a lot of fun, but it's not a very safe thing for a politician.

Mr. Borotsik: One other area, and we all know there are infrastructure deficiencies in a number of areas, whether it be in health care, whether it be in infrastructure, whether it be bridges and roads. We recognize that there is also a deficiency in the deferred maintenance programs of universities. I

can't speak to the University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg, but I can speak to Brandon.

Currently, the deferred maintenance or the deficiencies that are required to be addressed in the not-too-distant future is identified in the capital of about \$17 million. We already talked that there's only about \$250,000 on capital for equipment that goes forward. That's a substantial shortfall of the requirements. Is there a long-term plan, not only for Brandon University but for other universities which will also be falling into this same category of deferred maintenance. Is there a long-term capital plan to help fund those required infrastructures within the universities?

Ms. McGifford: I'm informed that the council has met or is in the process of meeting—has met with all the institutions on matters of deferred maintenance and capital projects and is in the midst of processing that information and I'm sure will then speak to me about them. So it isn't in stone or anything like that, but it is something that's on the radar screen. There is an ongoing process. We're concerned.

Mr. Borotsik: Madam Chair, Assiniboine Community College, without question, can and should be a Crown jewel in the educational institutions in Manitoba. Without question, the community colleges themselves currently are, in my opinion, very necessary institutions to educate the individuals coming out of our high schools.

Brandon ACC, certainly, has an opportunity and I know that the decision to relocate ACC is a decision that's already completed. It's a moot point. It's happening. I'm happy to say that the first opening of the Culinary Arts, which is going to be state-of-the-art, is state-of-the-art, certainly, not only within Manitoba, within the province, within the country. I'm very pleased.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I guess my concern, Madam Minister, is I don't see a full plan as to the relocation of the institution from where it's located now to the new BMHC site. I can see some real potential, and I'm very, very supportive, supportive to the point where, if you go forward with the requirement of additional capital, I can assure you that I would be the first one applauding it. My fear is that there may well be a ratcheting back of that relocation because I don't know the full plan, and not just I, I don't think the full plan has been formulated at this time.

My question to you: Do you give assurances that the full relocation of ACC will take place from its current location to the new location?

Ms. McGifford: Well, thank you, I'm very pleased to know that the member supports the move to the hill, and I know that the member knows it was a long, complicated process. We're very pleased that it is under way, and the culinary arts opening on Friday, we've already alluded to. It's certainly wonderful that this fine program—the students were in the Leg one day and made wonderful chocolate, and the president, Joel Ward, did a kind of demonstration of his dreams for the culinary arts centre. But, anyway, the food was great; the students were wonderful.

I understand that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is in the process of working on a full site plan and that the culinary arts is phase 1, and that phase 2 is the trades building, and that phase 3 is still being developed, but it is almost certainly to be the academic wing of ACC. So, that sounds like a complete move.

Mr. Borotsik: That sounds like a complete move, and I congratulate you. Again, it should well be a complete move. I guess the time line is an issue here, too. Well, there are two issues.

One is budgetary, and we recognize that there are always constraints on budget. The total budget has changed quite dramatically. It's changed quite a number of times, actually, from its initial inception of the move to where it's at now and where it could be in the future. My concern is twofold. One was budgetary. Knowing full well that the community doesn't want to have to be short-shrift, we don't want to have half of a location in one place and half of a location in the other place. So that's one of the major concerns, and certainly phase 1, phase 2, phase 3 are a part of that, and the assurances, hopefully, are given that that complete move will be made.

The second one is a time line. There's no plan in place; therefore, there's no time line in place. Is this going to be a three-year project, a five-year project, or a seven-year project? Can the minister allude to that?

Ms. McGifford: Well, government people are involved in some very sensitive dealings at this time. So, it probably is not prudent to speak publicly about some of the work that's being done. The member has got our assurance that there is a phase plan, and we hope that we'll be able to provide a lot more detail in

the very near future. But I'm sure the member doesn't want to put the future of the institution at risk. So I'm sure the member will understand what I'm saying.

* (16:00)

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Madam Minister, and that's absolutely correct. I would never want to put that institution at risk, I can assure you. It's too very vital and too very important, not only for the community, but for the students themselves. I do, as I take it from your comment, have assurances that the relocation will be complete, there will be a complete relocation from one site to another site, and with those assurances I am pleased.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I'll pass it back to my colleague from Charleswood.

Ms. McGifford: I just wanted to share one other piece of information with the member, and that is that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is leading the negotiations for the development of ACC, just so the member knows.

Mrs. Driedger: Related to ACC, can the minister tell us why they moved to the hill and the changes within ACC are done in such a piecemeal fashion? That just seems really, I hate to use the word "loosey-goosey," but it just seems a strange way to go about carrying through such a significant project to see it done in such a piecemeal process. What's the reason behind that?

Ms. McGifford: Well, largely because the development of the project is predicated on dealings with private-sector developers, but, secondly, I just want to point out to the member that Rome wasn't built in a day. To take everybody from one site to the other overnight would really be extraordinarily difficult.

I think the phased-in approach is one that's working for the institution. It will continue to work for the institution, and I'm just very pleased that it's happening.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to say to the minister, I don't have a problem with the phased-in approach. Considering all the nuances of what has to happen in here; a phased-in approach makes total sense to me. I don't have a problem with that. What I am questioning more is the lack of a long-term strategic plan that is obvious to everybody that would have more of the time frames on it, the vision, the cost, for example, that would paint a bigger picture so that everybody would have a better idea.

This just seems like such a piecemeal way to go about something. A long-term strategy could still show a phased-in approach, which I agree with the minister that does make most sense because we're already dealing with an operating facility and it's not that easy to move things, but it just does seem strange to me that we are seeing this move ahead in a piecemeal approach, which is going to increase the frustrations of a great deal for people who are used to working, probably, with longer-term visions and plans so that you have a road map in front of you so that you know where you're going. That's why I just wonder why there isn't such a tool in place, a strategic plan in place, which would seem to me just a good way of managing this project.

Ms. McGifford: Well, the member has used the word "piecemeal," and then has also said that she agrees that a phased-in plan is a good idea, so I think she may possibly be contradicting herself. I do point out that MIT is working on a long-term development plan for the site.

I did mention that to the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and the next step is trades. Trades are extremely important because I'm sure the member has heard of the challenges in the skilled labour market, and so they are our top priority. We've got the Culinary Arts centre opening on Friday. The shovel is in the ground for the Culinary Arts theatre. Trades are next. MIT is working on a long-term development plan for the site. I don't think it's piecemeal. I think it's careful. I think it considers the fact that we're working with taxpayers' money and we have to move dexterously.

Mrs. Driedger: I don't disagree with what the minister is saying. It's just for a major project like this, you know, if you were looking at any major project, you don't often see something move ahead in pieces without people knowing what is going on. If an architect was going to design a building, for instance, they don't just design a part of a building and then not have the full design in front of them as they are moving ahead. That's why with something so broad as this, it just seems surprising not to have a full picture of what is going to be happening there, and then you roll it out. That's part of your strategic plan. To say, this is the final picture and then, in a strategic plan, this is how we're going to get there, this is what each phase is going to cost, this is who's going to be involved and it doesn't leave anything in the dark. This one leaves a lot in the dark, and all I'm saying is that it just seems a funny way to go about such a significant, major project for post-secondary

education in Manitoba. To be doing it without a solid, strategic long-term plan that is established and in front of us, that would outline what's going to be done and when it's going to be done.

Ms. McGifford: Well, I thank the member for her comments. As I have told her, Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is working on a full-site development plan.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate what the plan is for the 700 acres surrounding that campus?

Ms. McGifford: Again, that would be deferred to other departments. I suggest Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation or/and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mrs. Driedger: I will go back to my line of questioning then which does fit in with some of the comments about deferred maintenance that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) has been asking questions about. Prior to asking about the deferred maintenance, there is just one item I would like to ask the minister about, and it is the situation that is occurring right now with UMFA. I understand that on September 28, UMFA voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike vote and that voting is taking place, I believe, tomorrow and Thursday. I'd like to ask the minister what her understanding of the issues is that is causing this strike vote.

Ms. McGifford: I think that the member knows it would be unwise for me to comment on labour issues at the University of Manitoba, especially at this time when negotiations are taking place. I think it would be regarded as my interfering, and I certainly don't want to appear to do that or to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us what preparation is in place in the event of a strike?

Ms. McGifford: That would be the responsibility of the administration at the University of Manitoba.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister not in any discussions with anybody in order to ask the question: What kind of preparations are in place in the event of a strike? I would just think that, considering the ramifications of a strike, she and her department would be very concerned about what is going on and have some kind of a strategy in place to address this. Can the minister indicate whether or not she's in any discussions with anybody about, you know, what's going to happen and what preparations are in place? Is she asking those kinds of questions?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I reiterate that the relationship with UMFA is with the administration, that it would be untoward and irregular for me to comment on labour negotiations, and that managing the university in the event of a strike is the responsibility of the administration.

I do want to bring to the member's attention that the administration at the university, quite rightly, guards their academic freedom and their institutional freedom, regard it very highly. They don't like government people telling them how to run their university and certainly would not welcome my interference. I have no willingness to interfere at all. I have great confidence in the administration. I'm sure that they will handle the situation well, and I think what we should do is keep out of it, keep our fingers crossed and hope there's not a strike.

Mrs. Driedger: Lots of times, strikes happen because the two sides can't come together and agree on salary increases or benefit increases, and so it's not unusual to expect that that's probably part of this. I have to wonder if part of the positioning of the university is going to be related to the lack of funding by this government, that the university is not in a position to offer a better salary or better benefits because this government has not funded them according to the needs of the universities.

When we see a tuition freeze put in place, it's denying the university needed dollars. When we see operating grants that are given to the university well below what they are requesting and need, not just want. But I would agree with the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), I don't think they're frivolous budgets put forward by the universities. I think they're putting forward what they actually need. So it almost seems that we could be heading for a strike because the university doesn't have enough money available because of long-time government underfunding over about the last eight years to probably put forward an offer that is going to satisfy the members of UMFA.

You know, it does raise some concerns for all of us that are parents that have children at university. Also, Mr. Acting Chair, I think because we want to keep our universities very, very competitive, and I'm sure there are lots of challenges out there, and because we know that there's probably a significant number of retirements coming in universities over the next several years, we want to ensure that we can keep the talented teachers and professors that we have.

It raises some serious concerns for me that if we have seen eight years of underfunding by this government of the university, that it's left them in a perilous position right now in terms of their ability to negotiate in this situation with UMFA. You know, I'm concerned that because of all of that, it all rolls into a strike in the near future, and I understand that not only is UMFA in a strike position, but CAW is also in a strike position. Would the minister indicate if that is correct?

Ms. McGifford: Well, you know, Mr. Acting Chairperson, the time when the universities in this province really suffered were in the '90s when the increases read something like a thermometer in March: minus 2, 1, minus 1, zero. When I became the Minister of Advanced Education and took a look at the history of funding in the '90s, I was appalled. So any difficulties that universities and colleges have now with their operating dollars, is historical. It's a direct gift from the former government and our government has been working overtime to try and compensate.

Now, the member has a question about a strike. I believe the CAW did take a strike vote. I also want to point out to the member, who asked if the operating increase was enough to fund a faculty increase, the operating increase was 7 percent. I don't think the faculty are asking for 7 percent. I don't know, but all I know is the operating funding was an increase of 7 percent, which is pretty well unprecedented in the history of this province.

Oh, pardon me. The increase at U of M, because there was some waiting based on enrolment was 7.6 percent. That's a pretty good increase.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that there is a serious deferred maintenance problem at the University of Manitoba, and, because of the inability of the University of Manitoba to properly address their maintenance needs, I understand that there is a serious mould problem in many of the buildings at the University of Manitoba. I'd like to ask the minister what she's doing to address that issue, and if there has been some extra dollars flowing to the university as part of a mould abatement program.

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Acting Chair, we've been providing \$3 million annually to the University of Manitoba to deal with its highest priorities. I do want to point out that the University of Manitoba has other programs. They have a \$150-million loan against their \$237 million in capital, which they raised under the leadership of Emőke Szathmáry and much of this

money has been used for programs like mould abatement.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that asbestos is also a serious problem at the University of Manitoba, and I'd like to ask the minister: If there is an asbestos abatement program, how much money is being spent on it, and how much more is needed to eradicate the problem?

Ms. McGifford: Well, Mr. Acting Chair, I understand that we have provided \$16.1 million to deal with the following items: a chiller system at Fort Gary campus, a chiller system at Bannatyne campus, roof replacement, disability access, animal facilities, asbestos abatement, St. John's building envelope, electrical distribution upgrades, building basement upgrades, fire safety upgrades, storm outfalls, sewer system upgrades. So that's the move government has taken.

I think I told the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) when he was here that people from the Council on Post-Secondary Education have met with all the institutions. They have heard information both about delayed maintenance, and also about capital plans and they are working with this information. Stay tuned.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Driedger: In the list that the minister read off, I would take from that that there is money going into some of these problem areas. However, based on discussions with the university, it sounds like there is still a substantial need in all of those areas to deal with mould, asbestos. She did indicate fire safety, and I understand that there is some need still continuing to reach fire-safety code in a number of the buildings. She brings up sewer upgrades as well. So I appreciate that some dollars are obviously flowing into this. She has indicated that \$3 million annually is going to deal with the highest priorities. My guess is that \$3 million isn't even touching the overall need in just some of these critical areas.

You know, as a mother that has a son at this university and he's got a lot of friends at the university too, I have to say that there is some concern for me around the area of mould, asbestos, that maybe some buildings aren't up to fire code. That bothers me, never mind as a politician; it bothers me as a politician, but it also, certainly, does bother me as a mother. It sounds like we've had eight years where this has become a growing problem where I think now and even according to some of the

comments of the university that it's going to be very hard to catch up with some of the deferred maintenance problems.

Is the minister aware that of the hundred buildings at the University of Manitoba, 64 percent are in poor or critical condition?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I am aware that government gave the University of Manitoba \$50 million in capital. The university will use that money wisely, I'm sure, and will identify its priorities and work with them.

Mrs. Driedger: Is that \$50 million in capital for new buildings or for maintenance?

Ms. McGifford: Of course, the \$50 million, its expenditure was decided by the university. But the items that it used, the items that I have listed as part of that \$50 million were the engineering and information technology complex. There was renovation and construction of the complex. That was \$15 million. Medical rehabilitation, there were upgrades and renovations to teaching facilities, including cardio-respiratory lab, other kinds of labs. I know the member's interested in labs. That was over \$2 million. There was \$600,000 in dentistry for a state-of-the-art simulation lab. Teaching and technology upgrades, installation of up-to-date technology equipment for classroom theatres, teaching research labs—again labs—that was about \$5.4 million.

The Russell Building, there were structural upgrades, expansion of the woodwork shop, upgrades to technology and furnishing. That was \$2.75 million. Then pharmacy: redevelopment, expansion, \$7 million. Finally, deferred maintenance projects, roofs, building envelope, windows, basements, fume hoods, galvanized pipes, high voltage distribution, disability access, HVAC upgrades, including asbestos removal and a chiller system, and that was 17.2.

So some of the 50 million, 17.256 of it, was used for deferred maintenance and the rest was used for other projects, the ones that I've mentioned to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us if this was in the last budget year or is it in the current budget year?

Ms. McGifford: This \$50 million has been flowed from 2001-02 to '06-07 [*interjection*]

No. I'm ready to hear from the Member for Charleswood.

Mrs. Driedger: I don't believe the minister answered the question, the year.

Ms. McGifford: I believe I said it was in the last four years. Sorry if I didn't speak into the microphone properly.

Mrs. Driedger: Okay. Just for clarification then, that 50 million in capital was over a four-year period and, therefore, the 17.2 million in deferred maintenance was spread throughout four years. Am I understanding that correctly?

Ms. McGifford: That's correct, but in addition there was the \$16.1 million in other expenditures that I mentioned to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the 16.1 in a specific budget year?

Ms. McGifford: I do also want to add that, in addition to the 50 and the 16, there was \$30 million in equipment and renovations which includes the \$3 million annually; so that from 2000-2001 to 2007-2008, there has been \$97 million in capital funding provided to the University of Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: Back to the other question, 16.1 million that the minister referenced. For which budget year was the 16.1?

Ms. McGifford: It flowed over a number of years, those years from 2000-2001 to 2007-2008. The total of the 50 million, the 16 million and the 30.9 million is 97 million over that number of years, so from 2000-2001 to 2007-2008.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to thank the minister for that. Back to an earlier question about 64 percent of the 100 buildings at the University of Manitoba are in poor or critical condition. I'm sure the minister must have been given that information at some point by somebody, because it's a major concern at the University of Manitoba. Was the minister informed about that? When was she informed about it?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I actually do not recall hearing that number, but I can tell the member that I have spoken, possibly within the last six weeks, two months, to officials from the University of Manitoba, including the president, about project domino.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us what project domino, if that's it, what it is?

Ms. McGifford: Well, this might be information that you'd best get from the University of Manitoba, but

as I understand it, it's a series of developments at the University of Manitoba, and there are several steps. It's called domino because as one building is done, it would be piecemeal in the member's view I suppose, but as one building is done, then it necessitates a move and another building is being attended to.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the minister concerned to hear that 64 percent of the 100 buildings at our largest university are in poor or critical condition?

Ms. McGifford: As I said, I haven't heard that figure.

Mrs. Driedger: But, if the minister is listening to me now she would hear it, that 64 percent are in poor or critical condition. Does she have some concern hearing that?

* (16:30)

Ms. McGifford: Well, it's hearsay as far as I know. I haven't heard it from the president.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, we have a tuition freeze put in place under this government. The government is not providing operating grants to the degree that the university is saying they need. So what we have now is our kids forced to sit in buildings filled with mould and asbestos, and I add all of this together and feel that this government has allowed this to build the way it's building because of a lack of funding to the university to meet some of these challenges that are going on there. They're being forced to defer some very, very critical projects because they are not getting the funding that they need by this government. It appears that it's been going on now, and will soon be hitting a decade of serious underfunding by the government that is now putting a lot of buildings at risk—poor, critical condition for 64 percent of 100 buildings. I understand that the University of Manitoba is the oldest university in western Manitoba. So knowing that, we can assume, it being the oldest university, that there are going to be a lot of older buildings. If there is inadequate funding flowing to the university, we could, certainly, see that they're going to run into trouble at some point, and they are having to defer some very serious projects.

One of the other projects that would concern me, too, and that is related to the sewage spills that would occur in that area from the university into the river because they have not been able to address the maintenance of their sewage system. So could the minister, around that area, tell me what she knows in terms of the frequency of sewage spills from the

University of Manitoba into the river? What is she aware of about that?

Ms. McGifford: Well, you know, when the time that the university really suffered was during the weather forecast budgeting of the 1990s. I'm just really surprised that a member who is part of a party that delivered not increases, but decreases through many of its years can actually say to me at this table today that 7 percent is inadequate. I find that really, really startling because it's about three times more than the former government ever gave to the University of Manitoba. So I do want to make the point that the generosity and education conscientiousness of this government as opposed to the former government is like comparing night and day.

However, having made that point, I do want to point out to the member that under the \$16-million envelope that I indicated to her earlier, there is money for storm outfalls and sewer-system upgrades. I think the member should be really careful about the kind of information she puts on the record about sewer spills. There was no sewer spill at the University of Manitoba, but, if the member wants details, she might speak directly with members from the University of Manitoba.

My understanding is that when the Engineering Building was redone, there was an irregular plumbing connection and that it was the fault of the contractor, and it was because of a pipe that was supposed to go one way and not the other. I don't have the details in my head because I'm not a plumber, but it was nothing to do with a lack of capital or anything. In fact, we very generously supported the engineering complex with \$15 million—pretty good, \$15 million. It was nothing to do with money; it was to do with a mistake made in the construction of the building. I understand that that mistake was identified; it was remedied. I know the Minister of Conservation had some concerns but it was a one-time affair or perhaps twice in August, not August of this year, either last year or the year before, so that there are no ongoing irregularities with sewers spilling water anywhere. I would advise the member to be very careful what she puts on the record because I don't think it's fair to the university.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the minister for clarifying that issue. The minister did refer back to the '90s and I'm sure she's well aware of what happened with the federal government cuts to every province in this country. I'm sure she's aware that within probably a four-, five-year span, almost a billion dollars was

kept from Manitoba, a unilateral move by the federal government with no consultation with the provinces, and what we saw was almost a billion dollars kept out of Manitoba.

Yes, there were challenges in the '90s; there's no doubt about it and a lot of areas suffered. Manitoba had to make do without that revenue but Manitoba also was affected by a recession in the '90s, too. Things that happened in the '90s have not affected this government. This government is getting federal dollars that have been unprecedented in terms of flow of government money. It is also one of the most reliant governments in the country on federal transfer payments. In fact, there's only, I think, one other Maritime province perhaps in there with Manitoba that is receiving so much federal government money.

When we see this government so reliant and taking all of this federal money and then also having the advantage of all of the taxes coming in—that would have been like a gift from heaven in the '90s, and I think what the government of the day in the '90s did was did their best with a bad situation. And were tough decisions made? You bet there were. Did it hurt along the way? Yes, it hurt along the way.

So there's far less excuse for this government to be underfunding education, post-secondary education, with the kind of dollars that they have coming in which the government of the '90s would have loved to have seen. So that's why seeing some of these huge deferred maintenance problems right now that the university is even labelling as urgent is pretty significant, considering the amount of dollars that is coming to the province. So when we see the huge flow of dollars here that this government has to work with and we hear that 64 percent of their buildings are in poor or in critical condition, this government has had almost a decade and this is happening under their watch. It is happening, you know, eight, nine years of them being in government, and this is not something that they can turn around and blame anybody for because this is now eight years of underfunding by this government.

I don't know whether or not the minister is even aware then that there is \$166 million in deferred maintenance of urgent capital projects at the University of Manitoba, and it's growing every year. So, when I look at the amount of money that the minister has said that has gone in capital to the university over the last six, seven years of \$97 million spread over that period of time, maybe we can see why there is a growing urgent problem in

capital projects at the University of Manitoba because, you know—of that underfunding, they're seeing \$166 million in deferred maintenance.

* (16:40)

We're not just talking about some simple issues. We are talking about fire safety, mould, asbestos, sewage, and it just makes one wonder how much has the tuition freeze contributed to some of this problem, but not just a tuition freeze. I mean this government could have backfilled all of that tuition freeze. Saskatchewan, I understand, did. When Saskatchewan brought in the tuition freeze they backfilled it all with operating grants. This government has not done that. So, what it's done is basically left the universities unable to meet some of their problems to the point now, it looks like we've got a huge maintenance problem. We've got universities now talking about having to cut programs, having to cut back on perhaps, professors. We've got a strike that could be occurring because perhaps, they're not going to be able to get the kind of, the university is not going to have the ability to, you know, they don't have the money to make the kind of offers that would keep Manitoba competitive.

In the end, while the tuition freeze may have sounded like a good thing, it would have been good if the government had backfilled all of that so that we wouldn't end up now with the kind of situation where we've got a problem at our universities. Whether this is becoming scandalous, I don't know, but it sounds like what we've got is a very, very, serious, growing problem.

I guess I'd like to ask the minister, who's been in that job for quite a long time, how could she allow this to happen under her watch?

Ms. McGifford: I noticed a lot of meanderings, a lot of misinformation was put on the record and I want to make the point, once again, that since we came into government there has been an increase of 52 percent in funding to universities and colleges, much more generous than anything in the '90s.

I know the member made the point about the cut to federal grants in 1994-95, but actually the dismal levels of funding pre-dated the Liberal government's decision to deliver less money to the provinces. I know that the member also talked about the generosity of the current federal government. Indeed, the request for the restoration of transfer funds was \$2.2 billion and what we've received is \$8 million

not \$2.2 billion so, it strikes me as something less than generous.

You know, I hear the member talking about disasters befalling the education system and particularly, capital, particularly, infrastructure in Manitoba, but I have already spoken about the \$96 million that went to the University of Manitoba. I know that at University of Winnipeg we gave them, in the past, a \$14 million grant. Then there was a decision to fund the school for the environment; I believe that was \$10 million. Then there was a commitment to provide matching funds to the equivalent, to the tune of \$15 million, so that there was a total grant of \$25 million, or there will be, monies to the University of Winnipeg.

The current government built the Princess Street facility. That was, I believe, \$34 million. We have a commitment to the HETTC centre, the Heavy Equipment Transportation training centre. That's \$15.1 million. Then there's ACC: the first phase is \$5.9; the next, phase 2, which the member didn't like very well, is \$18 million. We have a commitment at University College of the North. We have provided money to deal with mould and asbestos, but we've also promised infrastructure monies at University College of the North totalling \$50 million.

Mr. Acting Chair, this seems to me to be a government that is concerned about education, is concerned about sound facilities, has put millions of dollars into infrastructure, into post-secondary education infrastructure, and I'm very proud of our record, very proud of our record. I don't think one building was put up during that dismal, dark age known as the '90s. So I stand on our record. I'm proud of it. I think it's pretty good.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would like to ask—as the minister is quite aware, I'm very passionate about education; that's coming from a school board background and that's what inspired me to run for MLA.

The situation, though, Mr. Acting Chair, is that costs do go up and especially for rural students. Relocation, second residency, and accommodations and living allowances add substantively to the cost of education. There was an effort made to afford rural students different programs through satellite campuses of Red River College and the Assiniboine Community College.

The situation, though, under the satellite campuses is a cost-recovery premise, which really, truly discriminates. Even though the students are saving by staying at home and are in close proximity to the supports that make it less costly for them to go to school, it still is a very great disincentive when you are looking at—I will take an early childhood educator's situation that we are facing in Portage la Prairie, where effectively if you were in a Red River classroom, your tuition would be in around \$1,700. If you're taking that same programming in Portage la Prairie, 60 miles down the road, you're looking at nearly \$6,000. It's something that really needs addressing by this government.

We've got to look at Manitobans, regardless of whether they are living here in Winnipeg or they've living in Portage la Prairie or Winkler, Steinbach, where other Red River satellite campuses are located. We've got to be equitable, and I will correct the record in saying that it is \$6,150 for a second year early childhood educator's tuition through Red River College. This is something that is in stark contrast to \$1,500 if that same student was taking that same curriculum here in Winnipeg.

This has to be addressed, and I know the minister is aware because the minister did respond to the query by the second year class in Portage la Prairie. And you, Madam Minister, stated that you would be consulting with the council and getting back to them. But months have now entered into the timetable here, and the students themselves are really, really concerned as to how they're going to afford to continue to attend the classes. But this is only one example, and I believe it's incumbent upon the minister not to penalize those Manitobans that want to pursue a post-secondary education in the rural of Manitoba.

*(16:50)

Ms. McGifford: Well, thank you. Perhaps the member read the same article that I read yesterday that was in the Steinbach *Carillon* dealing with this matter. The member may wish to read that article. As that article states, and as the member knows, I have asked the Council on Post-Secondary Education to review the concerns that the member has raised. They are concerns that I have as well. The council, I'm informed, is waiting for additional information on this matter.

I also have to point out to the member that Continuing Education departments are not under the control of government, and we don't have control

over continuing education offerings. My understanding is that continuing education and all of our institutions have continuing education offices that continuing education traditionally operates as a cost-recovery model and that, unfortunately, is what's happening. So, we are looking at it, but I do make the point that we don't have control over continuing education offerings.

Mr. Faurschou: Well, I do find it curious that persons that want to get an education in rural Manitoba are under a different category. I don't know how that started. I don't know how students in the rural got reclassified, that you've got to attend class at a specific point that's designated in order to qualify for government support funding. But I appreciate the minister's willingness to look into it.

The other part of this is continuing education or the availability of distance education opportunities through an entity known as Campus Manitoba. I understand that the minister, or perhaps it was the Council on Post-Secondary Education has ordered an external review of that particular program, and I'm here to voice my absolute, unconditional support for Campus Manitoba.

They have demonstrated and have accomplished a bringing together of distance education programs from four different post-secondary educational institutions into one. They have a leading edge accounting and administrative process. In fact, I would very much encourage the council and the minister to look at Campus Manitoba as being the entity in which any person taking courses off campus would effectively register with and their particular student records be administrated through Campus Manitoba because it is already set up, and it is working very, very, very well. I believe that Campus Manitoba could, in fact, work with the new University College of the North and, potentially, the fire college, now it's known as emergency responders college, something like that, and that, too, through the programming that was announced with EMS training, of EMS-1 individuals, could also be administered through Campus Manitoba. This is just a common-sense page that we can perhaps subscribe to.

I encourage the minister to support Campus Manitoba because I believe the post-secondary educational opportunities are very scant in the rural, and Campus Manitoba is an entity which I believe can, indeed, be a delivery mechanism and a very,

very cost effective one that has already been demonstrated.

Now, I don't know if the minister wants to comment.

Ms. McGifford: The member opposite has brought up a lot of points, and I thank him for his advice. I know that he is very interested in education, and we have talked about it several times. By the way, it's the Manitoba Emergency Services College I think was the name that the member was searching for.

Thank you for your comments on Campus Manitoba. I do want to make the point that the reason we're taking a look at Campus Manitoba, or one of the reasons, is there has been declining enrolment. So, we're interested in exploring this, and so that's one of the reasons that we're taking a look at it. Also, I am told that the institutions are doing more distance education. Maybe that's one of the reasons.

But let me also make the point that UCN has 12 regional centres and those regional centres aren't run from Continuing Education so that the tuition in those regional centres is not onerous. As well, I understand that the courses offered through Campus Manitoba are offered at comparable tuition.

So, I appreciate the member's being from Portage la Prairie and appreciate his concern about rural students and his concern that they have the same kinds of opportunities and rights as other students. But it isn't that rural students don't have any opportunities in their communities—there are a couple of opportunities—but it is true that the Continuing Education branches are run at cost recovery and that's something that we're taking a look at.

Mr. Faurichou: I do appreciate the minister's understanding of this, but may I just, perhaps, give a layman's observation here insofar as each university is one that wants to demonstrate that they are relevant in all areas and would like very much to expand their spheres of influence and to run their own programs and to be autonomous and independent of other post-secondary institutions. But the whole concept behind Campus Manitoba was to get away from the redundancy of duplication and overlap. It's already been proven that that works and unless the minister and the Council on Post-Secondary Education support that concept, the universities will draw back and want to make direct contact themselves, thereby bolstering their own direct programming. Consequently, when you come to a Campus Manitoba, you will see an enrolment

decline because the participating post-secondary institutions are, in fact, starting to segregate once again. We know, as taxpayers, if we can come together and offer a program without duplication, the cost-effective delivery of that program is significantly enhanced. But it's incumbent upon the minister and the minister's department to make certain that this stays on course, and I believe it has languished over the last number of years without direct attention to it.

I encourage the minister to please look very diligently into it. Regardless of how the independent review came about, I believe when you look at it, you will find a very, very progressive new director for Campus Manitoba as well as enthusiastic and extremely committed directors at the various Campus Manitoba sites.

I would also like to focus on the available funding for students. Although scholarships and bursaries are quite plentiful, many students still rely upon the Student Loans Program. The student loans program, I have said it year in, year out, needs a revamp. Madam Minister, if there's anything that you can do in this line, please, I encourage you to do so. Even if we have to potentially strain our relations with the federal government on the Canada-Manitoba student loans program, we must get away from such ridiculous prerequisites that now currently exist.

I believe the minister is quite aware of the pickup truck that was offered to a student taking classes by his farming father. That was considered part of the student's assets and therefore, made the student ineligible to get a student loan because his dad loaned him the truck. The ownership never took place or anything, but under the student loans, it made him have an asset. In my understanding, no banking institution would ever consider that an asset of the student, yet this Manitoba-Canada student loans program does.

So I know our time is finished, but I thank you, Madam Minister.

* (17:00)

Ms. McGifford: Well, I just want to make two quick points and that is our student loans and the rules around them are dictated by the federal government, but the good news is the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada is currently reviewing student loans. Indeed, Tom Glenwright from student loans is chairing the committee that is doing the reviews, so

maybe there's good news at the end of this—maybe there's some good news in sight.

I want to correct something on the record, and that is I want to make the point that there is some contract training in regional centres through UCN, specifically at Nelson House. I think specifically this involves those people who are being trained to work on the northern dams. So I do want to make that clear. Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): We have just a few moments left. The member has a brief question.

Mrs. Driedger: Can I ask the minister about this independent review that we're talking about? Is it an independent review and who would be doing it?

Ms. McGifford: It's an external review, and we haven't yet confirmed who will be conducting the review.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): The hour being past 5 p.m., committee rise.

CONSERVATION

* (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 Department of Conservation. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm happy to be back in Conservation Estimates. It should be an exciting day for us, Mr. Minister.

I'm wondering if the minister would agree to give members of our side of the House and myself as critic for Conservation a list of all the political staff, including their name, their position and whether or not they are a full-time employee.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I'll take the offer just made by the critic to come back later with that information. So that's fair to me.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much, and I thank the minister for endeavouring to get back to me on that.

There're probably a few others that we could probably do the same with, just some sort of

housekeeping questions and some issues that we want answered on our side, the second of which would be if the minister can provide us with a specific list of all staff in the minister's office and the deputy minister's office, the number of staff currently employed in the department, and the names of staff that have been hired in 2007 and '08, including whether they were hired through competition or appointment.

Mr. Struthers: We can get that information for the member. Sure.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that. I look forward to receiving the information.

Some of the other information that we would like to receive, if possible: a description of any position that has been reclassified within the department, a listing of all vacant positions, and if all staff years are currently filled or not. Maybe if the minister could endeavour to answer the last question now, it would be great.

Mr. Struthers: We can get back to the member on the first part of her question.

The second part is that not all of the positions in the department are filled. We work to keep our vacancies down as much as we can. There's lots of work to be done, and I'm determined to make sure that we have appropriate staff and appropriate numbers of staff to do that work that Conservation is involved with.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that. I gather, if not all positions are filled, pursuant to my previous question, I guess we'll get a listing of all vacant positions?

Mr. Struthers: We can follow up with that and get that answer for the member.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm wondering if the minister could tell us how many and what type of contracts are being awarded directly to individuals, if there are any contracts being awarded directly to individuals or corporations right now by the department.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, we do both tendered and untendered contracts. If something is untendered there needs to be a good, logical, common-sense reason for it being untendered. I want to tell the member that any that are untendered that are over \$1,000 would be tabled by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). He does that at regular intervals.

Mrs. Stefanson: So he's saying that any untendered contracts over \$1,000, just for clarification, are tabled by the Minister of Finance?

What would be some of the contracts that are over \$1,000 that would be untendered within this department, the privy of this department, just for example?

Mr. Struthers: I can give a couple of examples for the member. One would be if it's a sole source provider, Mr. Chairperson. We may be working with Manitoba Telephone System—sorry, Manitoba Telecom Services, we might be working with Manitoba Hydro. Another example might be that there could be some specialized services that we need, and we come across that sometimes in our fire program where there are people who have built an area of expertise up that we want to take advantage of. So those are the kinds of common sense things that I want to take advantage of so we can get the best bang for the buck on behalf of the Manitoba taxpayer.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, if the minister could indicate whether or not there have been any positions relocated within his departments. What I mean by relocation is, geographically, whether or not positions have been relocated from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg, or relocated to other areas of the province and why.

Mr. Struthers: We haven't made transfers of positions from rural to urban settings. One of the things that does happen is we will move personnel. Say, for example, a natural resource officer moves from one location to another, that person goes. The position would then be filled by another natural resource officer. Our environment officers move from one location to the next, but we want to be able to have our people in the places in which they can do their job the best. If we need somebody out in the regions, that's where those positions are.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm wondering if the minister could indicate for this Estimates process whether or not there's been any travel by the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by the Department of Conservation.

Mr. Struthers: That's certainly not something that I budget for through this Estimates process, but I understand that, in terms of reporting, there is a different process underway now that Exec Council will be reporting on. I'm not sure of the timeline on that for the member, but, again, that's not something that I budget for through this process.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Stefanson: So is the minister then confirming that his department has not, in fact, paid for any travel expenditures or delegations, you know, of the Premier or delegations led by the Premier within his government department?

Mr. Struthers: Generally speaking, I'm willing to entertain requests that come my way if there's a conservation reason to do that, if there's a trip that is consistent with the goals that we set as a department or that I have as the minister. Can the member be a little more—if she'd narrow the scope a little bit in terms of a time frame. I'm wondering how far back she's thinking or just over the past year. Can she help me out with that a little bit?

Mrs. Stefanson: Just if there's been anything in history where, you know, within the last say two or three years the minister's department has paid for a delegation of the Premier and/or others from his government department. In other words, it's not coming from the Premier's budget, but it's coming from his budget. Have there been any sort of trips or anything, whether they'd be inside Manitoba, outside Manitoba, where the Department of Conservation is paying for the Premier and a Premier-led delegation? I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Struthers: I can get back to the member on that, but again, if there is a good solid reason for it to come out of the Conservation budget, then I don't mind that. We do some very good things in this department on behalf of the provincial government all around Manitoba and elsewhere, and I've never shied from doing my part and paying my way. So, if there's a good conservation reason, I'm open to listening. But, in an effort to be absolutely accurate, I think I should get back to the member on that particular question.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay. So just to confirm that the minister has agreed to get back to us on whether or not there has been any travel by the Premier or delegation led by the Premier that has been paid for out of the Department of Conservation, and given the fact that they're going to go back and get the information, we may as well go back to, you know, 1999.

Mr. Struthers: You want me to stop at 1999, do you, for obvious reasons? We can take a look at that for the member.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm just wondering if the minister could indicate whether, like, how many out-of-province trips he has taken in the past year.

Mr. Struthers: There have been two occasions. One was actually just slightly more than a year ago when I went to the Northwest Territories, Mr. Chair. We were in Yellowknife for joint meetings of Resource ministers, Forestry ministers, Fisheries ministers and Environment ministers. That was in, I think that would be last October, about a year ago. More recently, in June, the Environment ministers met in Toronto. We met with the federal minister to discuss the federal proposal on the air framework and greenhouse gas emissions framework. So I believe that's the only two times that I've travelled out of the province.

Mrs. Stefanson: Were there other members of your staff that travelled with you to these meetings? And if so, who? Who paid? Was it the department that paid for this? Was it another department that paid for it, and what were the costs associated with the expenditures for the trips?

Mr. Struthers: In Yellowknife, it was myself, my deputy minister, Don Cook, my special assistant, Larissa Ashdown, and Jocelyn Baker from our staff. Jocelyn was there because at that meeting in Yellowknife they handed the chairing duties for the resource ministers to me, and that meant we were hosting all of the ministers in a joint meeting this past September here in Winnipeg. Jocelyn was the co-ordinator, the person that made the whole conference work, so she was there to, from an administrative standpoint, learn how those meetings work and how to host, and she did a great job.

In Toronto, at the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment it was myself and my deputy minister, Don Cook, Larissa Ashdown, my special assistant, and ADM, Serge Scrafield, who had been leading up our department's talks with the federal people in terms of the federal proposals that were being made. My understanding is that we paid for those through the department.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just switching on to what has been a topic of conversation, certainly in Question Period and various Estimates, which, I understand, Mr. Minister, falls under your purview, would be the WNO Council of Chiefs Accord. Could you tell me who actually are the signatories? Who signed the agreement?

* (15:10)

Mr. Struthers: The accord was a very substantial step forward in the whole east side planning initiative which we began back in the year 2000. It's all about planning. It's all about land-use plans that communities put in place. The accord that was negotiated by the chiefs of the WNO plus myself and others had everyone sign except Black River, Hollow Water, Berens River, Norway House and Pauingassi. The other 11 of the 16 communities did sign on to that accord.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm just wondering if the minister could table a copy of the agreement, a signed copy.

Mr. Struthers: We didn't bring a signed copy with us. We have other copies. If she wants a signed copy, I can provide that for her later.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, if we could endeavour to get a signed copy, that would be great.

I'm wondering, can the minister indicate why—he mentioned that 11 of the 16 First Nations signed the agreement. Why did the other five, what were the reasons why they did not sign?

Mr. Struthers: A number of the communities, and first of all I should preface this by saying that we've accepted a government-to-government approach. We're building on a government-to-government relationship. It's different dealing with a First Nation as opposed to corporations or lobby groups or environmental groups or anyone else. These are First Nations who we have treated with. So I'm a little shy about answering on their behalf as to why they did not or did sign. *[interjection]*

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is right, I'm not usually shy, but sometimes common sense dictates that I should be. This is one of those times.

A number of chiefs have said to me that they need to be in communications with their own communities before they actually sign on. Now that may not be the case in each of those five communities that I listed. The one thing I do want to stress, though, is that when the WNO gets together, when they meet all of the communities are welcome to participate and there isn't a single one of them that doesn't participate.

Many of the communities have applied for and received money for land-use plans. Many of the communities have begun those plans. All of them are at various levels, from being virtually complete with their land-use plan to just starting the work that needs to go into compiling a land-use plan.

The other thing that is important is that whether or not a community has signed onto the WNO accord, whether or not they've signed, we welcome their participation. If their community has a comfort level with signing on at some point in the future, we've made it very clear that they would be welcome to do that, but that is their decision. That is their decision as a First Nation, and any support that we in this department can give that First Nation to reach a level of comfort, we've committed to doing that.

We consult with the First Nations in terms of decisions that are going on in their areas. We consult with each of them. We want to move toward a framework that can provide a forum for First Nations to be at the table. We don't want to be guessing when it comes to decision making. We don't want to be forging ahead or hanging back on certain decisions. We want to be able to work with First Nations in order to move forward, whether it be in terms of protecting the boreal forests or whether it be in terms of sustainable development, which is also important to the chiefs on the east side.

We are moving toward a system of resource management boards. Now, resource management boards, members opposite will know, aren't something new. There have been a lot of successes with resource management boards throughout the north. We're looking at moving along in this process to regional resource management boards that would have a say at the table when it comes to decision making, and I want members to be very clear that I said they would have a say; that's not a veto.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I thank the minister for his comments.

I'd like to then, considering he's brought up the veto issue—I know he certainly doesn't want us to go here and ask questions around this, but I think it's very significant in terms of the land and land approval and participation and so forth with respect to land on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I refer the minister in the agreement to section 3.8 where it states: The Province will develop regulations with First Nations participation and approval.

What exactly is the minister's interpretation of that clause when it says participation and approval, specifically the approval part? If he could explain why that would be added in there if effectively these communities do not have a veto over any decision that's made with respect to the lands.

Mr. Struthers: The first thing I want to point out to the member is the difference between a period and a comma and that she shouldn't stop at a comma, that she keeps going through a comma. A comma is like a yield sign; you slow down but you keep going. You don't take it out of context and then try to make some assumptions with it:

"The Province will develop regulations," comma, "with First Nations governments' participation and approval," comma, "pursuant to existing planning legislation to assist with the implementation" of the WNO accord, "the Regional Resource Management Boards, and the Traditional Area Land Use Planning."

If the member would care to, I think she should get the whole story, not part of it. She needs to see the whole sentence for what it is, not take parts of it out and take it out of context like they did today in Question Period.

We are going to have in place land-use plans. Some day down the future all 16 of these First Nations will have land-use plans in place. If a government comes along and says that they want to do something that is outside of the agreed-to land-use plans that have been developed by the First Nations and the provincial government, then that wouldn't be on. The key is that we participate in the land-use-planning process from day one as we have been doing, and that land-use plan then becomes what guides us on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

* (15:20)

In 1930, the federal government transferred to the provinces, through the Natural Resources Transfer Act, the ability and the authority to make decisions in terms of resources. That's not being transferred to anyone. That rests with the provincial government—that has rested with the provincial government from John Bracken through to the current Premier (Mr. Doer). That remains intact. If members opposite think that I can change that, they are naive. If they want to play politics with this and take one word out of one section and misrepresent that, then they can do that at their own political embarrassment. This does not give veto to anyone, and I wish the member would explain that to her leader.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, it clearly states here that the Province will develop regulations with First Nations government participation and approval. So, with the addition of the approval, and now the minister

saying—you know, they either are significantly involved in the approval process, or they are not. Which is it? To me, it's written in here, saying that, essentially, they have a say in the approval process.

Do the First Nations have a significant say in the approval process or not?

Mr. Struthers: Very good, to the Member for Tuxedo. She's put her finger on it. There's a difference between having a say and having a veto. Now I wish she would turn to her own leader and make that distinction for him so that he doesn't get it wrong again. Having a say is totally different than having a veto.

We have had resource management boards in this province for decades. They've been successful. It means that First Nations have a say in what's going on in their communities. There's nothing wrong with that. We do not give anybody a veto. We still have, through the Natural Resources Transfer Act, that authority resting right here comfortably in the provincial government.

What we have said to First Nations is that they will have a say before we get into their areas and start making decisions unilaterally, because for a long time, generation after generation, we have made the mistake of assuming that somebody in Winnipeg, or somebody in Ottawa, or somebody in Los Angeles with an environmental group, or somebody in Atlanta, Georgia, with some big resource company, knows best of what goes on, on First Nations. We've taken a brave step forward to make sure that, as the Member for Tuxedo has said, the First Nations have a say in what decisions are made.

Mr. Chairperson, does that mean that they can say no and not approve and have a veto? No, it doesn't. Any characterization other than that is a misrepresentation.

Mrs. Stefanson: I wonder if the minister can indicate where the government is at with respect to the WNO protocol agreement. As I understand, the last was a draft 22. Where are we at with this, and when can we expect to see that?

Mr. Struthers: The accord that the member referenced earlier replaced the discussions on the protocol. The accord became the outcome of those discussions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Okay. So in the accord it says that regulations will be developed. Where is the Province

at with respect to regulations and developing those, and who's involved in that process?

Mr. Struthers: We have made a number of commitments to move forward this planning process. There was a document that came forward. It was called *Promises to Keep*. The member knows, she's heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) say it a number of times, that we had 82 meetings on the east side. From those meetings, the WNO put forward a document called *Promises to Keep*, and there were 102 recommendations that flowed from that work that we had done. Part of what we had committed to was, as in 3.8 of the accord, to develop the regulations, the legislative framework to enable things like regional resource management boards to be put together.

One of the things that has come to my attention since being named to this position almost four years ago was the legislative ability that we have to reflect the advice that we get from Manitobans, whether they live on the east side or Carberry or Dauphin or wherever. We have to have legislation in place that can allow me as minister to reflect the wishes that Manitobans have in terms of resource management, especially.

So we have been working on that commitment that we've made. It's a commitment that flows from the *Promises to Keep* document, and it's a commitment that flows from 3.8, as the member has pointed out, of the accord. We will be developing the legislative ability to enable us to move into resource management boards that will allow us to more effectively include First Nations' leadership in the decision-making process. That's kind of the basis upon which we're moving forward on the regulations that we've committed to.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm wondering if the minister will agree, in fact, keep his promise and deliver these at some point in the next short while, and, if so, specifically speaking to the regulations, when can we and Manitobans expect to see the regulations developed, like finished, completed?

Mr. Struthers: We have been working diligently on these regulations, on the framework that we need. I would suggest to the member that she keep her eyes open throughout this legislative cycle for that to come forward.

Mrs. Stefanson: So is the minister saying that by the end of this session, within the next couple of weeks, that we should be able to see a copy of the

regulations and they will be tabled in the House at that time?

Mr. Struthers: No, there's a lot of work that needs to be done on this. In the legislative cycle that we're in, (a) they will be coming forward, and (b) they will come forward between now and the spring.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairperson, the minister said that we could expect to maybe see them sometime this session and now he's saying next spring. I think it's very important that we nail down dates here and that we ensure that and hold this minister responsible for delivering these regulations. I think a deadline needs to be set here. Manitobans deserve to know, and all stakeholders deserve to know, when these regulations will come out. I need to know from this minister, specifically, when the deadline for these regulations will come forward, when we can expect to see them tabled in the House and when all Manitobans can expect to see the regulations that will be developed as the result of this process.

* (15:30)

Mr. Struthers: As we all know around this table, my first opportunity to introduce the legislative framework that's necessary is going to be this November, December. If those are not ready, if they're not ready for then, I will be bringing them forward in the spring. But, I'm not going to hurry something and then have it not meet our requirements. I'm going to make sure that we're thorough. I'll take the time that we need to hear from people and then move forward.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on the regulations. I'm kind of curious on how this process is developed to date and how it's going to develop in the future. The way section 3.8 reads to me, the Province will be developing regulations. Then there will be some kind of a consultation period with the First Nations community. I'm assuming by the wording here that the First Nations community would have to approve those regulations.

Can the minister kind of explain the process there to me?

Mr. Struthers: When we move forward with that legislative framework, whatever that legislative framework may be, if it's legislation, it goes through the normal process that we go through here that members are well aware of. The First Nations, like everyone else, will have a chance between second

and third reading to come as members of the public and give me advice on what they think should be in the legislation.

The First Nations involved do not have a veto over what I bring forward as minister. I don't mind working with First Nations. I don't mind working with lots of different groups. There are times when, heck, members of the opposition get to sit down with me and talk about legislative proposals, legislative frameworks. We've actually listened to members of the opposition once in a while and incorporated the odd good idea that they have. So that will be handled as per the normal legislative cycle that we all know so well around this table.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I will acknowledge that the current government does take advice from the opposition from time to time and some of the legislation that we put forward is usually well thought out, and because of that, the current NDP government usually has a chance to take that legislation and bring in their own. So that's been part of the process the last couple of years anyway.

A bit of a technical issue here. I understand you're talking about changing a legislation and not a regulation. Are you proposing to bring forward changes to The Planning Act as it is currently written now, or are you going to work within the framework of the existing planning legislation? Because when we look at section 3.8, it specifically talks about developing regulations. In my view that's different than the actual legislation that exists now. So I just want to clarify if the minister is going to be bringing forward changes to the existing legislation.

Mr. Struthers: Well, I'm not the minister responsible for The Planning Act. I won't be bringing forward changes to The Planning Act. Our approach will depend upon the most effective way to enable resource management boards and those planning tools that can help communities in the WNO area have a say in planning decisions. We'll set that legislative framework in the normal ways that we do it around this table and in the provincial government, and that is to make sure that the legislation that we have in place is adequate to do that. If we need to make changes to existing legislation, or bring in new legislation, or whatever that could entail, we would put it in place, and then the regulations, as per normal routine around here, would flow from that.

Once the regulations are in place, then we look at the plans of each individual of the 16 First Nations on the east side, we look at their individual land-use

plans. Those plans will be jointly prepared. That'll be our government and their government putting those plans together. So it's not like we have a First Nation putting together a plan and then using it to veto. That's not where this is heading.

We then would make decisions, we'd follow up on these plans only if we approve it. Right now we're working with, I'll use it as an example, the Poplar River First Nation, who have, for a number of years, been working on their land-use plan. They've completed their land-use plan and they've sat down with us to work out how we would go about approving that and then implementing it. So it's not like Poplar River gets to just decide what's going on, irrespective of the Natural Resources Transfer Act and irrespective of our authority in resource decisions, that they would just go off and do what they want. That doesn't happen in this case and it won't happen with the 15 other communities in the WNO territory.

We found, for example, if you take a look at the parks act, that the legislation that we have that's existing now wasn't effective enough to enable us to put in place these planning tools specific to the east side. So what we did in that case was that we undertook to develop new planning legislation that will be tabled. As I said before, when you look at the parks act, I need as minister to have more tools in that toolbox to help people on the east side, to enable them to form regional resource management boards so that they can sit at a table with us and talk about the issues that are pertinent.

So, much of this, we are going to follow the normal procedure that we all know around this table, and we will be coming forward with that legislative framework, beginning either in November-December or in the spring of '08.

Mr. Cullen: I just need some clarification. You, Minister, mentioned Poplar River in terms of developing their land-use plan. In looking at the map on the east side, for instance, the Poplar River plan, will that property that they were going to be planning, will that be restricted to their reserve lands, or will that plan take into account land outside of that reserve?

Mr. Struthers: A number of years ago, the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve was created. I'm sure my colleague from Turtle Mountain has seen the maps that show the protected area. It's not just the Poplar River reserve that we're speaking about, its that park reserve, a fairly sizeable chunk of

land that is found on the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg, almost where the crook of Manitoba's border comes to. But I want to be very clear that it doesn't go right to the Ontario border. The land that this management plan will cover is only the park reserve that we put in place and that we have extended to the year, it's under park reserve status until the year 2010.

* (15:40)

Mr. Cullen: So, when we look at the map then, in terms of any of these park reserves, there's a limited date on those particular terms. I'm trying to understand the relationship there. I guess my assumption would be anything off-reserve would be Crown land, and that would be owned by the Province of Manitoba. Could you kind of clarify the roles in those different situations?

I know, in referring to another map here, they talk about community interest zones. If you could explain the differences between those community interest zones, obviously, the reserve status, and the park reserve in terms of the Province of Manitoba and their role in Crown land.

Mr. Struthers: In the year 2000, when we embarked on this whole East Side Planning Initiative, an initiative that flowed from the COSDI report that preceded us in government, we sat with the Poplar River chief and council and elders. They said to us that they were interested in planning for their traditional area which is a bigger area than just the reserve known as Poplar River. They wanted and still are working hard at getting their land-use plan finalized.

Mr. Chairperson, we thought that was a very good opportunity to get started. We were working with the Poplar River First Nation in terms of land-use planning. The chief said to us, though, and if I was in his position, I think I'd say the same thing, what if, when we're doing our land-use planning, you're, as a provincial government, making a whole pile of decisions in our back yard? We said, well, we're not going to do that. We're committed to land-use planning. We agreed to put in place a park reserve, which puts limitations on the kind of decisions that you can make on Crown land in that traditional area.

The traditional area is based on usage, usage one generation to the next. It was based on, for the most part, the registered trapline in the area which, back in, I believe, the 1930s and '40s and into the '50s,

was put together based on the usage of people in their own areas. So the registered traplines that were associated with the Poplar River community became the boundaries for the park reserve that was put in place back in 2000. We extended, in 2005, that park reserve for five years. You can extend for six months; you can extend for five years.

We believe that there was a lot of progress that was made by the Poplar River First Nation in terms of their land-use plan, and we wanted to make sure that we made it possible for them to wrap up that land-use plan and to work through us, work with us, in terms of implementation of that plan. So it's not just the reserve. It's bigger than the reserve. It's the area that has traditionally been used by that community.

Mrs. Stefanson: With respect to the Poplar River park reserve that the minister is referring to, which, he is stating, takes in a significant area outside the actual Poplar River First Nation, who owns the land outside the Poplar River First Nation?

Mr. Struthers: That is Crown land. That is land that the provincial government has the responsibility to make decisions on, and when we agreed to do the park reserve, we made the undertaking that, while the land-use plan was being worked on, we would not be making decisions on that Crown land that would negatively impact work towards a land-use plan.

Mrs. Stefanson: So the minister's stating that this is Crown lands. He's admitting that's Crown lands, but that there are, in fact, limits on—and these are the words that he used—the kinds of decisions that the provincial government, the owner of this land, can make because of an agreement that's in place with the Poplar River First Nation. Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I think for a complete answer, the member can pick up again the document that she referenced earlier in our Estimates, the accord that has been signed, and go to section 310 where it talks about, consult meaningfully which is section 35 of the Canadian Charter.

What we do whether it's Poplar River or any other First Nation, this government has very clearly indicated that we will be doing a meaningful consult with First Nations, whether that be Wuskwatim generating station, whether that be the section 35 consultation we're doing with Louisiana-Pacific's environment licence or whether that be the Poplar

River First Nation. We have that duty. It's clear that we have that duty. Our Premier (Mr. Doer) and our Cabinet, our government has said that we would commit ourselves to doing section 35 consultations, we would do it in a meaningful way and that there would be accommodation based on that consultation.

If a decision was made to do a certain project and we consulted with the community and they said, you can't do that because there's a burial site there, then we would accommodate that kind of a request. If they said, don't go ahead on that spot because of our burial site, that would be accommodated.

So, Mr. Chairperson, our commitments through the accord and our commitments on a project-by-project basis is that we will meaningfully consult. That's the key commitment that we've made and we've followed through on that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, unfortunately, the minister said earlier, and I quote: It limits the kinds of decisions that can be made by the government with respect to Crown land surrounding the reserve area.

In specific, this is the land around the Poplar River First Nation area, and he's referring to the park reserve area where he had said earlier that the government is limited based on an agreement. In other words, the Poplar River First Nation effectively has a veto under various circumstances when it comes to what the government wants to do on these lands. The minister has admitted to that himself, and, you know, I think it's unfortunate that that is the case when it comes to our Crown lands in our province, Mr. Chair.

With that, I'd like to move on, and I would like to ask the minister specifically with respect to the east side, what are the boundaries of the world heritage site that is proposed on the east side of Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Struthers: I can understand why my colleague from Tuxedo might want to move on from that last discussion because she's still got it wrong.

An Honourable Member: *Hansard* will speak for itself.

Mr. Struthers: *Hansard* will speak for itself, she says.

* (15:50)

But, you know, the decision was taken in the year 2000 to put this area into a park reserve, no different than a park reserve at Chitek Lake, no

different than any of the other park reserves that we put in place, that set up any of the provincial parks that we have in our province. Those rules are the same. Those rules haven't changed. Those were the same rules in the 1990s, the same rules in the 1970s. You set aside an area of land known as a park reserve so that planning can take place. Whether that's a First Nation, or whether that's working in conjunction with an R.M., to set up a park next to an R.M..

So that's not a veto. It's not a veto when R.M.s and towns and cities come to me and ask to help in protecting land. I have not signed a veto with the City of Winnipeg, with the memorandum of understanding that the mayor and I announced several months ago. It would be inaccurate for this member to characterize that as a veto. I hope she reads that into *Hansard* as well, when she asks her questions. She's just wrong on that.

The question about the world heritage site had to do with the boundaries. The strength of the UNESCO nomination is the First Nations accord lands that have the First Nations leadership who have come forward with their commitment to doing land-use planning. The First Nations of Poplar River, Pauingassi, Little Grand Rapids and across the border, the Ontario border, to Pikangikum, which is a First Nation in northern Ontario. Those communities came to us saying, we want to move forward with land-use planning; we want to do this and we'll combine it with the Atikaki Provincial Park and the Woodland Caribou Park on the Ontario side, which is only separated by the Ontario-Manitoba border.

They came to us and said, here is a good plan; here is a good proposal; we want you to support this, and we did. We've got good support from the Province of Manitoba and from the Province of Ontario. The federal government has been involved. It's a nomination. It's a project that, again, is based on land-use planning. It understands that if you're going to have protection of the boreal forest and if you're going to develop in a sustainable way, then you have to have your land-use plans in place so that good decisions can be made by the provincial governments with the say of First Nations.

So those are the communities involved. Those are the two parts involved and, very astutely pointed out by my deputy minister, the other part of that that is involved is the Bloodvein heritage river. So that would be the boundaries that we're dealing with.

Mr. Cullen: I just want to get some clarification on the minister's comments in regard to the park reserves. The minister talks—[interjection] I want to go back to that, Mr. Minister. You alluded to some rules that once a given area was in a park reserve there were certain rules that were applicable. Where could I find those rules, or are those rules different for each of the park reserves?

Mr. Struthers: The parks act and the regulations that flow from the parks act are where the information that my colleague is looking for. It's all there. It's one of the tools that I have, as minister on behalf of our government, to use in the protection of land. You can get as strict protection as an ecological reserve—and I always kind of get a kick out of people who have to write me a letter to get permission to go into an ecological reserve. That is something I hadn't known until I became minister and got a letter in front of me asking me for permission to go into one of these ecological reserves. That's the highest level. There are varying degrees of protection as you move through the spectrum of tools that I have available to me as minister. Park reserve is one of those, wildlife management areas, parks themselves. There are a number of things—number of things isn't the way to say it, a number of tools that we can use to accomplish that and that's all found in the parks act.

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's response.

Let's go back to the Poplar River's park reserve and we'll make the assumption that Poplar River will be entering into some land-use planning. They will present their plan or their proposal to the provincial government. At that point in time, then, that plan would lay out development plans for the future, let's say bipole 3, for instance. Would the province then have the opportunity to either agree or, in this case, could they veto that particular land-use plan?

Mr. Struthers: The authority in these areas clearly rests with the provincial government as of the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930. That clearly exists with the provincial government. What we have been doing is we've been working with Poplar River and the other 16 First Nations along the east side as they go through the process of putting their land-use plans together.

We think that is a better approach than simply waiting, let's say for Pauingassi to come forward with something that is unworkable. We want our input from the beginning. We want to work with the communities so that they're not coming to us with something that we can't do, you know, at the end.

There's lots of money tied up in land-use plans; there's lots of time that it takes. We don't want communities to go all through that only to come to me and say, here it is, and then we say, no, that's no good.

What we need to have in place is us and the First Nation sitting at the table working our way through the land-use plans and making sure that what eventually comes forward is something that's doable and isn't something that gives a First Nation a veto. It isn't something that detracts from the authority that we have as a provincial government so we work with the First Nations from the beginning to make sure that that doesn't happen. Ultimately, the land-use plan won't be put in place, won't be implemented, won't become effective if we don't, as a provincial government, give the thumbs up to it.

Mrs. Stefanson: With respect to the boundaries of the world heritage site that we were discussing earlier, how many acres are included in that proposal?

* (16:00)

Mr. Struthers: I have a couple of specific numbers for the member, and then another number that I'll have to get back, a specific number, to her.

The Woodland Caribou Provincial Park is 450,000 hectares. That's part of the overall number, Mr. Chairperson. The Atikaki Provincial Park is 398,130 hectares. That's the two parks. The number of hectares available through the traditional areas of Pikangikum, Little Grand, Pauingassi, and Poplar River, I'll undertake to get back with a more specific number.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the minister for that.

On the Parks Canada Web site it lists the Atikaki/Woodland Caribou/Accord First Nations proposal, proposed nomination, as stating, "Set in the Canadian Shield, the area contains existing contiguous parklands on both sides of the provincial border, including Atikaki, Nopiming and Woodland Caribou Provincial Parks. Adjoining these parks are six additional protected areas: the South Atikaki Park Reserve in Manitoba."

Just to stop there for a second, where would that area be? Is that just south of the park, or where would the park reserve be? What would the boundary be of the park reserve?

Mr. Struthers: The Poplar River, it's the Poplar/Nanowin park reserve, and that park reserve

is to the north. That's the area that we have been talking about.

Mrs. Stefanson: This is a description from the Parks Canada Web site as to the proposed UNESCO site to be considered. I'm just wondering, it says within there that it includes a protected area known as the South Atikaki Park Reserve in Manitoba. Where is that?

Mr. Struthers: I'd love to have my map that's in my office right in front of me now. I throw the option open to the member to visit me at the office so I can point to it on a map and really make sure that we're on the same page on this.

The area that I believe she's talking about is a recent addition to Atikaki Provincial Park. It's north of Nopiming Park, the southern part of Atikaki, and it is part of the nomination, the world heritage site nomination.

Mrs. Stefanson: The world heritage sites that we're discussing in the nomination, it says that it's about 8,500 square kilometres. So this is the proposal that is going forward. It's on the Parks Canada Web site. It's going forward, and it's on the list as a world heritage site. Is the land that the minister is referring to when talking about their proposal of—

Mr. Struthers: Yes, that's right. That's the area that is being put forward. I will make sure I get the member a good map that will show exactly the boundaries on this. I'll make that undertaking.

There are 11 right now, 11 that the Canadian government has accepted as proposals that they will go forward to UNESCO with, and we've worked very hard to be one of those 11. They get hundreds of applications every year, and this one is on the list. We have one chance to get this done. If you go forward with a nomination that isn't completely thought out and planned out, and you get rejected, it's ballgame over.

So we get one chance at getting this forward, and when you think the league that we would be in, and I'm confident that this is going to be successful, but when you think about the league we'd be in with the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, the Bay of Fundy, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, south of Calgary—it's quite an impressive group of sites around this planet that we could be part of. So we don't want to get this wrong. We want to make sure we make every single decision with the goal in mind of increasing our success on this nomination. So it's not something we can do overnight. It's something

that we need to do right, and we need to make sure we've got everything done before we move forward.

Mrs. Stefanson: So, just to confirm, that the 8,500 square kilometres that I'm referring to is the proposal that has gone forward from the province to the federal government, and that's the proposal that's going forward for the site? If that is, if I could just—and the minister, I think indicated as well, that he would provide me with a copy of the map with the relative areas.

Mr. Struthers: I love maps. I think that would be a very good suggestion. We'll get that map and make sure that the Member for Tuxedo knows exactly where the geography is that we're dealing with.

Mr. Cullen: We've talked a lot about the east side in terms of land-use planning going forward. It's a two-part question. Will all First Nations communities on the east side be involved in land-use planning, and the second part of it is, what about the rest of the province, will First Nations communities all across the province be involved in a similar sort of land-use planning?

* (16:10)

Mr. Struthers: Yes, there are 16 communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Each of those is at varying stages of developing land-use plans. We have helped in terms of funding for each of the communities and funding that the WNO has administered to communities. At some point, we will have 16 communities on the east side with land-use plans that are there that have been worked on with the provincial government and themselves. Land-use plans then that would have the approval of the provincial government, whose authority it is to make decisions and to give or not give approval.

We've learned a lot throughout this process. It's been eight years of meeting with chiefs and dealing with land-use planning. We're even bringing in groups outside that have got some experience with land-use planning to work with chiefs and to work with us. We've learned a lot that I think can be transferred to other First Nations in this province. We have First Nations in this province who are outside of the east side geography who have been involved in resource management boards well before we even started the East Side Planning Initiative. Resource management boards are all about setting up a table in which First Nations can participate in decision-making that takes place in their backyards,

not a forum by which they have a veto or say no. It is a forum by which they participate.

I do want to stress that the umbrella over all of this, over resource management boards, over the East Side Planning Initiative, over the WNO, is the section 35 of our charter, and all of the court cases that back up—

An Honourable Member: The Province has the veto.

Mr. Struthers: —the duty of the provincial government, the duty of the provincial government—

An Honourable Member: The Province has the veto. That's what he's saying.

Mr. Struthers:—the duty of the provincial government to consult, which is a different word, a different concept. I could refer the member to the Webster's dictionary, if he likes, but consult is not veto. We have a duty to consult and accommodate. That is the umbrella over all of the decision-making, the land-use planning, whether you're in the east side or whether you're anywhere else in the province of Manitoba. That is a duty of the provincial government, Mr. Chair. No matter who sits in this chair as the minister, that's the duty that the provincial government has. We've been serious about undertaking that responsibility that we have.

That is the overall umbrella. We think we've learned a lot that can be useful to not only protect parts of our province, boreal forest, or any other areas in the province, but also to make sure that we don't miss out on sustainable development at the same time.

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's response.

Directly dealing with Manitoba Hydro, obviously, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government and most Manitobans want to have another line constructed from the north to the southern end of Lake Winnipeg. With all the planning going on in the respective areas around the province, how does their proposal to build a line, either on the west side or east side, how does that proposal mesh with the land-use planning initiatives going on around the province, obviously, where each community is and in different areas and different degrees of evolution in terms of their planning? If we wait for each of these particular areas to complete their entire plan and the Province agrees with the plan for each particular region which a line may pass

through, we effectively could be decades before we have any line built.

So if the minister could kind of provide some background in terms of how he foresees the process moving forward in terms of developing a line through whichever route we look at which is going to involve a lot of First Nations communities.

Mr. Struthers: Well, again, I need to take the member back to section 35 of the Canadian Charter. It says that we have an obligation to consult and accommodate. The land-use plans need to reflect that as well. They need to be aware that consent and veto and all those kinds of words are not found in section 35. The word is consult. So it doesn't mean everything comes to a grinding halt. It does mean that we have to consult with the First Nations.

I'll be very clear on this, the other part of the process is what the Premier (Mr. Doer) has tried to explain to his leader in terms of the environmental licence and the process involved through the Clean Environment Commission to assess the environmental impact of any project. Whether it be a transmission line or the Wuskwatim generation station itself, or the Red River Floodway, there's a process there, if we're wise enough to follow it, that turns these projects underneath the environmental microscope. That's a commitment that our Premier has made, I believe a very wise decision, to have the Clean Environment Commission involved in this. I think that is our best environmental protection.

Mrs. Stefanson: With respect to the Métis harvesting rights. I'm just wondering if the minister could update us as to the status of any discussions with members of the Métis community with respect to this issue.

Mr. Struthers: I was very pleased last year when her leader and the Leader of the Liberal Party and I had a chance, at the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, to make clear our positions in terms of Métis harvesting, Mr. Chair. I was quite disappointed that the provincial Conservative leader decided to play both sides of the fence on that, maybe in preparation for the election that was coming up. It's not called playing both sides when you stick to the Supreme Court Powley decision and make darn sure that whatever scheme you come up with, it can pass the test of Powley. I would highly recommend that approach to my friends across the way, even if it doesn't fit into their day-to-day political approach.

We need to be very careful. We need to make sure that there is in place a framework that will maintain the protection of wildlife in Manitoba. If I was to take the advice that I have received from some, then the numbers of, particularly, I think, the numbers of moose would be in peril. It doesn't matter what rights we're talking about, Métis rights, treaty rights. The first and foremost consideration—and the Supreme Court, through a number of decisions, has underscored this beautifully, I think—is that conservation comes first. Any decision that I take in terms of Métis harvesting is going to be predicated on protecting animals first.

* (16:20)

Having said that, we will be looking for ways in which we can implement the Powley decision that emanated from northern Ontario. In that case, in that community, that person, Steve Powley, proved that he did have that right. That doesn't mean that every Métis person in every Métis community has that right. We've been working hard to make sure that we get the history developed. We've been open to working with Métis people, with the Manitoba Métis Federation. We're looking for ways in which we can honestly and accurately implement the Powley Supreme Court decision, understanding, of course, that there are competing interests out there, and the No. 1 of those competing interests always has to be conservation.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm sure the minister is aware of the situation in Alberta, what is going on there, what the Alberta government is proposing. I'm wondering if the minister could comment on what is going on in Alberta, some of the decisions that are being made there and relate those back to Manitoba.

Mr. Struthers: Very early on, after the Powley decision was announced, we made a very public commitment that we would work to implement that decision. Different provinces are taking different approaches to this. The Alberta government came out of the chute quickly, put in place a scheme in which there was a broad interpretation of who in their province could enjoy the rights that they were demanding and then quickly found out that they didn't have the legal framework to stand upon. So we ended up with Métis people in Alberta who were led to believe they had certain rights that the court wasn't able to substantiate.

The court decision that came forward showed that the provincial government's law was not backed up by the law. It could not stand the test of the courts

in Alberta. What the court, I believe it was—I'm thinking of the Kelley decision, where Mr. Kelley had been, I believe, shooting squirrels, and his defence was that here's the law; it said I could do it. The court said: Mr. Kelley, we're not going to charge you because you were following the law. But the law does not follow the Powley decision. The law needs to be changed.

So we're not following the Alberta model. Lots of good things are happening in Alberta, and I don't mind borrowing from provinces that are doing good things, but this is not one of them. We will be moving forward with work guided by an honest interpretation of the Supreme Court Powley decision.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to move on in the interest of time here and ask the minister some questions with regard to the blue box stewardship program. As I understand, there was a call out to members of various stakeholders in the community, various businesses and so on for some feedback with respect to some changes that will be made in regard to the blue box waste, or the stewardship program.

I'm wondering if the minister can just state where we're at with gathering—like, who has been consulted with respect to the blue box stewardship program and where are we at in terms of the regulations coming forward. When can we expect those regulations to come forward?

Mr. Struthers: We have undertaken not only with the paper and paper products but with electronic waste and with household hazardous waste to revamp those programs. To do that we need to have regulations in place to allow us to do that. We take those regulations out to the Manitoba public. We put together a draft regulation. We take it to the Manitoba public and then we take their advice that they've given us and use that to design a program.

It's clear to us that Manitobans take this seriously. We know that because we've taken our draft regulation out on paper and paper products. We've collected the advice that we've got and now we're taking that advice and turning it into not just a draft regulation but a real live regulation that can help us set up a good system. So I'm hopeful that we can come up with a regulatory change fairly soon, I would think within the next couple of months, based on the information that we've got from the people of Manitoba.

We've heard from individuals. We've heard from groups. I want to say one of the groups that is very

important in this is the Association of Manitoba Municipalities whose members do not want us filling up their landfills with everything from old iPods to paper and trash to you name it—everything that ends up in the landfills. We think, as they do, that there is a better way of doing it, and we need to design that regulation to reflect that and to reflect the advice we got from Manitobans.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chair, I just heard some feedback from various stakeholders in the communities with respect to some of the regulations that they see that they're concerned about the fact that they could be complicated. There are various concerns about maybe some of the specific directions that we might be going in.

One of the issues that was brought up is with respect to the cost-sharing of the recyclables. I think industry understands that they need to play a significant role with respect to this and I don't think anyone disputes that. What I'm concerned about is, if we take away the incentives for industry to contribute to this process, I'm just wondering if we're taking a step backwards.

One thing I'm a little concerned about, I know other provinces have gone to sort of a 50-50 split between industry and municipalities when it comes to cost-sharing in recyclables and as I understand, one of the proposed regulations out there is an 80-20 split for industry. Obviously, the concern there is that if that is the case, I mean, what is really the incentive that we're giving industry when it comes to this? Will it really—I mean it's sort of 80 percent of what, 20 percent of what?

* (16:30)

I'm a little concerned that, if the incentives aren't there for industry to recycle, everything's just going to end up in a landfill somewhere anyway. So I'm wondering what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the program does succeed by providing more incentives to industry and not—I mean, obviously they understand they have a significant role to play here, but we need to make sure that we've got the end goal in mind, and that is to reduce the amount of waste out there. So one of the concerns, obviously, is this 80-20 split. I'm wondering if the minister could comment on whether or not that type of proposal is being looked at to go through, or if they would consider, maybe, what is working in some other provinces, which is a 50-50 split. I'm not saying 80-20 doesn't work. I'm

just wondering how, and I think industry is just wondering how that will work as well.

Mr. Struthers: I take the member's point about the significant role that industry can play. As a matter of fact, I think it can be a real leadership role. When I've met with industry reps, they have said to me that they're willing to step up in even a more significant way than has been seen under the old program.

I know that industry has some very innovative approaches in this field, and I want to take advantage of that. The member references the 80-20 split. We have industry on one side who would prefer that sort of a ratio. We've got another major player who would fight tooth-and-nail against that kind of a proposal, and that is the municipalities around the province. When they've met with me, they have very strongly indicated support for the 80-20 split. So we have two very significant players, when you look at the delivery of the program, saying two different things, so we have to work our way through that. But I do believe the member is correct in talking about the incentives for industry and the 80-20 split. I just want her to know that there's the other side of that coin, and another very important part of the overall program is advising me pretty much the opposite of that.

Our plan is to have fairness. I want groups to understand that they need to be contributing, that we can't just have, for example, the two-cent levy that has funded this program. We can't just have that be maintained as the status quo. There needs to be an approach and industry has indicated to me that they would work to see that this happens, where everybody takes ownership of this program, and it's believed that that holistic approach will mean, first and foremost, a consistent program and a long-term program. I've met with some municipalities who have struggled to maintain their blue box program.

My own community of Dauphin has just recently taken some positive steps in terms of their recycling program after a number of challenges that they faced. Dauphin, like so many other municipalities, have really poured their hearts and souls into making sure that their people in their communities have this service available to them. So I give top marks to those municipal folks who have been working out there to divert away from our landfills and not have the landfills fill.

Mrs. Stefanson: One of the other sort of regulations that was discussed is on the expanding beyond industry to include various schools, secondary

schools as well as post-secondary schools, to participate in the program. I'm just wondering, would it then be expected that the post-secondary and the secondary schools, would they then have to contribute in an 80-20-type split as well, or is that going to be picked by industry, or how will you get them involved in the process and who will have to pay for it?

Mr. Struthers: We're looking at trying to change, fundamentally, the way this program is working, and the key to that is the advice that we get from Manitobans. That kind of detail, we would have to work through when we have a chance to fully go through and analyze the advice that we've got and sit down with our industry partners to see how that could best be done.

But I think it's too early for me to be speculating on whether that sort of thing would apply to schools and others. I think every one of us and every one of the 57 MLAs can find examples in their constituencies of very good work that's being done in the schools funded through the grants that come from the provincial government, come through the system, and are being made available to educate students, to set up programs at universities and at high schools and other schools. There's been some very good work done on that, but it's clear that Manitobans want us to make changes to improve the long-term stability of this recycling program.

Just to exhibit how committed I am to following through on my word to the member opposite, can I table for the member the signed copy of the accord?

Mrs. Stefanson: Just with respect, as I understand, one of the potential provisions in the regulations is for the payment of salaries and other costs of government for the administration of and enforcement of the sort of various regulations. I think in Ontario they allow for up to 2 percent to 5 percent of administration costs. Who will pay for those? Does that mean that industry is going to be paying for government salaries in the department to pay for this program? Like, how does that work?

Mr. Struthers: As it stands now, the fund that is funded by the 2 percent levy, it pays for the administration costs. The Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation and the provincial government both understand that the goal is to keep those admin costs down and the service up.

Mr. Andrew Swan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Part of what we're saying as we go into a new program is that the industry is in the best position to determine what those costs would be, what the costs of the program would be overall, and then they can make some decisions on revenue. They can make some decisions appropriately to make sure that they have a revenue stream that makes this service available to all Manitobans.

Our real role becomes one of the regulator in compliance and making sure that the plans are followed, that the benefits are accruing to Manitobans through the service.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Stefanson: I would think that part of the role of government would also be in the way of public education when it comes to the importance of recycling within our province as well. As I understand, it could be part of the regulations or it's maybe being considered that industry or other stakeholders outside of government pick up the costs of public education when it comes to this.

I'm just wondering if the minister could indicate who will be paying for the public education. Is there going to be a cost? If so, how much to industry and other stakeholders?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Acting Chairperson, first of all, we currently cover the costs of—any kind of regulatory costs that we come by. That is clearly our responsibility and that will remain our purview even when the program changes.

It's early and there's still discussions going on and considering the advice that we've got from Manitobans, but we could ask the stewardship board to pay for some of the costs of promotion. We can talk to them about that role, but like I said, we need to really fully analyze what the people of Manitoba have said when they've had their chance to kick at this. We need to incorporate that. So those kinds of things still need to be worked out as we transition into a new and improved system.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the minister very much. I just hope that, as we're moving forward here, that we don't get into cumbersome regulations that are very, you know, difficult and are not clearly defined for various members of the community, and that through all of this process we keep the right objective in mind and that is to reduce the amount of waste going into our landfills. If anywhere along the way we're looking at—I hope we won't get caught up in a process of not giving people incentives,

providing incentives to various organizations to participate in this. I think that would be very unsettling and so I hope the minister will endeavour to move forward with the regulatory process keeping those cautionary notes in mind.

Mr. Struthers: I think that's good advice from the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). She's put her finger on something that is really important to me, and that is minimizing the amount of waste in the first place, before it ever has to be recycled or has to be left to be disposed of in a landfill site.

I'll just very quickly talk about something that really, really irks me and that is every Christmas, or every January 17, when it's my five-year-old's birthday and I have to work my way through 14 pounds of styrofoam and plastic and cardboard before I get to a little wee toy. Industry is in a very good position to work with us to reduce the amount of stuff that we use to package toys and everything else that we like in society. So we've got to get to that before it becomes a recycling problem.

So I agree with what the Member for Tuxedo said about that.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I understand the minister is the lead minister on providing a solution to the major problems of erosion along the Winnipeg River in the area of Sagkeeng, erosion which threatens the road and the school and has the potential to create a lot of problems there. So I would ask what the minister is doing with respect to this, and what his intentions are.

Mr. Struthers: I don't mind being the lead minister on things that I'm the lead minister for, but in this particular case, it's not our responsibility. But I do know the area that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is referencing because when I was in the area out at Sagkeeng, I, too, was toured to the gentleman's house that had seen the "banky" road. He was clearly frustrated and I would be, too. I toured the area, brought the issue to the—at that time the chief asked me to bring it to the attention of the minister responsible for Hydro because the chief and council believe that it's a Hydro issue. I believe that Water Stewardship plays a role in this sort of a portfolio as well.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I think I got mentioned yesterday in my colleague's Estimates because I had made the trip out there to check out the damage.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I was assured yesterday that the Minister of Conservation was the lead minister on this file, and that Minister Lathlin was going to approach you very strongly in this respect, as the lead minister. So, I suggest that you see what you can do to sort out the confusion and, clearly, are you suggesting that the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro is the lead minister here?

An Honourable Member: It's a federal issue.

Mr. Struthers: Don't bring them into it. That would not be helpful. I don't want to get involved in the tennis match back and forth between the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) and my colleague from River Heights. I'm not the lead minister. I viewed the scene that the member is bringing forward. There was a contention by the chief that it was a Manitoba Hydro issue, but I think the member needs to look elsewhere and talk to other colleagues of mine to establish who, exactly, he should be bringing this problem to the attention of.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, my understanding is that the minister himself went to the area and found some disturbing facts about the erosion, and I would ask which lead minister did he approach to resolve this issue? Or has he not approached anybody?

Mr. Struthers: My understanding is that the Member for River Heights should be asking for some advice from the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick). I hated to do it to you. But that would be the avenue I think the Member for River Heights takes.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. I will continue the chase around to find out who's responsible.

Is the Minister of Conservation responsible for issues surrounding the Hecla Island causeway or not?

Mr. Struthers: It depends on the angle upon which the member is coming at this from? If there's an environment licence involved, if it's a regulatory question that he has, then, yes, he's come to the right place.

* (16:50)

Mr. Gerrard: I seem to remember getting a letter from the minister with regard to the die-off of dead carp in the Hecla Island causeway, and I had written to the Premier (Mr. Doer) because it was not clear to me who was responsible in that instance. I did get a letter back from the minister. I think in this case the minister didn't look hard enough or understand hard enough. Carp are pretty hard to kill. It's not a routine

die-off. I would ask the minister whether the water was ever tested for toxins from the algae or whether the carp were ever tested for toxins.

Mr. Struthers: The member should know that issues having to do with water quality, fish habitat, need to be addressed to the Minister of Water Stewardship.

Our folks are certainly out on the landscape. We have natural resource officers up and down every creek and stream and forest and all around every corner of the province. So we work quite often together with our colleagues in Water Stewardship. So if we see something happening we can and we do report that to the proper authorities.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell me what role he has or doesn't have with regard to the South Tobacco Creek project?

Mr. Struthers: From the aspect of environmental licence that is necessary, then our role is quite clear, that we would be involved with that. If the member's questions have to do with the construction of the drain or anything of that nature, or water quality or fish habitat, then that would be Water Stewardship that he could talk with.

I believe there's a role there with the conservation district, if my memory serves me correctly. The Conservation Districts program is clearly within the purview of Water Stewardship.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell me whether there's any funding through his department or through the conservation districts going to South Tobacco Creek?

Mr. Struthers: Strictly speaking, our role isn't to fund those kinds of projects unless the—sorry, just to finish that—that would be a question either at the Water Stewardship level through Conservation Districts or through Infrastructure, if they've applied for money there. They may have, and I'll check this for the member, if they have applied through Sustainable Development Innovations Fund or something like that, then we may have given them a small amount of money. But I'd have to get back to the member on that.

Mr. Gerrard: In looking at cleaning up Killarney Lake, a project which might or may not involve conservation districts, but might well, would the minister see any role for himself and his department?

Mr. Struthers: Again, Water Stewardship would be the lead on that but our role, again, would be as the regulator. We passed the phosphorus regulation that

would play a role in limiting the amount of phosphorus into that lake. We work with the municipalities in the terms of their water and wastewater, their infrastructure, and work with them in terms of controlling the nutrients that enter our lakes and rivers and streams, including this lake.

But our role would be as the regulator.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, it seems you have a larger role in terms of the Delta Marsh where you are, according to this, described as being quite involved. Delta Marsh has had problems for many years, so is there a long-run goal to actually restore the marsh to something related to its historic magnificence?

Mr. Struthers: I was really very pleased last year, last summer, to join with the folks from the University of Manitoba. We had given them a grant to continue I think some of the very good research that they do there at the Delta Marsh. I had the opportunity to check out the marsh and the southern part of Lake Manitoba, take a look at all of the different things that are going on there. We have a wildlife management area in that neck of the woods that has special rules that help to protect this marsh. We work in conjunction with Ducks Unlimited in terms of marsh and protection of the marsh.

Along those lines, one of the real threats is the carp that stir up, kick up all of the dirt, dredge up everything from the bottom. They have had a phenomenal impact on that marsh from decades ago, when Hollywood stars would come out and get their picture taken, shot with a line of ducks and a string of fish, to now where the carp have moved in and pretty much taken over. We've been looking for ways that we can work with whether it would be Ducks Unlimited or the Delta Marsh Field Station run through the University of Manitoba, looking for ways in which we can minimize the impact of this invasive species.

So we do play a role there and we're very pleased to do that with others.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. Will the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I'm just wanting to step back to the questions regarding gaming. I'd asked the minister a couple of questions yesterday on that file, and I just have one complementary question to that.

In August of 2006, the minister responsible for the Manitoba Gaming Control Act, Minister Chomiak, indicated that the Province was in negotiations with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to create a \$20-million economic development fund, which the minister referenced yesterday. That would be financed by the provincial lotteries profits. In November, 2006, the agreement was signed.

Can the minister please provide some details of this funding agreement that was established, how that agreement will work?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I would like to give the member a bit of a background on the First Peoples economic growth fund. Actually, in December of '05, our government and the Manitoba AMC signed a letter of understanding. There was an agreement to go forward with a feasibility study for the creation of a First Nations' gaming corporation.

In that LOU, there was also agreement to do a market study of the Manitoba gaming market. Also, when that was done, we had agreed to look at the feasibility of establishing and developing an economic development fund. So, in March of '06, there was approval in principle to go ahead with a five-year program to allocate funds to this economic fund, and that would begin this year, '07-08. That funding would be based on a percentage of the previous year's net provincial gaming revenue.

As I said yesterday, over five years it will be a little over \$20 million, and that's where we're at now. I think the crucial point where we're at now is trying to develop some sort of a governance structure. I understand last week, or this week, there was a call for a board of directors to serve on this board. I happen to have seen that paper yesterday, but I gather it even contains criteria, qualifications of said board members.

Once that is finished, that particular corporation will go about finishing the ways on how that corporation will be structured.

There will also be other program criteria developed. For example, how much do we loan a First Nation or whom do we loan to? What qualifications and criteria would they have to satisfy before getting whatever from this economic growth fund. So that's where it is right now. It's really not operational yet because, as I said, the governance structure is still being developed.

Mrs. Rowat: Would the minister please share the names of the directors that will be on that board? Have they been appointed?

Mr. Lathlin: On September 29, there was an advertisement in the media, in a newspaper, calling for board members, and board responsibilities are outlined. The criteria for board members are outlined, and the application deadline is October 26, so I don't know who are going to be the board members yet.

Mrs. Rowat: Would individuals be able to apply on their own, or will they be asked to apply through another agency or organization? I'm wondering if they'll apply through a band, et cetera, and actually while I'm on that, who will be making the selection of the board of directors? Who will be making the decision on who serves on that board?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, I can read from the advertisement here. It says: Fund governance. The fund will be managed by a board of directors consisting of five members, one of whom will serve as chair.

An Honourable Member: Who appoints them?

Mr. Lathlin: Let me get to that. All members of the board will be jointly appointed by AMC and the Manitoba government.

Mrs. Rowat: You indicated that they will be appointed by the Manitoba government. Who within—

Mr. Lathlin: Jointly.

Mrs. Rowat: Jointly with—can you clarify that?

Mr. Lathlin: AMC, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and the Manitoba government.

Mrs. Rowat: Who will be the representative from the Province?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, at this time, I don't know.

Mrs. Rowat: October 26 is the deadline for applications to be sent in, and there is no selection

committee in place to make the decision of who the board members will be?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, as I indicated two or three times yesterday, the questions that the member is asking, they're not related to Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. This is what the Estimates process is all about. Now I know that I agreed to, at the start of Estimates yesterday, general questions asked in a more global way. That's fine. But, when I get asked questions repeatedly for other departments, I feel awkward to answer on behalf of another minister, and yet I feel obligated to give some answers, information that I know of for sure. Information that I'm not really clear on, well, I don't feel comfortable giving any responses. The best advice I can give to the member is to ask the minister that's responsible for his file.

Mrs. Rowat: I can appreciate what the minister is saying, that there's an overlap of responsibilities in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and to other jurisdictions. I can appreciate that. As the critic, knowing that I have to work with my colleagues in the different areas, I do appreciate what you're saying to that point. But I would just ask that if and when the minister does learn of who makes the decisions on the governance structure, if he could share that with me at some point.

My question is with regard to the \$20-million economic development fund. Does the minister know of any of those dollars have flowed at this point?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, yes, I can advise the member that \$500,000 has been placed in trust with the Communities Economic Development Fund for the start-up costs. We anticipated that the fall of 2007 would be the start-up to try to operationalize the fund. But, seeing as they're still advertising, and the deadline is October 26, I think I said October 26, so we're likely looking at, I don't know, November, December.

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate the response from the minister on \$500,000 being put in trust. Has there been any money spent on administration or setting up, sort of, a structure to address the \$20-million revenue fund?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, as far as I know, there hasn't been any expenditure on the part of the rest of the \$20 million. But, from the \$500,000 that was set aside for start-up costs, I understand that a small amount has been expended for the purpose of

advertising, such as this advertisement here calling for board members.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Rowat: In 2003, in November, I believe, the federal government and the Province announced that a study would be undertaken on a route for a road to Nunavut. Four routes were identified from Lynn Lake to Rankin Inlet, Thompson to Rankin Inlet, Gillam to Rankin Inlet, and a common corridor, including a link to Churchill. Does the minister have any information that he can share on the progress of this study, when it will be released, and that type of thing?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I can indicate to the member that, early in our first term in government, our government signed a memorandum of understanding, I believe, with the Nunavut government, and that MOU, basically, was an understanding to co-operate with each other amongst the two governments for the development of Nunavut, well, and also Manitoba.

Since then, one of the initiatives that has been undertaken is looking at the feasibility of having a road system of some sort from Manitoba to Nunavut. That's been a long process because it's such a huge project if it ever goes ahead, but what's happened so far is there's been a consultant that was hired by the groups from a joined group, Nunavut and Manitoba government. So far, that consultant company, I'm told, has gone to the communities who are lobbying to have the road located around their communities or nearby their communities. I understand this consulting group is, I'm not sure if they're finished, but I would think by now they would be finished with their visiting communities, listening to people as they lobby them for the route.

I believe there are two or three routes that have been lobbied by the different communities. At this time, there's really been no decision to select a particular route, and that's all I know. I attend meetings occasionally with representatives from Nunavut and Hudson's Bay line route. The last meeting I was at was in Rankin Inlet, I believe, last year.

Mrs. Rowat: When I was the economic development officer within the southwest region, we did attend an economic development meeting in Thompson, and this was a topic that was discussed at that point. There was some major interest in trying to give this full consideration to the federal and provincial government. Obviously, a new road would

provide unmentionable opportunities and changes to a community, but, understanding that the economic challenges of putting in a road are great, I strongly encourage the minister to work with the communities as the minister has indicated he is. But I was wondering if the minister has indicated, based on his involvement in the meetings, have you a preference of where you would like to see these roads go.

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, I'd like that road to go by The Pas.

No, I don't have a preference. There's a consultative process that's going on right now, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the consulting group as to what route they would recommend to the group.

Mrs. Rowat: I wasn't trying to catch the minister. I just thought, just based on your experience, you would have a preference just based on those meetings, but I appreciate his comments.

Recently, when I was in the Thompson area, there was an issue that was brought forward, and there has been several correspondence sent to me as the critic on this issue. It's regarding increasing quota for commercial pickerel fisheries. This also came up at NACC, as well, in regard to fishing challenges and issues, but the issue specific that I'm asking about is the commercial fisheries from Grand Rapids Fisheries Co-Op and the Norway House fisheries co-op, the MCN and the NCN have been pursuing the government for several years to increase commercial fishing quotas. The minister is nodding, so I know he's quite familiar with the issue.

I guess what I'm looking for is some direction from this minister on where the government is going on this and whether there's support for the examination of this strategy. The Lake Winnipeg advisory board has supported the request for the Grand Rapids Fisheries Co-Op to increase to 20 percent the present pickerel tolerance of 10 percent on the total winter quota held by 35 of the 107 licensed fishers of the Grand Rapids Fishermen's Co-op. There is no pickerel tolerance proposed on the summer and fall quotas of Grand Rapids' commercial fishers, and the full quota may be caught as pickerel. So that's just some background on what was shared with me by individuals that are directly affected by this issue.

So they're wanting to know if the Government of Manitoba and provincial fisheries officials have been engaged with the co-ops and the First Nations who

are directly affected in looking at ways to examine proposals of the fishers' increased pickerel quotas, including examination of the Manitoba's buy-back and transfer of pickerel quotas. That's a mouthful, but I'm just wanting to know if the minister can give me some background on what he's been hearing and if he can share what the position of the provincial government may be on this issue.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, yes, I'm quite familiar with that story, particularly the one from Norway House. I've met several times with the Norway House fishermen, and their request is to increase their quota. I've supported them in the past. However, not being the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), I have talked to my colleague the Minister of Water Stewardship, and I understand at present she's still trying to resolve the situation at Norway House and Grand Rapids. So I think that's as far as I can go with that while I'm trying to answer that question. The Minister of Water Stewardship is fully responsible for fishing; however, I have met with her. I've given her my constituents' concerns and with the hope that she can accommodate the Norway House fishermen.

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chair, I'm now going to go into an area that is obviously very sensitive and is disturbing as well, and just wanting to touch base with the minister on the protection of vulnerable women and children in Manitoba. I know that last Estimates we talked about violence issues and talked about the Stolen Sisters report and the recommendations that were put forward through the report that was collected by and presented to the government by the Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba. You know, that report is timely. There are a number of recommendations that I think are still outstanding, and, based on the situations that have been occurring that have received media attention lately, I believe that these situations have been occurring for many years. In all of our communities the exploitation of children is not something that we necessarily want to hear about or learn about, but, unfortunately, it is there. It's of critical importance that we deal with these issues and develop some solutions and partnerships with families and communities that experience these types of tragedies.

* (15:10)

In my role as Aboriginal and Northern Affairs critic, my comments will be specific to the communities that I'm presently representing as critic.

But I do want to put on the record that I do know and appreciate that this is an issue that faces all communities. But we'll focus on the area that I have before me, the exploitation of children, especially what has been appearing in the news media, in Brokenhead, specifically, and other communities who have come forward since that time.

I'd like to ask the minister what his comments are and what assurances he can give me and to members of the community at large that he is working with government and working with the community to address these issues. These young women in Brokenhead, these young women in Winnipeg who were being exploited by a man or several men through a means, through a home, these young women were 11, 12, 14 years of age. It appears that they're looking for some type of guidance; they're looking for some type of means from this government that there is some type of mechanism in place that will address these issues.

So I just want to ask the minister if he can put on the record what he has been doing in consultation with his colleagues in government to deal with these types of issues.

Mr. Lathlin: I would like to indicate to the member that I am deeply concerned with the stories that I've been reading, the incidents that have been taking place with respect to women in general, but, in this particular case, Aboriginal women and Aboriginal children. Being an Aboriginal person, of course, I always have the attitude that I have a personal concern. I have personal, I'm looking for a word, personal interests that Aboriginal people, men and women, in this case women be treated fairly with respect and equal opportunities all around. That's always been my goal because I always think that that's the way everybody likes to be treated, including myself.

I am committed to working with any group, whether it's with the Department of Indian Affairs, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and all of their affiliates. We are funding Mothers of Red Nations, currently. We've also had input into the legislation that was proposed federally regarding the matrimonial real property on reserves. There are always these questions related to family law and domestic situations. So I try to concern myself by going to meetings, interdepartmental meetings, and even at the national level whenever I get the opportunity.

In fact, we just had a National Aboriginal Women's Summit in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland. I think it was in June, where Aboriginal women from across the country gathered to talk about women's issues. It was quite a powerful meeting. I think a lot of people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, learned a great deal from that summit. In fact, our delegation volunteered to host the next National Aboriginal Women's Summit, and there's work already under way to help organize that summit that's going to be happening here in Winnipeg.

So there's also the matter of Bill C-31; that's also always been a concern to me. Federal legislation, not legislation that was proposed by First Nations peoples, but just white governments themselves sponsored that legislation. I happen to look at it as an extermination law because, eventually, that's what it will do. We know when you look at the definition of what they refer to as 6162 in band membership, eventually, there will be no treaty Indian, according to the definition of the Indian Act, if that legislation continues to exist. That's what Aboriginal people are concerned about these days, besides the day-to-day stuff like housing, health, incarceration, women being exploited every which way, young children being in care.

I happen to believe, myself, that we have far too many of our Aboriginal kids, children in care. But I also believe in the direction that our government has taken with respect to the devolution of Child and Family Services to First Nations people because I truly believe, and I'll just give one example. Back home where I went to school, I went to school with about 40 Indian kids from the reserve, and none of the kids that I went to school with, except for two of us, managed to get to grade 9. Everybody else had dropped out. So, by that time, there was this push for Indian control of Indian education. I was a staffer at the OCN and Swampy Cree. I helped chiefs organize for that movement, and, eventually, Indians were able to take effective control over their education.

You know what happened? Up until 1972 in The Pas, we didn't have anybody from the reserve graduate from the local high school; 1972, and that's not a long time ago, whereas the other people have been doing it for years and years. That's why they have tons of people in universities and finishing high school and so on, compared to Indians who, until 1972, just the way the system was run in The Pas, nobody graduated from the system there. Well, when the Indians took over control of their education program, now I can attend a graduation ceremony on

the reserve where I see 20, 22 and 24 people graduating from high school. That's a far cry from what was happening prior to 1972. You know why that happened? Because Indians finally took control.

* (15:20)

In the case of child welfare, Madam Chair—and that's why some of these incidents are happening today—part of it, anyway, can be attributed to kids being fostered out of country, being adopted out of country, out of the Aboriginal community, a lot of dysfunction. Residential schools the same way, it produced a lot of dysfunctional people. That's not to blame everything on those two, but it sure contributed quite a bit to the situation our people find themselves in today. So, with Indian children at the time, up until the time that Edwin Kimelman reviewed the child welfare system in Manitoba, there was, quite frankly, no control over, you know, no parental control over children by Indians. They would snatch up the kids and bring them into town, and the next thing you know they're out of province or out of Canada. So that's why I firmly believe that Aboriginal parents will have to bring up their own children. If that's not possible, I also firmly believe that the Aboriginal community is capable of bringing up the children so that in the end those children will grow up to be, you know, not end up in jails or drop out of school or sick, or end up on the streets in Winnipeg.

That's why I will never deviate from that position. I think in the long run that, if we look after our children well, maybe the number of women being exploited will start to decrease.

Mrs. Rowat: Based on what the minister is saying, it's raising several other questions regarding education and children in care, which I will get to in a second. But I'd like to ask the minister, based on the recommendations in the Stolen Sisters report, that is a report that we're looking for outcomes, and a couple of the areas of recommendation, I'm not sure if government has addressed.

So I'm asking the minister if he could share what he knows about any consultations or any processes through consultation that have been done to ensure that Aboriginal women are being heard in the province. What is being done by this government to ensure that Aboriginal women are being heard so that information sharing is being co-ordinated in areas such as addressing the safety and well-being of women and children, and women and young girls?

So can the minister share, based on his involvement at the Cabinet table, what he's hearing about initiatives that are moving forward and providing information on, in areas of safety and welfare or well-being of Aboriginal women and girls?

Mr. Lathlin: Well, Madam Chair, I can indicate to the member that there are various ways, programs and services that we have in government, funding programs and services for Aboriginal women. I can't remember all of them, but I sit in different committees, Neighbourhoods Alive!, for one thing, Healthy Living. Through those two committees we fund different programs geared towards improving the lives of Aboriginal women.

So we are committed to working with women's groups, not just in Winnipeg, but throughout the province. Occasionally, I meet with women in The Pas. I've been to at least two meetings in The Pas where women were gathering, so I continue to play a role when it comes to trying to improve the lives of Aboriginal women.

Mrs. Rowat: I, too, have attended Take Back the Night in The Pas and have heard first-hand the stories of women in The Pas and area who have lost loved ones, so I can appreciate they have a strong group of supports within that community. I believe that it was their first annual last year that I was able to attend. It was a great success, and I think that it empowered the families to be able to share their stories. I think when you share stories you gain strength and, from that, solutions are shared from within, so I think that these types of things have to continue.

I would expect the government to be moving forward on these recommendations of Stolen Sisters which, I believe, are still outstanding, especially with the seriousness of the crimes that are out there. When 12 Aboriginal women who worked in the sex trade were murdered, it's raising serious concerns for family as well as communities out there that not enough is being done to provide supports and resources to keep women and young girls safe.

I encourage the minister to continue to lobby and to be a voice at the Cabinet table for that. I believe that we talked yesterday about the Aboriginal Cabinet committee, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Cabinet committee. It was learned that that committee hasn't met as often as it could, and they are looking at restructuring and making it a more functional and better process. I believe that that's one

venue or one avenue that would provide Mothers of Red Nations and other groups to come and share their ideas and solutions.

With regard to children in care, statistically, 85 percent of children in the care of Child And Family Services are First Nation or Métis, so you're right that there are some serious challenges within the community to reverse that. I think there's work being done to ensure that the interests of family play a key role, and culture.

There's much to do, obviously, and that is being shared on the government side. We hear it, but we want to ensure that, ultimately, the best interests of the child are being considered. I do believe that the minister and government are trying to work towards that, and I do know that they have major challenges before them in getting there.

Stories like Adam Keeper in Pauingassi. Madam Chair, we need to be looking at those tragedies and assuring the families in the community that, you know, six-year-old Adam Keeper's life was important. We need to learn from that and move forward and do what we can to ensure that tragedies like that do not happen again.

Can the minister share with me what his role has been on the government side in advising and working with Cabinet to ensure that tragedies like this do not happen again?

* (15:30)

Mr. Lathlin: Well, that's a pretty general question, but let me say this: I participate in the department through interdepartmental committees. I participate in many committees that are geared towards trying to improve the lives of Aboriginal people, whether they be women or children. For example, we have an initiative called Closing the Gap where we have, in partnership with other organizations, spent quite a bit of money trying to improve the lives of Aboriginal people. The one thing that I always come back to when I'm sitting at the Cabinet table or in the committee is that we have to concentrate on education. I believe that education is the key to, you know, helping us alleviate some of the problems we are encountering today.

I believe that, when I look around, people who I went to school with, went to high school and went to university, you know what? For the most part those people are leading good lives. They look after their children. They have nice homes, and they drive nice cars. They just generally have a good life. On top of

that they're healthy; they're not in jail; they're not in hospitals. They're certainly not on the streets, and they encourage their kids because they themselves have learned the value of education.

So, you know, Madam Chair, like myself, when my daughter was growing up, she used to get tired of me always talking about education. She would tell her friends when they would come over, don't say hi to my dad because he's going to start talking about education. So that's the kind of environment that my daughter grew up in. I have a little three-year-old granddaughter now, and the same thing, you know, when she comes over weekends to our place when I'm home in The Pas, I try to teach her Cree. I try to teach her, as young as she is, spiritual things. I think I do that because I'm hoping that when she starts to have children or when she grows up she'll go to high school and, hopefully, go to university, and she'll have a good life and not end up in the situation that a good many of our people are finding themselves in today. So I believe that education is No. 1. I still believe that today, and that's the way out of the situation that we find ourselves in today.

I kind of lost the other theme I was going to follow, but maybe I'll stop there. Perhaps get back to me.

Mrs. Rowat: I share the wisdom of the minister in that preaching and talking about the importance of education as critical. I have two children as well, 12 and, no, she's 11. She'd be angered if I said 12. She's 11 and my son is 13, and we talk about the importance of education and what you want to do when you grow up. I agree that you have to foster that. You have to encourage that, and you have to provide opportunities to learn outside of the norm. I think that it is important in the well-being of our children to understand and appreciate diversity and opportunities that are available. So I agree with the minister on those statements.

In regard to standards that the minister was saying, you know, talking about, ensuring the education system is there and is providing what our children need to grow and learn and to enjoy those opportunities, there have been reports that several Manitoba First Nations are adopting standards testing as a way of improving the quality of education in their communities. Under a pilot program, students from grade 1 to 8 will have to write standards exams in areas such as math and language arts. Is your government in favour of standards testing?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, our government, through the Department of Education has entered into an agreement with four First Nation education authorities, two from the north and two from the south. I believe the outcomes they're looking for is that we graduate more kids out of high school by working with those First Nations. One of the things that we're working on is standards. I don't think the whole program is based on writing exams. I believe much of it has to do with improving the standards at the reserve level, because right now, if you go to school on a reserve your resources are very limited because, again, you're at the mercy of the federal government as to the amount of funding they're going to give you. If you look at the schools in Winnipeg, for example, they have all kinds of resources; they pool their resources. They regionalize their resources in order to accommodate as many students as they can. Well, in the north, you have a school and you don't have labs; you don't have resource teachers, special needs; in other words, they're very limited, and sometimes I think they're programmed to fail.

Now, some of the talk that is going on right now, not necessarily in this pilot, but some of the First Nations leaders are starting to talk about asking the provincial government education people to, kind of, give them a guiding hand in our developing education standards at the reserve level, everything, from the qualifications of teachers that we're getting at the reserve level, upgrading and teacher training throughout the school year, number of school days that are actually happening at the reserve level. Also, some First Nations leaders are leaning toward more math and science programs because they want their kids to end up in the science programs at the university level. So there's quite a bit of discussion going on right now in terms of trying to improve the education outcomes of First Nations people.

I guess one of them would be writing exams. I don't have a problem with that, our kids writing exams to make sure that they're not passed on to the higher grade without completely completing the requirements of whatever level they're at.

The other thing that we've done is with the previous Minister Prentice. We had a meeting with him a year ago and he was quite interested in working with our government for the purpose of improving education at the reserve level. He was telling us about the programs they were running in British Columbia. So our staff went to British Columbia to meet with those people and they came

back with a report. Our senior people have been meeting with the senior people at the Indian Affairs in Ottawa. When the new minister was appointed, Chuck Strahl, on August 20 we met with him here in Winnipeg. Again, he too was interested in following up on Prentice's priority of education. So he made a commitment that he'd be willing to meet with our key ministers in the Manitoba Government with a view to, maybe, coming up with a more innovative way of delivering education programs on the reserve. One of them could be regionalizing resources by tribal council. We've just at the start of those discussions. There would have to be a lot of consultation work being done with First Nations to make sure that they buy into the concept of regionalizing programs into tribal council areas, for example.

* (15:40)

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chair, my next line of questioning was regarding the B.C. model. I'm quite familiar with the background on that as well. I know that in 2006, Bill C-34, it was called First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education Act, which was introduced in the House of Commons by Honourable Prentice, the minister. I do believe that I have had discussions with staff in the federal government, as well, regarding this. We've also been in contact with the Province of British Columbia on this model as well.

So your perspective on the approach taken in British Columbia is positive? You would consider that type of model as an option or a possibility within the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Lathlin: Our staff found out that, when they went to examine the program, there that some of it—I mean, I guess, the concepts are good, except that when it comes to federal funding the funds are pretty scarce. In our case, we would want the federal government to partner with us if we're going to embark on a more innovative program.

Mrs. Rowat: I do believe in British Columbia there were negotiations, and there was an agreement struck. So it would be a province-by-province negotiation, is my understanding. I encourage the minister to continue to follow this. We'll be continuing to track this. I'm wondering, are you moving forward in considering this? Are you going to continue your discussions with the federal minister, and have you struck a committee to look at this, a First Nations committee or a northern communities committee on this?

Mr. Lathlin: Yes, we have an interdepartmental committee that's been working on this. They have also met with the Ottawa senior staff. In my case, as I said, I met with Minister Prentice, and that's what got the ball rolling. So Minister Strahl is again interested in continuing where Minister Prentice had left off.

I think I will be in Ottawa in November, sometime, where I'm told that Minister Strahl will be. Usually, when I go to these meetings, I try to corner the minister somewhere and then talk to him about our Manitoba issues. That's one of several issues that I'll be talking to him about when I meet with him in Ottawa.

As well, he's made a commitment to come back to Manitoba, as I said earlier, to meet with key ministers from our government with a view to, maybe, entering into some sort of an agreement to implement new programs.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me who is on this interdepartmental committee? Is it ministers, deputy ministers, and which departments are involved?

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, that committee consists of the deputy ministers of my department, the departments of Competitiveness, Training and Trade; Education, Citizenship and Youth; and Advanced Education and learning.

Mrs. Rowat: There are a number of other questions that I would have liked to have had the opportunity to discuss with the minister, but I believe that my time allocation for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs is almost done.

I just wanted to close on that I've enjoyed the role that I've been put into. I've actually made a strong effort to get out to as many communities as possible. I have enjoyed the invitation, as I said earlier, to attend MKO's AGA. I've met with AMC and southern chiefs. I've had the opportunity to meet with NACC and attended their conference and have met with the president on a number of occasions. I've also had the opportunity to meet with a lot of community leaders including The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, Island Lake, various other communities. I think that the north is a treasure, and there is so much opportunity. I believe that in my role I will continue to work with the minister, and also to hold the minister accountable for different issues that I think are important to the growth and prosperity of the north.

I look forward to continuing in my role so that we can continue the debate on the vision for the Aboriginal First Nations and northern communities. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister, do you have a response?

Mr. Lathlin: Well, Madam Chair, I thank the member for those nice words.

So, do we go line-by-line, now?

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you, and I forgot something that is really, really important, and that is to thank the staff for taking the time to spend two days with us in the Chamber. I look forward to continuing my relationship with staff on the issues that are important to their areas of expertise.

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed we're ready to proceed with the resolutions? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$27,286,800 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,821,900 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 19.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$168,100 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 1.(a) Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 19.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 19.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a

sum not exceeding \$1,139,800 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Executive, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

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

Committee is in recess.

The committee recessed at 3:50 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:55 p.m.

**COMPETITIVENESS, TRAINING
AND TRADE**

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I do. I'm very pleased to have the privilege of providing opening remarks for the new Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, Madam Chair. The creation of this department more closely aligns government skills, development and training efforts with our industry partners and profiles the importance of human resource development and training to meet the needs of the marketplace.

Madam Chair, it also brings together the continuing efforts of our government to build the international relationships and competitive initiatives here in Manitoba with the growing necessity of ensuring a skilled and educated workforce.

To go about talking about what's been going on, it's important to know the recent economic performance. In 2006, Manitoba's solid economic performance outpaced Canada's on several fronts:

overall economic growth of 3.1 as compared to 2.7 percent nationally; 21 percent growth in construction work, almost double Canada's average; growth in total exports of 12 percent, the highest among provinces and by far above the Canadian average of 0.7 percent; a 22 percent increase in building permits, more than double the national increase of 9 percent; capital investment growth of 14 percent compared to less than 9 percent for Canada as a whole.

Business leaders have stressed that labour force expansion is the critical factor to competitiveness. With employment growth outstripping growth in labour supply, unemployment declined to 26,500, the lowest level in 29 years. Compared to the peak of 51,000 in 1993, the number of unemployed has almost been cut in half.

In 2006 Manitoba's economy generated 6,700 jobs, raising employment to a record 587,000 people. The rate of job creation doubled last year to 1.2 percent from 0.6 percent in 2005, with private-sector employment increasing by 5,900, while public-sector jobs increased by 800. Since 1995 Manitoba has created a cumulative 79,300 jobs.

Manitoba's labour market is expected to remain healthy, with unemployment remaining fairly stable at about 4.3 percent in 2007 and 4.4 percent in 2008.

Manitoba's new 60 percent income tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba will encourage our youth to establish their careers in our province and continue to grow the population.

Investments in Aboriginal education and labour force development are delivering remarkable results in Manitoba. Aboriginal student enrolment in universities and colleges is up 77 percent and 59 percent respectively since 1999. Aboriginal apprenticeship registrations have tripled since 1999. The number of employed off-reserve Aboriginal people jumped by an impressive 30 percent between 2001 and 2005.

Manufacturing in Manitoba showed great strength in 2006 despite the competitive pressures of the Canadian dollar and some weakness in U.S. markets. Manitoba manufacturers shipped over \$14 billion in goods last year, setting a new all-time record high. Manitoba's exports' performance was among the best in the province in 2006. The value of Manitoba's foreign merchandise exports increased

12.3 percent to \$11.3 billion. Canada's total exports were up slightly at 0.7 percent.

Globally, Manitoba foreign exports grew significantly in both U.S. and non-U.S. markets. Gains were largely concentrated in the primary industries. Modest growth is anticipated in Manitoba exports in 2007 due to the weaker U.S. economic outlook combined with stable or lower prices for primary goods.

What we're doing is a number of programs that we're focussing on to grow the economy. Industry training partnerships, the sector councils have proven to be one of the most successful tools available in Manitoba to address the skill requirements of today's work force. Manitoba's sector councils currently represent over a third of the work force or 185,000 people. The sector councils deliver training to approximately 12,000 new and existing workers, an increase of 65 percent from 1999-2000 and increase net about 15 percent a year. We want to continue to partner with the private sector to see how we can invest in the sector councils because they seem to work very, very well.

*(16:00)

Apprenticeship. The apprenticeship training and certification system educates and trains and graduates a number of journeypeople in the skilled trades. We have committed to growing the number of apprenticeship training spaces by 4,000 over the next four years creating new opportunities. Just last week, I believe, Madam Chair, the department announced the establishment of an Apprenticeship Futures Commission, which is mandated to consult the public, business, industry and labour, to look at the apprenticeship certification and related training systems and present a report on how to improve all the factors of the skilled training in Manitoba.

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

In addition to increasing the technical training, we're going to look at different methods of delivery, different options that are out there that we may look at. We're looking at programming to target local populations including the Aboriginal youth, experienced workers, immigrant clients, et cetera, to grow the program.

Hydro Northern Training Initiative continues to play a key role in employment and economic development in the north. It's a multiyear \$60.3 million pre-project training initiative. It's the first large-scale Aboriginal Human Resources

strategy in northern Manitoba to be planned, designed and implemented by the communities involved.

As of December, 2006, there are 1,800 participants who've been assessed. Since 2001-2002, 1,278 individual trainees have participated in 2,966, or almost 3,000 training and interventions, with 81 percent of the training occurring in the north.

Preparations are underway to construct the 200-megawatt Wuskwatim Generating Station, and these trainees will, hopefully, be involved in the building of that.

Employment Manitoba is the Employment and Training Services Division. It changed its name to Employment Manitoba to, sort of, reflect its vision, mission and goals and the focus of CTT. Employment Manitoba will strengthen our relationships with employers, industry and business community and assist small and medium-sized business to address their human resources needs.

In 2006-2007, Employment Manitoba delivered approximately 57,000 employment services to almost 34,000 individuals. They include supporting almost 10,000 clients and skills development opportunities, adding significant value to our labour market and economy.

Employment Manitoba directly assisted over 11,000 Manitoba employers through a variety of labour market services including over 37,000 job orders placed on the job bank.

Madam Acting Chair, Employment Manitoba developed and administers interim job referral system for the Winnipeg Floodway Expansion and Hydro Wuskwatim projects and has registered over 4,000 job seekers since its inception in June 2005.

As far as manufacturing and capital investment, manufacturing is a vital part of Manitoba's diversified economy accounting for about 12 percent of our output in 2006; renewed and enhanced the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. Capital investments in manufacturing grew by more than 16 percent in Manitoba last year, with a further 30 percent increase expected in 2007. This contrasts sharply with national growth of only 0.1 percent last year and 5.3 percent this year. So companies are investing sharply in our growth.

This year, we're also further enhancing the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit by increasing the refundability to 50 percent. Manitoba is also

paralleling a short-term federal incentive that allows manufacturers and processors to write off machinery and equipment at 50 percent a year. This'll make sure that companies can keep up with the appreciation of the Canadian dollar over the American dollar.

I'm optimistic that we can continue to better private capital investment in Manitoba with the broadening of Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit, a program to include a new 30 percent tax credit for direct investments and eligible emerging enterprises requiring large amounts of capital.

Business immigration. We've got a very successful provincial immigration program. The provincial immigration program for business has done extremely well. Since its inception in October 2000, the PNPB for business has made a significant contribution of Manitoba's growing through immigration strategy. We'll continue to grow on that. There seems to be about 1,359 applicants with about 150 new companies.

We're also working with small business. We're looking at BIZPaL. We're looking at doing e-government in business. We're looking at dropping the small business tax. We went from one of the highest business taxes in the country to one of the smallest. We're looking at how we make small-business and medium-sized business "e's" become much better.

We also work very, very much as far as stimulating business, as far as looking at trade opportunities, marketing the province better, profiling businesses, and so simple things like that. We will continue to work on skills by looking at the Business Start Program, the BizCoach program, trade and investment, and trying to figure out how we can work with the manufacturing.

Madam Acting Chair, one of the things I was pleased about is the manufacturing council providing us with a report, which we were very, very happy to receive, and working towards answering all the recommendations. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Erna Braun): Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, have any opening comments?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, I will, Madam Acting Chairperson. Just a few comments to put on the record, that I'm pleased to have the opportunity to be the critic for the Province of

Manitoba under Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

I've had an interest in this area for many years in regard to having played the role of Finance critic prior to the '03 election, in the province of Manitoba, at least, anyway. Being of business background in the farming community, and having dealt with a number of trade issues as a farm leader across western Canada, I look forward to the opportunities with the minister trying to make Manitoba a better province in regard to our competitiveness, for sure; for the opportunity of making sure that we have sound training facilities for as many of the opportunities as we can in Manitoba; and, where we can't, perhaps doing joint opportunities with other areas as well. Of course, these will be up to the government of the day to make those decisions.

I'd also like to say that the area of Trade is most important and dynamic in Manitoba because we are, of course, located in the central area of Canada. We are right in the middle, basically between, as I always used to say, in relation to exports of grain at least, the equidistant between Vancouver and Montreal. We're not quite in the middle of the country when you take into consideration the Maritimes and that area, but we are very strategically located in regard to those opportunities to the south of us, as well as the north.

If you're looking at equidistances, we're equidistant from the Gulf of Mexico as well. So, with all of the areas of infrastructure that I know are important that I've had the opportunity to speak to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr Lemieux) on in Estimates already, I know that the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Rondeau) will have a sympathetic ear in relation to, I am assuming, the issues of importance of those things in regard to the trade and the competitiveness of Manitoba.

I do want to get into some of the questions that we have. I know that the minister, I believe, asked me earlier if the area of the people in charge of Trade in his department today would have to be here, and I agreed that they didn't. I appreciate his opportunity of making them available for the rest of the Estimates process that we're in.

I'd like to move globally, if we could, on issues dealing with these Estimates, but I just wanted to say, as well, that throughout all of the occurrences in Canada today in regard to particularly Manitoba, with regard to trade, the minister has pointed out a

number of areas where there are important issues to be dealt with, not the least of which can be lost on the fact that our dollar is now equal, on par with the American dollar. We need to do an extremely good job of making sure that we're competitive in those areas. I'm sure that the minister is very aware of that. His department is for sure. I know that with some of the opportunities we have we just need to expand on making sure that we become more competitive than we are today as a province.

We lag behind other provinces in regard to some of the tax rates that we have in regard to investment and on private sector involvement in some of those areas. Of course, the minister knows that 82 percent of the jobs created in Manitoba have been created by small business in the past. I look forward to the minister's answers to some of the questions around many of those areas.

* (16:10)

With that, Madam Acting Chair, I would wish to move forward. I know that the minister's department is divided into many areas from just the supplementaries that he has provided us with, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review of these Departmental Expenditure Estimates which I received over the weekend.

Madam Acting Chairperson, I look forward to having the opportunity to go through the line-by-line opportunities in the various segments of the minister's portfolio and look forward to being enlightened by his answers in regard to the issues that we need to deal with.

With that, Madam Acting Chair, I would close off my opening remarks and look forward to proceeding.

Mr. Rondeau: Would it be all right with the member from the opposition, the critic, if we just sort of have it so that the Trade people show up tomorrow, and if they're done, then they can just be excluded from the process from then on, because they have a project up. So start with tomorrow. If we're finished tomorrow then they can just go away. Would that be acceptable to the critic?

Mr. Maguire: When I spoke to the minister earlier today, I agreed that we would not have the Trade people here today, but they will likely be here for the rest of the session of Estimates. I don't know if it'll go past tomorrow or not. It may, but I'd certainly like to have them here, because, of course, Trade is an integral part of the future of Manitoba. I know that

they are busy. All departments are. There's no doubt about that, for sure, but, if we could make them available tomorrow, I know that there'll be some other questions. Some of my other colleagues may have some areas as well, because I'm not in charge of all of the areas that the minister is in charge of.

I look at the acts that the minister is responsible for in this particular area, and there are a few areas that I have colleagues that may want to ask some questions on as well. So I would concur with the minister in regard to his request and look forward to dealing with Trade issues after today.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Erna Braun): Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us in the Chamber, and once they are seated we will ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance.

Mr. Rondeau: I'd like to introduce the staff that have joined us at the table. We have Hugh Eliasson, who is the deputy minister; Craig Halwachs, who is the manager of the finance department; we have Jim Kilgour, who is the director of Financial Services. I forgot his title.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Erna Braun): It's my understanding from earlier that we will now proceed through the Estimates with a global discussion and that the Trade staff will join us tomorrow.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Maguire: I, too, would like to welcome the staff that are here with us today and look forward to a productive few days of Estimates in regard to this critic responsibility that I have in the minister's area.

I want to say at the outset how pleased I am, and I just wanted to congratulate all of the people in the department who do fine work on behalf of the minister and the people of Manitoba throughout the various areas that the minister is responsible for. I'm looking at page 4 in the Estimates book and the organization chart of his department in regard to all of those areas, and I know how important the area of Trade is in regard to all of these issues. Without training you can't make things that are able to be traded, and if we're not competitive trade becomes

redundant as well. So there's an extreme correlation between all of these areas in regard to making Manitoba a successful province, and, more importantly, providing solid livelihoods for so many of the people in our population that depend on this department to make their living.

Of course, we are an area that depends on trade a great deal, whether it's in the aerospace industry or whether it's in our agricultural communities and whether it's in financial resources because without the trade that goes on our financial-resources sector wouldn't be nearly as important as it is, being one of the major employers in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson, Bonnie Korzeniowski, in the Chair

I want to, however, first get a few housekeeping things out of the road in regard to the process of Estimates that I'm involved in, and it'll be some questions to the minister in regard to staffing and some of those areas. I just wonder if the minister can point out for me the positions that he has in his office that are, I guess, technical support staff or political staff, whichever way you would want to look at it. I wonder if—yes, go ahead.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I'd also have to agree that I've been privileged to work with a number of the staff, and I have to, also, compliment them publicly for their dedication to the province and doing a great job. They have been professional. Many of them have worked a long time in the civil service and they take their job very seriously. So that's wonderful to work with a very professional, good group of people.

As far as my office, the minister's office itself, we have Lisa Rowe, who is the secretary to the minister. We have Cindy Field, who is administrative secretary; Greg Merner, who is my special assistant; and we also have Alison Depauw, who is another administrative secretary.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister give me an indication of how long each of those people have been with him?

Mr. Rondeau: I can get that information for the member. I will endeavour to get that to you within a couple of days.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, Madam Chair; that will be fine. I appreciate the minister being able to do that, move that forward for me.

Can he indicate if there are any of those, as well, while he's doing that, if any of these positions have been recently filled or not.

Mr. Rondeau: No, I understand that the staff, the secretarial staff has been there for a while and there has been nothing filled within the last year.

Mr. Maguire: The minister, I know, has had this particular department added to his responsibilities subsequent to the election, and I am assuming that he can confirm that, that he has just become the minister since the election. I am not looking for a specific date or not.

Mr. Rondeau: That's been added to my responsibilities, the CTT ministry.

Mr. Maguire: Are some of these staffpersons then the same ones that he had in his Energy Mines and other responsibilities as well?

Mr. Rondeau: Some of these were originally from the Industry Department portfolio that I held previously. What happened was, when CTT was formed, not only was the Industry and the Finance put in, but the Trade and the Training components were added. As you said in your preamble, where you're, sort of, bringing businesses; we're looking for skilled workers; we're looking for training, looking for trade growing and marketing their products. What we did was we looked at what the businesses were asking for, and what we've done is put a number of tools that businesses rely on for their future benefit into one ministry. So that's why the human resources, the training, the trade for the export of their goods and the industry, which is the finance and business factors, are all put into one ministry. So far I've had a wonderful, positive response from a lot of the businesses that have had dealings with the ministry.

Mr. Maguire: The minister indicated four persons that are in his department in Competiveness, Training and Trade. I am assuming that he has other staff than these four for his other responsibilities or is there any overlap here?

* (16:20)

Mr. Rondeau: There is no overlap. What we've done is kept them separate. So I have a separate office staff and support staff in Science, Technology, Energy and Mines branch and ministry.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, can the minister then supply me with the names of the staff that would work in the deputy minister's office as well?

Mr. Rondeau: Hugh Eliasson is the deputy minister. I understand that he's been there for many years. I think he's the longest-serving deputy in all of government. I keep on saying that. I haven't found someone who's spent longer.

We have Gail Lemoine and Barb Wild. Gail is the secretary to the deputy minister and Barb Wild is the administrative secretary.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for that information.

Can he give me a number in regard to the staff that's employed in his department?

Mr. Rondeau: There's 407.3 full-time equivalent staff in the department of CTT.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if the minister could provide me with a list of, perhaps, new hired persons in 2007-2008, sort of since the end of March.

Mr. Rondeau: We don't have that right with us. We would be able to provide it to you in due course. It would take a little while to put together because we don't do it that way, but we can gather it over the course of a little while and get it to you.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. Madam Chair, it may be, depending on how many have been hired, it could be quite an undertaking. I don't suppose there's that much turnover, but I just wanted to ask the minister, and I appreciate that. I would concur that if he can just supply me with that at some point in the next few days, that would good.

While he's doing that, can he indicate just when they were hired? The ones that, you know, the timing of it, in '07-08. I'm assuming, well, I won't assume anything; I'll ask the minister. Most of the positions that would have been hired would have been done through competition, or are they appointments?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, most of the positions are done through competition and through the civil service, through the normal process of the civil service hiring.

Mr. Maguire: The minister's indicated that most of them are. I wonder if he could just also point out to me, when he is providing the list, which ones have been appointed, if there are any.

Mr. Rondeau: I'd be willing to do that. I understand some might be just term employees or hired quickly. One of the things that we find is that, if you need somebody for a specific job, sometimes you'll appoint a person for a specific job to do a certain

contract or a certain job within, et cetera. What we have done is we've tried to follow the process if it's a long-term, full-time employment. But, sometimes, you need a person, and you'll have someone within the department that's transferred or some other thing like this. So what we try to do is we try not to downsize if someone's in, say, a position, and you're eliminating that position or moving that position, you may move them around. So it's not just where a person's been hired. The person might have been transferred from a different part of government or within the department. So there are people who do move around within the department. Say, if you have a clerk, you may move the clerk around to a different department or a different ministry.

Mr. Maguire: The minister has indicated that some of them may be short-term positions, not short-term but appointed to a specific position. If they're an appointed person, could he also just point out the particular project that they might have been working on at that time? He's suggested that there may be some specific jobs that they do in those areas. I'd be interested in knowing just what they were and the responsibilities of each of those appointed positions.

Mr. Rondeau: This department doesn't have a lot of movement of people. So we will provide the information on the positions and what people have done. Although, because the training component was put into CTT from Advanced Education, I don't know whether you want all the people who've moved in from Advanced Education into CTT. That was a year ago. You just want the people who are new hires, right?

Mr. Maguire: Yes, particularly in '07-08, but, if the minister can outline to me the process they went through in regard to the combination, that would be fine as well.

I wonder if he can just tell me, as well—I know we've just been speaking about specific jobs and a number of particular appointed jobs that people may have been appointed to do. Can he, as well, indicate to me if there's been reclassified jobs in the last while, over the last year or so?

Mr. Rondeau: We'll provide the honourable member with the list of information that we're compiling. So if any one has been reclassified we'll include that in the report we get to you. Of course, we don't have it with us today, but as part of the whole report it'll take a few days to compile now, but we'll get that to the honourable member.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's co-operation on that, Madam Chair, and I know that some of these things you can supply right away and some you can't. So I appreciate his indulgence with that.

Also, I know, in looking at the organizational chart, that there're a few areas that I want to discuss later here as well just in regard to vacancies that might be in the department. He's provided me with the total number of full-time equivalents; can he also supply me with a number in regard to vacancies that might be in the department at this time?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I can actually get it for you now because we actually have that information. As of the end of August, we actually have 25.51 full-time-equivalent vacancies in the department.

Mr. Maguire: Could he just supply me with a breakdown of which sectors of his department those are from?

* (16:30)

Mr. Rondeau: In the minister's office, I'll go through them right now: the executive assistant position is empty right now because it's being filled through the Science and Technology department. So that one is empty right now.

As far as the division administration, there are no vacancies.

As far Industry Training Partnerships, there are no vacancies.

As far as the Apprenticeship program, the apprenticeship training co-ordinator, there's one vacancy; policy and analyst is one vacancy; project officer, there's one vacancy; program development co-ordinator, there's one vacancy—for a total of four in Apprenticeship.

Employment Manitoba regional manager, there's one vacancy; co-ordinated plant services, there's one vacancy; executive director, there's one vacancy; manager of community partnership, there's one; program analyst, there's one; program support co-ordinator, there's one; employment consultant, one; program analyst is one; program support clerk is 0.3; project officer is 0.2; employment counsellor is one; employment services adviser is 0.2; program support clerk is .11; program support clerk, 0.7; financial analyst, one; employment services adviser, one. So Employment Manitoba's 12.51 out.

As far as Hydro Northern Training Initiative, there are no vacancies.

As far as Policy, Planning and Co-ordination, there's one trade economist that isn't filled.

Financial and Administrative Services, there's a manager, financial services, position unfilled; a manager comptrollership not filled.

Administrative, Operations and Bureau of Statistics, there are no vacancies.

Industry Development - Financial Services, as far as there's a financial consultant vacancy, there's a senior financial consultant of a 0.2, so that Industry Development - Financial Services is 1.4 of a full-time equivalent.

Industry Consulting, there's one consultant position.

Community and Economic Development, there's a director of health reform working group.

Federal-Provincial relations, there's a policy 0.6 position.

Manitoba Trade and investment, there's a trade officer position open, for a total of 25.51 positions.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I thank him for that information. I wonder if he could supply me—he may not have this available today, but if he could supply me with the names of the last people that have been in those positions as well as how long they've been vacant.

Mr. Rondeau: We'll get that to you, but as the list gets longer, it'll be delayed a little bit because it'll take a little time to gather that information.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate the minister's indulgence in that, and some of these will be interrelated and others aren't. So, just as he gets them forwarded to me, that would be fine. I appreciate that.

We talked about reclassified positions, and I wonder if the minister can discuss the location of those positions. Are most of them here in the city of Winnipeg? I know that he's got some in Training in other areas of the province, and I wonder if he can tell me if there have been very many. I guess I'm looking for just a number in regard to the amount that might have been relocated around the province in his department.

Mr. Rondeau: When we provide you the lists, we'll provide the locations. I know that with the Northern Trade Initiative there would have been some movements up there. I know that with the different

training initiatives there would be some—because the new Hydro training initiative, or Northern Training Initiative, has had a lot of activity in it. So we'll provide the locations to you on the list of vacancies.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I know that there are positions in rural, northern, as well as here in the city. If the minister can just provide me with the persons that have been relocated, that would be a benefit as well.

I'm wondering if the minister—I know that he's had a number of opportunities to represent Manitobans in different jurisdictions with his portfolio in the course of federal meetings and perhaps some international, I don't know, as well. I wonder if he can provide me with any details in regard to the amount of trips that he's maybe made out of the province in the past year, and since becoming the minister in charge of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, which isn't that long ago, but whether he could supply me with the trips that he's made since he took over in this portfolio, and as well an outline of those opportunities to represent Manitoba outside the province by his predecessor in the last year that he was there as well?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I understand that right after the election I went to Halifax to attend a federal-provincial trade meeting. It was a very good meeting, and we talked a lot of initiatives. Right in the beginning of September and of August, I went to Asia as part of a trade mission.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that. I know that the minister has to travel. That's part of the job, and I appreciate his representation there. Those are the main ones that he's had.

Can he also supply me with perhaps the ones that his predecessor would have had in the year previous to that, just so that I get an idea of how much travel was involved?

Mr. Rondeau: I am not aware exactly where the previous minister went on the trade front. We don't have that. I know that we have an amount of money on travel that he spent, but I don't know where that is. We could put that together if the member wants, as far as the destinations that the previous minister went into.

I do know that when I was talking to my fellow ministers on trade I have to admit that Manitoba is very, very frugal on their expenses on travel, and we're also very frugal as far as the amount of trips and what we do. We do our Trade portfolio well, but

we do not spend a lot. What we try to do is keep our expenses very moderate.

So I know that when I went to Halifax, what you do is you go with a very minimum of staff, we don't spend any extra time there, and you do it very, very cost-effectively.

Mr. Maguire: I think the word that the minister was looking for was he does his job extensively, not expensively. Not to put words in his mouth, but to help him out with that part.

If he could provide that just at some point, and include in the briefing as well a copy of the trips that the previous minister made in the last year leading up to the election. What I would like as well is just who, and I know the minister alluded to it, but who might have went with him as staffpersons or others, and just expenses involved in each of those trips, in his case, apparently just the two: Halifax and Asia.

* (16:40)

Mr. Rondeau: I'd be pleased to provide the member with a copy of my expenses and the trips. As far as who went with us, one of the things I have done is made sure that we generally use departmental staff. I know that some provinces travel with a large, extensive staff wherever they go. We do a very, very good job. Our staff is very committed; they wear many hats and they do a good job.

I'd be pleased to provide the member with the list of the people who went on the Halifax and the Asia trip. I'd be pleased to provide any other staff that went, as far as the previous minister.

Mr. Maguire: I'm assuming that these are trips with Competitiveness, Training and Trade. In regard to that, I know the Trade staff's not here today as well, but I'm sure that's what the minister's referring to, just for clarity.

Mr. Rondeau: Yes.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you. So I look forward to that.

In regard to his responsibilities here in this area, then, he would have had no Executive Council expenses in his department because there have been no Executive Council members travelling with him, I would assume. If that's not the case, can he provide me with details of what those expenses might have been?

Mr. Rondeau: The Premier (Mr. Doer), the Executive Council, no other person besides myself accompanied on the Asia trip or the Halifax trip.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarity, there was some noise. Did the minister say that the Premier went with him to Asia? No he didn't; I didn't think so.

Mr. Rondeau: No, the Premier did not join me on the Asia mission, and he did not join us for the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Halifax.

Mr. Maguire: I appreciate that.

If as well when he's getting me the information in regard to the previous minister—the previous year, I should say, instead of the previous minister—can he just outline whether there were any Executive Council expenses where the Premier or any of his staff accompanied Competitiveness, Training and Trade missions in the past year with the minister as well?

Mr. Rondeau: I can provide any information of the previous minister, Minister Smith, and any of the expenses that he had. I don't believe that he—I don't have the Trade people here, but I don't believe that he was accompanied by the Premier on any trips. I can't guarantee that. I'll have to find that and clarify that tomorrow.

So if you can, Madam Chair, I don't know what that is. I'll wait for the Trade people to be here. I think that the previous minister travelled by himself, but I do not know. I will find that out and provide that to the member opposite.

Mr. Maguire: Can the member indicate to me in the flowchart that I'm looking at on page 4 there under Competitiveness and Training, I look at the chart that he has there and each of those boxes has a person in charge of each of those departments, except Employment Manitoba, can he indicate to me if that executive director position is still vacant or if it's been filled?

Mr. Rondeau: It's one of the vacancies right now, Madam Chair.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate how long that's been empty?

Mr. Rondeau: Since August 7.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate who had that position at that time?

Mr. Rondeau: Claudette Toupin.

Mr. Maguire: Was this a relocation or a retirement, or can the minister inform me how the vacancy came about?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chairperson, I understand that she competed for, through the civil service, a position in Intergovernmental Affairs, and so she was successful. She was able to acquire that position through competition in Intergovernmental Affairs, and it was through the normal civil service process.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I guess the minister also has, between the two deputy positions that they have in that chart, the Secretary/Executive Coordinator, Angela Mathieson and Pat Britton. Can he indicate if that's still the case?

Mr. Rondeau: I missed the question; I'm sorry.

Mr. Maguire: I'll just ask the minister if Angela Mathieson and Pat Britton are still in the positions as Secretary/ Executive Coordinator, sharing that duty, I assume. Can you just explain that position?

Mr. Rondeau: I can confirm with the member that Angela Mathieson is the Secretary for CEDC. Pat Britton is the Executive Coordinator for the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. So they have two different distinct roles.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I can see the division in the chart, but I wanted to just clarify that as well. Can he just outline what role, interaction they have between him and the two deputies that might be involved in that area?

Mr. Rondeau: Basically, Madam Chair, the CEDC is a co-ordinating body for the Economic Development Committee of Cabinet, and so they will take submissions and provide opinion on them.

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council is comprised of a host of business people, people who are involved in our community, Bob Silver, Ash Modha; there are lots of people. It's very similar to what the previous government had as far as an advisory council. So what they do is they take certain issues or concepts, they look at it and they provide advice to the Premier as far as how the Province should go. So they might do many, many different strategies, and what they do is they provide advice. Generally, they're volunteers. Pat Britton's responsibility is to get the advice, work with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and provide it to government, but her job is to support PEAC.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I mean, the minister has some 400 staff, and so I appreciate the indulgence in regard to these questions. It's not quite as many as I incurred when I was speaking with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and

government services, which was over 2,400, I think it was in that area, but nonetheless, just as responsible and as necessary to the running of the Province of Manitoba.

Looking at the statutory responsibilities of the minister and the acts that fall under his jurisdiction, I just had a couple of questions in regard to The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act, if I could switch into that for a few moments. I want to, because I have a number of questions that we'll ask on Trade as well tomorrow or in future times that we meet, but can he just outline to me his involvement as the minister around The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act?

Mr. Rondeau: Generally, what we do is we appoint two representatives to the board.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, Madam Chair. I wonder if the minister could indicate who his two appointments are at this time.

Mr. Rondeau: I'll have to get that for you. I can't recall off the top of my head.

* (16:50)

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I know there are a number of appointees. I'm not sure if it's 15 that are on that particular position. We looked at a number of different acts, but I appreciate the minister getting those names back to me as well. I know there's been some discussion in regard to the Convention Centre and any expansions, additions to it.

Can the minister indicate to me what presentations have been made to him in regard to that area and just what his involvement would be in that?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that there may have been some presentations about the expansion to parts of government. I haven't seen them yet personally, but I understand there's been some discussion as to where the Convention Centre can go in the future. That's generally between the City and the Province. It has a lot to do with Trade and Tourism. So I would assume, if there's something that moves forward with the Convention Centre, it's Intergovernmental Affairs, it's Trade and Tourism, it's a bunch of departments that will be working together with any proposal that comes up. So it wouldn't just be this department.

Mr. Maguire: Well, there is no doubt that the Convention Centre plays a major part in tourism in Manitoba and conventions that continually come to

the city. I know it's going through a major renovation right now.

Can the minister indicate the details of that to me, any details?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that, although there're renovations, it's not coming out of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. It may be coming out of other departments, maybe the IGA or something like that, but it wouldn't be coming directly from our department.

We try to work with business to make sure that they're competitive. It's the old industry department that would be more into Intergovernmental Affairs and other sectors that would provide money to that, or Tourism, but I understand it's more UD, which are the partnership agreements between the City, the Province and the feds. So that's probably where the funding is coming from, not CTT.

Mr. Maguire: I just found it interesting that the act is under this portfolio, and so I respect the minister's answer in that area.

If, however, there was a doubling of the size, as an example, or a new location to make a major addition, not just renovation, to the Convention Centre, would this be the ministerial department that would become mostly aware of that, or what would be the lead ministerial portfolio on that?

Mr. Rondeau: One of the reasons for the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet is to work with projects that might involve other departments. So what you're trying to do is bring partners together; you're trying to bring departments together. So, whenever you have something that has multiple partners, so that you might have the City, the feds, the Province, you might also have Tourism, you might have Intergovernmental Affairs, that's the whole function of CEDC is to bring ideas there, give an evaluation and move them forward through the system.

So, because CEDC is in this department and sort of relates to multiple ministries, that's probably why it was put here, because we often do the co-ordinating function.

Mr. Maguire: I was going to go off onto a trade course there, but we won't do that today. It's probably one that you could answer on your fingertips.

If I could, Madam Chair, just for a moment I wanted to ask, I know the minister referred to in his

opening comments the Hydro Northern Training Initiative, and I wonder if he can just—I know when it was announced some years ago that it was talking about 1,000 Aboriginal residents for the 800 Hydro construction jobs in regard to areas like Wuskwatim and the development of the new dams in the north, and some of those areas. I do know that the initiative was to run from 2001-02 to 2008-09, and I know that it was reannounced in the election campaign by the Premier (Mr. Doer). I wonder, now that the minister's in charge of this area, if he can give me an update just on how that program is working, other than that he did refer to it in his opening remarks. I'm just wondering if he can give me an answer in regard to the number of people that have been trained and how successful it's been going at this time.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, before I answer, I'd like to introduce Bob Knight who is the senior executive director of Continuing Education and Training—I got a nod; that's right. So he's going to talk a little bit. I can tell you that the Manitoba Northern Training Initiative, while Bob is sort of getting organized, it's a multiyear \$60.3-million pre-project training initiative. As far as the outcomes to date, over 1,800 participants have been assessed. Since 2001-2002, 1,278 trainees have participated in 2,966 training interventions.

The investments have been made in adult upgrading, designated and non-designated trades training. Just to give you an idea of what's going on, as far as the area of designated trades, nine trainee journeypersons have been certified; 93 active apprentices, 48 of these active apprenticeships are in levels 1 to 4, and 45 are working toward their level 1. There are 81 trainees in designated trades pre-employment programs who may enter apprenticeship training. There are 125 trainees who have completed interventions and academic upgrading. There are over 285 trainees that have completed training in non-designated trades. To give you an idea of non-designated trades: truck driving, heavy equipment operating, warehousing, labour, types of trades like that.

As far as other training, Madam Chair, over 90 trainees have completed training in project supports. Those are things like catering, security, administration, those types of functions. Over 285 trainees have participated in work experience placements. As a former educator, I know that's very, very valuable to give people experience on the job and knowing how to appropriately behave.

The overall completion rates are about 60 percent; 278 individuals are employed; 68 percent are employed full-time; 58 are employed related to the training. On-the-job training employment is occurring, both on- and off-reserve, but acquiring appropriate work experience is getting—you want to do it on real time. It's tough, but things are moving forward. So we're working on developing the capacity. We're working on getting more people into the training.

I have to commend not only the staff who have done an extremely good job, because you're trying to train in areas where, traditionally, there haven't been training facilities, but there's also been great co-operation with the First Nations there. There's been a wonderful participation rate with different organizations that are up there, whether they're community based, et cetera.

So it's done really well. I have to say that, after working for 16 years up in northern Manitoba, it's

nice to see especially apprenticeable trades being expanded, because I think there's huge opportunity there and future opportunity.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, just for clarification, I agree with the minister in regard to the importance and the opportunities in trade that we have and the trades areas, because, of course, with the shortage of labour that we have throughout the province.

With the minister's indulgence, I'll have some more questions—

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2007-2008—Revenue Estimates Selinger	658
Bill 22—The Medical Amendment Act Oswald	657	Annual Report of the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 McGifford	658
Bill 13—The Organic Agricultural Products Act Wowchuck	657	Annual Report of the Council on Post-Secondary Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 McGifford	000
Bill 14—The Government Purchases Amendment Act (Responsible Manufacturing) Lemieux	657		
Petitions		Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2007-2008—Departmental Expenditure Estimates—Manitoba Health and Healthy Living Oswald	658
Provincial Trunk Highway 2—Glenboro Cullen	657		
Provincial Trunk Highway 10—Forrest Rowat	658	Ministerial Statements	
Provincial Nominee Program Lamoureux	658	Manitoba Film and Music Week Robinson	658
		Mitchelson	659
Tabling of Reports		Gerrard	659
Annual Report of the Cooperative Promotion Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Wowchuk	658	Oral Questions	
Annual Report of the Co-operative Loans and Loans Guarantee Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Wowchuk	658	West-Side Hydro Power Line McFadyen; Doer	660
Annual Report of the Manitoba Education Research Learning Information Networks (MERLIN) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Rondeau	658	Manitoba Housing Authority Mitchelson; Mackintosh	662
Annual Report of the Industrial Technology Centre for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Rondeau	658	Child Welfare System Briese; Mackintosh	663
		Cattle Enhancement Council Eichler; Wowchuk	664
		Auto Theft Hawranik; Chomiak	665
		Freedom of Information Rowat; Robinson	666

Bill 204 Gerrard; Oswald	667	Provincial Nominee Program Lamoureux	669
-----------------------------	-----	-----------------------------------------	-----

Provincial Nominee Program Lamoureux; Allan	667		
------------------------------------------------	-----	--	--

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Members' Statements

Outdoor Recreation Development Briese	668		
------------------------------------------	-----	--	--

Business and Professional Women's Clubs Blady	668		
--------------------------------------------------	-----	--	--

Louis Riel Day Naming Cullen	668		
---------------------------------	-----	--	--

Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday Jha	669		
----------------------------------	-----	--	--

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Advanced Education and Literacy	670
---------------------------------	-----

Conservation	690
--------------	-----

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs	706
---------------------------------	-----

Competitiveness, Training and Trade	714
-------------------------------------	-----