

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The Adult Literacy Act

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 6, The Adult Literacy Act; Loi sur l'alphabétisation des adultes, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, the proposed Adult Literacy Act, the first of its kind in Canada, will commit the government of Manitoba to the development, implementation and evaluation of an adult literacy strategy. As part of that strategy the act will establish the Manitoba Adult Literacy program to help fund qualifying agencies that offer programs for adults wanting to improve their literacy skills. I recommend the bill to all members of the Legislature. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency is a provincially mandated First Nation child protection and welfare agency. Operated under authority of the Provincial Ministry of Family Services and Housing, the mission is to help keep children, families and communities safe and secure, and promote healthy citizen development and well-being.

Lynn Lake is located 321 kilometres northwest of Thompson, Manitoba on PR #391. There is no social worker living and working in the community. The goals of the ministry are implemented from a

distance and supplemented with infrequent and short visits from a social worker located in Thompson.

The Lynn Lake Friendship Centre is a designated safe house and receiving home providing accommodations, services and care to children and families experiencing difficulties in a safe environment. The designated safe house and receiving home are forced closed at this time due to outstanding accounts payable due from Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency.

Failure to have a social worker based in Lynn Lake providing immediate and sustained services and forcing the receiving home and designated safe house to close, children and families experiencing difficulties in Lynn Lake and area have their health and safety placed in great jeopardy.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider re-staffing the social worker position in Lynn Lake in order to provide needed services to northwestern Manitoba in a timely manner.

To request the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider mediating outstanding accounts payable due to the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre by Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency in order to allow the designated safe house and receiving home to resume regular operations and services and continued utilization of these operations and services.

Signed by Sheila Dulewich, Nadia Michaluk, Evelyn Sinclair 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 2-Glenboro

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

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 No. 2, near the village of Glenboro, leading to serious safety concerns for motorists.

The provincial government has refused to construct turning lanes off PTH No. 2 into the village of Glenboro and on to Golf Course Drive, despite the fact that the number of businesses along PTH No. 2 have increased greatly in recent years.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider implementing a speed zone on Provincial Trunk Highway No. 2 adjacent to the village of Glenboro.

This petition is signed by Caroline Cullen, Jeanette Jefferies, Rick Sjolander and many, many others.

Provincial Trunk Highway 10—Brandon Hills Estates

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

Provincial Highway 10 access travelling south to Brandon Hills Estates is not only unsafe for school students who must cross the busy highway but also for the turning vehicles who must cross a solid line to enter the park community.

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

Highway upgrades to Provincial Highway 10 are occurring within a short distance of this site. Priority should be given to this community based on the dangerous access to highway for residents.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to act on the situation by considering construction of turning lanes that will reduce the danger posed in traffic access to Brandon Hills Estates, which is home to 85 residents.

This petition signed by Elan Boulbte, Lesley Starkell, Dawn Buckley and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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 M. Guzman, C. Pingal, B. Cruz and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I have a few to table. I am pleased to table the 2006-2007, Infrastructure and Transportation's Annual Report. Also, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2006-2007 Manitoba Water Services Board Annual Report. Also, I am pleased to table the '06-07 Manitoba Floodway Authority Annual Report. I am pleased to table '06-07 Fleet Vehicle Agency, Materials Distribution Agency, and Crown Lands and Property Agency annual reports.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I am pleased to table the '06-07 Canada Manitoba Infrastructure Programs Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, I mean, Attorney General. Sorry about that. I had a flashback.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the following Annual Report: Manitoba Public Insurance Quarterly Financial Report, 2nd Quarter, Six months ended August 31, 2007.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I am pleased to table the 2007-2008 Departmental Expenditure Estimates Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I am pleased to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report for Manitoba Health and Healthy Living which includes the Annual Report of the Manitoba Health Services Insurance Plan.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Rod Berezowicki of the Rural Municipality of Kelsey in The Pas and the Mayor, Herb Jacques, from The Pas.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Riding Mountain National Park UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in 1933, the Prime Minister of the day, R.B. Bennett, and the Premier of Manitoba at that time, John Bracken, among others, established the Riding Mountain National Park in the western part of our province. Many of us who have grown up in Manitoba have appreciated the wonderful beauty of that park. We've enjoyed its many natural features and certainly it is a very important place to many, many Manitobans.

In 1986, the NDP government of Premier Howard Policy-Pawley made—that was an honest mistake, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government of Premier Howard Pawley made an application to UNESCO to have the Riding Mountain National

Park and the area around it declared the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve. This application was recognized by UNESCO and it entails the land that runs from the Saskatchewan border to an area east of Riding Mountain National Park.

The Web site for Riding Mountain National Park talks about the wonderful ecological interface that exists in that part of Manitoba. It includes black bears, wolves, elk, moose, white-tailed deer, beaver, turkey vultures, great grey owls and many, many other important animal species within the habitat. The Web site also indicates that one of the biggest threats to that park and reserve is the potential for a hydro-electric transmission corridor.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Premier can indicate, given the land covered by the UNESCO-recognized Riding Mountain National Park Biosphere Reserve established by the NDP government in 1986 and recognized by UNESCO, whether it is his plan to run his power corridor through that UNESCO-recognized reserve.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, continuing on in history, the lines through the Riding Mountain National Park were built in 1950 and 1960 in the Riding Mountain park. In our discussions with the CEO of Hydro, obviously it's our intent in Hydro's siting not to have the bipole through that park.

Mr. McFadyen: The daffy detour is getting daffier by the day, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to ask the Premier: Given that the biosphere reserve goes from the Saskatchewan border to an area east of Riding Mountain National Park, this is a UNESCO-recognized area which entails both the park and a significant amount of land around that park, and according to the Web site, Mr. Speaker, contains—sorry, I'll just quote: "The area of the biosphere reserve was home to Aboriginal peoples for millennia, and currently contains four First Nations reserves. Settlement by peoples from Scandinavia, the Ukraine, and the United Kingdom began in the late 1870s and is continuing."

Mr. Speaker, given that the existing map which refers to Manitoba Hydro and the Clean Environment Commission as a source shows the west-side line making a direct southern route from Dauphin to Brandon, I wonder if the Premier can indicate, given that he's given a veto to chiefs on the east side, whether he plans to give a veto to the four First Nations reserves and the other people who have

enjoyed Riding Mountain National Park and the UNESCO-recognized reserve, whether the people impacted by that decision are going to receive a veto over the location of the power line in western Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: I would refer the member opposite to his misinformation. The Grand Chief Fontaine—our expert's legal opinion deals with the issue of a joint agreement on the process, not a joint agreement on land-use planning. Ultimately, we're going to use the principles; actually in the Supreme Court, section 35, decisions in the Supreme Court.

I know he practised law, but we had lawyers look at the document, and obviously we have a number of legal opinions, including the legal opinion from the Aboriginal people that were at that press conference. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is talking about history, we have to look at history.

Mr. Speaker, I remember in recent history, there was a recommendation of the Tritschler commission that Manitoba should develop more coal and natural gas. Well, thank goodness, some people on this side, our predecessors, had the vision to develop hydro-electric power rather than coal and gas as a Tory vision.

Mr. Speaker, the former Premier Schreyer negotiated the Limestone project. He had the vision and the judgment to negotiate the Limestone project. Who were the ones that mothballed the Limestone project? The Conservatives. They did not have the proper judgment. Let history show. Who were the ones, after the former NDP government negotiated the Conawapa project, who were the ones that used their improper judgment and cancelled the Conawapa project? You go over history. The people that made the correct decisions, the long-term judgments, the right ones, were the people that built Hydro, not the people that mothballed it.

Mr. McFadyen: I appreciate that response from the Premier. The bluster certainly gives us a strong cue that he recognizes the folly of the daffy detour that he's going to take the precious energy of Manitobans and waste on Doer's daffy detour through the western side of Manitoba, through a UNESCO-recognized site—

Mr. Speaker: Order. For all members, when referring to another member in this House, it's by the positions they hold through their portfolios or other

members by their constituencies. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that.

Mr. McFadyen: I withdraw that comment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier refers to Supreme Court decisions, and I think he'll know, if he reads the decisions, that there's an obligation to consult, but it is not an obligation to cave in in the face of opposition. There's an obligation to consult and accommodate reasonable concerns, and I wonder why the Premier doesn't have the backbone to stand up to unreasonable demands that may be made by people who aren't interested in having development that many residents on that side of the lake would like.

Speaking of common sense, Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Estimates after the Premier had declared in this House that a UNESCO World Heritage Site would occupy land through the proposed route, his Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said in Estimates that the proposed site is an area that is one of 8,500 kilometres on the eastern side of Manitoba: Atikaki, Nopiming and the space in between. The Minister of Conservation has said that there is a proposal that has gone forward, it's in *Hansard*, to deal with that area. It leaves space for both an east-side power line and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and I can understand why the Member for Dauphin-Roblin wouldn't want the bipole running through his constituency.

So, why won't the Premier take the advice of his Minister of Conservation, establish a UN World Heritage Site in eastern Manitoba, also run an east-side power line, avoid leaving a debt of \$2,000 to every Manitoba family and protect the UNESCO site on the west side of Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite proposes to reduce the size of the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site by 80 percent and proposes to dramatically impact on places like the Poplar River First Nation.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Doer: It's not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, there is, as I understand it, a requirement in Question Period to at least attempt to be remotely factual in responses, and the Premier has indicated that I proposed reducing. It was his Minister of Conservation that proposed reducing the size of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree, and I listened to the comments of the Minister of Conservation, and I also agree with the Premier. He was trying to correct the misstatements by the Leader of the Opposition, the very individual who wanted to go into Point Douglas and build a water park without talking to anybody.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members that a point of order is a very serious matter, and I need to be able to hear all the words that are spoken.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, he does not have a point of order. It's clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: One of the issues in Manitoba besides the mothball strategy of members opposite, and besides the fact that on every historical judgment they've been wrong and other leaders have been correct, the Conservatives have been wrong, wrong and wrong.

Limestone, Conawapa, and the third issue is the whole issue of a transmission line. Hydro recommended to the previous government in 1992 that for increased sales and increased reliability there needs to be another transmission line. Obviously, the preferred—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when their government had that recommendation, they did not proceed down the east

side of Lake Winnipeg. They did not proceed with that proposed transmission line.

We have been dealing with this issue because the issue of dithering is not acceptable. It is absolutely the worst course of action to take the politically expedient route and do nothing. To do nothing is the politically easier route.

You look at any transmission line anywhere in North America; there are always other routes that are more preferable in terms of the debate. There are always other routes that are cheaper in terms of the debate, and at the end of the day, you have to stand up and make a decision. That's why I'm proud we stood up and did the Limestone dam, Mr. Speaker, which has made hundreds of millions of dollars for Manitoba. That's why we put Conawapa back on the proposal stage to build it. That's why we're building at Nelson House. That's why we're building an office building for Hydro in downtown Winnipeg instead of the suburbs. The members opposite would have saved a few dollars on land cost and built it on Waverley. Our vision, our judgment was to build it downtown. It's the right vision and judgment, and history will show us to be correct.

Auto Theft Bait Cars

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Under a bait car program, when a car is stolen, the location of a vehicle is tracked and police respond. The engine is shut down by remote control and thieves are arrested, preventing property damage and personal injury.

In 2004, the Winnipeg Police Service stated that bait cars are a tremendous advantage to law enforcement. It's a great tool to be able to stop auto theft. The police agree with the bait car program; the minister does not.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why does he refuse to implement a bait car program in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we will take directions from the police. As I said many times in this House, members opposite always have bold suggestions about things that are unworkable: water parks in Point Douglas; Hydro headquarters out on Waverley; building jails instead of hospitals. We've had that in this province. We listen to what the police say.

We announced we've got more police in schools. Members said nothing about it. We offered bait cars

to the City of Winnipeg police; if the City of Winnipeg police want to reinstate the program, that's their decision. The City of Winnipeg police had licence plate monitors that they put in place using technology; that's what they wanted to do. They wanted expanded police services. We doubled the police services. When members opposite were in government, they did nothing in that regard. We doubled, Mr. Speaker. If bait cars are something that is requested, they could make a difference in the city of Winnipeg, we'd be happy to do it. We will take our advice from the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, at the same time the policies of this minister have doubled auto thefts in Manitoba, the Minister of Justice claims he's doing everything in his power to combat auto theft. However, he abandoned the bait car program in 2001. According to the minister's own political staff, he abandoned it because he does not know where to put the thief. Here's a novel suggestion: put them in jail.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Is he refusing to implement a bait car program because he has no space in provincial jails?

Mr. Chomiak: As the member would know during Estimates, we're at our highest levels of incarceration in history, Mr. Speaker. We also have the highest level of programming, and if the program is so bad, perhaps the member could explain to me why the federal government, Stockwell Day and Minister Toews, came to Winnipeg two weeks ago and announced enhancement of our auto theft program, 1.5 million from the federal government to enhance our auto theft program. Perhaps he should talk to the minister of the federal government who thought they should put more money into our program.

Regarding bait cars, I talked to a 19-year-old the other day who said they knew every single car in the city of Winnipeg that's used on the mobile recognizer, photo radar. The kids know what the cars are, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite has no idea what the level is out there.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, armed with an effective bait car program, within the course of one month the police nabbed six of the top 10 most wanted car thieves in the province. Those results speak for themselves. In Manitoba, the minister refuses to catch our car thieves, because in the words of his own political staff: Where will we put them?

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why not put them where they belong? Put them in jail.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, today at the Chamber of Commerce, the incoming chairman talked about the reduction of auto theft in Winnipeg of 25 percent. Some people are very happy, Winnipeg Police, City of Winnipeg and the citizens of Winnipeg, that we've reduced auto theft by 25 percent. But that's not enough. Members opposite voted against additional police officers in Winnipeg. Members opposite voted against our enhanced auto strategy. Members opposite voted against every single strategy and now they want a one-trick pony. They want to put bait cars that everyone recognizes in Winnipeg. The kids that are perhaps high on intoxicants are going to solicit and sort of walk into a bait car that's, say, a Lexus that everyone knows is going to be a bait car.

I will listen to the City of Winnipeg police department 100 times out of 100 rather than the Member from Lac-

Mr Speaker: Order.

* (14:00)

Spirited Energy Advertising Campaign Additional Funding

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. This government says no to bait cars, but they're willing to find another million dollars for the failed Spirited Energy campaign. The Premier (Mr. Doer) said the Spirited Energy campaign would grow on us. Turns out it grew like a wart, and like a wart it's unsightly, it's embarrassing and it just won't seem to go away.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: How can he justify another million dollars for the Spirited Energy campaign and we have no money for bait cars?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. The member is wrong.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have offered and provided 155 additional police officers, including doubling the auto theft unit. MPI offered bait cars and funding to the City of Winnipeg police department who utilized it for a while but have now, through our auto theft strategy, reduced auto theft by 25 percent. The member opposite is wrong factually. She is wrong in terms of the information she brought

to this Chamber. She ought to apologize. She ought to apologize for bringing wrong facts to this Chamber.

Auditor General's Report

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, the minister suggested yesterday new money should be spent on the energy campaign. He says this before the Auditor General even has a chance to report back to the House on the Spirited Energy campaign. This disrespect for the independent office of the Auditor General is the perfect example of this government's arrogance.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did this government agree in Public Accounts to have the Auditor General investigate if they were going to pass judgment before her findings were even published?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House and all members that there will be no additional money spent on the Spirited Energy campaign. We're awaiting a report from the Auditor General. There will be no new money spent on the Spirited Energy campaign until the report, and we eagerly anticipate a report that was recommended by all parties in this Chamber. We're not moving ahead with it until we receive the report.

Recent Spending

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Yesterday [*inaudible*] announces a million dollars and today he backtracks. Mr. Speaker, we were all told that no money would be spent on the branding boondoggle until the Auditor General reported. Yet the Spirited Energy street teams were out in full force at Folklorama in the middle of the Auditor General's investigation.

As if passing off Crown corporations as private donors and spending money on beer and wine was not enough, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: How much money was spent on the Spirited Energy campaign during the Auditor General's investigation?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, as the former minister said, there was some small maintenance of the Spirited Energy campaign, but what that was, was, and I would like to say that it was approximately \$200,000 to maintain the brand. What that involved—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rondeau: —it was \$200,000 approximately, but what that was was for the Web site for the campaign that was out there. No new initiatives were undertaken. No new moves were done. The campaign's been put on hold until the Auditor General reports. There are no new initiatives.

So, what we have is an Auditor General's report that's coming. We will not move forward on the campaign until after we receive the report, and we're eagerly awaiting an all-party report. That's where we're going. We have not moved forward in the campaign.

Flin Flon Soil Contamination

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, it seems that this NDP government has been sitting on a 2006 Manitoba Conservation report that found unsafe levels of metal such as arsenic, lead and mercury in some soil samples from Flin Flon.

Some of these elevated levels were in samples taken from playgrounds and a schoolyard. Given that arsenic is a known carcinogen, these findings are extremely disturbing to members of this side of the House as well as many Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation explain why he has been sitting on a report that shows the dangerous levels of toxic elements were above the recommended Canadian standards for human health?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I'd recommend to the critic across the way that she reads the *Flin Flon Reminder* of July 31 where all this was made public. It was there for the citizens of Flin Flon. I don't know why it is that she thinks that anybody was sitting on it, that this was secret.

She's looking for a conspiracy theory here, Mr. Speaker. It does not exist.

Mrs. Stefanson: What we're looking for, Mr. Speaker, from this government is a little leadership when it comes to issues such as toxic waste in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the report recommends that Flin Flon and area residents take steps to minimize their exposure, including reminding children to keep their hands out of their mouths when playing outside, keep

children's toys and play areas clean and brushing pets often. A local nursery school teacher calls the situation, and I quote, kind of scary.

Can the Minister of Conservation explain what his department is going to do to assure Flin Flon residents that it is safe for their children to play outdoors?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, when colleagues of hers sat on this side of the House, the standard procedure was to hide these reports, not move forward on it, not include the people of the city of Flin Flon. That was secretive. That was not open. That was not transparent.

What we did was the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We put it in the *Flin Flon Reminder*. If she doesn't know, that's the paper in Flin Flon. She should go look it up. She should read that. People in the Healthy Flin Flon committee have been working with the Department of Conservation to move forward and put in place some actions that actually do protect.

Mr. Speaker, for crying out loud, it was on our Web site. She could have read it there.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, what people are looking for is action on this government. They're not talking about Web sites or anything else. They're looking for action.

The report also states that a human health risk assessment will be undertaken and that plans are underway for a public presentation and discussion of the results of the soil survey. The report states that further details will be provided in the months ahead. It's important to note soil surveys were undertaken in 2006. The Manitoba Conservation report on the findings is dated July 2007 and we're now into October.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation explain to Flin Flon residents how long they will have to wait for a human health risk assessment and what steps will be taken to address this very important issue to the people of Flin Flon and to all Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Do your homework. That meeting took place last week, a meeting with Flin Flon residents.

Mr. Speaker, today, at least two-and-a-half months late, this critic gets up and says we should do a health assessment. It's already been done. Get your act together.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:10)

Tire Recycling Program Receivership of Recycler in Winkler

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day when the Minister of Conservation does not take the matters that are before Manitobans regarding their health, safety and the environment seriously.

Mr. Speaker, the tire recycling program in this province has been in difficulty for some time. The government has known about it, but the minister and the government have sat on their behind and dithered while Winkler tire recycling went into receivership, yet recommendations were made to this government early this spring and have not been acted on.

I want to ask the Minister of Conservation why he has allowed this situation to arise without taking action, given that he was given recommendations early this spring.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I would ask that the Member for Russell be responsible in the way he characterizes this situation. Tire recycling is important in this province. It's important to this side of the government and it's important to Manitobans. That's why this side of the House, that's why this government has been supportive of the Tire Stewardship Board and supported it in its mandate to deal with the tire recycling in this province. The Tire Stewardship Board is the one that is responsible for setting the credits that eventually go to the tire recyclers.

The best piece of advice that I got on this was from the interim board, which gave me the advice that those tire credits, which were the same under previous governments, were appropriate under this government.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister should apprise himself of the facts of this issue and then he would be more credible when he stood up in the House.

The mismanagement of this issue has led to a tire recycler closing his doors and going into receivership. That's one of two tire recyclers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the other operation has indicated that government has been sitting on its behind and not dealing with the recommendations that it had before it. I want to ask the minister if he can explain

what commitment he has to the tire recycling program of this province, given what he has not been doing in terms of moving ahead with the recommendations.

Mr. Struthers: The original Tire Stewardship Board, the interim Tire Stewardship Board, and the new Tire Stewardship Manitoba have all said to me that it is the responsibility of the Tire Stewardship Manitoba, the new board we're heading to, to set those credits that benefit the recyclers. This is a private company. It's always been a private company and the government has not been responsible for directly giving money to that private company.

The receiver in this case will manage and will keep the employees busy at the Tire Recycling Corporation. We as government need to continue on with working with the new Stewardship Manitoba to make sure that we have in place a long-term stable tire recycling program that doesn't allow all those tires to land in the landfills of this province.

Future of Program

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, it's very evident that the current situation is unsustainable. While the government continues to sit on its hands and do nothing, mounds of tires are going to start accumulating in communities across this province. This presents an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes, causing the prospect of the expansion of West Nile in Manitoba.

I want to ask the minister what his immediate plans are to deal with this situation and to deal with the mounds of tires that are going to be showing up in this province.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): The diligent work of this government and members of the Tire Stewardship Board cleaned up the very tires that the member across the way is now talking about.

This government flowed to the Tire Stewardship Board \$800,000 to help in the clean-up of stockpiling tires. So I think the member opposite better get his act together before he stands up in Question Period, Mr. Speaker.

Land Transfer Agreement Consultations in Roseau River and Rosser

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I strongly support First Nations receiving treaty land that it is entitled to under treaty land agreements. In fact, the Treaty Land Entitlement

Framework Agreement and the individual TLE agreements were signed under a PC government. What we don't support is the fact that 35 acres of land were transferred to Roseau River First Nation in the R.M. of Rosser without meaningful input from the municipality.

My question to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: Can he indicate why his government transferred land without meaningful consultation and why were the rights of residents of Rosser ignored, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the issue of Treaty Land Entitlement is a very important one in this province, and I find it ironic that once again we're seeing clear evidence from the members opposite, the Conservatives, how little they have recognized what has been happening in terms of the attempts, whether it be on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the attempts in terms of Treaty Land Entitlement to do what is right in terms of our relations with First Nations people.

I also find it strange, Mr. Speaker, that he hasn't bothered to talk to his federal counterparts because it was Jim Prentice, the former Minister of Indian Affairs, that took a lead role in trying to move forward Treaty Land Entitlement working with the Province of Manitoba. Indeed, we in this province support those efforts. I would suggest he may want to call the current minister, Chuck Strahl, because even the Conservatives in Ottawa get it, even if the members opposite, the Conservatives in Manitoba, don't.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the extensive consultation was a single meeting between the R.M. of Rosser and Roseau River, and I quote, indicating Roseau River First Nation intends to maintain the land's current status as agriculture. Since that time, Chief Terry Nelson has publicly stated he plans to develop a gas bar, eventually VLTs. The R.M.'s concern is that their long tradition as an agricultural community is not being respected.

In fact, the R.M. turned down a prior proposal of a gas bar across from the highway from Roseau River's land. The R.M. does not support this type of commercial development at that location.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister prepared to do today to ensure residents of the R.M. of Rosser have the say in what sort of development takes place within their own municipality?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, we all respect our municipalities, certainly as Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, I do.

But let's not ignore the fact that the real root issue with Treaty Land Entitlement is the fact that there are many First Nations in this province that never received the land they were entitled to under the treaties, treaties which date back more than a century. What I notice, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite never once referenced in his comments that underlying feature, and I would suggest that members opposite, if they truly wanted to develop this province, would understand.

We should be proud of the fact that we're the province with the highest per capita number of First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker. We can develop by working in co-operation with First Nations. I wish the member opposite would do that instead of opposing Treaty Land Entitlement.

Mr. Eichler: I remind the Member for Thompson that it was a PC government that signed the agreement. Obviously, he's off-track.

Mr. Speaker, the Province has committed to complete a transfer of 1.2 million acres of Treaty Land Entitlement over the next four years. If the process that took place at Rosser is repeated, the results will be disastrous.

Can the minister assure Manitobans the lack of consultation in Rosser will not be repeated? Can he commit to a full consultation process for all new Treaty Land Entitlement transfers within Manitoba? Or does he expect Manitobans to sit back and watch their rights be trampled on by this government, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives didn't transfer a single acre when it came to Treaty Land Entitlement, and I would suggest that there's a pattern in questions from members opposite.

Last week, they wanted us to repeat Ipperwash when it came to Hollow Water, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Mike Harris agenda. This week they talk about 16 select Manitobans making decisions on the east side. Those are the chiefs representing the First Nations on the east side. Today, they're getting up and saying that we should rip up a process that even the Conservatives in Ottawa get.

Let's understand one thing. This Conservative opposition is further right wing than the Harper government. You know what? They're out of touch

with Manitobans who understand the future is by working in partnership with First Nations, not against them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

* (14:20)

Flin Flon Soil Contamination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the Premier, Mr. Speaker, it is hardly enough to give the people in Flin Flon a reminder that there are very toxic levels in the playgrounds and the schoolyards in some areas of Flin Flon and adjacent Creighton. The report documents serious levels of contamination with up to 10 times the acceptable concentration of lead, mercury or arsenic.

I ask the Premier: Have every one of the sites where children play been fully cleaned up now?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of points. The whole study was initiated by us to try to determine what has been dealt with in terms of remediation and what needs to be done. When we got that information, we made it available to the public last July with public health officers who were there. I would point out there have been major reductions in emissions. The acid rain agreement that was signed by the former prime minister did include money for the Flin Flon smelter, and I believe there's been the elimination of the zinc, or copper, emissions in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement, by the way, was implemented by the government in '92 after being negotiated, I believe, in the mid-80s. There was an additional amount of money, some \$25 million, ordered by the provincial government to reduce emissions in the early part of this decade, and we will continue to identify a plan to clean up and reduce emissions, which is the fundamental problem.

I would point out that the Flin Flon mine and smelter is better today than it was 20 years ago, but it's still got very high emissions, and it's a very serious challenge for whoever's in government because, on the one hand, you have hundreds and hundreds of families that rely on the income in that area, and on the other hand, we do not want any children playing in areas. That's why we gave public notification.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the government has known for eight years that this was a concern, and they have known for one year that there is serious contamination in places where children play, tiny tot lots, schoolyards, playgrounds.

I ask the Premier: Has he now fully cleaned up all those areas where children play?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, when we received the results of the study that we initiated, that we took on, on behalf of people living in Flin Flon, we made sure that the people of Flin Flon were the first to know what those issues were that we studied. I would ask that members opposite at least try to be accurate on this. Try to be accurate.

Mr. Speaker, when we found out through our study that there were issues to be dealt with, we moved as quickly as we could in July to make sure that the people of Flin Flon were made aware of that, and we worked with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: You could have, I say to the Premier and his government, you could have at least ensured that the areas where children are playing were cleaned up promptly. The alternative certainly is, instead of having this cleaned up, at least put big billboards going into Flin Flon, so that when you've got tourists and visitors, they will be aware that kids should not be putting their hands in their mouths, that any time anybody goes outside in Flin Flon, they should wash their hands. There is a serious problem here.

Why have you not, in one year, looked after the children at least, and made sure that the place where children play is safe?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange because the member opposite would know that this situation goes back 70 or 80 years, and the Mulroney government, to their credit, negotiated an acid rain agreement that did reduce emissions dramatically in Flin Flon. We have since ordered a \$25-million reduction in emissions. We also have invested money in the last number of years, on an eco-green project with Creighton and Flin Flon because it is actually across the border. It is actually within national jurisdiction because it is across the border.

We have had removal of soil in some areas, introduction of alternative gardens and grass and other projects. It is a work in progress. We have to

continue to do more. We have not just sat back on this issue, we have actually reduced emissions and increased the eco-green area in Flin Flon and Creighton and increased by far the secret reports that have been sitting in government for decades that haven't been released to the people of Flin Flon and Creighton and made those public to be able to be informed, first of all. Yes, more action is necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Centre Albert-Galliot

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to attend the official opening of the Centre Albert-Galliot. This centre serves the communities of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes and Saint-Léon. With their proud Francophone heritage and citizens, these communities will welcome the bilingual services offered. As the MLA for Carman, I would like to recognize and thank the individuals involved in this project. Without people such as Paul Cenerini, chair of the building community, this important project could not have taken shape.

With health care in crisis in the rural area, I am glad to see that this facility was opened because the residents of Carman constituency and all Manitobans deserve quality health care close to home. Community members are excited to see the primary care services offered at Centre Albert-Galliot.

They are looking forward to working with the talented and dedicated staff that include the medical professionals, dietician, pharmacy staff and mental health care workers. Recovery for patients will be aided by local access to chiropractic, occupational, massage and physiotherapy. Many seniors will benefit from the enhanced home care services. Additional services include the use of a library, exercise centre and free Internet access.

Félicitations aux communautés de Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes et Saint-Léon pour la grande ouverture du Centre Albert-Galliot. Le centre offrira des traitements médicaux dans les deux langues officielles du Canada. Nous sommes tous fiers d'avoir un nouveau centre médical dans la province du Manitoba. Merci.

Translation

Congratulations to the communities of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes and Saint-Léon on the grand opening of the Centre Albert-Galliot. The centre will offer

medical treatment in both official languages. We are all proud to have a new medical centre in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Manitoba Health Auxiliaries

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, volunteers make a world of difference in our health-care system. A number of those hardworking volunteers came together last weekend, September 28-30, in Creighton, Saskatchewan, at the 61st annual conference of the Manitoba Health Auxiliaries. The gathering was aptly named Sharing and Caring. Approximately 150 delegates participated in the conference.

Fin Flon health auxiliary members were great hosts. Friday evening was devoted to registration and the president's wine and cheese reception. Along with other elected officials from Denare Beach, Flin Flon and Creighton, I was delighted to bring greetings at the Saturday breakfast. Saturday afternoon speakers were Colleen Wickens and Brent Zettl. The evening concluded with a fine banquet.

Delegates came from all parts of the province. I was particularly pleased to see a delegation from Snow Lake. The president of the Saskatchewan organization, Barb Ell, was present as well as the national president of the Canadian Health Auxiliaries Association, Joyce Nash. All events took place in the Creighton community hall.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in acknowledging the very important work done by the Manitoba health auxiliaries. They make a real and positive difference in the lives of patients and staff in Manitoba hospitals. From involvement with the knitting cabinet at the hospital, to visiting, to working at the Christmas crafts sale, to working with the hospital staff, to numerous fundraisers, the health auxiliaries are there. They provide both moral and material support.

The passion that the members of health auxiliaries show for people in care and staff make them stellar humanitarians. They reach out and help patients when they are most vulnerable. I know I speak for all my colleagues when I say that their work does not go unnoticed. It was a pleasure to join them in their Sharing and Caring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Immigration to Brandon

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Brandon is a progressive and growing city. New

residents are moving from across Manitoba and Canada to Brandon. One of the most rewarding transformations is the changing face of my community. With the expansion of Maple Leaf Park, we have been privileged to welcome new citizens from across the globe, from countries such as El Salvador, China, Columbia, Mexico, and the Ukraine. The addition of new cultures is making Brandon a better and more diverse place to live.

As the MLA for Brandon West on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, it's my honour and my pleasure to welcome each and every new citizen to the city of Brandon. Our population continues to grow as workers relocate their families. Our schools are filled with new faces and eager students. On the streets we can hear a mixture of languages. With our latest residents we are lucky enough to enjoy an insurgence of new food, entertainment and culture.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting time for the city of Brandon. It is important to recognize the significant role that the business community is playing in Brandon's growth, not only Maple Leaf but many other businesses, trades and professionals. They have provided employment and other significant support in settling newcomers into their lives in Brandon. Numerous local organizations and non-profit groups must be commended for their efforts as well. They have been friendly and helpful to acclimatize newcomers in many ways, including assisting with language skills. I have met many of the newcomers and their families. Their enthusiasm and joy in coming to Canada is inspiring and should be inspiring to all of us.

I look forward to meeting more new friends and welcome our newest valuable community members. Brandon has a strong future and we are embracing the spirit of multiculturalism. I know our city will continue to attract new citizens and grow. We welcome them, Mr. Speaker, to Friendly Manitoba. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Northeast Pioneers Greenway

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, we all know that good recreational facilities are good for communities, and the new Northeast Pioneers Greenway in my constituency of Rossmere is no exception. I was pleased to join the Premier (Mr. Doer) at the opening of phase 1 of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway on September 27, 2007. This

trail will revolutionize how the residents in my community work and play.

Quality recreation can be enjoyed by all members of the community. This trail serves as a wonderful place to play, explore and get to know the neighbourhood while becoming active. It is fantastic to see the positive impact the trail is having on the quality of life of many residents. I see young families pushing strollers and letting youngsters run without fear of traffic. This is a place where seniors and youth alike can take in the beauty of the outdoors. I am proud to be part of a government that values developing quality recreation for our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this trail will also provide an emission-free way for residents to link up with other parts of the city. The trail stretches from Springfield Road in the north to Herbert Avenue in the south. Community members are already working hard to complete phase 2 of the project. Eventually a trail will stretch from Birds Hill Park to Herbert Avenue. This will make it possible for residents to travel and commute in an environmentally friendly way in their neighbourhoods and to renowned Manitoba attractions.

A special congratulations is in order for the River East Neighbourhood Network, as well as the volunteers and organizers who made this project a reality. I would ask that all honourable members join with me in celebrating the opening of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Flin Flon Soil Contamination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): A 2006 report by Manitoba Conservation shows very serious levels of contamination by heavy metals like arsenic, lead and mercury in the Flin Flon area. This report sampled children's playgrounds including tot lots with sandboxes and schoolyards. Quite a number of park playground sites and at least two schoolyard sites were found to contain concentrations of arsenic, lead and/or mercury which are higher than acceptable levels with one park playground area having six times the acceptable concentration of arsenic and another park playground site having 10 times the acceptable level of mercury.

The government has had the report for one year, but sadly the NDP government has not acted to fully protect children playing in schoolyards and playgrounds in Flin Flon. The government should have acted immediately to protect the children in Flin Flon.

Children deserve safe areas to play. That the government failed to act immediately when children's health and well-being is in danger shows an appalling lack of concern for the health of children in our province.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the House for their rapt attention, and I'd like to ask that the Committee of Supply be called.

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

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY

* (14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Before the first question, may I introduce staff again, because we do have a new person with us today. I think yesterday we met Elaine Phillips, who is acting deputy minister. Then the gentleman over here is Claude Fortier, who is the executive financial officer, shared services between us and the other education department.

The new person is Sid Rogers, who is the secretary to the Council on Post-Secondary Education, and I'm sure that the members recognize Ray Karasevich, who was with us yesterday, and David Reich, who's from Student Aid. I just wanted to introduce the staff.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister for that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Thank you, Madam Chair, and the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

Just a few minutes just on one area that I have some concern with for this particular year, and that's in regard to student visas that are issued from abroad, and to get a sense from our post-secondary institutions what type of numbers we actually look at. I wonder if the minister could indicate if any of the staff present would be able to provide some sort of numbers with respect to numbers of student visas that are in the province.

Ms. McGifford: I want to tell the member that international education falls under the ambit of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, and perhaps he should ask his questions in the Estimates of CTT.

Mr. Lamoureux: Given the impact foreign students have on our facilities here, is the department aware of anything in terms of numbers that are in our facilities?

Ms. McGifford: I see that there's been a 283.2 percent increase, but if the member's looking for numbers, I think I had heard from the international education folks, myself, that the numbers of international students in Manitoba were around 10,000.

Mr. Lamoureux: Again, it's just because this is something that comes up quite often in discussions that I have with people in terms of being able to get individuals from abroad to be able to come over in order to study. That applies to post-secondary and all the way to elementary schools, so it's just to try to solicit some feedback from the minister in terms of where does she see the numbers in the future.

Would she encourage more people from abroad to request visas to be able to attend our post-secondary institutions? Does she feel that this is an area where we are not necessarily promoting? Where's the government coming from with regard to student visas?

Ms. McGifford: Well, as I said, international education is the purview of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. If the member is asking me as the Minister of Advanced Education about my concerns or my sense of the whole situation, I think the internationalization of education is a great thing. I think it's very healthful for students from Manitoba, or indeed from Canada, to study abroad as well as to have students from abroad study here in Canada.

I think the reasons are pretty obvious. Cultural exchange is extremely important. If one wants to be more pragmatic about it, I suppose we all know, and I know the Member for Inkster knows very well, the

importance to our country of immigration and immigrants. I think the students who study here are more likely to later on want to become citizens, and well-trained students who love our country will make important contributions.

So my sense is, the more exchange we have between students here and abroad and vice versa, the better it is. If I may be so idealistic at this point, the better it is for our world because I believe that kind of interchange would lead to some sort of understanding between people.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing from the minister. I think that that is indeed the right approach at looking at foreign students that would like to be able to study in the province, and I would go further to, not necessarily knowing the hard numbers, I would like to think that we have the ability within our institutions to look at expanding or opening our doors even more so. That's the reason why I ask for the numbers, and if it is possible, I know this might not necessarily be the most appropriate branch, if it is possible to get those types of numbers, it would be greatly appreciated. I would ask, not right now, whether it's some time in the next number of months, I would very much appreciate that.

* (14:50)

Ms. McGifford: I thank the member for his comments. We have one hard number for the member, and that's that the University of Manitoba, international students are, as we understand, 2,782. I had assumed, when I used the figure about 10,000 students in Manitoba, that the member was also referring to students in the public school system. There are quite a few students in the public school system, and then, of course, at our other universities and colleges.

I'm sure the member knows as well that most of our colleges and universities have programs abroad. For example, what comes to mind right now for me, is that Red River College has several programs in Chile. So that's another way of encouraging international exchanges.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I have some new figures as of last evening in terms of deferred maintenance. I would like to ask the minister if these numbers are close to the same information she has, that the University of Manitoba has a deferred maintenance of \$211 million, not the 166 that I had believed earlier, that the University of Winnipeg was

around \$20 million and Brandon \$16 million. Would all of these numbers be accurate in terms of deferred maintenance requirements?

Ms. McGifford: I understand that if you take those numbers as provided without any analysis whatsoever, they may be accurate.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister was indicating yesterday that there is \$3 million made available for the highest priorities in maintenance on an annual basis. Did I understand that correctly?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, that is true.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the \$3 million spread over all post-secondary institutions in Manitoba?

Ms. McGifford: I understand that the capital for all universities is \$12.3 million, and, furthermore, colleges receive their capital money through MIT.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how long that \$3 million annually has been in place?

Ms. McGifford: I understand that number has been in place for quite a long time.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister be more specific in terms of what that means in terms of number of years?

Ms. McGifford: I'll have to get back to the member.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate, I understand there are some faculties that have agreed to raise their tuitions. I wonder if the minister could indicate which faculties have gone down that road.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I can.

The first faculty was Dentistry, followed by Pharmacy, Law, Engineering, and I believe there is one more faculty. We're just checking. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm still on the mike. There's been four and I listed the four.

Mrs. Driedger: Are all of these done by referendum by students?

Ms. McGifford: Madam Chair, indeed, they aren't, and this is interesting, too, because the first school that wished to have increased fees was Dentistry. That was, I think, back in 2002, but it may be '01; I'd have to check on that date to be absolutely accurate. At that time the president of the university, the dean of Dentistry, and the vice-president administrative, Mike McAdam at that time came to see me, and they put forward a very compelling case, I thought.

So we weighed and measured it within the department and came up with a list of five criteria, one of which was—it was clear that there was support from students for the implementation of higher fees. But the department has never confused that with the referendum, and indeed when Dentistry received its increase, there was no referendum. We met with the student council. The student council came with the president, and I'm talking about the students from the Dentistry, not UMSU, came with the president and with the other officials, and they were very supportive, and we considered that support.

And the same with Pharmacy. There was no referendum in Pharmacy. But when Law was requesting an increase, the law school made a decision itself to have a referendum, and since then there was a referendum in Engineering, but no one asked me if I thought there should be a referendum. They went ahead and had a referendum. So it's really the institutions who made that decision; it wasn't ever the department.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the minister have to approve all of these tuition increases through her office?

Ms. McGifford: Yes. There are five criteria, and I'll read them into the record:

(1) The higher tuition or other proposed fee would not have adverse effects on accessibility to the program in question;

(2) Higher tuition fees would not have adverse effects on the Manitoba labour market. We would want to ensure that higher tuition fees would not reduce the number of students choosing to enrol in the faculty;

(3) The field of study for which the exception was being requested was one in which it was clear that graduation rates were high, hence law, for example. As well, it would also be important to demonstrate that the average earned income of graduates shortly after graduation was high enough in order to have sufficient funds to pay the higher student loans that would be required to pay the increased tuition.

Now there have been some changes since then with our 60 percent tax rebate on tuition.

(4) The program had especially high costs and quality requirements that warranted the additional tuition; and

(5) It was clear that there was support from students for the implementation of higher fees.

So various faculties have approached these in various ways. What happens is, the process is that it's discussed internally. I presume that the dean of the faculty under question approaches the president, and then the president and her folks make some decision. Then they usually go to the Council on Post-Secondary Education, and then a recommendation usually comes to the minister. And I have agreed to all four of those increases.

Mrs. Driedger: I note that in some of the press clippings related to the Engineering tuition hike, there were some comments raised about the danger of losing accreditation, and there was some concern that that might be a possibility unless they were able to raise their tuition to have the money in order to have the quality of education that was important.

Has the minister seen the accreditation results from the Engineering faculty?

Ms. McGifford: The Council on Post-Secondary Education has seen them.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Driedger: In discussion with the Council on Post-Secondary Education, which the minister has indicated she meets with them regularly, what kind of an interchange has occurred between the minister and COPSE in regard to those accreditation results? I guess I would also ask what are their accreditation results?

Ms. McGifford: Madam Chair, we were pleased with the results. Though I understand we didn't get the very highest results, we were pleased with the results that we got.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to thank the minister for providing that information and the criteria that is used to address these requests for an increase in tuition. I'm also aware from information that the total credit hours has decreased by 3 percent at the University of Manitoba. That information came out at the AGM.

Can the minister indicate what the reason is for a decrease in the credit hours?

Ms. McGifford: The slight decline that the member referred to is due to demographics. We know that there are fewer students enrolled, fewer students graduating from high school. I suppose it's the end of the echo and beginning of some other trend yet to be named, and there are fewer students in the public school system.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether student residences at post-secondary institutions, or universities, I guess, pay property taxes?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, they do.

Mrs. Driedger: Would it be accurate to say that in Manitoba those are the only student residences that are in the position of having to pay property taxes, that other provinces, they're all exempt? Would that be an accurate statement?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I do want to point out that under the former Conservative government the whole university paid property tax. When we came into power, I think it was '02, we, in fact, moved universities and colleges, phased out their requirement to pay municipal property tax. My understanding is the phase-out didn't apply to residence and it doesn't apply to businesses within an institution; that businesses have to pay tax, or pardon me, that part of a building is assessed for tax.

As for what other provinces do, I don't have that information, but I do want to add that the colleges are—it was the universities that were exempt from taxation. Since the colleges have a different relationship with government and a more intimate relationship with government, colleges continue to pay taxes.

Now, I've had several conversations about the whole question of taxation on student residence and it's a very interesting—I don't know whether the member's going to suggest the removal of property tax on residence. I know that there is a sense among certain officials at some of our institutions that that would be a good idea, but the question has to be explored and has yet to be explored.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that the University of Manitoba faces an \$18-million shortfall for '07-08. I'd like to ask the minister: With that kind of a shortfall, in their view, how are they supposed to provide good quality education and compete with other universities for professors and students and good quality programs?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I'm a little uncertain as to what the member means by a shortfall because the University of Manitoba has a balanced budget.

Mrs. Driedger: According to the university, according to the request that they've put in, they have been underfunded in terms of the amount of dollars they actually need in order to meet their requirements, and because of that, they're in a

position where they are having to look at a number of things. Certainly, we've seen from Brandon University, they are talking about actually having to cut programs. When we look at all of the universities—and I don't believe they've been putting forward frivolous budgets. I think, at this point, after they've been underfunded for eight years, that those budgets are probably pretty on in terms of what their requirements are. So, when they are not getting the amount of operating dollars they need, they are being squeezed in terms of the kind of decisions they are going to have to make.

So, I'm just, I guess, wondering, in the minister's view, when she's not providing them with the dollars they need, what is her expectation in terms of how are they supposed to move forward and provide quality education when they don't have the funding to do that.

Ms. McGifford: Well, you know, I might begin by just pointing out that the University of Manitoba has more Rhodes Scholars than any other university in western Canada, which I think suggests that there is quality education. I might point out that the University of Manitoba has world-class researchers—for example, Jamie Blanchard who is doing HIV-AIDS research and is renowned internationally. I might point to Dave Barber, who is heading up a wonderful group called ArcticNet. In fact, we had a short discussion about ArcticNet and the work that they're doing yesterday. I might point, for example, to Noralou Roos, who is known internationally for her research on poverty.

So we have this wonderful team of Rhodes Scholars. We've done very well in research funding at the University of Manitoba. We have these internationally known researchers. We have a president with an international reputation. Our Engineering school has got the accreditation. So I'm not quite sure—I'm also not sure whether the member is referring to '07-08 or '08-09.

But I do want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the work in the '90s because I think this member is into a mode of behaviour which is, do what I say and not what we do when we're in power. I think I'll just put on the record, Madam Chair, let's take 1993-94. I don't know quite what the request was from the University of Manitoba, or from universities—but I know that they received minus 2. I don't know what the request in '94-95 was, but I know that they received minus 4. I don't know what the request in 1995-96 was, but they received,

and listen to this, they received a grand total of 0.1 percent.

I don't know what the request in '96-97 was, but what was the increase? Well, minus 2.5—in other words, it was a decrease. In '97-98, there was a request for 5.1 percent increase, but what did they get? Minus 2 percent. So, in fact, during the '90s, there were one, two, three, four years when rather than getting any increases, the University of Manitoba was decreased 2 percent, 4 percent, 2.5 percent, 2 percent and then one year they had a grand total increase of 0.1 percent.

So this member really shouldn't be hectoring me on grants to universities and colleges.

*(15:10)

Mrs. Driedger: I find the minister's comments interesting and, I guess, a little disappointing. After yesterday, I thought that maybe she was—and I really appreciated her comments yesterday compared to some other ministers that I've had to ask questions of over the last number of years. I thought she was more forthcoming with her responses. In fact, I was going to give her credit at the end of today for her behaviour in Estimates compared to some of the other ministers I've had to deal with. I'm afraid now that that's taken a bit of a downward dive.

The minister is also on Treasury Board, and so she would know, having been on Treasury Board, what economies are all about and what financial disasters are all about. She knows full well in the early '90s there was a recession, one of the worst recessions that we've ever had and that accounted for a lot of the problems. Then she also knows that almost a billion dollars was withheld by the federal Liberals from this province, and across the country, on a unilateral decision through a large part of the late '90s which did create a lot of financial problems and an inability to meet everybody's needs; not like today, where this government is flowing in dough, unlike what we saw in the '90s.

This government has got more money coming at it than the government in the '90s could ever have dreamed of. So I think she should, being on Treasury Board, have a better understanding about some of this—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I just want to take a moment to remind all honourable members on both sides of the table to please address their questions through the Chair.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to also indicate to the minister that my comments are not being generated out of anything other than conversations or audits that I am looking at from these institutions. I will give an example from the audited report of the University of Manitoba 2006.

I'm the messenger here. I am the one that is asking the questions based on what is being told to me by these institutions. So it's interesting that the minister wants to take a swipe at me when, in fact, I thought I was fairly representing the comments that I'm hearing out there. I thought I was coming in here asking the appropriate questions of this government.

I'd like to read a few excerpts from the audited report then of the University of Manitoba from 2006, and I quote, under the leadership of Dr. Emöke Szathmáry, the University of Manitoba has strived to realize its vision of excellence and innovation in teaching, research and community service. Although faculties, schools, the libraries and administrative units have risen to their budgetary challenges in the past, excellence can only be achieved if resources are made available—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

I just wanted to clarify: Is that document a public document?

Mrs. Driedger: Yes, it is, and the minister would have it.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. Please continue.

Mrs. Driedger: Excellence can only be achieved if resources are made available to fund new strategic initiatives. Maintaining the status quo will only produce mediocre results over the long term.

In the next paragraph it says: While the University of Manitoba has made considerable progress, many exciting initiatives remain unfunded. This puts the University of Manitoba at a disadvantage as compared to other universities across the country.

Next paragraph: To meet the challenges of increased costs of operating, these challenges are being met through the issuance of debt to support new building construction.

Based on that, I would like to ask the minister how much money the University of Manitoba has had to borrow. I understand from our discussion of,

probably yesterday, it's in the vicinity of \$150 million, in order to meet some of the requirements that it has. Would that be accurate?

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday, I mentioned that the University of Manitoba had borrowed \$150 million, but the university had borrowed this against the \$237 million that they raised in their fundraising campaign. The reason they borrowed money is because not all that money, the \$237 million, came in right away. It's staggered over a number of years, but the university wished to do some of the projects that that money was funding right away, as soon as they could, so they came to government and negotiated with government, and government took a loan for the university in order to guarantee a low interest rate.

The university is using that money for a number of projects which include an Aboriginal student centre. I can give the member the figures if she wants. That's \$2.6 million. Engineering and information technology complex, 19.25; Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals, \$2.7 million; Apotex Centre, \$17 million; the Elizabeth Dafoe storage annex, \$2.76 million; underground service system, \$2.75 million; environmental safety building, \$4 million; technology projects, \$20.7 million; infrastructure health and safety—and I know the member will be interested in this because she expressed concern about health and safety yesterday—\$52.5 million; the William Norrie Centre, which is open, up and running on Selkirk for access programs, \$2.2 million; welcome centre, \$3.5 million; International House, \$2.1 million.

Then the university also had some revenue projects that will be used to help pay back. These include the Bannatyne campus parkade; the Smartpark at 135 Innovation Drive; the Smartpark, One Research Road; and Smartpark, 2078 Innovation Drive. So the university has created these revenue-producing projects, and they will also help to pay back the \$150 million plus portions of the \$237 million which the university raised in its fundraising campaign.

Mrs. Driedger: Has the university had to borrow more than the \$150 million or is that the total amount of their borrowing? I understand that borrowing is borrowing of dollars from the provincial government.

Ms. McGifford: No, the university hasn't as far as—well, in fact, I think I know quite well because the university can only borrow—*[interjection]* As far as I

know, no, there was no other borrowing, and since it's done, any borrowing of that nature is done through an Order-in-Council. I think that's a pretty safe answer.

Mrs. Driedger: Then I would ask, are the debt-servicing costs then paid to the government?

Ms. McGifford: The interest is paid to the government because the government has to pay the interest.

Mrs. Driedger: Do all of the post-secondary education institutions have a rainy day fund, and how many of them have been forced to dip into that rainy day fund because of the underfunding for the past eight years?

* (15:20)

Ms. McGifford: I just want to review for the member what she calls underfunding, and I think it contrasts quite handsomely with the funds that I mentioned for the '90s. In 2000-2001, a 3.4 increase; in '01-02, a 3.6; '02-03, 2.8; '03-04, 3.8; '04-05, 2.7; '05-06, 3.3; '06-07, 6.8; and '07-08, 7.2. So I just wanted to respond to the remarks about underfunding and point out, again, the stark contrast to the real underfunding of the '90s.

At the same time, I do want to make the point for the member that she talks about the cuts in 1994-95. Those cuts have not been restored. The departments of education will, for the first time this year, the federal government is flowing \$800 million to be distributed across the country, but we haven't seen any of that money yet. It'll come in the '08-09 budget. So, just to bring that to the member's attention. Despite experiencing the same kinds of federal cuts that the former Filmon government experienced, this government has responded, as I said, with some very handsome increases to post-secondary education.

Now, the question that we were dealing with was: do all institutions have a rainy day fund? My information is no, they don't have slush funds or rainy day funds, but some of them, for their ongoing operations from time to time, may have a line of credit.

Mrs. Driedger: Just in reference to the comments made by the minister, while she has indicated that a certain amount of operating funds have flowed to the institutions, according to the institutions it's far less than what they need in order to provide a quality education in post-secondary education.

Also, while the minister likes to make reference to the federal money flowing to the province, the minister is also fully aware that there is much more reliance on federal transfers and more money flowing to this province through federal transfers than certainly what flowed in the '90s. So, this government does have a lot more money to work with and put it into priority areas than what was available in the 1990s.

According to the University of Winnipeg again, in their public document, the University of Winnipeg audited statements from '06, it shows that they ended '06 in a deficit position of almost half a million dollars. I would like to put on the record, read one of the paragraphs: The financial results reflect the effect of a continuing decline in student enrolment growth, insufficient growth in the level of provincial grant funding to maintain a sustainable level of operations, and continuing pressures in operating expenditures, including staffing and facilities. This is the first operating deficit incurred by the university during the past five years and essentially reflects the previously reported gap in the growth of revenues and expenditures that exists within the university's financial structure. End of paragraph.

So the comments I have been bringing forward to the minister are certainly concerns that I have been pulling out of annual reports, or audited statements, or some discussions with people at the various post-secondary institutions. They're not an invention in my mind. I think there's a cry for help out there from these facilities and that cry for help is more than just happening right now. It's been happening for a number of years. I think what's happening right now though, it's reached such a point that I think there is a level of desperation in these institutions and they are basically hitting a wall and asking the minister to please do something.

If this government is going to continue with a tuition freeze, I think what all of them would like to see is a full backfill of what that tuition freeze is doing to all of the universities.

I don't know if the minister wants to comment on any of that, but I was going to go on to some questions about Red River College.

Ms. McGifford: If there is any cry, it certainly started as a shrill scream in the '90s when the universities and colleges were desperately slashed by the former government, just thrown to the winds, and tuition just went up enormously for its students.

But I do wonder about the member's comments about the tuition freeze because my understanding during the past election was that her leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), had now decided that he supported the tuition freeze. Not only did he support the tuition freeze, but I believe that he proposed tax cuts of something like \$800 million dollars, and those \$800 million are far more than the whole post-secondary education budget. So I can't imagine how the member opposite and her leader would have managed this portfolio. It just boggles the mind.

Mrs. Driedger: We saw in Saskatchewan when they brought in their tuition freeze, what they did was they fully backfilled that so that the post-secondary institutions weren't deprived of that money. So, if one is going to have a tuition freeze, then, at least, the government should have gone that next step and backfilled and provided appropriate operating grants that would take into account the money that the universities were losing because of that, and that's not what this government did.

Prior to getting into Red River College, I just have a couple of questions to the minister. Is there any travel by the Premier (Mr. Doer) or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by her department?

Ms. McGifford: I don't know whether the Saskatchewan government fully backfilled for a tuition freeze in the province of Saskatchewan, but I do know what the Filmon government did was lower operating grants and get students to backfill. At the same time as they let tuition skyrocket and therefore got students to backfill, they also cancelled the Manitoba Bursary in the dead of the night in 1993-94. So they took away the students' accessibility to monies that would make their lives a little easier. Students left the province in droves. Enrolment went down incredibly. Again, I don't think this member has much to tell me about post-secondary education.

As regards the question about the Premier, I will have to get back to the member on that.

Mrs. Driedger: While the minister is looking to see if there was any travel by the Premier or a delegation led by the Premier that was paid for by her department, if she could also provide the pertinent details of that travel as to location, purpose, dates, cost and who all went.

In regard to ministerial travel, could the minister indicate how many out-of-province trips she has taken in the past year and details of those trips, such as the purpose.

Ms. McGifford: I was in Denmark in January. It was paid for by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I was representing Canada because there is no federal Education minister, so a provincial minister is selected, and the topic was migrant labour. As I said, it was paid for by the federal government. I was recently in Victoria for a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to thank the minister for that information.

I understand that Red River College has problematic waiting lists. I'd like to ask the minister if there has been any expansion of seats at Red River College.

* (15:30)

Ms. McGifford: We are doing some calculating, Myrna. I don't mean calculating in a bad sense. I mean adding up numbers.

Madam Chairperson: That was the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

Ms. McGifford: My information is since '99-2000 the increase in numbers of seats at Red River is approximately 1,500, but that's not an absolutely firm number. It may be either way a little bit, but that's the figure I can give the member today and I think it's pretty accurate.

Mrs. Driedger: Based on the waiting lists that they currently have, is there any further discussion about expanding even further in the future in terms of more seats? I understand from the media there have been comments that they made, like another building.

I saw that there was a heritage building in downtown that they've been looking at, and I understand that there might have been a request or some looking, I guess, at a campus in south Winnipeg in order to address some of their waiting lists and the need for more space in some of the high demand areas?

Ms. McGifford: I think the member might recall that one of the election commitments the Premier (Mr. Doer) made was a commitment to 4,000 new

apprentices—and I know the member knows the need for skilled labour—and 2,500 of these were notionally to be with Red River.

I understand that much of the information that the member might have been reading is speculative at this time, that Red River is very interested in maximizing the space that it already has. That's the situation with Red River right now.

Mrs. Driedger: Does Manitoba have a co-ordinated skills strategy?

Ms. McGifford: Some of these questions the member may wish to refer to Competitiveness, Training and Trade, as well, but I can tell the member that there is the Manitoba action strategy for economic growth. There is the innovation strategy, and then the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, sometimes known as PEAC, also has an interest in these kinds of strategies.

Mrs. Driedger: I know that this has been an issue raised I think by Professor McCallum, and it is one that's sort of been on my mind even in health care. So I'd like to ask the minister, do the provincial government or post-secondary institutions track graduates to see if they get jobs here, if they have to leave Manitoba to find work, if the jobs they get reflect their educational choices, or if they meet the province's labour market needs?

Ms. McGifford: Thank you for that question. The member is probably aware that the colleges do quite intense surveys on their graduates and Red River, for example, has had some spectacular results there. It's their report that I've read most recently so I make reference to that, and we know how important they are to our economy by reading these kinds of documents.

I'm told that some of the faculties in our universities do surveys and have information, but one of the real difficulties is it's very hard to track students once they cross borders, but our department and the Council on Post-Secondary Education in 2007 plan a graduate survey.

Mrs. Driedger: Back to the AGM at the University of Manitoba. In looking at research funds that they acquire by source, they indicated that they get 10.5 percent of research funds from the province, 50.1 percent from the federal government. and 39.4 percent from others. It appears that the Manitoba provincial contribution has not changed since 1999, so that would be about 10 percent. Is that an accurate interpretation?

Ms. McGifford: Research monies are flowed through STEM, so I think the member should refer her questions to the Estimates in that department.

Mrs. Driedger: The University of Winnipeg recently had the death threat that was spray-painted on the men's washroom, and I was involved in a briefing about what had happened in that incident. I would just like to ask the minister how are post-secondary institutions going about—I don't need a lot of detail, but just some assurances, I guess, that post-secondary institutions have some very definite management plans in place to manage those kinds of threats, and I would also like to know if the minister is confident that adequate plans are in place in all of those institutions.

Ms. McGifford: I know this is a matter of concern in all post-secondary institutions. I'd like to take the opportunity on the record here today, and I'm sure the member opposite would like to do the same, to congratulate University of Winnipeg President Axworthy and his very, very capable staff for handling that situation so well, so just to put that on the record.

* (15:40)

I'm told that after Virginia Tech—I'm sure the member remembers that—COPSE asked all our institutions to review their plans, and since Virginia Tech, they have been actively planning. Since the latest incident at University of Winnipeg, we've asked them all to revisit their plans. We believe that they will soon be coming to COPSE with their plans and for discussions.

So no one can ever guarantee that nothing will ever happen, but I think our institutions are very aware of the need to provide safety to their staff, faculty, students, and they're doing work on it.

Mr. Gregory Dewar, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to thank the minister for her comments and, indeed, I know that that would have been a very stressful experience, and do compliment all of those that were involved in it. In trying to look at all of the things that could have happened in that and how it was managed, as the minister indicated, there are probably a lot of nuances to it and one hopes that they're all addressed. But I guess we pray that nothing ever does happen and that all of our students and professors and everybody else that is working at these institutions are certainly safe.

I move on right now to the University College of the North. I note, and I guess I just maybe should ask for clarification. Is the chancellor in place at the University College of the North?

Ms. McGifford: No, I understand that the chancellor is not in place, but there will soon be a ceremony. He will be—I think, installed, is the correct word? In the next few weeks he will be installed. I think that's the right word.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate why it's taken so long to fill that, considering it is a requirement of legislation and everything is sort of up and running and they've never had a chancellor, which seems very strange?

Can the minister indicate why that person hasn't been in place?

Ms. McGifford: The naming of chancellors at universities is the responsibility of the institution. I can't tell the member why the chancellor is not in place yet at University College of the North. I would guess it's possibly to do with the fact that when the University College of the North first started—and we have to remember it's a relatively new institution—there was, I'm trying to remember, an interim council, and the interim council, along with the president and other academic officials, was responsible for the institution. Then in 2006, the interim council was replaced by the learning council and the governing council. Perhaps it's taken a bit of time with the change in presidency. There's a new president began last year. So I would assume it's just a matter of timing. I'm sure the member knows who the new chancellor's going to be, and we're very delighted that it's going to happen.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate whether or not the university has been accredited?

Ms. McGifford: The university has not yet been accredited by the AUCC. The reason is that you can only be accredited when you reach a certain number. The University College is working on growing its numbers and will begin the process of accreditation once the numbers have expanded.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that the Aboriginal midwifery program was started there. I believe their first year began September '06. I certainly am supportive of that initiative.

Could the minister indicate whether or not there's any provincial funding in that, or was that

money that came—I understand from doing some reading that it was funded by federal dollars.

Ms. McGifford: Staff are looking for more solid information, but I could just go from my memory at this point. I do remember that there was some federal money. Funding for the program was made possible through an allocation provided to UCN and contributions from Manitoba Health and the COPSE's strategic program envelope. So, yes, the Province is part and parcel of funding that program.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us why the midwifery program that had been developed in the late '90s—and I'm told by midwives in the community that they had developed it. It was fully ready to go and that this government decided not to fund it.

Can the minister indicate why her government decided not fund that program at the University of Manitoba?

Ms. McGifford: I can't answer that question. I think that the member should ask that question in the Estimates of Health.

Mrs. Driedger: My information is that COPSE was the one that refused to fund it, and considering that the minister would have been in consultation with COPSE, then that would fall into her purview. So I would ask her, then, why COPSE did not agree to fund it.

Ms. McGifford: Well, current staff are not aware of this decision making. We'll have to get back to the member on the matter.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate if all faculty positions at UCN are filled and if they've hired a V.P. of academic and research?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I understand that the University College of the North has recently hired a new vice-president academic. That's Kathryn McNaughton. I understand that all the positions are not yet filled, but they're actively recruiting those positions.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm going to switch gears here to adult learning centres. I ran into someone the other day from an adult learning centre in a smaller town who said that the post-secondary institutions in Manitoba don't like to co-operate with adult learning centres in Manitoba, so that these adult learning centres are being forced to buy programs and support from out-of-province like SAIT and NAIT in Alberta, although I do think the University of

Winnipeg might be maybe an exception to some degree in that.

Would the comments from this person be accurate in the minister's view?

Ms. McGifford: I have never heard this before. Indeed, I would be wondering why adult learning centres would be buying programs from SAIT and NAIT because they're post-secondary institutions. But if the member would like to encourage that individual to contact my office, for example, to contact my special assistant, Jeremy Read, I would be very interested in pursuing the matter.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to thank the minister for that. As I will be having meetings coming up with some of those groups, I'll certainly indicate that they should do that.

This person also said that support for market-driven training programs is not adequate in Manitoba. What kind of comments would the minister like to make to that? Certainly, because we have an acute skills shortage, if these comments are accurate, then, indeed, we might have a problem here.

* (15:50)

Ms. McGifford: My information is that the Province does not support market-driven programs. By their very nature, they're driven by the market and supported by the market. However, the department and obviously government indirectly supports market-driven programs because these programs often make use of our public institutions.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the minister indicate how many adult learning centres there are in Manitoba and if they all have to be registered with the government?

Ms. McGifford: Pardon me, I wonder if the member would repeat her question.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister indicate how many adult learning centres there are in Manitoba, and if they all have to be registered with the government?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, there are 45 adult learning centres, and they are all registered with government.

Mrs. Driedger: Do they have to meet requirements laid out by government before they can be registered?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, that's true. There is an Adult Learning Centre Act, and the requirements are laid out in the legislation.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister tell us how they are evaluated to ensure that they are on track for what they are supposed to be doing and so that there is solid accountability in place with all of them?

Ms. McGifford: Through monitoring and evaluation by the adult learning and literacy staff who make on-site visits, I think twice a year. Twice a year.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm sure the minister is fully aware of the CARD program and the Neeginan program at the Aboriginal Centre. I know that they have been looking for recognition by the government as a post-secondary institution. Can the minister indicate what kind of discussions are in place around that and whether or not that is something that she is giving any consideration to?

Ms. McGifford: There have been some ongoing meetings between CARD and, I believe, federal government persons as well as members from my department and indeed other community members in addition to CARD.

As a result of consultations, there was report released earlier called the bear spirit report. The bear spirit report dealt with questions of post-secondary education, particularly Aboriginal post-secondary education, and post-secondary education outcomes. As a result of the report, meetings continue. CARD people are meeting with folks from COPSE.

Mrs. Driedger: I'm going to switch gears again into the area of literacy, and I know the minister introduced today The Adult Literacy Act. I wonder if she could just detail for us the types of discussions or consultations that she has carried out in putting that act together.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, there have been stakeholder consultations and also cross-department consultations because other departments have very valuable contributions to make. These consultations will continue and will broaden because that, of course, is part of the legislation. In order to arrive at the strategy, we have made a commitment to consult widely with our provincial people.

Mrs. Driedger: I am told by people from within the literacy community that there have been no stakeholder consultations to date, which contradicts what the minister just said. So could she indicate then how many stakeholder—and I would assume by

this we're talking literacy groups in the community—how many stakeholder meetings she's actually had?

Ms. McGifford: We don't have the number here, but we will get back to the member with the number.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you.

One other question: Are there any discussions ongoing about how to improve transition from high school to post-secondary education?

Ms. McGifford: I'm told that all the post-secondary education institutions have programs, the purpose of which is to facilitate the transition. I know the Adult Learning Centres do work on this issue, and we're pretty sure that ECY has programs, but I can't really speak to that.

Mrs. Driedger: No further questions.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Gregory Dewar): Thank you.

Resolution 44.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$448,623,900 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Support for Universities and Colleges, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$59,248,700 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Manitoba Student Aid, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,227,000 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Adult Learning and Literacy, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,720,600 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 44.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$285,800 for Advanced Education and Literacy,

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 44.1(a), the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 44.1. At this point, we request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

* (16:00)

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Driedger: Just one final question, and it's in the Estimates book on page 9 where it does show a change in capital grants from \$14 million down to \$11 million, a 17.5 percent decrease. So it certainly emphasizes, I think, some of the discussions we've been having about capital dollars and maintenance dollars. I think seeing a 17.5 percent decrease in that certainly speaks to some of the challenges that the universities are having.

Ms. McGifford: The reason for that decrease is because there was a particular commitment, and that commitment had been completed in '06-07. So that's why there was a decrease. It isn't that there was—it was because a commitment had been completed.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Gregory Dewar): Resolution 44.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,617,700 for Advanced Education and Literacy, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Department of Health.

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

The committee recessed at 4:02 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:06 p.m.

HEALTH

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): 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 Health.

Does the honourable Minister of Health have an opening statement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Acting Chair, as per discussion with my critic, we have agreed that we will both make some opening remarks today. So I will begin.

Mr. Acting Chair, certainly it is an honour to be sitting in this chair today as Manitoba's Minister of Health. I think anyone that has that sort of responsibility bestowed upon them would certainly feel that honour and feel the weight of that responsibility as well. I am very committed to working with our government, with the citizens of Manitoba to do all that we can to ensure that people are getting the care that they need when they need it.

I know that consistently health care has been the No. 1 priority of our government, and we know that it is the No. 1 priority on the minds of Manitobans. We all have, at one time or another, experiences with our health-care system, and we all have our stories to tell. We have our challenges to cite and our successes to celebrate. We know that people care deeply about what kind of care their parents get, their children get, their brothers and sisters get, their neighbours get, and that's why we're working every day to ensure that we can work with the people in the health-care community to make that care second to none.

We have, of course, recently come through an election campaign where our government has made very clear the commitments and the direction that we have on the subject of health care. It isn't on its face complicated, Mr. Acting Chair, but it is clear.

Our commitments have been over time and will continue to be to increase the number of health-care professionals that exist in our system to be able to provide that care. We have made specific commitments about increasing the number of doctors in our system. We've made specific commitments about increasing the number of nurses that will exist in our system. We've talked about how we will achieve that, and that is undoubtedly going to be part of our more fulsome discussion as we go forward, but those issues, of course, consist of remuneration, they consist of looking at the quality of life that our

health-care professionals must lead. It considers issues of innovation within the system that draw professionals to come to Manitoba and retain the very fine people that we have. Of course, it addresses continued investment, not only of a capital nature infrastructure, but of technology, of IT, and so forth.

Our commitments were clear on increasing additional health-care staff, whether it's health-care aides or technologists or primary care, other kinds of professionals that exist in our system to help Manitobans be as healthy as they can be.

* (16:10)

We've been clear on our continued commitment to reduce wait times, and we've been very clear on our commitment to continue to bring care closer to Manitobans so that they can live and work through sometimes very difficult times with family members who are ill in their communities with their families.

We've also been clear about our overarching commitment to ensure that care is provided to people based on their medical need, Mr. Acting Chair, and not on the size of their wallet. We know that there are many ways that one can enter that debate which, indeed, has been a lively one in recent weeks across the country and across the world, really. But we know that one of the ways that we can engage in that debate is by participating in making a health-care system better, and stronger, so that people don't have to entertain the idea of going into other systems because they're concerned about how long they have to wait. We have had very good success in some areas, and we have more work to do in others, and we've never shied away from that.

I would also say that it's a privilege to sit in this chair but, indeed, it is challenging, and I have never said otherwise. Dealing with challenging issues like reducing disparities that exist in our population when it comes to health status, whether we're talking about disparities among Aboriginal people, among our immigrant populations, those living in poverty, single women, we know that there are people, as groups, in our society that are less healthy than others, and we need to work diligently to ensure that we reduce that disparity.

And we know that we can't do this alone, Mr. Acting Chair. We cannot, as a Department of Health, address some of these broad issues. We know it has to be a shared vision and a shared responsibility. And when we talk about determinants of health, education, poverty, housing, it has to be a

collaborative approach if we're going to ever make a meaningful and profound difference in the lives of Manitobans who exist with these great disparities in their health status. And we know that we can't do it alone on a provincial level. We have to work with our municipal counterparts, and we must work in partnership with the federal government as we go forward on these very important issues.

Lastly, and without it being least, our government's commitment to prevention and promotion of health and healthy living has been very clear. While, certainly, the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) is going to be talking about that in her Estimates, it must be said that that particular piece of a very complex puzzle is arguably the most important one. How can we make society look at the issue of health, not from a sickness-care perspective, but from the promotion-of-health perspective? It's a very big job, and it's something that we have to do together.

So, in closing, Mr. Acting Chair, I would say that it is indeed an honour to have this responsibility. It is an incredible one, and, as somebody that has had very direct experiences recently with our health-care system, you know, over the last two years, as somebody having a child in Manitoba, you have an up close and personal look at the health-care system, and the gratitude that you feel towards those nurses and those doctors in those very intense moments cannot be put into words. I know the member opposite may likely share similar feelings about how grateful you are to those people that help you through arguably the most important moment of your life.

I would also say that, recently, I had to go through the loss of a parent. Arguably, there's no more difficult time in one's life to lose one's mother, and to have the doctors and the nurses at your side with incredible medical expertise and absolute intuition about what your needs are in those most difficult moments. Well, it's an honour to be part of that system and to work to make it better.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): We thank the honourable minister for the opening comments.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I do have an opening statement. I thank the minister for hers. I

pass on my condolences. I didn't realize that the member had recently lost her mother. Unfortunately, we share that similar experience as well of losing a parent, although mine was much longer ago, but I do extend my condolences to the member and also to her family.

I am new, obviously, as the critic to this particular department, excited and sometimes a little overwhelmed by the challenge. I know the minister and I have had a discussion about this, in the relative sense. I believe the minister would still probably classify herself as relatively new to the department. She indicates that this is, in fact, her first Estimates. I don't think this is something she would begrudge me sharing, but when we had the discussion she indicated that we were sort of in a similar boat because this is my first Estimates in this particular department and it is her first Estimates. I'm not sure that we're exactly on an equal footing. If she were to share her entire department with me, then perhaps I'd feel that we're actually on a level playing field, but the way the system works, that, obviously, is not going to happen.

But I do want to echo some of the comments that the minister indicated in terms of those who are working within the health-care system. I, recently in a similar sort of vein, although not being the primary person, have been involved to the birth of our son about a year ago. I did have an experience in childbirth. Certainly, our experience was positive from the sense that those who were involved, the doctors and the nurses over the course of 32 hours—I think we saw almost every doctor and every nurse in Manitoba at that juncture. But it was certainly a challenging experience that was made easier—I wouldn't want to use the word "easy," but it was made easier as a result of the good people who were there. Of course, I think my wife would echo that and have a much more direct comment towards that.

I do want to indicate, first off, that certainly members of our party appreciate the work that is done by staff within the departments of Health and Healthy Living, and we will have an opportunity at some point during these Estimates to discuss the issues related to Healthy Living. But we do want to indicate that we know that the work that goes on in the department isn't always easy work. Certainly, we know that the nature of many of the calls that would come to the department, either directly from individuals who are not satisfied with the help that they're getting or possibly from elected officials who are referring constituency cases to the minister's

office and directly into the Department of Health, we know those aren't easy situations and that many of them, probably most of them are emergency situations where individuals are dealing with the most important thing in their lives, which is their health. So there's a very direct and specific need that needs to be met in a timely basis. So we appreciate the work that is done by those who are operating in the Department of Health in ensuring that the best of their abilities are getting service for individuals.

Also, of course, we refer to it sometimes as the front lines of health care, those who are working in our hospitals and in different forms of the health-care system, whether it's the doctors or nurses or paramedics or others, who are offering care on a daily basis. We know that they do the best with the resources that they're provided. We know that they are doing the best in the environment that has been established for them. Certainly, we appreciate those men and women who are out there even as we sit here in this committee and talk about the health-care system in Manitoba. They're out there delivering that first-line care and sometimes in difficult situations. I don't think the minister would deny that there are those challenges in the health-care system, in our hospitals, in our ERs and that the doctors and nurses are the ones who bear the brunt of that and are really within their abilities doing the best they can for those who come in the doors.

I think it would be fair to say that, although the minister, I think, doesn't try to paint a perfect picture of the health-care system, I would probably go a little further than she did to say that there's a disconnect between what it is that people expect from the health-care system and what it is that they often find when they go into the health-care system, either because they're going to see a doctor or they're going to an emergency room or they're waiting for some sort of a diagnostic test. I think that most Manitobans would feel that they aren't exactly getting what they're paying for.

* (16:20)

It's important to remember sometimes, and I think we forget this as Canadians, that what we have is an insurance system that people throughout their lives are paying into through their taxes, through the taxes that we bear here in the province and more generally throughout Canada, are paying into an insurance-based system. And it would be no different than if an individual was paying insurance through Great-West Life, for example, and then there came a

time when they needed to use that insurance. If that company didn't provide what they said they were going to do, I think that there would be, justifiably, a good deal of outrage and a good deal of concern.

In the health-care system, when individuals have paid into the system for a good part of their life or someone in their family has paid in for a good part of their life, when they come into contact with that system and they aren't provided with the service that they feel they were entitled to through the insurance system, through our tax system, I think that there is a true disconnect there and a concern.

I think that's really what we want to discuss and to try to find a way to ensure that people's expectations with the health-care system are met. I think, well, I'm sure that there are some within our society who might have expectations that the minister or others might label as unreasonable, I think, by and large, Manitobans have very reasonable expectations about what they are expecting from the health-care system. I don't think that those expectations are always being met.

Certainly, after seven years in government, there's a propensity sometimes among politicians to use excuses; this will come as a surprise to the Chairperson of the committee, but that time frame for using excuses, I think, has really expired. There really is time for this government to take ownership and to take responsibility for the things that are happening in the health-care system, and it's not good enough simply to say that it's up to the federal government, and it's not good enough to say that this dates back 20 or 30 years almost, the lifetime of me and the minister. Certainly, I think there is a time when you need to step up, and even though the minister is relatively new to her portfolio, certainly this government isn't new to managing the health-care system.

Management is a key word, and I do think that those in society who look at the health-care system—I think there's a general feeling that it's not simply going to be money that cures what ails, and no pun intended, but cures what ails the health-care system. I think when I talk to constituents who have a concern regarding the system, they understand, of course, that it does take resources, both capital and operating resources to operate a health-care system, but they also recognize that there's probably never been more money across Canada poured into the health-care system, and yet the results aren't

necessarily proportional to the increase in revenue that's being put forward.

So those who approach me—and I'm sure the experience is no different for the minister—often come to me and say, you know, what is it about the system that we can change how it's managed, that we can change how the system operates within a publicly funded system, to ensure that there are better outcomes? And outcomes is really what we talk about, I think, in the health-care system. We talk about the inputs to the health-care system, sometimes, as it relates to human resources, but people are really interested in the outcome, the kind of care that they're getting when they go to that ER or when they go to the hospital.

So, over the course of the next few days, I wouldn't be so bold as to say the next few weeks, but certainly the next few days, I think we'll have a good discussion here and my hope is that it will be productive and a healthy discussion; again, no pun intended.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): We thank the honourable Member for Steinbach for the opening statement.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for our department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 21.1(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 21.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister will introduce the staff to members of the committee.

Ms. Oswald: Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chair. I'm pleased to invite and to introduce two very important members of our staff at the Department of Health, Ms. Arlene Wilgosh, who is the deputy minister of Health, and Ms. Heather Reichert, CFO and associate deputy minister of Health.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): I thank the honourable minister.

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

Mr. Goertzen: I think historically a global discussion has worked well by Manitoba practice. I would indicate, obviously, for the minister that if there are elements of questions that staff who aren't

here aren't able to answer, she could certainly take it under advisement. It's not my intention to hold the entire Department of Health hostage as we go through a number of days of Estimates. So if that's agreeable.

Ms. Oswald: We're pleased to carry on a global discussion and I appreciate the honourable member's acceptance that if we don't have appropriate staff here at the appropriate time and we need to come back to him with some information, we appreciate his willingness to accept us to do that.

I would make one request of the member, as we previously discussed, that we agree that matters concerning the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and the Healthy Living Department will be scheduled to be at the end of the Health section of the discussion of Estimates. Is that still part of the plan?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes. I absolutely think that that's agreeable. Obviously, if there's a reason related to the minister's schedule next week where she'd rather have the Healthy Living Minister come in for a day, I think that we can accommodate that too, but, again, it's not our intention to needlessly tie up departments unnecessarily.

Ms. Oswald: Sorry, I didn't include this in my other request. As best as you can, and I know this doesn't always work out perfectly, but if we are able to afford the Minister of Healthy Living just some degree of notice that it will be her turn to come up, we would be very appreciative of that.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll certainly undertake to do that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Daryl Reid): There seems to be agreement. I thank all honourable members of the committee.

We'll now proceed on a global manner, with all the resolutions to be passed once the questioning has been completed.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Goertzen: During the context of the election campaign, which the minister referenced in her opening comments, there was a report that was released by the Paramedic Association of Manitoba entitled *Manitoba's Quiet Crisis*.

I'm not sure, and I wouldn't presume to say that the report was intended to be released during the context of a writ period, but it seemingly arrived and appeared at that time, happenstance or not. The

report, I thought, was an interesting one, and I had the opportunity to talk to a number of different paramedics long before my new critic role. It's in the context of those that I know who are friends and relatives. So, while part of the report came as a surprise to me, it certainly all wasn't, because I've heard the concerns of paramedics that they have regarding how their particular portion of the health-care system is operating.

It was surprising, I think, to see it in the context that it was brought forward, how significant the paramedics put forward the issue, calling it a crisis. I know the minister has sometimes bemoaned the fact that the word "crisis" gets used in relation to the health-care system, but I don't want her to think that it was my word. This was the word that was put forward by the paramedics.

So I would ask the minister if she's had a chance to review that particular report since the election, and since her reappointment as the Minister of Health, and what correspondence and response she may have had in relation to the report with the Paramedic Association of Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Oswald: You know, certainly, it's funny, isn't it, how these reports can just appear at the most interesting times in one's life. Really, one has so little else to do during an election campaign than sit around and read white papers and purple papers and green papers.

* (16:30)

But it was a blockbuster read, nonetheless, and I did have an opportunity to review it some months ago. Certainly, looking at the issues germane to that particular paper and really listening to paramedics that are working on the front line and working in the system, I think, is unquestionably one of the most important things that we can do. Individuals that have those experiences at arguably the most difficult times in a person's life, in a family's life, and the advice that they can offer us on what we can do as a department of Health, as a government, to try to support them in being able to do their jobs better. I think that those are very important lessons to be learned.

There's evidence, Madam Chair, that we have been listening to what EMS workers have been telling us over time. We know that since coming into government, we've worked very diligently to work on the co-ordination, one of the things that our

paramedics tell us is so critical in response and response times and co-ordination, which is why we invested in the MTCC, the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre in Brandon, a \$7.8-million investment to work on that co-ordination.

We also know that one of the important things that we have done just on an infrastructure basis is to work very diligently to replace that fleet, some 160 ambulances, predominantly for rural and northern Manitoba, which has been a very important exercise as well. Not just listening to paramedics but listening to people who interact with paramedics and interact with the system, one of the things that we've heard loud and clear from constituents in rural Manitoba, from service providers, from our good friends at the AMM that one of the daunting issues that has been facing Manitobans is the issue of inter-facility transfer fees. We have been committed to work on that and indeed have invested over \$7 million to fully fund the costs of those land ambulance IFTs. We know that that has gone a long way to help people in Manitoba with some of those issues.

One of the issues that comes up in that paper, I believe—and I will concede to the member opposite that I did not commit that paper to memory—but I do know that one of the issues that exists in that paper is one of training, that we have to make sure that just as we're working diligently to increase human resources for doctors, for nurses, for health-care aides, for technologists, we need to be building our complement of paramedics here in the province of Manitoba. That's why we have worked very hard in partnership with Red River College to announce, as we did last week, a \$1.3-million investment and partnership with Red River College to develop the Primary Care Paramedic program, which, I think, was one of the foremost issues in that white paper. We're going to see a total of 40 seats in that program, 16 at the Winnipeg campus and eight seats each in sites that will tour around rural and northern Manitoba to help educate, in more of a career model, paramedics so that they won't have to take one level of training and then go back and get more training on the job. They'll be able to have that pre-career training and be able to hit the ground running with that program.

We're also going to be offering, as we have with doctors and nurses, financial support in the form of return of service agreements to bring our human resources to rural Manitoba. We know that the Paramedic Association acknowledges in that white

paper that there's no argument that government funding for emergency medical services has increased over the past decade. They say that clearly they challenge us to do more and we take what the paramedics have to say very seriously.

Mr. Goertzen: I just want to crystallize the minister's thoughts on the particular issue of what her response was to the Paramedic Association. I wouldn't expect maybe during the context of a campaign for her to have gone out and met with them. At that point, I know she would have had a robust campaign of her own going on in her own riding, but certainly, after her re-appointment as Minister of Health, I would assume that one of her primary things would have been to have met personally with the Paramedic Association, because such a report, even though it was released during an election, I don't think is common. I don't think that it's often that a report that raises the significant issues that they did in that report comes out very frequently.

So if the minister could just indicate by way of date when it was that she first met with representatives of the Paramedic Association to discuss the critical issues that were outlined in the report.

Ms. Oswald: I cannot cite the date for the member opposite when I first met with Mr. Glass, in particular, but I suppose I could endeavour to look that up. I can say that it was prior to the election campaign so I don't know if that—and given the fact that the paper was released during that time, I don't know if seeking out that date is relevant to the member. Certainly, I have met with him at my office. I've met with him at a number of occasions, three or four occasions, outside of the building.

Subsequent to the release of the paper itself. I know that Mr. Glass, in particular, has had an ongoing dialogue with the deputy minister of Health, certainly in consultation with me. I know that there has been at least one meeting, perhaps more, with department staff, with Mr. Glass and paramedics association members. Again, I would be unable to cite the dates of that. I can say that it would be subsequent to the release of the white paper and before today, but we can endeavour to try to find the dates of when those meetings were.

I guess the salient point here is in working with those individuals, we've been able to bring to fruition the development of the paramedic training program that I believe was, if not their No. 1 priority, certainly very near the top.

Mr. Goertzen: The salient point of the question perhaps was somewhat lost, and if I phrased it poorly, I would apologize. It would seem strange to me if I were a minister, if I'd ever worked for a minister in the past, that if a report like this had been issued, I think one of the first things that I as a minister, if I was advising a minister, would be to meet with the authors of that report. I've been asking if the minister met sort of a week after the campaign. I might be asking a bit much, but here we are, several months after the election, and I understood the minister to say that she had meetings with Mr. Glass, I think she referenced, prior to the election and then, clearly, prior to this report coming out.

I wouldn't want to leave on the record that the minister hasn't met with the president of the association since the report was issued because I'm sure that isn't the case. So perhaps the minister could just clarify and assure us that she, in fact, has personally met with Mr. Glass since the release of the report.

Ms. Oswald: No, I have not. As I said, I met with him before and the deputy minister has met with him after. People from the department have met with him after, and we've been focussing on getting the work done. Certainly my door is always open to members of the health-care community, and, indeed, I believe that the communications that have been ongoing have been very fruitful in moving the agenda forward, whether it's our investment in the upgrade of 17 emergency medical stations across the province or if it's our investment of \$6.5 million to replace air ambulance, whether it's our investment of \$15 million, as I said before, to replace the fleet, whether it's the building of MTCC and now continuing to work on human resources on the emergency medical system side.

I continue to look forward to the good advice of the paramedics association broadly, of its president, and of those people that are actually receiving the care of paramedics every day. This is how we can share the knowledge and share the responsibility.

Since the campaign, no, I'll be clear. I've not had a meeting with Mr. Glass personally, but there have been a number of meetings to get the job done that have taken place.

* (16:40)

Mr. Goertzen: The minister won't be surprised that I'm surprised, in fact, that she hasn't reached out to have that meeting, given one would probably not

have to look further than the title of the report to ensure that she would have direct contact. I know she mentions in her comments that she always is open to the advice of the Paramedic Association. I would say that probably the best way to get that advice is to meet with them directly. Having an open-door policy certainly sounds nice and it's a sort of a nice vernacular to use, but I also recognize that I doubt that any association, paramedic or otherwise, would simply show up at the door of the minister and expect to get an audience with her to discuss whatever issue that there was.

So I will put on the record that I am concerned, it's probably not too far off a word to use, that she didn't in fact respond to this report in some sort of fashion after the campaign to meet personally with the association. I would encourage her to do that. I think the old adage of better late than never probably falls into this particular category. I'm sure that whomever she was meeting with on behalf of the association would appreciate that call so that some of these issues could be discussed personally with the minister, because we are very much still in the people business in politics. While I would never question the good work done by department staff, and I know that, certainly, they do much of the heavy lifting with these particular initiatives, there is an important part of a minister having a personal interaction with those who are raising concerns, particularly at the level that this was raised.

On the same topic, although not specifically on the same point, I'd like to ask the minister if she's had a briefing recently on the temporary closure that happened at Falcon Lake ambulance service. I believe that last week, from Monday to Thursday, they were without their own local service and getting service from the communities of Ste. Anne, Prawda, and I believe there was another community, so forgive me if it doesn't come immediately to top of mind. Whether or not she's had a briefing on that issue.

Ms. Oswald: Again, just on a last point, again I appreciate the member's opinion about who I meet with and when, and certainly, you know, I will listen to his advice.

I would concur that we are in the people business. Again, let's be clear that I have in past had a meeting in my office with Mr. Glass. I have spoken with him in a variety of settings and certainly will continue to look forward to hearing his good ideas and would say that our record on investing in EMS

speaks for itself. We've got more work to do. There's no question about that because we want to ensure that the improvement is continuous. Whether that advice comes from the president of the association, from paramedics in the field who have very good advice to offer us, or if it comes from the people receiving the care, we do care deeply about those people's opinions and will continue to do so.

On the subject of the curtailment of service at Falcon Lake recently, yes, I was made aware of the situation, certainly was made aware of contingencies put in place for service that would be close by to ensure that if any individuals were requiring that service needed care, that they would get the care in a timely way. Certainly, we want to work together with our paramedics to build our complement. That would be part and parcel to why we've made this investment in training to build that complement, so that we can ensure that our various dispatches in rural and northern Manitoba are there for people when they need them as often as we can.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister made reference to the fact that she'll ensure that the people of Falcon Lake, the residents, would get care in a timely fashion. My understanding was, and she can certainly correct me if my understanding was incorrect, that a report time for an ambulance could be as high 60 minutes. I suppose, if it was coming from Ste. Anne, and being a resident of the region, that would seem about right to me, from Ste. Anne to Falcon Lake.

Could she confirm that during that point of time that the high-end of a wait could have been 60 minutes? That's assuming that an ambulance was available immediately in Ste. Anne. Does she consider that to be timely access to care for an ambulance?

Ms. Oswald: It is not at this time my understanding that that was the wait time, but in the interest of accuracy I would ask to take a moment to verify that information. We certainly do know that that particular area of dispatch at this time of year is a low volume area, and certainly we will double-check to see if, in fact, there were any calls that occurred during that curtailment of service and endeavour to get for the member what the contingency places would be and, in fact, what those times would be.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that undertaking. I suspect, being a resident of the area, that the 60-minute time if an ambulance was dispatched from Ste. Anne would be correct. However, I will look forward to that information.

I did receive earlier today an e-mail, actually a series of e-mails from a different resident of Falcon Lake, and I received them actually from Minister Toews's office. They were forwarded to me in my responsibility with health care. It comes as a shock, I know, to some members sitting across the table. *[interjection]* We must be careful. Some of the staff in the office I know quite well and they do a wonderful job. I want to say that they're the good people in Mr. Toews office.

The e-mail that I received, I'll just read it for the member. I have no concerns about providing her with a copy of it, but just for the sake of expediency here, it's from a Barry and Sheila Hewitt and they write to the minister, forwarded to me: There appears to be an intent on the part of provincial parks branch—I understand that the minister isn't responsible for that part of government, but, certainly, being involved with paramedics I am sure she will want to hear this. There appears to be an intent on the part of Provincial Parks branch to remove the ambulance service from Falcon Lake. While we realize this is essentially a provincial matter we are asking you to lend your support to keeping the service here. As residents here in Falcon Lake, the ambulance service is extremely important not only to us but to everyone who either resides here or have cottages or who use the campgrounds in Falcon, West Hawk, Bear and Caddy and Star lakes. As well, the ambulance is very important when accidents occur on this stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway. We would certainly appreciate whatever support you can give us to keep the ambulance service here in our community. That was written by Barry and Sheila Hewitt.

I want to direct the minister's attention specifically to the portion of the e-mail that references a concern that there's an intent to remove the ambulance service, remove the ambulance service from Falcon Lake. Can she give assurances to the Hewitts that that is not the short-term or the long-term intent?

Madam Chairperson: I thank the Member for Steinbach for the question, and I would ask, is that a public document in the public domain?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm sorry, could you repeat your comment, Madam Chairperson?

Madam Chairperson: Is that a public document in the public domain?

Mr. Goertzen: It is and I have endeavoured in my comments to mention I would get a copy of the e-mail to the minister. I have read it verbatim. I can assure her I didn't remove any of the salient points.

Madam Chairperson: We can get one of the pages to photocopy it. That'd be great.

* (16:50)

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, we do know that people living in rural and northern Manitoba have a very close eye on issues concerning their health care, whether it's access to primary care, whether it's access to programs that help them in the pursuit of healthy living, and certainly in situations where emergency situations may occur.

I appreciate, not having seen the e-mail, but I do take the member at his word that he read it to me word for word. I embrace the spirit of the e-mail, not having seen it, that we are working diligently to ensure that emergency medical services are available to people across Manitoba when they need them. That is why we have committed to ensure that we are training personnel in a very high-level manner, making that training be more available to people that want to choose paramedic, to be a paramedic as a career. That's of course why we're working on the infrastructure and the kinds of investments that we can be making to make the affordability of things like inter-facility transfer not such a daunting task to patients across Manitoba.

So, certainly, I can say to the member today that, notwithstanding words coming out of the Department of Conservation, that it is the goal of our government to keep emergency medical services available, and to continue to work very diligently to ensure that those EMS stations are staffed appropriately at all times.

As the member has noted, there was a curtailment of service at that particular station. That, of course, is done in the interest of safety. We don't want people to have the belief that emergency medical personnel are on hand when they are not in fact on hand. That's why people are made aware of these situations, and that's why contingencies are created.

But, by continuing to invest in health human resources, and in the capital side of emergency medicine, we're going to work very diligently to keep these stations open and to keep people like those you've cited in the e-mail feeling confident that their emergency services will be available to them.

Mr. Goertzen: Just because, you know, words matter in such a sensitive situation as this, and I won't read the other e-mails directly into the record because I don't need to send others scurrying to the photocopying machine, but there were others who wrote, Terry [phonetic] and Jean Rudge [phonetic] and Marie Fenez from Falcon Lake. I know that these individuals are looking for representation on this particular issue. They are concerned that their medical service might be lost. And I want to just give the minister a very clear opportunity to tell these individuals, and others who I know will also be concerned, to tell them very clearly that they will not lose their ambulance service.

Ms. Oswald: Well, I always appreciate the opportunities that the member opposite affords to me to put my thoughts on the record in a clear way and, again, I will clearly say to him that it has been, over time, and will continue to be the commitment of this government to provide emergency medical services to the people of Manitoba, in rural Manitoba, in northern Manitoba and in our urban centres.

We are committed to keeping emergency medical services as fully staffed as we possibly can, which is why we're continuing to invest, as I said, in training programs, and continuing to make the job as attractive as possible by making those investments in the vehicles themselves, making the investments in the highly technological and very advanced MTCC in Brandon. I'm very prepared to say to the member today that we are committed to keeping emergency medical services available to the people of rural Manitoba.

As for the people in Falcon Lake, I will be frank. Can I, at this moment in time, ensure that there will not be another curtailment of service at that particular dispatch unit? I cannot do that, and it would be improper for me to do that. We are in a situation where we are endeavouring to educate more paramedics, but we are committed to keeping those services available to the people of Manitoba. Our record has been clear on that. It is a challenge, but we're up to that challenge, Madam Chair, and we're going to continue to move forward.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, that'll have to, I suppose, suffice. It wasn't, perhaps, as clear as the Constitution, but it was at least an effort in the right direction. I will relay, obviously, back to these concerned citizens of Falcon Lake that we have what I believe to be an assurance from the minister that this particular facility will stay open. They will, I'm

sure, be concerned about the minister's comments, though, and I think rightly so, that their service might be interrupted again. I would say that ambulance service is not the kind of thing that when people phone 911 that they want to sort of be rolling the dice about whether or not there's actually going to be an ambulance coming from that particular station or whether they'll have to wait for an ambulance to come from Ste. Anne, because I certainly appreciate the people of Ste. Anne, as well. I don't think that they would necessarily always feel comfortable—although, they're good people and like to share—but I'm not sure that they'd always like their ambulance to be an hour away from their particular station because it's servicing other people in Falcon Lake because of their disruption.

So I would certainly implore the minister to continue to ensure that not only that particular service is made available to the good people of Falcon Lake, but also across the province. She may want to respond to that. I see that I have a colleague here who has an important health question in his region that he'd like to address, and I always like to make room for a good friend and colleague of mine. But, if the minister wants to respond to that, of course, I know she will.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, I would like to put a few more words on the record on emergency medical services. If I should happen to go over, I'll endeavour to be brief, but I know that the member opposite, his caucus member, will have ample opportunity in what, I believe, you just described as the weeks ahead that we were going to be sitting here. But I'm sure that I was just imagining that.

In any event, again, I would say clearly that we have made a commitment to the people of Manitoba when it comes to emergency medical services. We know that since coming into government, the investments have not been small in emergency medical services. I would reiterate again for the member that the investment in the MTCC at Brandon to even better co-ordinate the dispatch of EMS is really serving as a model nationally. People are coming to have a close look at what's happening at MTCC and how dispatch can be made bigger, better, stronger, faster. There's more work to do there, but that's a \$7.8-million investment.

We, once again, invested \$7 million to fully fund the cost of inter-facility transports for land ambulance. This is something that the people of Manitoba had been asking for over time and it was a

daunting cost for the people of rural Manitoba. We committed to doing that. But it doesn't come for cheap, Madam Chair. We've invested more than \$15 million in that upgrade of the ambulance fleet. The investments that we've made in Lifeflight, \$6.5 million.

Again, I know the member opposite has cautioned me on always laying the blame elsewhere. I think I've done pretty well in 59 minutes, but it must be said that some of the challenges that we face today on some of our ambulance issues, in relationship to commitments of the federal government to our First Nations people, are profoundly debilitating. We continue in these discussions with the federal government. We know that they have a responsibility to be covering these costs. We know that the member opposite shares a close personal relationship with members of the federal government—in fact, furniture, don't you share that? I'm not sure, but with members of the federal cabinet.

I would hope that he could speak to that member about the federal government's responsibility to ensure that that emergency service is available to our First Nations people and is appropriately funded as such. We continue to struggle in those discussions. We remain optimistic that the federal government will see their way forward to make those investments as they ought. But, together, we know that if we can continue to strengthen our emergency services across Manitoba, not only in these capital expenditures, not only in the expenditures when it comes to systems, to the transport of IFTs, and not only in the efforts that we have made for paramedic training, that we will be able to provide the best emergency services possible.

Madam Chairperson: The time being 5 p.m., committee rise.

CONSERVATION

* (14:40)

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.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Chairperson, I want to follow up on one item

yesterday that I promised the critic that I would get back on. She was asking some questions about political staff. I am very fortunate to have a special assistant by the name of Larissa Ashdown, who's worked with me for just over three years, put up with me for over three years maybe and a policy analyst by the name of Tom Garrett. There's a communications specialist that is a position that is vacant and that would be it.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): A couple of questions to the minister in respect to a couple of the provincial parks in my riding. First of all, I do want to compliment all the volunteers that are associated with Spruce Woods Provincial Park and also the volunteers associated with the Criddle/Vane heritage homestead park. Certainly they do a lot of work throughout the year and certainly I think assist the department in various endeavours that take place in both of those parks.

There's an ongoing issue we have with provincial road 340 that runs adjacent to the Criddle/Vane heritage park. There's I believe 13 kilometres of gravel there that remain unpaved at this point in time. I think it would be a tremendous asset for the provincial park if that section of 340 was paved. It's just a little area in the middle there; there's pavement on both ends coming from Shilo and from Wawanesa. So it would certainly enhance access to that provincial park.

I just wondered if the minister has any plans in terms of development of that park and any other plans for investment in terms of Spruce Woods Provincial Park over the next year or going forward maybe in terms of the five-year plan for those two parks.

Mr. Struthers: Thanks, Mr. Chairperson. Spruce Woods Provincial Park, the campsite, consistently registers in the top three or four in terms of usage in our very impressive park system. One of the things that I was really proud of was the quickness in which we recovered from a flood event. I believe that was two years ago. If I haven't got that right, I know the member would correct me. He has very consistently brought forward those kinds of requests to me and I appreciate his on-the-ground approach to making sure that we have a way of, one of a number of ways, in which we keep track of what's going on there in that part of the world, Spruce Woods and Criddle/Vane.

Criddle/Vane was actually the very first park that I had the opportunity of cutting a ribbon in front

of when I first became minister. I think the Member for Turtle Mountain had been a member for about a week at the time and was able to join me in cutting that ribbon. We always look at ways in which we can—he scrambled very quickly to get to the ribbon; it was pretty impressive.

We're always looking for ways in which we can improve all of our parks, in particular at Spruce Woods. What came from that flood event was not only some good work in terms of the clean-up but in the floodproofing, the road that runs through the park we used to control the Assiniboine River and not have it flow back up into the campsites like it did a couple of springs ago. That amount, '06-07 on floodproofing, was \$344,000 and then another hundred thousand in the '07-08 budget to make sure that we don't have to go through another clean-up like we did there a couple of years ago.

Spruce Woods is an area where we've very successfully introduced yurts, quite possibly the most popular thing we've done to our provincial parks in a long, long time. We get all kinds of good remarks back from those who stay in the yurts. I know this past summer, friends of mine complained to me because they thought they had contacted us very early on and were told that the yurts at Spruce Woods were completely booked up, almost right through to the end of the summer. So that was something that we have done.

Our next major improvement is that we're looking at the computerization at the campground. We've had a very successful couple of years, especially this last year with our parks reservation system. We exceeded 50,000 early on in the summer, which has never been done, ever; never in the history of our province. Instead of sticking with the old Tory American system, we put our faith in Manitobans and made that switch. Not only did we provide some stability in terms of booking campsites, we provided some jobs and some economic development here in the province of Manitoba. So we're moving towards the computerization of that campground as well.

* (14:50)

I do want to throw into this, which I have been reminded of, is, I think, a very innovative approach to Kiche Manitou where we're looking at setting up two family group areas, 23 individual sites that will form these two family group areas. They'll be electrified sites. What we've noticed is that the electrification of sites across the province has increased the accessibility to Manitoba families and

tourists coming to visit our province, and the electrification has really helped to make sure that we have more and more bookings that take place.

I think that doing this family group area, two of them at Kiche Manitou at Spruce Woods, I think is a very progressive step forward. That's also what we're looking at at Spruce Woods. Thanks.

Mr. Cullen: I appreciate the minister's response. I know the minister and his department are looking at implementing 911 service throughout a lot of the provincial parks and, at this time, Spruce Woods park does not have a 911. It has service to it, but it doesn't have a very good phone service. It's a very large park, and, as the minister knows, it gets used throughout the year and there are a lot of remote trails there.

Because the cell service is very poor, we're finding individuals, from time to time, get caught, not only in the park itself but out on some of these remote trails. So I think it's something that maybe the department could look at in conjunction with some of the cell providers for that area that would certainly enhance the safety of that park. I know I have had discussions with MTS about this particular situation because MTS is certainly involved in that area quite extensively, and they may be looking at developing a tower in that particular area to help service the area more intensely.

Also, from the emergency EMS side of things, it's very important to have communications there. I know they're having some issues in terms of communications once they drop down into the campground in some of those remote areas, so it might also enhance that particular service to the people that use the park. I just want to leave that comment with the minister and his department that hopefully they could look at enhancing some of that service to that area.

Mr. Struthers: I appreciate that advice from the member. We have moved forward and I've identified six, now, parks where we think we can move ahead and get this 911 service up and running. We have identified some of our busiest, and we have identified some that are a little more remote, the Whiteshell and Grand Beach, Duck Mountain Provincial Park, Hecla/Grindstone, Birds Hill and, most recently, at Clearwater, up near The Pas.

The member is right. We need to line up, first and foremost, good phone service so we have to work with MTS to make sure that that is happening,

to make sure that they're not pulling phone service from some of these parks, which has become a problem in the Duck Mountain. We need to have agreements in terms of local communities that are close in terms of fire and ambulance and police. We need to be able to come to agreements with each of those.

I intend to continue expanding the service of 911. I want to take it from the perspective that if we have an opportunity to go to a park, and we have the dollars assigned to do it, and there's a reasonable chance that we're going to get fire and ambulance and police to co-operate, then I want 911 service in more parks. If we can do that at Spruce Woods and others, then I'd certainly say that that's good advice from the Member for Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Cullen: Just to clarify, there certainly are the services available. Both fire and police and ambulance are right there, and they are responding now. The real issue is in terms of the people that are using the park being able to phone out to access that 911 service. That's the real issue, I think.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, the Member for Turtle Mountain is right. What we find in different parks, we have different combinations of challenges that we have to overcome. In that part of the world, that is definitely one of the main stumbling blocks right now. If we can find a way to move forward on that, then we will. But, in other parks, we have negotiations ongoing with a neighbouring community over their fire department, or their EMS. All those things need to line up in each particular case no matter what park we're looking at. Our commitment is that we work with people to make sure that happens.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I have a question for the minister and staff. The wolf problem that is going on in the province of Manitoba is significant. We know of two producers, one to the north of me that lost 60-plus head of calves, one over in the Whiteshell area that lost 40-some head of calves. That's just two producers. We understand that the federal government has made available to the Province the licensing agreement to move forward with a bait program to get rid of these. I was wondering if the minister could highlight us on whether or not the Province is going to take that opportunity to get the licence in order to alleviate the wolf problem in those areas.

Mr. Struthers: We need to be clear. What the federal government has said to us, has said to

Saskatchewan, and has said to Alberta, that small amounts of any kind of bait or poison that is used to control rodents such as gophers, they will look at. But what they have told us is that larger amounts, that are used in predator control with wolves or larger animals, we're still in the same boat. We have to be looking for alternatives.

What we have done in response to that, we've put in place an agreement with the Manitoba Trappers Association to work with producers, to work with ranchers in order to take an approach that not only is acceptable to the federal government and to others, but one that might actually work. I met recently with the Keystone Agricultural Producers who very clearly said to me that that was the right approach, that they supported that. So our approach has been to work with KAP and with Manitoba Cattle Producers, in conjunction with the Manitoba Trappers Association, making sure that there's a trapper available to come out and work with the producer to try to get a handle on the predator problem. What we do, as well, is we offer in each of the regions, along with the Manitoba Trappers Association, workshops in each of the regions. I've got very good feedback from producers on that as well. Now, this may not be the magic wand that we would like to have, but it's, at least, an approach that is producing some results.

* (15:00)

Mr. Eichler: Well, I hate to tell the minister that his plan is not working because we've still got a problem, and I think he needs to get in touch with his colleagues in Alberta.

My understanding, they are looking at this very seriously, if they already don't have a licence. My understanding is that the federal government did give them a licence and I suggest that we take a serious look at it and a very hard look at it because if not, the producers will start eliminating them themselves and that's certainly not the direction that I would like to see Conservation go.

So I know it's a serious issue and the minister needs to take responsibility for it and move forward in a timely manner.

Mr. Struthers: We also need to understand the big picture. If we start to incorporate techniques for removal of predators, no matter if a wolf or a beaver, whatever; if we start taking on practises that is in contravention to the humane approach that all provinces and the Canadian government especially

has signed on to, then what we lose is the price, the market price that trappers get for these pelts.

I'm the first to admit that that price isn't good enough. I wish that the market would pay trappers more for wolves and beavers and the rest of it, because when we deal with the trapping association they have expenses that they have to try to cover. They can't do that with the sale of a wolf pelt or a beaver pelt, so we have to be careful that we don't take an action on one side that comes back to hurt us in terms of the market.

The member can count on this minister to be responsible for this. We have been taking responsibility to work with the Trappers Association, Cattle Producers, KAP. We want to absolutely minimize the number of calves lost by ranchers in this province. It's in everybody's best interest to do that, but we need to do it in such a way that we're effective. As I've said, I don't believe there's a magic wand, but I do believe we've taken some steps in terms of working with the trapping association to at least make some progress.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I will now take the opportunity to thank the minister for endeavouring to get me the information that I asked for yesterday. I appreciate that.

I do have a question with respect to an area that's of a lot of concern to me. It's Department of National Defence land where they used to store fuel, just north of the Gimli Golf Club. I've been in touch with the owner and we've had some discussions with respect to the fact that, back in 2000, he allowed, I think it was KGS group who was conducting the sample studies, series of studies on the former airbase site. Mr. Baldwin allowed them to come onto his golf course property and drill some sites there which they, as I understand, the study came up and basically stated that there was contaminated water on his site.

I'm wondering if the minister could just let me know who asked KGS group to conduct this study. Was it either the Department of Conservation or was it the conservation district? Who was the study done on behalf of?

* (15:10)

Mr. Struthers: I'm aware of that particular site. I've received some information on it locally. There's a very good local MLA at Gimli, and he's been very conscientious about keeping me up to date on things happening in his community and has endeavoured to keep me up to date on this particular issue as well.

Because of this issue and many others, we've booked \$39 million. The first time ever in the history of our province, we've booked \$39 million. That was the first step. The next step is to look at all of the sites, most of which in this province are abandoned gas filling stations and those sorts of things, with anything that could leak gas into the water table. Our job right now, our big task right now is to, first of all, monitor the sites that are there and then make sure that we address the sites that are most likely to cause human health.

I'll give a good example. We've got a memorandum of understanding with the R.M. of Rosser where the little community of Grosse Isle, just on No. 6 highway, is located. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) smiles because I think he's well aware of this. A number are aware of it. That contaminated site sits beneath a school, beneath a community hall, beneath a number of residents who have got these big ugly-looking filters right in their houses. That is the first one that I believe we'll be able to move on.

The site that is referenced by my colleague from Tuxedo will be evaluated in terms of the connections to human health. What I don't want to do, first of all, is have the provincial taxpayer step in and pay for something that the real polluter should be paying for. So that's good. We're going to need to have that kind of an analysis, an analysis of the test sites that we've done to see just what the extent of the plume underneath the ground is, and then we can make some good, sound decisions in terms of all of the sites that are present around the province.

So the work on this has been ongoing. I've assigned more staff, more resources to do these evaluations and make sure that we are dealing with the ones that are mostly connected to human health.

Mrs. Stefanson: What concerns me here is that this study was done back in 2000, and what was found at the time when the holes were drilled in the area—it was done at the above-ground tanks, I gather, as well as on the par 27 golf course of the Gimli Golf Club. Analysis of the samples indicated, again back then in 2000, that there was higher than guideline concentration of benzene, ethyl benzene and xylenes, all of which are lethal hydrocarbons.

Obviously, Mr. Baldwin is extremely concerned. I mean, he was trying to get a copy of this report. He knew that they had come and he had given them authorization to come onto his land to drill the holes to be able to take the water samples. He was trying

for several years to get a copy of this study from the conservation district where he was unable to get a copy of this study. Now, once the study has come out, we now see that back in 2000, it was established that, as a result of the drilling in these areas, there were potentially lethal hydrocarbons within the water in this area.

Now, I understand that it started with the Department of National Defence and fuel storage and we all understand that, but that water is continuing to move underground. The contaminants are continuing to move underground. Mr. Baldwin is extremely concerned not only about his staff and I know that members opposite are concerned, as we are, with the health and safety of employees when it comes to working in these areas. It's also family and all the people, all the young children and so on, that are golfing on this course. All Mr. Baldwin really wanted to know was he wanted this information back in 2000 and he wasn't able to get it.

Why was he not able to get information that stated that there was potentially lethal hydrocarbons that came out of the drill sites on his land so that he could warn golfers, the patrons of his golf club as well as his own staff and his own family, not to frequent the area. Obviously, this is a very serious concern to Mr. Baldwin, to all those that golf at the Gimli golf club telephone book and to all of us.

Why was he not able to get a copy of a study that was done back in 2000? Is it the practice of this government to not allow those studies to be shared with property owners who allow conservation districts to come on and test the water on their property?

Mr. Struthers: First of all, the environment officers in that region have been in contact with, I believe, the gentleman that the member references. Any of the information that we have available to us, I believe, we have been making available to people who come forward and ask us for the information, but if that's somebody else's report, then that's a different question. Any of the information that we're dealing with, we try to take an open approach with people. We try to make it clear that our monitoring continues so that we know what's under the ground and where it's going. We also want to work with people locally to first of all determine the health impact that could be there.

I don't want to be in the position where I am taking part of the money that we've got, and putting

at one site when there's other sites that have more of a human impact. Those are the kind of decisions that we need to go through. But I certainly want to be sure that any information that is pertinent to the people that are there, that we work with them on that. My instruction has been clear that when we take these sites on, that we make the best determinations we can of human health impact and that we tailor our decisions from that and work with the people on the ground who are most impacted by that.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm then going to go back to the first question that I asked, KGS Group conducted the series of studies that took place. Who paid for that study? Was it the Department of Conservation? Who paid for the study and who asked KGS Group to conduct that study?

Mr. Struthers: Yes, that is a key question. If it's their study and they've paid for it, then they determine who they release that to. If it's our study, that's a different thing. What I'll do is I'll find out for sure for the member and get back to her on that.

Mrs. Stefanson: I think it's very important, and I know that the conservation districts do ongoing studies in the sites. As Mr. Baldwin has said, they frequently come out and do studies on his land, not studies, but they test the water, water samples on the various on his property.

Through all of this time after this report, the conservation district, I guess, was saying that they didn't see that there was much of a problem here. Certainly, Manitoba Conservation didn't see that there was any sort of a problem with respect to the contamination of the site. It's very important that we know, and I would think the minister himself would see that it's very important to know who commissioned KGS Group to conduct the study that was done back in 2000. As I understand it, the Department of Conservation had a copy of that study. I think if a study is in the hands of the Department of Conservation that states there are potentially lethal hydrocarbons in a specific area that it's incumbent upon the Department of Conservation or the conservation district staff to let people in that area know and certainly let the landowner know.

So I hope that the minister will get back to me as quickly as possible. Each day that goes by, you know, we have a serious contaminated site here. It's obvious. I know that there're many areas across our province where this minister has to decide which areas—he has to prioritize these issues.

But I think that this is something that has been around for a long time and certainly people in this area, I think it's sort of passing the buck to the feds is one thing. There's no question that they play a role in this, but I think it's incumbent upon the Minister of Conservation to ensure, on behalf of all of the families and workers who are frequenting these facilities and on these lands, that they clean it up. I mean, clean it up now and send the bill wherever it's due later. This is something that has been around for a long time. I think it's very important at least for the Department of Conservation to let people know in the area.

So I will leave it at that as long as the minister will endeavour to get back to me with respect to the KGS Group and who commissions the study.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I've made that undertaking already and will follow up on that. The department always does its due diligence. The difference now is that we're adding \$39 million in a fund that will be used to protect human health when it comes to these contaminated sites.

On that particular site, there are 15 monitoring wells. This month, as a matter of fact, there's routine testing that is scheduled to take place. That is the key. If those tests tell us, or if KGS has a study that tells us that there are human impacts that we need to be concerned with, then that increases the chance of this site being prioritized higher on the list and—*[interjection]*

Well, that's not exactly correct. Back in 2000, the study they put forward indicated that that was a very low probability. As the member has stated, and she understands that there needs to be a prioritization of these sites around the province and, if we have other sites that are of a higher probability or have more of a chance of impacting human health, then I think she understands, given her last answer, that those decisions need to be made. The key here to remember is that we are monitoring; we are testing. Should we get any indication that this site deserves to be tended to above other sites, then that will be the decision that we'll make.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: Just to clarify that clearly this study came out and showed that there's potentially lethal hydrocarbons. That's what came out of the study to me. That is a hazard for children; it's a health issue. I would hope that the minister would prioritize this site and this issue and make sure that it is among the

top of his list of priorities because of the potentially lethal hydrocarbons that are in the area and the potential risk and harm it could be to children and to workers in the area.

Mr. Struthers: The one thing that I'm very relieved about is that we're doing all this monitoring, and it's being done by people who know a lot more about these impacts than what I do or would I suspect most people around the table know. These are folks who are experts who don't just look at what is in the water. They look at the soil conditions; they look at a whole number of factors and they base on science the recommendations that they give me. We don't want me as the politician making political decisions when it comes to this. We want to be able to work from the scientific data that experts report to us with. That will be the basis upon which we make decisions, moving forward with the \$39 million that we've, I think very wisely, put in place for this use.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): When the contaminated sites legislation was put in place, I was quite involved. It was my understanding that under the legislation we were going to find the polluters of the contaminated sites and at their cost have them cleaned up. That being said, there were a lot of sites that you can't find who actually was responsible.

But my question is, and I was quite disappointed later on to find out that very few of the sites were actually listed as contaminated sites; they were listed as impacted sites. My question is on the impacted sites. If you can find the polluter, do you order them cleaned up immediately? Because I think they should. I think they shouldn't sit longer waiting for that to happen.

I guess a secondary question to that is: How many are called contaminated sites and how many are called impacted?

Mr. Struthers: The memory of the Member for Ste. Rose is good. When the contaminated sites legislation was brought forward, it was under the assumption that we would do our due diligence in tracking down who the polluter was and make that polluter pay. I think that's based on some common sense. If everybody had grown up in our household, when I was a kid, none of us would be polluting and we'd all be cleaning up our mess behind us. That's what we want to get across.

Unfortunately, there are a number of very large corporations who have left the province and left small mom and pop businesses behind with the

responsibility of cleaning up a site without the kind of money that it would take to do that. Those are the orphan sites that we, as a province, have said that we would take on. You can bet that we're going to try everything we can to make sure those who polluted are tracked down and if there's any way we can get them to pay for their own clean-up, we do that. If that is not possible, then rather than having that become more of a problem, the Province then steps in.

There are 239 petroleum sites that we're dealing with, the orphan sites that I just mentioned, 48 other sites of various—but we track over 2,000 sites in this province, to help us in making those determinations, those scientific determinations that I've just mentioned in my previous answer. We want to make decisions based on good science, good data, that's why we do the tracking of these sites, and that's why we do work with the owners to try to clean these sites up.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): To the minister, I congratulate you, first of all, on a hazardous waste collection program. We've taken advantage of it in Brandon. I certainly know that the city of Winnipeg has a hazardous waste collection program that is extended in time line.

I would like, for the record, to have the minister's assurances that, in fact, the very limited hazardous waste collection that we have in the community of the city of Brandon will be expanded. It's been extremely well received. The community is very, very supportive. Unfortunately, it's only available for two days a year. There are line-ups of people wanting to take advantage of it and, unfortunately, we've turned them back, turned them down, which I think is detrimental, obviously, to the program itself, because people are wanting to achieve what the minister is setting out to achieve.

So could the minister please tell me, at this time, whether he is anticipating expanding that program and, if so, what the time line would be and when we could expect the expansion?

* (15:30)

Mr. Struthers: I appreciate the question from the brand-new Member for Brandon West. I have taken, kind of, a two-step approach to, not just the household hazardous waste side, but the electronic waste side. We want to change fundamentally the way in which we approach, virtually, the whole recycling service here in Manitoba.

The first way is a short-term approach that we did this summer, where we provided right across this province, in every region, depots for people to come and drop off the waste that they've been collecting. I heard stories about people collecting these in their basements, in the sheds out back, piling up at the back. Municipalities were concerned that this was going to become a problem in their landfills. I know that members all around this table have heard their constituents talk about that.

So we had a very successful summer in collecting all kinds of this waste and then properly disposing of it. In the long term, though, which we have to be doing because we can't have Manitobans sitting every four or five years collecting their stuff and then bringing it to a depot, we have to have in place a long-term, fiscally efficient, effective way on a more routine basis to get rid of this waste.

So, with that in mind, we are very close to releasing for consultation with the people of Manitoba a draft regulation on both household hazardous waste and electronic waste. According to the act, we need to be sending that draft regulation out. It needs to go before the people of Manitoba for a set period of time, and then we take their advice and we incorporate it into a regulation. That regulation will set up the kind of program that I believe the Member for Brandon West is speaking of, always understanding though that it is dependent on the advice that we get from Manitobans, and I am a firm believer that Manitobans are ahead of all of us on this.

Mr. Borotsik: With all due respect, Mr. Minister, a regulation isn't required. We already have a situation where in fact we do collect the household hazardous waste. That's in place; it's there right now. It's been extremely well received, make no mistake about that. Manitobans have spoken loud and clear. They want to do what you are wishing them to do. The problem is, is that there is not sufficient time in the two opportunities they have to dispose of that household hazardous waste. All we're asking for is not new regulations. All we're asking for is not another direction from government. All we want is additional time paid for by the Province of Manitoba, as they do in the city of Winnipeg right now, to extend the program and just add perhaps a day a month as opposed to two days a year. We're attempting to try to assist you, Mr. Minister, in this, in getting rid of those household hazardous wastes. All we need is your assistance in giving us the facility in order to do that.

So my time line is not waiting for regulations, not going to the people of Manitoba, not asking for information coming back. It's simply a matter of, would you please extend the collection times and dates in Brandon, Manitoba, to not match the city of Winnipeg, but simply become a little bit more closer to the city of Winnipeg. We are the second largest community in the province of Manitoba. All we're asking for is some equity in this. We want to do your job for you; just give us the opportunity.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the offer. I'm always open to good ideas from wherever they come from. We think that, along with the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), we think that people in Brandon or Dauphin or Winnipeg or wherever in this province want us to give them a program they can count on. And what I'm saying to the Member for Brandon West is that we are going to at least do what he is saying, plus we will get the regulation in place. That means a long-term program run by industry representatives, rather than we politicians mucking around in it. The people who actually know what they're doing can lead that long-term program.

I don't want to deny people in Brandon or anywhere else the opportunity to bring their waste forward and dispose of them properly, because I understand that if we don't do that, it ends up in our landfills. That becomes a problem, and neither we nor the municipalities nor the citizens in Manitoba want to see that happen. So we're moving towards a program that is going to be long term. It is going to give more opportunities for people right across the province to participate.

Mr. Borotsik: I appreciate the minister's long-term thought process on this. I guess my question still remains, with all due respect, is there a short-term expansion of the current program? That's all I'm asking for. Is there an opportunity to expand that? There is an expansion of the program in the city of Winnipeg under your current guidelines. All we're asking for is an extension and expansion of the current program that you've now put into place in the community.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, the Member for Brandon West has approached me on this before. We have correspondence from the City of Brandon on that which he is aware of and that is something that is under active consideration. We need to see that in terms of finishing off that first step that we took, but towards the longer stable program. So that is

something that is under consideration. I don't have an answer specifically on that today.

Mr. Borotsik: I'll hold the minister to that. I'm disappointed, I have to say, in the answer. I would hope that it wouldn't be that difficult just simply to expand a program to be one day every three months as opposed to two days every year. It doesn't take very much to be able to do that, with the exception, I suspect, of finances.

I guess my last question on this area is: Is this a financial issue with the minister right now? Is he trying to offload those costs to industry as opposed to having the contribution there by the Province, which it is currently? That's a concern that I have because the Province—quite frankly, I'll give you full marks—has done a good job. But, as my colleague here from Portage has said, we seem to be treated as second-class citizens all the time. We don't have the same equitable circumstances as the city of Winnipeg. The city of Winnipeg does have the opportunity. All we're asking for is the same opportunity and, quite frankly, helping the Province along with that.

I know I have no more questions, but I would like to just simply say to the minister on another question earlier with respect to 911, I'm sure he would give the City of Brandon full credit for developing the 911 system outside of the city of Winnipeg. I know that I was a part of that as was the previous government. And I'm sure if Spruce Woods is looking for 911 operation within that provincial park, I'm sure the City of Brandon would be certainly happy to assist the minister, as well, in that particular function.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, starting from the last statement and working my way back up through the speech that the Member for Brandon West just gave, we're fully aware of the co-operation we've received from the 911 centre out of Brandon. That has really helped us in the steps that we've taken up to this point, and I fully expect that to continue on into the future. That is very helpful.

* (15:40)

Going back to the early part of his questions, the finances are always a part of it. It's always a consideration. Offering even the depots we did this summer, there's a cost to that that we have to bear. I'm always looking for ways to squeeze money out for good causes like this one, so that will be taken into consideration on his specific request.

On these sorts of things, we've also got good co-operation with Green Manitoba, the new agency that we've set up to deal with these kinds of things and to provide some leadership on that. So we will continue to take a co-operative approach on this. I think, by the sounds of it, our goals are similar between the Member for Brandon West and our government and, hopefully, we can say that more often in the years to come.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I do appreciate the honourable Member for Tuxedo affording me the opportunity for a question. I will make it short and to the point.

Timing is very important here. I do appreciate that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and her legislative assistant also are in attendance here today. It is a concern with the disposable animal by-products, animal waste materials from the slaughter industry here in Manitoba, not only for livestock but for our fowl industry as well.

Currently, 40 metric tonnes per day are deposited in the landfill site known as Brady landfill and I have heard that the Brady landfill site is definitely a top 10 as far as a methane-gas-emitting location here in Canada. I think it's made the top five in a number of studies as well. So it is of great environmental concern that these current deliveries emanating from the livestock and fowl industries here in Manitoba be addressed in a different fashion than what we're currently doing.

The Minister of Agriculture has co-operated with the federal government in offering a very, very substantive support program for the development of disposal proposals, and I'm wanting to ask the minister because it essentially is your department that ultimately has to deal environmentally with these concerns: Have you been able to co-operate and co-ordinate with the Department of Agriculture and the federal government because I know that there's been a number of proposals come forward, but I understand that December 31 of this year those program supports and encouragement for development of these projects concludes. We haven't seen anything move forward, and we're just a few months away from the conclusion of this program.

Mr. Struthers: There was a lot in that question to chew over and, I think, some very important stuff that we're moving forward on.

Let's start with the landfill and the capture of methane. We're expecting a proposal from the City

of Winnipeg. We believe that won't be too far down the road. Our role in that would be through a licensing, our process of licensing.

I want to be able to capture the methane and put it to use rather than have it escape and become part of the problem. I think it's pretty obvious that we all want that around this table. We need to work with the City of Winnipeg to make that happen. There have been discussions that have taken place, and I do want to say, too, that we've had a look at some other jurisdictions in terms of what they're doing in terms of capturing methane, in terms of water treatment, sewage, all kinds of things that other jurisdictions are doing that we can borrow and adapt here, whether we're talking about the city of Winnipeg or around the province.

The other one that the member puts his finger on that concerns everybody, but I guess, in particular, rural Manitoba, is the whole area of SRMs, which is where I think the member was going in terms of disposal. It's one thing to talk about the normal disposal. It's another thing to talk about SRMs, given the whole experience that we've had with BSE and border closures and hardship on farms. *[interjection]* As the member points out, the articles we read in Saskatchewan in the poultry industry.

I know that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture has been working very hard at moving that agenda forward. I think there are some very innovative ways that they're looking, on a regional basis, of accomplishing. Again, our role, depending on where that settles out, would be as a regulator, making sure that the technology we go to, for example, has sufficient controls to make sure that we're not spewing into the atmosphere contaminants that we shouldn't be putting into the environment, those sorts of things. There's work being done on that. We're in co-operation with the other department on that, Agriculture, and I look forward to moving forward in a progressive way on that.

Mrs. Stefanson: I know my House leader is anxiously trying to get in touch with me, and I think our time in Estimates, unfortunately—because I've got so many other issues of concern to Manitobans, to my constituents, to members this side of the House, and I think that, certainly, I wish I had all the hours in the world to be able to sit with the Minister of Conservation and get many more, well, I guess we could call some of them answers, you know, but comments from the minister on the record, but, unfortunately, at this time, and just before we go to—I

think the minister is probably anxious to pass his Estimates as quickly and efficiently as possible.

I just had one question that just piqued my interest in the Estimates book. With respect to the Clean Environment Commission, I gather there are three employees paid for by the Department of Conservation, and I'm just wondering. I thought the Clean Environment Commission is an independent body of the government. Why, if it's an independent body of the government, would the government be paying for three full-time—what is the role of those employees with respect to the Clean Environment Commission?

* (15:50)

Mr. Struthers: I want to begin by pointing out that all MLAs get paid from the same pot of money, as well, but it's not like we all have to sing from the same song book. Just because we pay salaries for three different people at the CEC, the structure is that the executive director and the admin support, which are two of those positions, report to the chair and then the chair makes recommendations on a whole variety of issues to me as the minister. They are a distance from government. We ask them to perform certain functions and they report back to me on those functions; they make recommendations to me. That is a distance from us and we very strictly make sure that that distance is respected.

Mrs. Stefanson: So, just to clarify, there are three employees that are paid for by the Department of Conservation, one of whom is the executive director of the Clean Environment Commission, who reports to the chair of the Clean Environment Commission and the other two are support staff that also report to, I guess, the executive director of the Clean Environment Commission?

I guess, as employees of the Department of Conservation, do they not report to the minister or to members of his staff, more senior members of his staff? I mean, they're paid for out of his department, so who do they report to? Who does the executive director of the Clean Environment Commission report to? I think the minister had already stated that he or she reports to the chair of the CEC. Would they not, as members of his staff, meaning the minister's or the department's staff, report to senior officials within his own department?

Mr. Struthers: No, there are three people who are paid by government: the chair of the Clean Environment Commission, an admin support that

reports to that chair, and an executive director who also reports to that chair.

When we asked that chair to take on a function such as the review of the proposal for the Manitoba floodway—that chair does public hearings; he collects all the information he can and he comes back to recommendations to me. The admin support, the executive director, they don't report to me. The chair of the CEC gives me recommendations on a case-by-case basis when we ask them to be involved.

So, when there was a proposal to build a generating station at Wuskwatim, understanding that that was a big project, we asked the Clean Environment Commission, we asked the chair to conduct such hearings as necessary, do such research as was necessary and then report back to me on that particular project.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I've heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Conservation and several members opposite try and say that the Clean Environment Commission is an arm's-length organization, but I find it difficult to believe when the chair of the CEC is a staff member of the Minister of Conservation. I have trouble seeing how that can be an independent, arm's-length organization when the head of the organization, the chair and the executive director, are both members of the minister's staff. How can it possibly be an independent body of government?

Mr. Struthers: The same way it was independent for Minister Cummings and for Minister Driedger and for Minister McCrae, for minister, minister, minister dating back to the 1980s, when the Clean Environment Commission was put together. That's been the same way it's been done over the history of the Clean Environment Commission. It's consistent with its being done today.

We pay those three people, and two of those people, as I've explained, report to the chair, and the chair reports to me, makes recommendations on specific proposals that we've given him to investigate on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: I need to just reiterate the fact that I have so many more questions surrounding this and many other areas with respect to what I deem to be a very important part of what we do in the province and as legislators. The environment is something that is extremely important to me and my colleagues in the Legislature, as well as to Manitobans, and I just want to say again that I'm really happy to be

representing our caucus when it comes to issues with respect to the environment and Conservation.

I think at this point in time I'll say we have no further questions, I guess, regrettably. I've got many questions, but we're out of time to be able to ask any more. So little time.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, thank you every one. I assume we are now ready to move to the resolutions.

Resolution 12.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,810,600 for Conservation, Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$65,295,500 for Conservation, Regional Operations, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,146,200 for Conservation, Conservation Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,855,300 for Conservation, Environmental Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,195,900 for Conservation, International Institute for Sustainable Development, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,669,700 for Conservation, Minor Capital Projects, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 12.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,865,700 for Conservation, Costs Related to

Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:00)

Mr. Chairperson: The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 12.1.(a), the Minister's Salary contained in resolution 12.1.

At this point, we'll request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions. Seeing none,

Resolution 12.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,577,600 for Conservation, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2008.

Resolution agreed to.

Mr. Chairperson: This completes the Estimates for the Department of Conservation.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Finance.

Shall we briefly recess? *[Agreed]*

We will reconvene at 4:10 p.m.

The committee recessed at 4:01 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:13 p.m.

FINANCE

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We will now be considering the Estimates of the Department of Finance. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I actually do, but I'm willing to waive it because I understand that we wanted to spend some time maybe going global and doing some general discussion first. If the member is comfortable, if my critic would like to proceed that way, I'd be willing to waive my opening statement, because we're starting late, and get right on with your questions.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I have some time and we have some time. If the minister would like to have the opening statement—if I may, Mr. Chairman, first of all, as being my first time here, I

would like to certainly experience the full experience of this particular Supply. If the minister does have opening statements, I would certainly be most happy to hear them, perhaps glean some information out of those opening statements.

Mr. Selinger: Sure. Well, the statement really is a summary of many of the things that we put in the last budget, and some of the measures that we've taken with respect to managing debt and accounting issues, but also some of the expenditure matters that are before us, as well as taxation matters.

I'll just start by saying that last year's budget was the first major move to full summary budgeting as recommended by Manitoba's Auditor General. That recommendation has been lurking around the Legislature since the mid-'90s. Our budget consolidates government's core budget plans for all Crown organizations as well as regional health authorities, hospitals, colleges, universities, school divisions in the province. It reflects what is generally called generally accepted accounting principles or GAAP, not to confuse it with the retail store.

In the report to the Legislature in March 31, '06, the Auditor General said: In our view the summary financial statements and therefore the summary budgets are the government's foremost accountability documents. The benefits for the preparation of a detailed summary budget are many. Without a detailed summary budget—and I'm quoting still—the Legislative Assembly is not given the necessary depth of financial information upon which to fully discuss the planned use of public funds. As well, it is in the comparison of the summary budgets financial statements actual results with that detailed summary budget which permits a thorough analysis of the Province's financial position and operating results compared with planned results and provides the ability to measure the government's management of public resources.

So that's kind of the defining statement put in place by the Auditor General in the Public Accounts in March 31 of '06.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants has also commented positively on Manitoba's government move to full summary budgeting. They have said: We congratulate the government on its commitment to be fully compliant with GAAP in both its budget and reporting for the year ended March 31, '08. It will result in greater transparency and accountability to the citizens of Manitoba.

In addition, we have had many comments from other financial organizations including banks about moving to full summary budgeting.

Year '07 projects a summary surplus of \$175 million, supported by core government revenue exceeding core government expenditure and continues to provide for \$110-million payment on the general purpose debt and pension liabilities. This brings our debt and pension payment over the last eight years to \$814 million, the largest such payment in Manitoba's history.

Building on our plan to eliminate the pension liability, we announced our plans this spring to address the unfunded liability of the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund, strengthening the pension plan and generating considerable long-term savings to the Province. We have committed to funding 75 percent of the outstanding liability this year. In addition, we will begin paying the employers' current service contribution. I can make more comments on that later if the member wishes to explore that.

Our net debt-to-GDP ratio has been reduced 25 percent from 31.4 in '99-2000 to 23.6 for '06-07. We have reduced debt-servicing costs by 45 percent from 13.2 cents on the dollar in '99 to 7.3 cents on the dollar in '07-08. As a result of these measures we've had four credit-rating upgrades since 1999, actually five but one was a technical one.

The Fiscal Stabilization Fund reached \$663 million at the end of '06-07, three times higher than the \$226 million budgeted for in '99-2000. As projected in last year's budget, the only draw for the Fiscal Stabilization Fund was \$37 million for funds that were prepaid to us by the federal government to deal with wait-times reduction.

In terms of our economic performance in '06, Manitoba outpaced Canada's performance on several fronts. Manitoba's economy grew 3.1 percent last year as compared to 2.8 percent for the country. Real GDP is expected to grow by 2.9 percent in '07, outpacing the forecasted national increase of 2.5 percent, and Manitoba continues to surpass the national average in most major economic indicators. Capital investment grew by 14 percent, compared to 9 percent for Canada. Our unemployment rate fell to a 30-year low of 4.3 percent. After a new record high for employment in '06, some 6,700 new jobs were created, almost 90 percent of which were in the private sector.

Consumer strength was reflected in housing starts, which topped 5,000 in '06, the highest level in almost two decades. In addition, building permits increased 22 percent, more than double the national increase of 9 percent.

Despite continued strength in the dollar and some weakness in U.S. markets, Manitoba manufacturing shipments set a new record high at over 14 billion goods shipped last year.

* (16:20)

On the taxation front, we build on our previous seven budgets which have contained the largest tax cuts ever delivered to Manitoba families and businesses. Budget '07 contains \$297 million annually in new, confirmed tax cuts and introduces a multiyear plan for further personal and business tax reductions. The education property tax credit will increase by \$125, to \$525 from \$400. This will save Manitoba homeowners and renters an additional \$40 million.

The tuition fee income rebate will help Manitoba attract and retain post-secondary graduates with a reduction in their taxes of up to \$2,500 a year. The tax rate applied to middle income or middle bracket personal income is reduced from 13 percent to 12.75 starting in the '08 taxation year, and the upper income tax bracket will be increased to \$66,000.

These measures are part of a multiyear plan, subject to budget balancing requirements, to raise the middle and upper income tax brackets to \$35,000 and \$70,000 respectively, and reduce the first tax bracket to 10.5 percent.

The basic personal amount as well as the spousal and eligible dependent amounts will be increased, taking over 6,000 Manitobans off the tax rolls.

The farmland education property taxes will be reduced a further 20 percent over the four years starting in '07, bringing the total rebate to 80 percent. Manitoba is also matching the federal pension income-splitting tax changes, saving pensioners \$11 million annually.

The corporation income tax will be further reduced to 13 percent on July 1, '08 and, subject to budget balancing requirements, to 12 percent on July 1, '09.

The small-business income tax rate will be further reduced to 2 percent on January 1, '08 and will be cut again, subject to budget balancing requirements, to 1 percent on January 1, '09. This

will benefit 80 percent of Manitoba corporations and make it significantly lower than the rate in other provinces.

The refundable portion of the manufacturing investment tax credit will be increased for a third year in a row to 50 percent.

The corporate capital tax will be phased out by 2011, subject to balanced budget requirements, beginning with a 20 percent rate reduction for fiscal years starting after January 1, '08. And the payroll tax exemption threshold will be increased to \$1.25 million, effective January 1, '08. The increased exemption will benefit over 30 percent of employers that currently pay the tax.

On intergovernmental issues, there are several things that have changed in the last year, important changes.

The '07 federal budget implemented a new formula for equalization, one which settles the recent debates. It is a compromise in the best sense of the word and represents a return to a rules and principle-based approach.

While the federal government committed to implementing the 2004 10-year plan to strengthen health care, and has renewed the equalization program, its actions in respect of funding post-secondary education, social services and support for children through the Canadian Social Transfer have fallen short of expectations. For most provinces, including Manitoba, the federal budget provided no new funding in '07-08 beyond what had been previously legislated. Nearly all of the \$687 million in extra funding that was injected into the CST to support the move to equal per capita allocations went solely to Ontario and Alberta, and I can discuss that with you later if you want to explore that.

Even the nominal level of federal funding for post-secondary education and social services will not be restored until 2013-14. The nominal level really reflects the 40 percent cut that was in the '95-96 Martin budget, which the member might remember. That was where there were dramatic cuts to all the provinces.

While Manitoba welcomes the funding for child care spaces announced in the federal budget, we are disappointed with the federal government's decision to withdraw from the '05 agreement on early learning and childhood care, and we were the first province in Canada to sign that agreement. The \$9 million in

federal funding provided in the recent budget is only a portion of the \$24 million they received the previous year. In other words, we're \$15 million down off the agreement we signed.

To backfill the withdraw in federal funds, Manitoba budgeted '07 increases, but Manitoba's budget in '07 increases the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million. Manitoba will continue to call for long-term sustainable federal investment in early learning and child care so that Manitobans have improved access to daycare services which is an important prerequisite to many, many families who want to enter the labour market.

Manitoba welcomes the federal government's funding contribution to the Canada ecoTrust for clean air and climate change, the HPV immunization trust, and the Patient Wait Times Guarantee Trust. These funds will help the Province carry forward its plans in these areas over the short term. However, it should be recognized that this year's funding is one time, and not an effective substitute for an ongoing financial commitment, something that is required for effective planning and service delivery.

With respect to transparency and accountability, we continue our commitment to improving financial management and reporting practices that enhance transparency and accountability. We are pleased to report that budget '07 meets our commitment to move to full summary budgeting and reporting, as the Auditor General has recommended. Our budget consolidates the core budget plans with projections for all Crown organizations, regional health authorities, hospitals, colleges, universities and school divisions.

Budget '07 fully reflects the GAAP principles—30 seconds?—and I've repeated that. Some of the specific improvements are the full capitalization of capital and infrastructure, the recording of environmental liabilities, and the recognition of the unfunded liability for health employees' future benefits.

I'll leave it at that. If the member wishes to ask me questions or explore issues around consumer protection, we have several initiatives we've taken there which I can discuss with him later. I'll leave that as my opening comment.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Brandon West, have any opening statements?

Mr. Borotsik: I do. Thank you very much and I do appreciate the minister's opening comments. There's a lot of detail there that I can obviously go through and look at and there will be some other areas that we do want to expand upon, certainly.

I guess in my opening comments, the first thing I would like to do is certainly congratulate the minister. There are a lot of—and I'll be the first to admit—there are a lot of good things that are happening in Manitoba versus 2007-2008, 2006-2007 as opposed to earlier years, certainly, when times were more difficult. I know the minister has a difficult job. There's absolutely no doubt about that. I know that there are a lot of demands on the dollars that are generated through this government, and I do know that governments run on money whether it be any departments.

I'm sure that every department comes to him on an annual basis wanting more, wanting to provide, certainly, more services within their department. I look at it as being a jigsaw puzzle trying to put all of those little jigsaw pieces together and to balance a budget, as the minister's well aware of. There is a balanced budget legislation that he is required to balance an operating budget.

At the same time, I recognize that there are these substantial demands, Health, particularly, we recognize as a large portion of the annual budget, Education, social services, infrastructure. We recognize fully well that there's a deficiency in infrastructure in this province, not only this province, throughout the country. There are billions and billions of dollars that have to be put into infrastructure in the not-too-distant future in order to make ourselves competitive. Agriculture, I know my colleagues with respect to agriculture are always looking for support systems in agriculture.

The minister's had eight years in the chair of Finance Minister, and he has certainly eight years of experience. I would just like to indicate that I've had exactly three weeks in this particular critic's portfolio, so I have a lot of learning to do and I'm the first to admit to that. However, I would also like to indicate to the minister that I am a fast learner, and I will be asking some very poignant questions. I'm sure that he will think that some of the answers, I should already know. The fact is, is that may not well be the case and I know that he will help me walk through that.

I will ask the minister in the not-too-far-distant future to help me walk through his department with

respect to staffing levels and individuals that are within his department. I would like to learn a little bit more about certainly the system that he's certainly so experienced at.

I'm sure he and I will disagree over ideology. I don't think there's any question about that. He will believe in quite a number of policies that his department has put into place ideologically, and I certainly believe in certain different ideologies. I believe in lower debt. The minister's indicated that there have been some reductions in the cost of servicing the debt, but, in fact, it's my understanding that the debt is certainly not lower now than it was in 1999.

I believe in lower debt. I believe in a very concise debt-reduction plan, and I'm sure we'll talk about that in a global overview of the debt that is currently being serviced by Manitobans in the province of Manitoba.

I believe in lower taxes. The minister had indicated that there are certain areas of taxation that he has taken the initiative on lowering taxes and I congratulate him on that. The difference is that I believe that there are areas, in order to be competitive, not only here with western Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, but we have to be competitive in a global market right now, and part of that is a level playing field that deals with taxation. So we're going to talk about the taxation.

I believe in the elimination of regressive taxes. The minister did touch very briefly on the payroll tax. I'm sure we'll get into a much more detailed discussion. In fact, I know we'll get into a much more detailed discussion with respect to payroll taxes and the regressiveness of that particular tax.

* (16:30)

I believe, and my party believes in smaller government and less regulations. I don't see that, in fact, happening at this particular juncture of time with this government and this department. Again, I have an ideological bent on that which, perhaps, the minister doesn't share.

I know, and I'm sure that the minister agrees, that the past eight years have been, not only demanding, but they've been extremely good. He talked about some of the advantages that we've had in this economy over the past eight years, and he's right, by the way. We've had the lowest interest rate in the past 40 years. We have the lowest interest rates in the past four decades. We have, as can be shown,

an ever-increasing transfer payment from the federal government. We can talk about the differences of the total equalization payments, including transfer payments, and I'm sure we'll get into that debate, as well, as we've had an increase in equalization and transfer payments which has assisted him, I'm sure, in his final budget deliberations. We've had extremely high commodity prices in this economy over the last little while, which reflects very well on the Manitoba economy, as we do have a commodity-based economy to a degree. We've had some substantial public-sector capital projects which, albeit not sustainable, certainly do affect the economy on an annual basis and put a lot of money back into the economy which the minister can take advantage of.

I do have a fear. I have a fear that the economy will not continue to grow. We've seen that. The minister and I have been around long enough to recognize that there are hills and valleys, and there are certain times in the economy where it's not quite advantageous as it has been over the past nine years. He may agree, he may not agree, and I'm sure we'll have the opportunity over the next little while to agree and disagree, but we recognize that Manitoba is dependent on exports to the United States, to the U.S. economy. We have 76 percent of what we produce here in Manitoba that is exported to the U.S. economy.

We know that that economy right now is in jeopardy. We know it with respect to the sub-prime that is certainly affecting the housing stock and the housing market in the U.S. We recognize that the U.S. debt right now and deficit is substantially high. Those debts and those deficits have to be serviced in the global market, and it may well dry up liquidity in the credit opportunities that we have. We know that the U.S. has a huge deficit right now and that's going to affect their economy, perhaps even to the point where they may well enter into not only a downturn economically but perhaps into a recession. We know they have a costly war right now with Iraq, and that obviously is going to affect their economy, not only now but in the future.

We recognize that the Canadian dollar is on par. I have not since my very late university days ever seen the dollar at this level. I'm sure the minister is well aware that the Canadian dollar at par has some challenges or, certainly, will put some challenges forward to not only the Manitoba economy but the Canadian economy. We'll talk about that situation

and how the minister is prepared to deal with the circumstances with respect to the Canadian dollar.

There's also a very grave possibility of interest rate hikes. We know certainly right now that the Bank of Canada has backed off for this time period. However, there is an opportunity for interest rate hikes which would then change the economic circumstances with respect to low interest rates at the current time.

I'd like to at this time just simply in my opening comments mention a quote that I was reading recently, and it's from John McCallum from the University of Manitoba. He says quite specifically: If you don't save and put away aggressively when you've got the best circumstances you're ever likely to have, you're going to regret it.

I think I've probably lived by that comment. Again, that deals with the retirement of debt and certainly the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. What we haven't done, our debt has increased and we'll talk about that, and certainly our annual operating costs have escalated quite substantially over the CPI or the cost of living increase.

My fear is what happens next. My fear is more debt. My fear is more taxes or taxes at a level that does not allow us to be competitive with our western Canadian counterparts, particularly, and as I said earlier, with our global competition that we have outside of the borders of Manitoba.

I certainly would like to thank the minister, and I look forward to the next seven and a half hours, I suspect, of questions about his department. Again, I look forward to learning over the next little while and getting a better handle on what's happening within the province of Manitoba and, perhaps, sharing some suggestions on our part as to how maybe things could be better.

So thank you very much for that opportunity for an opening statement.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic for those remarks. Under Manitoba practice, debate on the Minister's Salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 7.1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 7.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and I would ask the minister to please introduce the staff in attendance when they arrive.

Mr. Selinger: I'd like to introduce Tannis Mindell, who is the secretary to Treasury Board on my far left, and on my immediate left Erroll Kavanagh, who is our director of Administration in the Department of Finance.

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

Mr. Borotsik: My preference at this time would be for a global discussion rather than go chronologically through the Estimates. If the minister would be so willing to do so, we could do some global discussion as to the Finance Department.

Mr. Selinger: We briefly discussed this in the hallways, and I agreed we could do a global today. As a result, we don't necessarily need to have all the staff here, if we want to relieve them, and we'll carry on. We're actually running tight on time already, so let's get on with it.

Mr. Chairperson: It is agreed then that questioning for this department will follow in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once the questioning has been completed. Is that correct?

An Honourable Member: Correct.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister, as I've noticed with the introduction of the staff, and I appreciate that the staff are very qualified; however, there is a lack of a deputy minister currently in the minister's department. Can he inform me if and when he will be able to announce a deputy minister for the department?

Mr. Selinger: Well, there's no hard date, but there should be an appointment soon. It's as simple as that.

Mr. Borotsik: Soon, if I can just simply ask, is soon—we're talking within 30 days, we're talking within 60 days, if I could just have a better understanding of it. By the way, I appreciate the fact that the minister is probably as equally concerned about the appointment of a deputy minister as I am. I'm sure that he would love to have that individual named sooner than later. Are we talking, as I say, within 30, 60 days?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, deputy ministers are appointed through Executive Council. I know that they're paying attention to that and they'll make a

decision when they're ready to make a decision, but I think the feeling was that we wanted to conclude last year's Estimates by agreement with the opposition and have all of that process out of the way, take a week off, come back with a Throne Speech, and I expect as we move forward, concluding these Estimates and into the next round, that appointments will be made during that period of time.

Mr. Borotsik: I wonder if the minister could just please, for my own personal curiosity, as well as learning the department, as I said earlier, can the minister list all of the political staff that he has currently in his office, including their names and their positions and if, in fact, they are full time equivalencies.

Mr. Selinger: Well, all ministers have a special assistant. My special assistant is Michelle Cenerini and she is full time. I have an executive assistant as well, Linda Geary. She is full time.

Mr. Borotsik: That's the total amount of political staff that the minister would have is just those two, the SA and the EA.

* (16:40)

Mr. Selinger: Yes. Those are the staff available to me as the Minister of Finance. There are other resources for other responsibilities that I have beyond Finance. I also am responsible for Hydro and other various Crown corporations, so there are other staff that are available to help in those duties, which are subject to another round of discussions. Usually, we don't discuss those here, but there are other staff available for those broader responsibilities.

Mr. Borotsik: Those staff are housed in your office? They are there currently?

Mr. Selinger: Not full time. They're just there on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Borotsik: Are they the same staff of people that come from those other organizations and corporations to assist in your operation?

Mr. Selinger: They are in the building, but they're not housed in my office. My office just has limited space, so we only have really one office for a special assistant.

Mr. Borotsik: These other part-time individuals, part-time staff that assist, are they paid by your department, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Selinger: There are two other staff: one is for Hydro, Paul Labun; he's paid through Hydro; and

there's another chap named Pratik Modha who looks after Lotteries and Liquor, the Crown corporations; his salary is covered by them as well.

Mr. Borotsik: You may or may not have this answer, but if you don't, certainly, you can take it under advisement, and I know you will. Can you tell me the number of staff currently employed in the Department of Finance?

Mr. Selinger: I've written down what I think it is. Let's see how close it is.

Just by way of background, the member might know that the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs a few years ago was actually folded into the Department of Finance so that has changed the numbers. We really have a larger department now that that department's been absorbed into Finance. I'm sure that's why my Finance guys—*[interjection]* Yes, the staff is 553 in the department, the merged department.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you. One other question: Is there a possibility of getting other than just simply political staff that are in the minister's and deputy minister's offices—you've already identified the political staff. Is there any opportunity of getting a list of the staff or could you identify to me right now the staff that are in the minister's office and the deputy minister's office, non-political?

Mr. Selinger: Non-political staff? We can make that available to you. I can probably tell you right now actually. In the minister's office, the secretary to the minister is Lisa Kessler. The administrative support is Monique Rowson, and I've mentioned the executive assistant and the special assistant.

In the deputy minister's office at the moment, there's Jackie Koop.

Mr. Borotsik: Is Jackie Koop, Ms. Koop, she's the assistant to the deputy minister who's no longer available?

Mr. Selinger: No. she's the secretary to the deputy minister. There is an administrative support person that recently moved to another organization.

Mr. Borotsik: Is there a possibility, Mr. Minister, if you could provide me with a description of any position within your offices that has recently been reclassified?

Mr. Selinger: I'm not aware of any reclassifications.

Mr. Borotsik: Are there any vacant positions currently within your office and the department?

Mr. Selinger: On an entire departmental basis, there are 59 vacant FTEs at the moment.

Mr. Borotsik: Fifty-nine vacant FTEs, but there are 553 full-time equivalents, so there are actually somewhere in the neighbourhood of 495 current employees in the department. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, about 10 percent at the moment.

Mr. Borotsik: Fifty-nine, again. I'm learning here. Fifty-nine seems to be an awful lot of vacant positions. Is this normal for the department?

Mr. Selinger: I think it's a little high this year. Last year was about 6 percent or 7 percent. This year, it's around 10 percent.

Mr. Borotsik: Is there a concern in the department that it is running that much higher, and is there any indication as to why the vacancy rate is so high now? Are people leaving the department because of other financial opportunities in other sectors, whether it be the private sector or whether it be other departments?

Mr. Selinger: In most cases it's the demographic reality of the public service. Many people are of full retirement age now. For example, in the tax collection department, many of the people that came in when the PST was introduced, 30-some years ago, are now fully matured in their careers and they're taking retirement.

We have many long-service employees in both Finance and Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and some of them are moving on. In other cases, we have some quite challenging positions in certain branches where people move on when they get an opportunity and after many years of service. Then we have to ensure that we fill those jobs with capable people.

Mr. Borotsik: I noticed when the minister was referring to demographics that one of his staff was identifying herself as being perhaps in that area. I know the minister would hope that that's not the case and that she would stick around for many more years to come, but she also looked at the minister and me, I'm sure, with those same views perhaps, that demographics may be—from an age perspective, that we perhaps should be looking at ourselves. It is not just the staff.

That was a bit facetious and I would like to answer a serious question. I recognize that there are reasons, and the minister has pointed them out, as to why the vacancies. If the department is working effectively with 59 less FTEs currently within the

department, is there some thought perhaps that there can be a rationalization of those positions and perhaps a reduction of the FTEs within the department.

Mr. Selinger: Most of those positions are reviewed before we fill them, and in the overwhelming majority of cases that staff are needed. Manitoba's government actually runs fairly lean on the amount of public servants it has to cover all the responsibilities that we do. Really what happens is when people retire, other people carry an extra burden until somebody is hired, and then if it's not an experienced person there's a training requirement as well.

So we have to make sure that we're not having extra positions if they're not necessary, but we also have to recognize that the people that are still working in the department a lot of times are carrying a heavier load until a new person gets fully trained up and into a job to take up the responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities require a lot of experience to do them effectively. There's not, like, a training program to do some of these things, other than the training program provided by the department itself and the mentoring opportunities. We do have some internship programs, for example, in accounting.

Generally, most of the positions are needed, and we do review them on an annual basis to see which increases or deletes we need. There are changes as responsibilities change and I review that myself at a ministerial level. When I'm asked for FTEs, I ask if that position is needed or if there is a better way to deliver the service.

Mr. Borotsik: So I take it from that, if the minister looks at it and identifies some redundancy, if you will, or some overlap, that he in fact would reduce the FTEs from his department?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, and we have in the past.

Mr. Borotsik: I'll become a little parochial here, not so much politically but from a community perspective. Can the minister tell me if there've been any relocations of any FTEs, any jobs from rural or northern Manitoba to Winnipeg, to the central area?

Mr. Selinger: I'll cut right to the chase on that. The answer is no. *[interjection]*

Mr. Borotsik: I've never, ever been accused of not being able to be heard and I guess this would be a red-letter day in my experience. So I promise I will

speaking louder and I just was trying to be—
[interjection] Why? Are we waking up the other
minister at the table? I apologize if that's the case.

The answer being no, there have been no
relocations from any of the other rural departments
in Manitoba, and I appreciate that.

* (16:50)

Mr. Selinger: In the Department of Finance there
have been no relocations to Winnipeg.

Mr. Borotsik: No, my reference specifically was for
the Department of Finance, and I appreciate that. As
a matter of fact, I guess just as a plug here, if the
minister is looking for some capable individuals to
replace some of those 59 FTEs, I'm sure that he can
find some capable people in rural Manitoba and
northern Manitoba. If he's looking for those capable
individuals, I'm sure he can find them.

I wonder if the minister could tell me what travel
he's taken part in over the fiscal year that's being
identified.

Mr. Selinger: Well, just before I get to that question,
I just want to say that, in the public service,
opportunities are available to all Manitobans, rural
and northern. There is a Civil Service Commission
and a Web site. Sometimes jobs are filled internally,
for internal competition, but the vast majority of jobs
are publicly advertised, and we recruit from all
around the province. Many, many capable people
come from rural, northern areas as well as from the
urban areas.

On the issue of travel, I don't have a hard set of
numbers here right now. If the member wants that,
we can provide that for him. But I travel for
ministerial meetings, finance minister meetings. I
travel for ministerial meetings with respect to French
language services. I travel within Manitoba to do
budget consultations. I travel within Manitoba to
deal with Hydro matters. I travel within Manitoba to
deal with French language services issues, consumer
and corporate affairs issues. But generally, my travel
is related to the job and demands on me to appear at
certain meetings to represent the province.

Mr. Borotsik: I recognize that the minister travels
certainly internally, provincially, quite often. I've
seen him in a number of locations. I wonder if he
could provide me with a list of his interprovincial
travel and his travel outside of the country. Has there
been any travel that the minister's had outside of the
country over the past 12 months?

Mr. Selinger: I'll have to check that. I believe I was
in New York to meet with the bond-rating agencies
last January with the Premier (Mr. Doer), and that
would have been the latter part of January, the
second half of January, and I don't think there's been
any other out-of-Canada travel in the last 12 months
that I'm aware of. I'll check the record on that.

In terms of travel across the country, we can
identify what specific trips we've taken, but usually
I've been down, obviously, in the Ottawa area to deal
with federal-provincial matters, some of the items
that we'll discuss later. And I'll see what other trips
I've taken. I know I've been out to the east coast just
this fall for a French language services ministers
meeting in Nova Scotia, Halifax. Last 12 months, I
think I was in Vancouver as well, but I'll just check
the record on that and let the member know.

Mr. Borotsik: You'd mentioned that the Premier had
travelled with you to New York, and I can appreciate
why. It's a very important money market. Were any
of the expenses of the Executive Council paid by
your department?

Mr. Selinger: I don't believe so. I'd have to check
that, but I don't believe so.

Mr. Borotsik: Has the Premier travelled with the
minister on other occasions to Ottawa or to other
locales that he had indicated, and, at that time, were
Executive Council expenses covered by the
Department of Finance?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, I'd have to check the
record on that, but I don't believe so. But I'd have to
check the record to verify that for sure.

Mr. Borotsik: Can I then take from your comments
that you would get back to me with the answers to
those?

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Borotsik: The Treasury Board Secretariat, can
you tell me who is on the Treasury Board, the
number of staff, and who those staff members are?

Mr. Selinger: Well, just before I do that, we're in
global right now. This is actually getting into the
line-by-line of each of the branches and the
departments in Finance. I don't mind doing that, but
you're sort of switching levels here. We do actually
happen to have the Secretariat of the Treasury Board
here if you want to do that, but I mean you're going
into a level of detail that I thought we were delaying
until later.

Mr. Borotsik: This is the last question I have of this vein. I do know when you introduced the member who is involved in the Secretariat of the Treasury Board, I thought, perhaps, we could just deal with that one now and not have to deal with it again.

Mr. Selinger: The number of staff in Treasury Board is 64.

Mr. Borotsik: If I may, while we have Miss Mindell, have there been any staff changes in the Treasury Board Secretariat?

Mr. Selinger: Yeah, there's turnover every year of some staff, not a huge amount, but we do bring in new people every year and people with experience in Treasury Board move into other opportunities in government. Some of them leave government and go off to other opportunities either in other governments or in the private sector.

Mr. Borotsik: With that turnover, are the positions that are hired for the Secretariat of the Treasury Board, are they competitions for the most part? Do you hold competitions?

Mr. Selinger: In general, positions are filled by competition. I'm looking at the last four we hired. On the information I've just been provided, they were all done by competition. Sometimes it's a secondment from within a department. If somebody that we know has a certain skill set that would be valuable and it would be valuable to them, too, to get the experience working at the centre. So you do get secondments sometimes. Sometimes there's a switch from another department, and there'll be a move over of somebody that we think has certain skills that we can benefit from, but usually when a position's just flat out vacant, we usually have a competition to fill it.

Mr. Borotsik: Are there currently any secondments within the department?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I'm aware of two secondments that we have from other departments right now working with us at Treasury Board.

Mr. Borotsik: Can the minister tell me from which department they've been seconded?

Mr. Selinger: The one would be from the Science, Technology, Energy and Mines Department, and the other one would be from the Department of Competition, Training and Trade, CTT, as I understand it.

Mr. Borotsik: Are there terms to that secondment?

Mr. Selinger: Usually, secondment arrangements are put in place for a year at a time, but there can be extensions.

Mr. Borotsik: I know this is going to be difficult and again, perhaps, would like some time to find the advice—can he tell me in detail how many and what type of contracts have been awarded directly, contracts of \$25,000 or more? Needless to say, in any department there are an awful lot of contracts that are entered into, but any contracts in the value of larger than \$25,000, does the minister have any understanding as to how many contracts have been issued out of his office?

Mr. Selinger: My office, personally?

Mr. Borotsik: The Department of Finance.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I'm just going to have my director of administration sort of compile a number for you there of contracts.

There has been a long tradition of doing untendered contracts around the budget because of security issues. That goes back to previous governments not as well as ours, and it's actually the same people in many cases. They do certain kinds of graphic and design work for us as well as preparing the documents and—

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

COMPETITIVENESS, TRAINING AND TRADE

*(14:40)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 51 of the Estimates book. The section agreed to a global consideration of these Estimates.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I appreciate the minister's indulgence for a few moments here. I know we're just trying to co-ordinate a few things in regard to time for different personnel to ask some questions and include independent members,

hopefully at some point, as well, just so the minister's aware as well.

I've got a couple of issues that I wanted to start off with today.

Just yesterday, we were finishing up in regard to, or not finishing up, but I was asking some questions on the northern training and employment initiative. The minister had indicated some \$60.3 million, I think, was put forward in that project on the northern training and employment initiative. Can you confirm that?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): There was \$60.3 million. It's from three partners: one's the federal government; one's the provincial government; and one is Hydro. They're all contributing to that \$60.3 million.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to discern a little bit of how that was arrived at. I know the training is very valuable in regard to the personnel that's there, and the minister kindly went through yesterday the types of jobs that are made and the number of those that have been looked at in the training process. However, I guess I just want to talk to the minister for a minute in regard to how that \$60.3 million was negotiated. I believe about half of that funds comes from federal sources. Can he indicate to me just a breakdown of those kinds of decisions and dollars?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chairperson, I understand that the training initiative was set up between a number of the partners, the First Nation communities, Hydro, et cetera, who basically tried to figure out what the end result was, the number of people we needed to train and worked backwards where you sort of say that you need these many people trained. You break down the amount of funding and come at the total costs. So you sort of say, we need X number of people to do this type of job; then you figure out how much money it's going to cost. Then we negotiated the different contribution agreements.

Mr. Maguire: Can you indicate to me how many dollars that his department put into this?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chairperson, the Province is going to have a contribution of \$10 million over the six years, and over the '07-08 year it's going to be \$1.125 million.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I believe as well, obviously, that if they're training personnel to work in the Hydro

projects, Hydro has played a major part obviously in the funding of this as well. Can you confirm that they have participated in this as well and to what level?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, I can contribute that Hydro has been a partner in the development and the ongoing part of this initiative. They're contributing about \$20 million. As we talked about in the initial discussion and yesterday with what the honourable member said, human resource is becoming an issue, especially with the baby boom getting a little older. So all businesses are very, very concerned about where the next generation of workers is coming from.

So I think Hydro and the government see this as an investment in the next generation of employees. When we're doing construction of dams and all this, when you're competing for skilled workers, it's going to be hard. So this is an investment by Hydro and the government, not only in employment, but also in our future labour force.

* (14:50)

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chairperson, I certainly acknowledge that we have a shortage of labour in the province in just about all sectors. Many projects are on the go. Certainly, federal initiatives have helped create some of that as well. A third of our budget, I must state, comes from—over a third of our budget comes from transfer payments from the federal government into Manitoba, the only province in western Canada that has that kind of a level. In fact, the other three are what's been quoted in some jurisdictions as have-provinces in that area without the net federal transfer payments. But Manitoba still has that to the tune of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3.6 billion coming into our economy from that area.

But I commend the types of projects for the future of being developed. We need to have sales for those Hydro projects as well. There's no doubt about that. Our initiative to be as environmentally sensitive as we possibly can in the province needs to be expanded, needs to be developed further. We need to have people trained in those areas to make sure that these kinds of projects continue to grow and go.

I know that from the numbers that the minister's given me, about half of it has been up by the province. I believe as well, I'd like him just to confirm, who the other partners were in that whole process.

Mr. Rondeau: The federal government is the other partner in the process, but I also have to let the honourable member know that this also makes a big difference in the communities. You want to have the communities, the First Nations, involved so that they actually have input in the process because they're the ones who also benefit from it.

One of the important parts about growing the economy is you want to make sure that you have a long-term view and long-term focus. So we've been focussing on education and skilled labour, and developing it.

So it's interesting to see the job growth. Manitoba is actually ahead of the national average in job growth since 2007. As far as the labour force, Manitoba has grown at 1.6 percent and Canada by about 1.3 percent. Jobs, Manitoba is ahead of Canada, again, at 1.5 percent versus 1.4 percent. Full time jobs, we're at 2.2 percent in Manitoba versus Canada at 1.4 percent. Private-sector jobs, Manitoba's at 1.5 percent growth and Canada is at 1.1.

So we are growing, we are working toward a good economy and lots of private-sector investment. We're really looking forward to continue to build the economy above the rate of Canada. We're looking at doing that by working with private sector and with multiple partners to grow the economy by creating a skilled workforce.

I know that, since taking office, 85 percent of all the jobs that have been created have been full time. The majority have been in the private sector. We are growing and we are proud of that, but, more importantly, we want to continue that growth. We think that the advantage of training people, getting people decent jobs and growing the economy through skills is the answer.

Mr. Maguire: I know the minister has indicated that the federal government was involved. Can he provide me with any kind of breakdown with regard to which departments of the federal government supplied the dollars for roughly half of the project in the north?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that the federal government departments are Human Resources Development Canada, INAC, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Western Diversification.

Mr. Maguire: I certainly wanted to acknowledge the importance of the First Nations communities being

involved in the projects as far as training goes, and it'll offer an opportunity there.

Can the minister give me any kind of breakdown in regard to what the education levels, and I have another question after, but just the education levels of the—well, first of all, can he give me any kind of an indication of what percentage of the people taking the training would be from First Nations or are they all First Nations?

Mr. Rondeau: There would be First Nations and Métis people taking the training. I don't want to be absolutely specific on the number, but it would be about 75 percent First Nations, 25 percent Métis. Some communities, depending on the make-up, would change. Don't hold me specifically to those numbers, but it would be close to that breakdown.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I just wanted to go back to the question I was going to ask originally, and that was: Can the minister give me a breakdown of the education levels of the persons that might be involved in taking these trainings?

Mr. Rondeau: I can let the honourable member know that the process had people being assessed at the community level at the beginning of the process. I can also let the honourable member know that most people didn't have grade 12 or ties to work or ties to work history. So it was about a yearlong process. Lots of people were involved in upgrading of skills so that they could get the specific trades training or specific training that they wanted. So there were assessments done in the community; there were a number of people being upgraded and supported so that they could be successful in later trades training. Most of them started with very, very basic skills and, thus, it is a little bit longer process because you're starting and building on what the person has as capabilities rather than assuming they have specific capabilities.

Mr. Maguire: I think that that's important. I agree that, probably, practical experience that many of these people bring to the table when they start their training is enhanced by the training that they get. It's not necessarily what grade they might have had in school, but how important it is for them to be able to add to the skills that they would have maybe not otherwise had, and open another door for them. These are skills that could be used in all levels of their futures.

So I wanted to ask the minister just in regard to the funding: Can he tell me how the decision or the

agreement came about that it was roughly 50-50 between the federal government and the Province's share, including Hydro as part of that 50 percent on the Province's side?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that the general parameters of the discussions with the federal government said that, if there was an industry component, which became Hydro, they would be willing to come up with 50 percent of the money to run the program. Because what you're doing is you're actually taking people who are not employed or are very underemployed, building the skills and creating a huge net increase in value. So what you're doing is you're taking the time and you're investing it in people, to take people who, generally, don't have income, build the skills and abilities and give them long-term, sustainable employment. That's what we're trying to do. The federal government is also encouraged by doing this because then what you're doing is you're building people, you're improving the quality of life, you're improving everything, because if you give people work and training in trade, the ability to succeed, then you're really making a huge difference in their lives.

* (15:00)

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me when the agreement was signed between the federal government and the Province?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, 2001-02, so a long time ago.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I would like to carry on, on the topic of training. Yesterday, I had the chance to ask the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) about the training programs that are offered by Red River College and Assiniboine Community College at varied communities around the province.

The situation that exists at those course offerings, let's say Portage la Prairie, for instance, under the Red River community college, the programs are on a cost-recovery basis because the colleges consider that the students, in the programs at the satellite campuses, are in a continuing education program, therefore, operate under a cost-recovery model. It's extraordinarily dismaying to me that a student that was taking a program in rural Manitoba is significantly more drawn upon to pay higher tuition charges than if that student was taking that same program at the campus in Winnipeg or in Brandon. It's beyond my comprehension how a

student is reclassified for cost recovery just because they are a rural student, and for no other reason.

I'm wondering whether the minister is, first off, aware of the situation and, second off, if he's willing to consult with the Minister of Advanced Education to right what I say is a wrong, and perpetrated upon the rural residents of Manitoba.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I think the member should be aware of the fact that Advanced Education through the Council on Post-Secondary funds the institutions.

Now, my department, through CTT, actually does a few things. One, what we do is we purchase training spots throughout the province and they would be for apprenticeship positions. Whether you're in an apprenticeship position anywhere in the province, it's the same cost. The apprenticeship program which is administered through this department, if you're an apprentice anywhere, it's the same price. So that becomes important.

Things like the Stevenson Aviation facility, which I hope you're very, very much aware of, that's the type of thing that we do fund. We don't fund directly the institutions. That's up to Advanced Education and the Council on Post-Secondary Education. What we do is we purchase spots on apprenticeship or we'd sponsor what would have been normally termed market training initiatives or things like Stevenson. So those are the sectors that we fund, and it's more market driven or industry driven.

Mr. Faurshou: I am aware of the very specifically funded programs by the department, but because the department's mandate is to promote business and make certain that we have the skilled professionals in our province in order that we are competitive and able to build upon our strong manufacturing sector, we require persons of a skilled nature. I query the minister on the basis that, if we want to have skilled welders, for instance, in the rurals of Manitoba here, why that individual that wants to take up that profession should be charged three and four times the tuition cost just because that individual wants to take the programming in rural Manitoba rather than commute or relocate to Winnipeg or Brandon.

Mr. Rondeau: One of the things that I've done recently which we announced just last week was an Apprenticeship Futures Commission. What we looked at is that we wanted to make sure that access, accessibility, different uses of how we could

approach the apprenticeship system or trades or training positions could be updated, looking at improvements to communications, or how programs are delivered.

What's happened was that we have now announced last week an Apprenticeship Futures Commission looking at how we can improve the system. I might add that there's an eminently qualified group that's going to go around the province here, public hearings, and discuss a lot of the issues, whether it's on transportation or if there are better ways of delivery. I don't know, whether the Internet can be used better, whether there are other ways of getting more access. So what we're trying to do is with this commission is that they're supposed to listen to the public, listen to business, listen to different industries, come back with a report. We mean a quick report. The chair had said that he wanted to get it in January or February and then we can act on it.

So one of the discussions often is that we are going to be, you know, a case where there aren't enough skilled workers and what you want to do is that you want to make sure that there is access to the programs. I've spent 17 years in northern Manitoba as an educator, in different capacities as an educator, and the interesting part was that there are always issues on travel, transportation, costs, et cetera. So, with the Apprenticeship Futures Commission, I'm eagerly anticipating a very interesting report.

The group of people involved in the report are very, very good people and they're going to give us some interesting responses because they also have a mandate to look at anything that they feel is appropriate. So it might be expanding the principal trades. It might be different delivery mechanisms. I'm not going to presuppose what the committee is going to do. I would encourage the member opposite, along with any of the businesses that are looking at this, to please put in a submission because we will take this very seriously. I think that access, affordability, delivery mechanism are all an important issue, and so that's where we have gone as a government.

*(15:10)

Mr. Faurchou: I do appreciate the minister's response, and I look very much forward to being in communication or encouraging others to communicate to the commission. I will say, though, I hope that this is on a timely basis because the

Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) has ordered a review of Campus Manitoba, in specific, which delivers post-secondary educational opportunities in the rural of Manitoba, simply because enrolment has significantly been reduced over the last very few years. I beg to say that this is because the tuitions have been escalating significantly, and with the tuition freeze on on-campus site programming it has expanded that differential between rural-program delivery and urban. Now, students are commuting and reduced enrolment has forced many programs, such as the welding in Portage la Prairie, to be cancelled this year.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for his concern because I think that you have a very legitimate concern on how we can improve the system. That's why, when I was looking at the Apprenticeship Futures Commission, I was looking at different ways of delivering. After spending a lot of my life in Cranberry Portage, Norway House, throughout frontier and rural Manitoba, I realized that there are difficulties, but we can work around it. So, maybe, it's whether we use the Internet better, whether we can use visiting—there are lots of options here, so I'm not going to presuppose what the commission's going to do, but we want to get it done.

Mr. Faurchou: Madam Chairperson, I do appreciate the minister recognizing that there is a time element in this because it's a chicken and egg. Soon as the enrolment drops, the opportunities will be lost.

I want to ask a question of the minister on a very specific entity in Portage la Prairie that is an eyesore and a health concern, as well as a safety issue as well, that is the former site of K and G Mushrooms. The location of that former producing plant is across the road from the Dakota Tipi First Nations.

For a number of years now, this site has been monitored by security because it was a concern for local residents that children playing could very well meet their peril at this abandoned site that has been pillaged and ravaged by fire. That has ceased now, I believe. The community leaders at Dakota Tipi are very, very concerned. Chief Cornell Pashe has asked me to raise this issue. I want to leave it with the minister because I know the minister's department has a financial interest in this entity, but the site has to be cleaned up, there's just no if, ands or buts about it and the sooner, the better.

Mr. Rondeau: I will endeavour, Madam Chairperson, to look into this issue with Conservation and with the department to see what we can do to move forward on this.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Madam Chair, my line of questioning will be with regard to Spirited Energy.

Can the minister please tell me what the current total budget has been for the Spirited Energy campaign from start to today?

Mr. Rondeau: The actual expended to April 30, 2007, was \$2,909,888.56, that's to September 30.

Mr. Maguire: I know the Member for Minnedosa is going to be asking some questions in regard to Spirited Energy. I wonder if the minister could just give us that number again.

Mr. Rondeau: Nine million—or sorry—wrong, I couldn't read. Sorry. I'm dyslexic today—\$2,909,888.56.

Mrs. Rowat: And that was to which date?

Mr. Rondeau: September 30.

Mrs. Rowat: That's the total budget. So for any maintenance of the Spirited Energy campaign whether it be Web upgrades, Spirited Energy teams out during Folklorama, focus groups of any sort, that is the total amount. That would include those types of activities in that total amount.

Mr. Rondeau: I'd like to read a letter into the record. It's actually a memo to Pat Britton from the Honourable Scott Smith, and it's from the Spirited Energy campaign. It says: As you know, the office of the Auditor General is conducting a review of the Spirited Energy campaign at the unanimous all-party request of the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature. I am requesting that you convey to the members of the community volunteer council that no additional funds will be approved for the campaign advertising until the Auditor General concludes her review and tables her report. Expenditures for basic ongoing operations, including the maintenance of the Web site and providing promotional materials on request from business and community groups, will be approved.

So that's the ongoing maintenance, and the amount that has been expended up till September 30, 2007, is \$2,909,888.56 on all those.

Mrs. Rowat: Could the minister please indicate to me the date of that letter?

Mr. Rondeau: April 17, 2007.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister please table that letter? [*interjection*] That would be fine.

Mr. Rondeau: I'd be pleased to table a copy of the memo.

Mrs. Rowat: Can the minister indicate to me and maybe provide some clarification as to why there was a delay in responding to the FIPPA request on focus group information that we had made, the reasons why the delay occurred?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that because of the Freedom of Information there's an obligation on government not to release commercial information into the public, and so what there was, there was discussion between the Ombudsman and the department as to what was appropriate to release because you don't want to do something that's not appropriate under FIPPA. So there was a discussion between the department and the Auditor. Ombudsman. Sorry. I got that wrong. So the Ombudsman and the department have a discussion. They had an agreement as to what isn't releasable under the Freedom of Information because there are rules, and so then they did. Then it was released.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chair, in the correspondence from the Ombudsman which the minister knows I have, that's not exactly how the Ombudsman had portrayed the situation to have occurred. There was an obvious frustration by the Ombudsman in getting information from the government department, from the minister's office. There was obvious frustration in that the Ombudsman believed that there was information that was to be released, and when it failed to arrive in the office of the Ombudsman, discussions would then take place again.

Could the minister indicate to me why there seemed to be a failure on the part of his department to provide the information in a timely manner, and if he can explain also why there seemed to be challenges to the Ombudsman's request when there seemed to be an obvious agreement at the time of the meetings? This happened several times through the process, so I just want the minister to clarify what exactly were the reasons for the disconnect in the communication.

Mr. Rondeau: I think, Madam Chair, that it's important to note that it's not just a freedom of information act. It's a Freedom of Information and

Protection of Privacy Act, and one of the things that would always be incumbent upon me as a minister, my department, and any government ministers is to follow the law. I think it's very prudent to be cautious, to make sure you're not breaking the law by releasing inappropriate material.

The protection of privacy act, which is the other half of the act, it's not just freedom of the information because you want to make sure that you're not giving something that breaks the law because if that happened, then I would be in major issues with the opposition, as I should.

So it's two halves of the law, The Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act. There was a legitimate discussion between the Ombudsman and the department as to what could and should be released. You note that some of the stuff that was released had to be blacked out. It was not blacked out by our department. The Ombudsman discussed what could be released under the act. We released what was appropriate, that the Ombudsman said was appropriate.

Mrs. Rowat: I'm glad to see that the deputy did clarify that it was actually staff within his department that did black out the information. There've been questions raised regarding the Ombudsman's request. The Ombudsman obviously understands the freedom of information process and believes that information that was to be shared should be shared, and I believe that it was more than just following the law as the minister is indicating. The correspondence speaks clearly to the Ombudsman's frustration that this government failed to provide the information, did not want to be transparent in the information that was to be shared with the taxpayers of Manitoba, and that there was an effort on the side of the minister to keep this information from the individuals who were requesting it.

I disagree with the explanation the minister is providing, but I guess it leads to a question. Why didn't the government consider suspending funding when the focus groups came back in a manner that clearly indicated that they weren't impressed, overly impressed, with the Spirited Energy campaign, that they had serious concerns and were at times confused by the messaging within that? So why would the government not pull back and say, okay, this is not working and suspend funding?

Mr. Rondeau: I'd like to state on the record that we have a great deal of respect and good relationship with the Ombudsman, and we really respect her

opinion on these matters. We never would overrule the Ombudsman, and we wanted to make sure that we had a discussion what was releasable under The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. There was legitimate discussion, and we wanted to make sure that we follow the law as appropriate.

In fact, the Ombudsman did agree with us that certain parts of the information couldn't be released due to third-party confidentiality. That's an important point to make. Not all the information could have been released under the act, because we would have broken the law and broken third-party confidentiality if we had.

The member may believe that she's an expert in marketing and promotions and knows more than the business community. What we've done is we've really followed the lead of the business community. The business community are very, very qualified. They've run businesses for many years. They've taken the lead. They've done a very, very good job on this, and they've volunteered in trying to do what's good in the province.

So what's interesting is the member opposite may believe that she has better marketing ability than Bob Silver, who is the president of Western Glove Works and owns a large percentage of the *Free Press*, or Robert Ziegler, or Jim August, who's CEO at North Portage Development, or Jamie Brown, or a lot of the people who are involved in PEAC, David Chartrand, Anita Campbell. You have a lot of people who have been involved in running companies for many, many years. They've been involved in marketing for many years. What they did was they gave advice to the government that they believed that a marketing campaign was appropriate. We followed their lead and we supported their initiative to market the province.

You look at Ash Modha, who is actually from Manitoba, who has set up Mondetta Clothing, has set up a wonderful brand. You look at Roslyn Nugent, who is the president of Baybridge Lumber and Forest Products, Ian Smith, the director of NRC Institute for Biodiagnostics. These are people who have a good reputation in business, a good reputation in their businesses and marketing, and a good reputation, not just in Manitoba, but the country and, in fact, the world. You have people like at CanWest Global who got on board on this and actually put in a good insert in the *National Post*. So there're lots of people who volunteered their times and talents to try to promote

and market Manitoba. We followed the business lead.

Now I know the member opposite may believe that she knows more than these business people. I know the member opposite may believe that these people are all wrong and she is right. I believe that we should leave marketing to people who are in the marketing business and follow their lead.

Mr. Maguire: I know the Member for Minnedosa has more questions, Madam Chair, but I'd just like to put on the record that the Member for Minnedosa wasn't questioning, and I certainly don't as the critic for this area, the ability of these people to be good marketers in their businesses day-to-day, but the arrogance of the minister in an answer like that shows through, and I'm very disappointed in that kind of tact. It can be a long day and quite a session in Estimates if he continues down that road. I'm appalled by that kind of an answer.

So I just wanted to put on the record that, in regard to the kinds of questions that we're asking, we're asking those because it's our job in regard to being members of the Legislature and critics in these responsibilities. By no means are we questioning the business acumen of any of the people that the minister has named in his answer.

So I would turn it over to the Member for Minnedosa.

Mrs. Rowat: My question was: Did government consider suspending funding when focus groups came back negative?

Or, even better, did any of the marketing individuals that he has referenced come back to government and say: You know what, this isn't on. This isn't going well. This focus group information is coming back negative. Should we withdraw from the campaign? Should we rework this?

*(15:30)

Mr. Rondeau: What we've done is we've followed the advice of the business community that we should do a marketing process. We followed the advice because we believe that we should leave those decisions to the people who have the most expertise.

We knew from the start whenever you have any new initiative there'll be a difference of opinion, but the business community recommendation was that we would move forward. It got bogged down in politics, unfortunately, and we lost some ground and momentum, but what we did was, when there was an

all-party recommendation from this House to do an audit, the Auditor General went in. By the way, it's very unusual that there's an all-party recommendation; all three parties agree that this should be done. I don't know if it's the first time, but I believe it was the first time it's ever been done. The Auditor General went in and conducted an audit. What we said was there would be no new spending while the Auditor General's report was being investigated; the whole process was being investigated.

So, when I said that there would be no new initiatives, we put the Spirited Energy campaign on hold, the initial money to maintain the brand was continuing because we don't know what the Auditor General's going to say. Then, after the Auditor General reports, we'll see where we go from there with the business community, but they're the ones who have the lead in this file.

Mrs. Rowat: So you're obviously not going to indicate to me whether suspending funding when the focus groups came back negative is going to be responded to. Obviously, you're not going to answer that question.

The question then is: You've indicated that expenditures for basics continued. Can you tell me what that total amount on a monthly basis was, and a breakdown of what each of those financial items would be?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I don't have that here. I can endeavour to get that to her shortly.

Mrs. Rowat: I would appreciate if that information could be shared before we break at 5 o'clock. Just, you know, I don't want six months to pass before—so, if I can get it before we leave today, that would be—*[interjection]*

Five o'clock. That's giving you an hour and a half. I don't understand the challenge on that.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, my staff is here in front of us and we're in committee. We will get it to you shortly. My staff, the director of Finance is here; other staff is here, and so it becomes almost impossible to get it to you here with the staff here. I have made a commitment; I will get it to you in a very timely manner and that will happen.

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Chair, that's not good enough. I would appreciate if the minister could indicate that he would get it to me before Estimates finish tomorrow, before his Estimates are completed

tomorrow, or, whenever your Estimates are completed, prior to.

Mr. Rondeau: One of the things I want to make sure is that we have accurate information. Again, the member opposite may want us to do it quickly, I'd like to make sure that we have it accurately and all the information there. We have provided all the information up to date. I can endeavour to try to get it before my Estimates are done, but I also want to make sure it's accurate. I know that the member opposite's eager on this. What I can say is we will endeavour to get it as quickly as possible. Generally, the department does a very good job, but we are in Estimates and so the people that need to provide the information are sitting in this room. Therefore, it becomes harder. We can endeavour to do it, but I also don't ever want to put inaccurate information on the record. So, therefore, I want to make sure that when we send the officials out to get the information it's all the information.

Now, I can tell the member opposite that, generally, the amount of money that's spent on maintaining the brand is approximately \$200,000 a year. So that is the Web site, maintain their brand, normal communications, and support for the brand.

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate that the staff are here, but we want the information before the end of Estimates, for the simple reason that, in Question Period today, first, there was no money being spent, the second question we asked there was something, I think he mentioned \$200,000, and out in the gallery it was \$10,000 per Web site. There are numbers that he keeps referencing that are all over the map. So we would love to be able to get clarification on the amount of money. If it's \$200,000, or \$215,000, as I believe his communications person outside the Chamber was saying, \$215,000—there're too many numbers out there. There's not enough clarification or transparency on this. That's why I think it would be in the best interests of the minister to have his facts straight and have the information available and out to the people that are asking for it as soon as possible.

They indicated that there were expenditures for basics around \$22,300, or something like that. Now these are a number of projects or expenditures that are ongoing. It leads to a question of were basic projects tendered out from the campaign team, or were only companies that were part of the select few receiving the tenders? Was there any tender process in this whole campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: One of the things that's happened is that all three parties have asked the Auditor General to do a report. The Auditor is going to look at all components of the Spirited Energy campaign and do a report. We anticipate the report very, very shortly. Now that doesn't mean instantly, but I can't direct the Auditor General.

Now her role in this, I believe, is to see if the spending was appropriate, if we followed proper procedures et cetera. That Auditor General's report should be out shortly. It will contain all the information, and it's from an independent third party appointed by this Legislature. I think that's what we need to look at is the Auditor General's report.

Now this has gone to her. I understand that she has been provided any of the information she's asked for, and I would expect the report soon. But it's not up to me to tell the Auditor General where or how to present her report. She is an independent officer of the Legislature; she'll do an independent review and she will present it.

Mrs. Rowat: My understanding is that the Auditor's report is not a value-for-dollar audit, so my questions are related to processes.

So I'm going to ask the question again to the minister: The development projects that McKim Cringan George and Intermark were involved in, were they the only companies considered for the funding that they received to do those initiatives?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand, Madam Chair, that there was a valid, normal process to select that vendor through normal government processes.

* (15:40)

Mrs. Rowat: Well, we've found that there're various processes that this government's been following.

Did they have a tender process for the development projects that have been connected to the Spirited Energy campaign? Was there a tender process?

Mr. Rondeau: There was a valid agency selection process, and I'm quite confident that the Auditor General will look at that selection process and make comment on it. Again, I don't know, the member opposite may know what the Auditor General's reporting on. I have not seen the Auditor General's report, and I can't comment on it. But all the information's been provided to her. I have good confidence in her and her staff to look at the whole issue. Once she makes her report, I'm not going to

suggest where we're going on this. So, once the report's issued, government will look at the report and work with the committee and the business community to see where we're going in the future.

It is not my intention to say we're going any specific way, we're continuing or not continuing. We are going to receive the report, see what the Auditor General's report says, and follow the lead of the business community as far as where we're going to go in the future. We're going to work with them to determine our future courses of action. But it's not my intention to do anything until the Auditor General's reported, we see the report, and then work with the business community.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarification from the minister in regard to his answer. He indicated that there was no tender process, or he could clarify that. He said there was a valid agency process for the selection. He assumed that the Auditor General would find that, and yet he says he doesn't know what's in the report. So can he tell me just how that valid agency process works, how it was determined and who was involved in it?

Mr. Rondeau: The selection was up to the committee of the advisory council. The business community set up a committee. It was community-led, business-led. It was their decisions, and what they've done is they worked to pick the appropriate people. I think what we've done is a valid process to pick the appropriate Manitoba company, and these were people like Bob Silver and Dave Angus, who led the government's process, where what we're doing is following the lead of the business community. So the business community led the initiative on marketing. Two volunteers in the business community worked to select a company to lead the process and manage the brand.

The Auditor General has looked at this whole thing, all three parties, including the NDP, Conservative and the Liberal Party, all wanted the Auditor General to go in. She is going in. She is issuing a report shortly, and what we're going to do is we're going to look at that report when it comes out. So your questions on the selection of the advertising company, or where we're going, will be shortly answered by an independent officer of the Legislature that has the ability to look at anything in here. I eagerly anticipate the report, and I want to see what it says.

Mrs. Rowat: Then I guess we'll focus on expenditures. Will the minister explain an invoice

from MIDCAN Productions from May 24, 2006, that is in the amount of \$78,439.56 that is completely blacked out and marked "rush"?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. What's happened, maybe the honourable member doesn't understand. When things were blacked out, it was because the Ombudsman said certain things were confidential because of third-party commercial confidentiality. I know that the member opposite wants Freedom of Information, but the act is The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So there are two balances: One is the right to know and one is the right to protect privacy. What was blacked out was what the Ombudsman felt was the protection of third-party confidential information.

So, when you're asking what that is, it would be breaking the law in the protection of privacy act. Again, one of the things that you may have, or I may have, is the invoice that's blacked out. The Auditor General won't have that. She has access to everything and that's the important part of this because, as a servant of the Legislature, she has the right to go in and get any information, and she has the right to report. I cannot inhibit her access to information. In fact, she has unfettered right to information. She can go in, look at this, and say whether it's an appropriate transaction or not. She can look at it and make her decision.

Mr. Maguire: I just found it interesting that, and I'd just like to ask the minister, you know, he's talking about the Auditor General providing him with an independent audit. Of course, it will be, but just before that he said that he, through a discussion with the Auditor General, had agreed upon certain things that would be blacked out. So who's making the decision? Certainly, the Auditor General, I'm sure, on our side of the House agrees, and I'm sure that the government would as well, that she'll do the best she can with the information available. But, when the minister has indicated that they had a discussion with her beforehand to decide what was blacked out and what wouldn't be, how can that be independent?

Mr. Rondeau: I actually thank the member opposite for that question because there are two pieces here. One is the Ombudsman. If there's a disagreement on The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and there's a disagreement between what can and can't be released you can go to the Ombudsman who makes the decision. They make a decision based on the law. So in this case there was some discussion between the department and the

Ombudsman as to what could be released according to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

There was the discussion. After some of the discussion, the Ombudsman said what was appropriate to release and what was not appropriate. The Auditor General, who was conducting at another independent office of the Legislature—we had a committee hearing on the Public Accounts, and during that time, I think the first time in the history of the Legislature, the three parties got together and said we should look at this to make sure that it's appropriate, that it follows appropriate processes, et cetera.

So what happened was the Legislature, as a whole, said to the Auditor General: We would like you to do an audit and look at it. So she has conducted, and is conducting an audit into the Spirited Energy campaign. She has unfettered access. In other words, what the Ombudsman has said has to be blacked out isn't blacked out for the Ombudsman. She can go conduct the audit. She will have unfettered rights and access to the information. I assume that she's going to look at whether the expenditures were appropriate and whether the proper processes were followed or whatever she does, but I'm not going to direct, as a minister, what the Auditor General can or can't do. That would certainly limit my length of career.

* (15:50)

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for describing that process to me.

As he's also the minister in charge of The Crocus Investment Fund Act, can he indicate to me of the same process where the Ombudsman had opportunity to look at and determine what should be included for the Auditor General to look at in the Crocus Investment scandal as well?

Mr. Rondeau: The Auditor General has unfettered access to all the information in the government's possession and also has unfettered access now since we've changed the legislation into any third party like Crocus Investment Fund or parties that receive funds from government. So the interesting part is that we changed the act where the Auditor General can follow the money. So, if we're providing tax credits to Crocus on ENSIS or any labour-sponsored fund, the Auditor General can go in and conduct an audit.

In fact, in the Crocus case, it was interesting because the Auditor General asked to be appointed

as "official" under the act, under The Crocus Investment Fund Act, so that they could have access to the information. The Minister of Finance and myself at the time made sure that the Auditor General had unfettered access. I understand that the act now, the Auditor General has unfettered access. There's no information blocked out. She can get anything they want.

Mrs. Rowat: MIDCAN Productions May 24, you're not going to tell me what was in that invoice, obviously, but can you tell me what MIDCAN Productions' role was in the Spirited Energy campaign, what their role was? What was their mandate?

Mr. Rondeau: There are over 500 invoices that were released, and it's hard to know what each invoice dealt with or whatever. I don't think I could be expected to know each invoice off the top of my head on a program. However, I know MIDCAN does produce commercials, videos, things like that, but I know that from the top of my head. They do special effects. I know a little bit about the company because of dealing with them in my previous life. However, all I do know is that this would have been a commercial transaction that was directed by the image campaign and by the business community. So it's not something that was done out of the department directly.

Mrs. Rowat: So can I ask the question, then, whatever work that MIDCAN did for the total of \$78,439.56, was there a competition within the province to do that work?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but I don't know about how each of the hundreds of invoices was decided upon. I think that's why we do have the Auditor General doing the report. I think it's appropriate that the Auditor General does look at them. Whether they spent on photocopying or whatever, I don't know, and I would not be able to explain in front of this House every single invoice and how they arrived at it.

What happened in this process was this business community, a committee of business people led the marketing initiative. The government followed the business lead, and the image campaign said that we needed to market. The image campaign said that we needed to get out there and have an image that was more positive, that was sellable. We followed their lead. When there were questions and there started to be politics as far as the Spirited Energy campaign, what happened was there was unanimous agreement

to make sure that we had an officer of the Leg come in and look at it. That way, if there's anything untoward or anything inappropriate, it'll be made public. The Auditor General's report comes out; it's made public. Then we can answer the questions.

But I don't know how each specific—I know that there was a stack of invoices that was presented through Freedom of Information. After the Ombudsman discussed what was third-party confidential and what wasn't, that was sent out. Then what happened is that these were made public and provided, and that information is out there. No. 2, we do have the Auditor General who's going to make comment on it. I am not going to—I do not know how all these different financial—*[interjection]* I didn't know how the process as far as making all the invoices and making the decision when, and that, I believe, is what the Auditor General will be following.

Mrs. Rowat: I don't think the minister's getting it. He seems to be a little bit slow on the pickup here. What I'm asking is about process. I'm asking the minister to tell me if there's a process for competition for the different activities that occurred with the campaign. Was there a process followed to ensure that individuals, different companies out there, had an opportunity to bid on projects within the Spirited Energy campaign? Was there that opportunity? If there was, how was that made public? How were people able to find out about these opportunities for campaign development projects?

Mr. Rondeau: I think that's exactly the type of question that the Auditor General will answer, whether there was a process and how it went. I don't know. I did not authorize specific expenditures.

Maybe the member doesn't understand. I will go through it very basically. We have an image campaign, and that was led by the business community. They wanted to create a better image for Manitoba. That led to the Spirited Energy campaign, and we followed the lead of the business community. Then what happened was they made a number of proposals on how to move this forward. We followed the lead of this group of volunteer business people to improve the image of Manitoba. Then what happened was we started the image, following the business lead. They led this process. They started to move forward.

We then had a lot of issues raised by the opposition. What we wanted to do as a House, unanimous, is to make sure that we looked at

whether there was anything untoward, whether it was inappropriate. So we, as a unanimous House, said, if we want an unbiased, third-party person who we all have confidence in to look at, to answer the questions the member is asking. Well, that is why we picked the Auditor General and unanimously said, go in and do an audit. The government didn't prevent it. She has unfettered access. She will conduct the audit, and she will specifically answer, I trust, the questions you're asking.

Now you're asking whether somebody specifically followed the appropriate process. I assume that's what the Auditor General is going to look at and see whether appropriate purchasing was done, whatever. I don't know what type of audit she's conducting. We don't direct or control what she looks at. She's going to give a report, which I have not seen. She will present it and we will respond. That's the process.

Now, as far as whether they've tendered every single thing or followed processes, I am not aware of that. That's why we did the Auditor General looking at the whole process.

* (16:00)

Mr. Maguire: The member wasn't asking whether the Auditor General had been involved in it. The minister was involved in the initial process of the Spirited Energy campaign. He's outlined the process, the Business Council. Could he provide us with documentation, any documentation that he might have had from his department or other departments of government toward the Business Council in regard to seeking a campaign, or the documentation whereby the Business Council or, as the member referred to earlier, the valid agency process—can he provide us with the documentation whereby there was a request for a Spirited Energy campaign in the first place?

The Auditor General doesn't need to be involved in that because that's after the fact. We're just asking for the documentation that began the process.

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that it was a recommendation from PEAC that there would be an image campaign. I think that it's been out in public from Bob Silver, Ash Modha, also from the Chamber of Commerce, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce that we needed to do an image campaign and that they're actually behind the image campaign.

I think a lot of the business community and the business community that have talked to me have often asked what the issue is. They've often stated—the business community said that marketing works. The business community said that we need to attract new businesses and talk about our clean energy. They said that we need to talk about our water resources. We need to be part of the growing economy.

So, when the business community said that we needed to market Manitoba better and market our attributes better, we followed their lead. So I find it interesting that the members opposite are not following the lead of Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Brandon Chamber of Commerce—

An Honourable Member: The mayor of Brandon.

Mr. Rondeau: —the mayor of Brandon, thank you, and a lot of the business leaders including Bob Silver, Ash Modha and many others. I could go through the list of business leaders.

I find it strange that the members opposite don't believe in marketing the province in a positive light. I know that there may be some reason why you're doing this, but we followed the lead of the business community. Marketing, I often find it interesting that marketing is looked down upon by members opposite, but we believe that the people who have been in business and been successful, we followed their advice in this case because they actually said that we needed to improve Manitoba's image.

The whole Spirited Energy campaign would have been risky for government, but we followed the business lead. We listened to them because they said that we needed to improve Manitoba's image and to grow the economy. We do that by having people look at our natural attributes.

The member opposite said, you know, why would we do that? Well, we do that because you know, we have the lowest-cost electricity in Canada. We have good electricity. I know that in Ontario they have some issues on electricity. I know in Alberta they have problems with electricity. We have 96 percent of our electricity as hydro-electric. We have renewable. We have lots of it. The interesting part about it is that companies need to make sure that they have good dependable electricity. Well, energy becomes a very important thing for growth. So, when you're talking about growth, you're talking about

energy. We have clean, dependable, renewable, green energy.

When I talk to other businesses in other countries—when people from other countries come here, they often are amazed because of the abundance of energy, especially electricity and the price. If you look at our price, it is very, very small compared to most jurisdictions. Even in Asia, when you talk to people in China, the limiting factors in their growth are water, clean water and energy. Well, what do we have? We have clean water and energy. The business community has said that, maybe, what we should do is tell people that we have clean water, lots of energy and that's what the marketing campaign that the business community wanted and suggested is all about.

Mrs. Rowat: I have several more questions regarding honorariums paid to Interbrand in the amount of \$2,000, an honorarium paid to Brandworks for \$2,000. Honorariums that, you know, people would wonder what that honorarium would be for, but, obviously, the minister is going to go on about other things and will not respond to that.

You know, there are other things that we are very concerned about: the \$30,000 retainer fee and the need for that and explanation of what that would be for; \$5,000 for a Web maintenance fee that was paid each month to McKim Cringan George. There are a number of things that are there that raise eyebrows, raise questions regarding government's involvement. If there are simple answers and easy answers for this I would encourage the minister to share those answers. The mismanagement of this file is quite interesting, Madam Chair, and it would appear that the government could easily give the answers, be transparent on what has occurred through these expenditures and move on. Obviously, the minister would rather play cat and mouse and spew out different dollar amounts to the media and in the House and lead people to believe—or actually show people that really this rebranding has become an issue of accountability and transparency, and just goes to show how poorly managed this file has been by the government.

There are a number of issues regarding discrepancies in dollars that have been shared by the government, be it through the Premier (Mr. Doer), be it through the former Minister of Competitiveness, every time the issue is raised it raises more questions. I guess what I'm going to have to do is just, maybe, ask the minister some questions that are

directly related to the general revenue of the Province with regard to something simple as the product that is being merchandized through Manitoba government, the products that have the Spirited Energy name on them.

Can the minister indicate to me how much money has been made through the sale of the Spirited Energy merchandize since the Web site started selling the product to this point?

Mr. Rondeau: I'm surprised that the member opposite is talking about government transparency because she just went through a whole litany of expenses and of information that we provided to the public. We provided it to the public through The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So then she's saying we don't understand why you're not more transparent, but here she is reading from those invoices that we've made public. I think that's showing that we have been transparent.

* (16:10)

As far as the mismanagement by government, I find it interesting because she must have missed the fact that it was a business-led initiative. We followed the lead of the business community in this. Thirdly, the Auditor General—I'm not going to make an allegation that something was mismanaged or anything like this because it's not my right to do so. I believe that you should let somebody who understands finance—I'm not an auditor, I'm not an accountant, so I would never, ever throw allegations that something has been mismanaged when I wouldn't have the qualifications to state that categorically. What I would do is probably have someone like an auditor general or a third party who has the skills and abilities and who has the staff and the abilities to go in and make a real judgment, because I would never throw allegations against staff or against volunteers until I had the facts. Now that's me, and I know how I would handle situations; I would handle them a certain way.

As far as the products, I will get you the information very shortly. Again, I will get it to you on how much was sold and what was sold. Do you want a breakdown as far as what exactly the products were that were sold? If you do, I can provide that by the end of the week.

An Honourable Member: By the end of Estimates? Before the end of Estimates?

Mr. Rondeau: Well, we're working on it.

Mr. Maguire: Just for clarification, can the minister tell me, in his previous life, was he a financial planner?

Mr. Rondeau: Yes, I was, Madam Chair, but not an auditor nor an accountant.

Mrs. Rowat: I would ask the minister to please provide today how much money has been made through the sale of Spirited Energy merchandise. Today. Right now. It's in the book. I'm sure you have it.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I'd be able to provide that, I believe, in tomorrow's Estimates. I'll try to table it tomorrow, how much was sold in that. We don't have it today. It's 4:15. It's at the end of the day. I asked my staff whether they have that information in the briefing books. They don't have the information in the briefing books. They'll get it shortly.

Mrs. Rowat: Then can the minister indicate to me where this money, when it is made, where does the money go, into what category, into what department, or into what line?

Mr. Rondeau: We will find out exactly where that was and where the money is by tomorrow.

Mrs. Rowat: I find that rather humorous. They don't know where the revenues go from the Web site sales. Interesting.

Can the minister then indicate to me who makes the products that are being sold on the Internet, and are the companies local?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I think, fundamentally, the member opposite doesn't understand that this is an initiative that's run through a group of volunteers and a brand council through the group of volunteers that is not being directly run, mandated or advanced through this department. So what we are doing is we're supporting a group of business people who are volunteering their time and talents, who are moving this initiative forward. This is not my department selling these items. We have a group that's maintaining the brand, that's the advertising company that the member opposite referenced, and we have a group of volunteers leading the brand. It is not this department directly selling merchandise, nor is it this government directly leading the initiative. What we have is a group of business volunteers leading it, a group of business volunteers working with the advertising campaign as far as maintaining the brand, which is

selling the items, which is supporting the people who have the banners, maintaining the Web site, et cetera. That's what's happening right now. Now we are not directly starting new advertising campaigns or anything like this. This is something that a group of business people are leading.

We will get this information, but the reason why it's not directly available instantly is because it's not the CTT Department selling the merchandise directly. It is a group of people who are leading the government's initiative on how to move this Spirited Energy campaign forward.

I might add, to make sure that there's no misinformation is that we're not moving the brand forward right now. We're waiting for the Auditor General's report, so all we're doing is maintaining the brand, which means the Web site, the materials and what was already committed to. That's it, so no new initiatives. So it's not me having the material directly at our fingertips. This is not directly in this department being controlled by this department.

Mrs. Rowat: So can I then ask that the revenue that is created from the sale of Spirited Energy merchandise, does that come to the Province? What's the process of the Province receiving those dollars, and where do those dollars go?

Mr. Rondeau: We will provide all the information on merchandise, including the sales, where the profits go, or if there is any—I don't know whether there are profits or anything. I will provide all that to the member tomorrow.

Mrs. Rowat: I'd appreciate also to know who makes the products and if the companies are local.

I'm going to ask the minister during the summer months there were the Spirited Energy teams out and about. Was his department responsible for covering the salaries and the other basic expenditures associated with the teams that were out and about during the summer months, the street teams?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, I think that follows, when I've read the memo, what it did was it talked about maintaining the brand which was the existing commitments to community groups or to businesses; that would be the banners. I think that fell under that category, so no new initiatives. I think that beforehand—oh, I have it here. The last line of the sentence says—and this was the April 17, 2007 memo from Scott Smith that I tabled earlier. It said in the last line: Expenditures for basic ongoing operations including maintaining the Web site and providing

promotional materials on request from business and community groups, will be approved.

I think that fell under that.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, I would expect, then, when the minister gets back to me on those basic expenditures, that they'll be listed there, and he'll indicate to me the amount that was expended on that team because you've already committed that you would be providing me with a breakdown line by line of each of these basic expenditures and what those expenditures follow through on. Which department, I would appreciate, would also be helpful since you seem to have Spirited Energy spirited across several departments. It would be nice to know if you could also indicate to me which departments are responsible for those funds.

So I'm obviously not going to get an answer for that at this point, but we're anticipating some information from the minister in short order.

Can the minister indicate to me who approves the invoices for the campaign? Is it one person or is it multiple people? Can he share that information for me?

Mr. Rondeau: The invoices would be approved by whatever entity was responsible for the procurement itself.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Rowat: Could you give me an example of some of the different sectors that would have been approving different invoices and the individual that would be responsible for those? You could provide a listing of each individual who would be responsible for those approval of invoices and give me some examples.

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, the government has a branch called Communication Services who would be responsible for contracting or signing the invoices for communication services, so media stuff.

Mrs. Rowat: So that I'm clear, invoices that would come through Communications, that would be Pat Britton would be in that area. Who would be the individual that would be responsible for those invoices?

Mr. Rondeau: Things that Pat Britton would've approved are things that directly are procured through PEAC which would have been, maybe, room rentals, things like that, and that would have been what Pat would have signed for. So things that

PEAC was trying to contract for, say, if they were having a meeting and they needed a room and coffee, then she would contract for a room and coffee.

Mrs. Rowat: So what you're telling me is Pat Britton would have been the one to approve the sustenance or the beer and wine at the Sheraton invoices. It would have been through her direction or her sign-off on those invoices.

Mr. Rondeau: I don't know who would specifically approve that specific one. I can endeavour to look at it and find out who signed off on that specific invoice.

Mrs. Rowat: Okay, I'm not clear in what you've said regarding approval of invoices. Can you give me, probably, a listing of the different sectors or areas that the department would be having individuals sign-off on invoices? How many people would be signing-off on these invoices?

Mr. Rondeau: What happens under the general administrative manual, people have certain sign-offs for a certain amount of money and certain categories. So what happens is that this delegated authority goes to certain people under their category. So PEAC might have accommodations up to a certain amount, et cetera. I am sure that that's exactly what the Auditor General will look at to make sure that no one exceeded or didn't do what they were supposed to do as far as the delegated authority.

Certain managers throughout my department have certain ability for travel or a certain delegated authority for supplies or maintenance. So everyone has that under the general administrative manual. This hasn't changed from government to government. People have certain responsibilities within the civil service that they are supposed to adhere to, and I trust they have. Again, the Auditor General could look at it. I assume that she would've looked at it to make sure that people are functioning as appropriate and as outlined in what they're supposed to do according to normal administration.

Mrs. Rowat: With regard to the response that not all invoices were provided because there were photocopying issues, can the minister indicate to me whether those invoices will be forthcoming, or is that pretty much a dead end?

Mr. Rondeau: I can tell the member opposite that what had happened was there was a stack of invoices that was provided. Apparently, because of the quantity of invoices, we were getting the original invoices, it took a little while to produce them

because there were several hundred. So what happened was the next morning we provided all a stack of invoices, and then next morning, by the next morning all the rest were distributed.

Mrs. Rowat: So what the minister is saying is, no outstanding invoices. Everything that would have been available under the Freedom of Information has been provided to the individuals that have requested them. There is nothing outstanding in our request.

Mr. Rondeau: Not that we're aware of. We provided all of the information that was requested in that Freedom of Information request. The only thing is that the Ombudsman did say certain things were not appropriate in certain invoices that were blacked out.

Mrs. Rowat: The member has gone on at length about following the lead of the business sector, but, obviously, government has played a role in this process or in this campaign. Can the minister tell me today how many paid government staff are currently working on the Spirited Energy campaign, and in what capacity?

Mr. Rondeau: Madam Chair, that's a little bit difficult to answer because what happens—is the member asking for the person who photocopied all the photocopies? Are you asking for the creative services person who made one phone call? If you're asking for the person who's been responsible for it, it would be Pat Britton, is the person who would have been leading the Spirited Energy campaign following the lead of the business community. However, I know that my own staff has received calls from different people or responded to letters, and that would have been through the Freedom of Information. So what we have is generally one person, Pat Britton, who is working with PEAC, following the lead of the business community in this initiative and another advisory role for the business community to provide advice to government. So she would be the general person responsible for the Spirited Energy campaign, having it flow through government.

Mrs. Rowat: So what the minister is saying is that Pat Britton would be the only staff person that is paid through government who is working solely on the Spirited Energy campaign. Are there any other individuals within government who are working solely on the Spirited Energy campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: Pat Britton, I understand, is not working solely on the Spirited Energy campaign. She is the secretary to the Premier's Economic Advisory

Council, the council which is the business community providing advice to government, same as the previous government had, something that was very similar. So Pat's sole function is not the Spirited Energy campaign. She has part of the function to help support that role as the business community, certain members of the image committee, which are business people and people from the private sector and other sectors who are giving advice to government. She is the conduit where she's getting the advice and she's working through it for the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, which is a series of business people following the business lead, and that's what's happening.

* (16:30)

Her responsibilities also include support for the Economic Advisory Council. Her role is to support that group and that function, and they do provide a lot of advice to government. There is a number of people who may have worked partially for this campaign. In other words, the person—when the member opposite had a Freedom of Information and we actually have people go through and pull invoices, compile invoices, photocopy invoices and send invoices to her office, that's staff. When people said, well, will it take staff time to compile and get all these requests? Yes, it does. So, if the member opposite says, did it take time? Yes, it did, and it did take staff time.

Now, it's important to note that whenever there's a freedom of information act it does take staff time. It takes resources from other work and that's what happened. We do wish to make sure that, if there's a letter written in response or a phone call to a constituent or a phone call to someone, I don't know what happened as far as all the efforts of every person that is involved in government, but what I do know is that, basically, Pat Britton is responsible for, as the secretary to the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, to be the conduit to work with the business people to lead this campaign and there's been people involved in communication services, my office through Freedom of Information, accounting, creative services, that moved forward on this.

Mrs. Rowat: Did the minister know that expenditures for liquor were being approved as part of the campaign?

Mr. Rondeau: As has been mentioned, I did not manage or micromanage this campaign. It was led by a group of people outside of government. I was not aware of all the invoices that have been done, and, as

it has been explained in previous discussions and answers, I don't know about all of the invoices and whatever the expenditures were.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, the minister indicated a few minutes ago that he had a stack of all the invoices available now. Can he make those available to me tomorrow?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand it's been made available to the caucus through the normal Freedom of Information process. I know that we had sent them to the opposition caucus. Did you not gather them, or did you not receive them?

Mr. Maguire: Well, I'm not sure, Madam Chair. As a new critic in this area, I just would like a copy of them for myself. So, if they're available—I mean, the minister said they're available, can he provide me with a stack of the hundreds that he said he has tomorrow? Thanks.

Mr. Rondeau: I was just wondering whether the opposition critic, on the hope that he might have them somewhere in the opposition caucus, if you could look at it, because it would take a lot a staff time and a lot of photocopying to get them all there. Is it possible to check to see if the caucus office has them before I request staff, again, to photocopy them, because it is a rather large stack of invoices. If you don't have them, we can endeavour to find them, but if you do have them I'd rather save the staff time and the resources if it's not available.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, it's a very simple question. I'm assuming that it's not a hidden secret. The minister had indicated a little while ago that he had those, and that he hadn't supplied them to us yet. I'm just asking him if he can do that more expeditiously by providing them to me tomorrow.

Mr. Rondeau: We will endeavour to see if I can get mine. I do have a copy, I think, but I don't know whether they're all exactly there. I haven't counted every single one. It takes a lot of process and a lot of staff time to make sure all of them are there, make sure they're all accounted for, make sure they're all photocopied. So, even though I have what I believe is a complete copy, what it would require is it would require staff time to go through each one of those to make sure every single invoice is there, make sure they're all photocopied, so you're probably talking about two to three staff days, maybe less, but they have to be there and make sure that each one's included in the pile of that. I can do that. I can also, probably, just get you the stack that I have in my

office and assume that they're all there, but if you want us to go through on each one I can do that if you need to.

Mr. Maguire: No, I mean if the minister's indicated that he's already done this and provided them to his staff to make available to our Freedom of Information process, then, if he could make sure that that's over by the end of the week, that'd be fine too. Seeing how tomorrow's the end of our week, as far as that goes, it won't necessarily be the end of our Estimates process here, so it's either tomorrow or Friday. Friday is the end of the week as far as our sitting in the Legislature goes. I look forward to that.

I know that one of the independent members would like to ask some questions in regard to the timing as well. I know that with patience the trade people have been very much waiting today as well. I just have to say there's a couple of things on the record that the minister put out that we need to continue to ask some of these questions, or we could have got to some of the trade issues sooner.

One of them was that he indicated earlier that we look down on the marketing from our side of the House in opposition, and that's just not true, Madam Chair. I need to put that on the record. We're very aware of the importance of marketing in the province of Manitoba, the business community in the province of Manitoba, and very much support their initiatives in marketing products worldwide that we have. For the minister to put on the record that we would look down on marketing from our side of the House is just completely not true, and I think the business record of many of the members that we have on this side of the House would point that out very clearly. He had some indulgence in that sector as well in his previous life before coming into the Legislature, so I know that he may have said those things in jest, I hope. I hope it was in that manner, but he seemed fairly serious at the time, so I just wanted to refute that.

I also want to say that we will deal with trade issues and, perhaps, some of these other issues tomorrow as well, so we will need staff available at that point in those areas.

I just have a few questions that I want to ask about—because of the minister's responsibilities, as I pointed out earlier in the schedule—some of the acts that he's responsible for. One of them, of course, is The Crocus Investment Fund Act. I was wondering if the minister could give me an update on just exactly where the Manitoba Securities Commission review is at.

Mr. Rondeau: All I know is that the matter went to the—or the Securities Commission is reviewing the whole issue. Again, it would be very inappropriate for me to interfere with the process or push the process or direct the process in any way, so we've kept a total hands off. The Securities Commission is reviewing it in their own manner, in their own time frame, and it's incumbent upon us not to become involved. We just provide information or co-operate in any way we can.

Mr. Maguire: I wonder if the minister can just—I understand that he certainly would be at arm's length from the Securities Commission in regard to their work, but there will be a cost involved in that, and I wondered if the minister—a financial cost, I mean, Madam Chair, at this point—and I wonder if the minister can provide a number for me in regard to what the government has spent in defence of, a dollar value for what they've spent in defence in regard to that review process so far.

* (16:40)

Mr. Rondeau: The whole review by the Securities Commission is in Finance. It's not paid for by CTT. As far as the role of government in it is that we have basically said that we would not claw back the tax credits should the Crocus Investment Fund be wound down, but that would not be an additional cost because we've already paid for the tax credits. As far as legal fees, again, the legal fees would not be paid for out of this department.

Mr. Maguire: I would assume then—I thank the minister for that answer—that those kinds of contingencies would be dealt with then by the Department of Finance.

Mr. Rondeau: I'm sorry, but I was incorrect in my last comment. I must correct it. If the government's named as a suit, we may have legal fees out of this department that would pay for lawyers. We're being sued as a defendant and so there may be some legal costs, and so that would come out of our department.

Mr. Maguire: But as of today the minister's indicating that he has no legal fees in his department in regard to the process?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand there are some fees. I'm sorry, I was wrong. There are some legal fees, and I'll endeavour to get that to you by tomorrow. That's easy to gather.

Mr. Maguire: So there'd be an outstanding interest in the lawsuit in regard to some smaller amounts, in

regard to interest that would be charged on those as well. Can the minister indicate—I guess he has indicated earlier that all of the defence then for this would be taking place out of the Department of Finance or is there some—well, no. There's obviously some coming out of CTT as well.

Mr. Rondeau: I understand that this department's paying for the legal fees for the defence of Crocus.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I assume then that those are the numbers that the minister indicated earlier that he'd get me? [*interjection*] Thank you to the minister for that.

I know it was speculation, but can he indicate to me, you know, he kind of alluded to the fact that there might be—you know, if there was a contingency or the government was found involved with the process in that area—can he tell me, if the lawsuit was successful and the government was found to have some compliance in the process, does he as a minister or has he guided his department to have some kind of a contingency fund available for covering what the value of that lawsuit would be?

Mr. Rondeau: I can't speculate what could or might not happen in the future as far as any lawsuit. So, no, I would never speculate what would happen in the future to any lawsuit, so there have been no discussions by myself regarding that because I don't make plans on speculation, and specifically not on any litigation or any lawsuits.

The only thing I can say is that should the fund be wound down, in other words, if the money is disbursed to the shareholders, what we've said and what we've talked to the feds about is to make sure that the tax credit that was paid for the labour-sponsored fund, the actual one, is not clawed back so people would get the money that was allotted to them without a clawback of the tax credit, either provincial or federal.

Mr. Maguire: So, Madam Chair, the minister, I thank him for that answer. He's obviously thinking about what would happen down the road. I know a normal business would, perhaps, at least be looking at their insurance or something in regard to what might be involved and what that value would be. Of course, perhaps not all of the assets of the Crocus Fund have been dispersed at this point, so there would be still a value there that could be put toward the funds received by the 34,000-some shareholders of Crocus Fund that lost over there \$60 million. Can

the minister indicate to me just exactly what might be left in assets within the Crocus package today?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand, Madam Chair, that the courts have appointed a receiver. The receiver is in charge to realize the best money available for the sale of the assets, and is in the process of winding down the fund. But it's important to note that the courts—again, a third-party independent process—have directed the receiver to move forward in that regard. Again, the government is not involved in the process. We're out of it, and the receiver has a responsibility for the fund and the fund's assets.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate just when he expects the review by the Securities Commission to be done?

Mr. Rondeau: I have no idea, and, again, this is a career-limiting move if I was to ever interfere.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for his time.

I know that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) wants to ask a few questions as well. I turn it over to him.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The question I have relates to the approach to supporting businesses. Let me start with a recent example, the tire recycling. In this circumstance, Manitoba was approaching this differently in terms of support, compared to other provinces. It seems to have put one of the tire recycling businesses out of business, on the recent report. I'd ask the minister his view on this situation and, you know, what the involvement of his department has been in this respect.

Mr. Rondeau: I'm pleased with the amount of capital investment and investment in building and construction and economic activity that's going on in Manitoba at this time. We, of course, are saddened if there's ever a company that doesn't do well or has difficulties. But I'm very, very pleased because the level of private investment in Manitoba is up by about \$2 billion between 1999 and 2007, which is an increase of 50 percent. And, if you look around yourself, we have almost doubled the capital investment in Canada. We've maintained our GDP.

We have a number and, I repeat, a large number of projects under way. It might go from the Siemens Institute for Advanced Medicine to Husky, to CVRD, Inco. And some of these you have to put into context, like, Siemens Institute is \$25 million. You have Biovail, which is \$30 million. You have CVRD, Inco. That's the new owners of Inco up in

Thompson, which is \$135 million. You have Canad Inns with a \$25-million hotel. You have Polo Park with \$30 million. There is a whole list of them, of businesses that are investing in Manitoba. You have lots of capital investment. I know even in my own constituency Boeing's gone from the 500s to, like, 1,400 employees. So there are companies that are doing okay.

* (16:50)

It's always sad whenever anything closes, and it's sad when any businesses are having difficulties. We will continue to work with businesses. One of the things we did do is on the manufacturing. We made sure that, with manufacturing investments, we matched the federal 50 percent rule on investments and write-offs of investments. We've dropped the small business tax rate from about 8 percent in 1999 to about 3 percent now, and we raised the threshold to about \$400,000. We've also worked very, very hard with the Canada/Manitoba Small Business Centre to start up a lot of programs like BizPaL the mentoring programs and the loan programs.

So is there more we could do? Yes. Are we working hard to maintain and grow the economics and businesses in Manitoba? Absolutely. As a former business owner, I feel badly whenever a business is having troubles. It hurts, and I know it hurts the employees, the owners and the people who've given their time and efforts. But we as a government will continue to work with businesses to try to improve and create a better business environment as we have done in the past.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister has done a good job of answering all sorts of other questions except the one which I actually asked, and he's also doing a very good job of trying to talk out the clock. So maybe the minister could keep his answers shorter and more to the point.

What was the minister's and his department's involvement, if any, in the tire recycling business area?

Mr. Rondeau: It's actually under Conservation or Tire Stewardship Board generally. They are the leads on that file.

Mr. Gerrard: It's curious that, as I ask questions, I seem to have to chase around from one minister to another. Seeing as how my questions in Conservation have ended and seeing as how this is a business issue, I would ask the minister as the one responsible for business: Was there any involvement

of his department whatsoever in this tire recycling business area?

Mr. Rondeau: I understand there has been no involvement as far as a small business loan or MIOP loan or other supports from this department. I don't know whether there's been training. I'll find out from the Training people whether there was ever any training initially set up, but no business loans, no small business loans, and there was no training involved. So, no, we have not been involved with this.

However, if a business is running into troubles and wishes to come to my staff, I have to compliment the staff on doing a good job and trying to work with business to either increase technology, or give them advice on how they can restructure and move forward.

Mr. Gerrard: As I understand this situation, the problem in comparison to other provinces has been that the dollar is going in terms of, I guess, cost of tires, that go toward recycling tires, is considerably lower than in other provinces. Was the minister involved in advocating for more equitable treatment compared to other provinces in any way for people in this industry?

Mr. Rondeau: I think that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) was quite clear in Question Period that the Tire Stewardship Board, the interim board and the new board, is responsible for the whole program. It's not something that's directed out of the CTT, and it's a responsibility of the Conservation Minister. If it had to do with training of new workers, if it had to do with capitalization or new equipment or trade or action in selling the products from the shop, then it would go to CTT. If has to do with conservation issues or the Tire Stewardship Board, that's not in this department whatsoever, and I wouldn't interfere with another minister's turf.

Mr. Gerrard: It seems to me, that when we're dealing with business aspects, that when you have a situation where it's possible that you may have businesses coming to you for MIOP or other loans when they're having difficulty, that it would seem to be logical to be aware of what was going on with the business and how things compared with other provinces so that, at appropriate times, we could make an advocate in a proactive fashion for business, rather than letting the situation go downhill to the point where all that's left is some emergency,

last-minute loan. So my understanding is pretty clear that you were not involved in any proactive action.

I would like clarification on one other matter. The department had given notice and made public announcements, I think the minister himself with regard to a situation for producers of computer-based games similar to the film tax credit. The minister had announced that there was going to be and there would be and, indeed, I believe had sent out some certificates to companies on the basis of there being a tax credit for the production of video games in Manitoba. Eventually, the minister had to change gears and to announce, instead, that there's going to be a grants program.

Can the minister put clearly on the record why the original tax program was cancelled after there had already been notification to businesses and to others publicly that this was going to be in place?

Mr. Rondeau: Actually, Madam Chair, the company never approached us when they were having difficulty, in the first part of your question. I am very pleased with how serious the staff take when companies come to them. They often have very in-depth discussions and spend a lot of time with companies to try to work through their issues. Sometimes it's the incorporation of technology or R&D or different markets, so there isn't a one size fits all. My staff is very diligent and very good at trying to work with companies to come to solutions.

I know that, in my own experience, I get wonderful feedback from companies that are working with staff, whether it's with David Sprange's department or Jim Kilgour's department. They

actually work with them to figure out solutions, long-term solutions, and try very, very hard to work with the companies. Because of that you have the Industrial Technology Centre; you've got the Composites Innovation Centre, vehicle technology centre, which are focussing on working with companies to incorporate new technologies, new systems, new management and also the trade to market. Those are important. So we would be hopeful that any company that's running into trouble comes and talks to these guys because these are people who really take their job seriously.

As far as the new media, sorry to let you know that that isn't actually in CTT; it's in science and technology. I'm not supposed to, I understand, answer Science Technology questions in this one. I have to answer the Science Technology questions in the next section of Estimates. If I break that rule, I think a deputy minister may get offended. Therefore, I better keep to what I'm supposed to.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Member for River Heights, you have 15 seconds.

Mr. Gerrard: I think that's probably about the end; it's too bad. But we'll wait for tomorrow and the Science, Technology Estimates portion.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

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