

Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 29, 2011

*The House met at 10 a.m.***ORDERS OF THE DAY***(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY****(Concurrent Sections)****LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran): 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 Labour and Immigration.

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

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Okay, and good morning to all. I want to continue where we left off yesterday with immigration, and then after that I'm going to be giving it over to the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) for a few questions, and then the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) will take a few questions as well. So that's sort of a very quick overview.

But on immigration, I guess I was going to go—and I referenced the book here yesterday, the report—oh, what is this again—anyway, the office of the Manitoba commissioner here. But the comment that was made here was: Today's immigrant is highly skilled—and I think we talked about that, but many are professionals anxious to quickly re-establish themselves, but the system is not efficient. It is onerous and frustrating. Tenacity, drive, resourcefulness or patience are mandatory for success.

Now, I mean, that's a comment made here, and I think we talked about it for a little while, but my question would be for the department, and I know that over the years—I didn't go back to list the number of years—but that has been my concern about the whole area of professional training. So my question would be: What have we done in the last year, two years, in order to try to work towards streamlining, outlining this whole process?

And, again, as I said yesterday, I think it's unfortunate that, where some of our immigrants already do have the degrees, that they are forced by their professional body out here to basically go right back to school and learn everything rather than challenge the exam.

So I guess I'm—my question is, you know, what's taking place in order to try and resolve some of those issues?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Well, this is an issue, I think, that both of us have a lot of concerns about. Both of us want newcomers, when they come here and they come here with skills and they come here some of them with a tremendous amount of education and experience, and we want to benefit from that in Manitoba. And we also know that they want to contribute and they want to do the things that they're trained to do.

And that's why we set up the office of the Fairness Commissioner; the report that you've been reading is her first report. And we also established the fair practices act, and that obligates the regulatory bodies who are ultimately in charge of credential recognition—it obligates them to do a few things. It obligates them to make sure that their standards are transparent so people know what's expected of them. I think one of the things that we've heard from immigrants is people come here and they don't really know what they're going to have to do to get recognized. Another thing that it obligates them to do is make sure that those processes for people to get those credentials recognized make sense. And they have to be accountable for that.

So, for example, one of the stories from the Fairness Commissioner that she's told me is, you know, there are some exams that are, you know, six hours long and multiple choice questions. At the rate to finish the exam you'd have to answer one multiple choice question a minute. Now, for me, who's taken those exams throughout my schooling, it would be a familiar format. For someone who that's the first time they've ever seen it, probably not really a fair way to judge their skills. What it judges is how well you take that kind of exam.

So one of the things we're working with regulators on is putting in place processes to accurately judge someone's skills and having multiple processes that still make sure that people live up to the standards, but it doesn't mean that everybody has to demonstrate that in the same way.

So some of it is putting in place a way to recognize prior learning, to do an assessment of what people have, what kind of credentials they already have and what kind of experience they have. Some of it that some of the regulators have been working on has to do with mentoring, so pairing internationally trained professionals with Canadian-trained professionals for a period of time so they can learn how things are done in Canada and they can get up to speed in their profession. Some of it involves—I know for doctors, some of it involves specific language training in that profession. We still find, I think, that one of the greatest barriers for people to employment generally and to credential recognition is English, is knowing enough English to take the exams, to understand the clients that they're working with and to participate in the profession. So that's been part of what we're doing.

We also work not only with the regulatory bodies, but we also work with colleges and universities to make sure that bridging programs are in place so that people can come up to the standard in Canada. So I think last time we met, I was talking about some of the work that is especially been done with engineers. Some of that work has also been done with doctors.

The other thing that we are trying very hard to do is to make sure that people know before they come here what they're going to be required to do. I think one of the concerns that I hear from newcomers, that you've probably heard from newcomers, is I wish I had known before I came here that it was going to be this hard, that I was going to have to do all of these things.

And so we've tried very hard to make sure that on the website we have direct links to those regulatory bodies so people can go there and they can see what's required. The office of the Fairness Commissioner has also worked with the regulatory bodies to make sure that they are putting those things up in plain language. And some of these regulatory bodies, you know, some of them are very large, very large professions. Some of them are very small, so we are talking about some of these regulators having maybe two staff in their office. So one of the things

that the Fairness Commissioner has done is added staff to her office who can help those regulators put things into plain language, for example.

* (10:10)

So those are some of the steps that we're taking. I think it's ensuring that there's good bridging programs in place for education, working closely with regulators to make sure their requirements are transparent and accountable, getting the best information to newcomers before they come to Manitoba about what is required.

And some of the interesting examples we've had, I think, of this working well is where we were able to work with the College of Registered Nurses to deliver the exam in the Philippines before people came to Manitoba. So they got the exam to become nurses here in the Philippines, and they knew before they came here if they were going to pass that exam and be able to be registered. And I think we've also worked in the Philippines, and I think the other place is in China, with pre-arrival programs.

So, once someone is nominated and they're planning to come to Manitoba, usually there's a year or more before they get all their visas. We're now trying to make better use of that time with them, to talk about, okay, you're an engineer in the Philippines; here are the things you're going to need to do before you can be an engineer in Manitoba. Here's some of the things you can do while you're still in the Philippines to make sure that you have those credentials, things like improving language training, making sure you've got all the documentation in place, knowing exactly what the regulator is going to require.

So I think those are improvements, but I wouldn't, by any stretch of the imagination, tell you that the job is done.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you for those comments.

As I say, as long as we are working and striving to go in that direction of trying to simplify and possibly even make them aware.

Now, I guess my other concern is that I think very often some of the immigrants who come—and I wouldn't say all of them, but many—I mean, they really want to immigrate to Canada, to Manitoba, and I don't think in all cases they take the time to go through all the links and look at what the requirements are. And I think that very often they come out here—and that's not a fault of the

department, that is the—I mean, this is the fault of them being very anxious to come to a different country where the opportunities are greater than what they have back home. So I think, you know, that that is a problem that continues to take place and will continue to take place as well, but at least the options are there for them. I know that—and this is a few years ago. I, you know, in dealing with some of the immigrants, they—it seemed as though they were not aware of what was taking place. I wouldn't want to put fault to anyone on that. It was just—and again, I don't think that they took the time to really look.

I guess a question I had, though, and you mentioned the language being a barrier, do you see that a big barrier for the majority of them who are immigrating, or is that just a very, very small percentage?

Ms. Howard: I think that having good language skills—when I meet with employers, that is a thing they tell me, that they find when—the most—the biggest barrier to hiring newcomers is making sure that people have adequate language skills.

And I think sometimes what may happen also is that people come here and they've taken English in their home country and so they believe that they're going to be able to live and work in English, and they get here and they find that living and working in English is very different than studying English. And any of us who studied a second language in school would attest to that. It's one thing to study a language; it's another to live in it. So oftentimes we have to help people with those language skills.

The nominee program is designed to get people who have a higher level of language and we try very hard to do that, but we also know that one of the most important things that we do for people when they come here is English training—English language training.

And so, I think, yesterday when we talked about the increase this year to settlement funding and the increase coming from the federal government, the vast, vast majority of that is going to English language programs. And the majority of that is going to higher level English language programs, so people who do come here with absolutely working knowledge of the language but maybe need some additional help with grammar, maybe need some additional help with speaking the language in a way that they can be clearly understood.

I've toured some of our language programs, and some of them are very specific. There are some where, you know, people may have studied English, they can read English beautifully, they can write it well, but they haven't had a lot of practice speaking it, so they'll do intensive training on speaking, on pronunciation, on conversation. Others—you know, I met a man recently who had been here for 20 years, and I think he was a truck driver by training, lost his job and so went back to English language training. Spoke it well, understood it well, but had never been able to read or write in English.

So we're that—we're now able, I think, because of the investments and because of the very good work by those English language delivery organizations to get that specific with people's needs. But I would say some type of language training is a pretty basic universal need of newcomers who come here where that's not their first—or English isn't their first language.

Mr. Dyck: I guess you were talking about the monies given by the federal government. Are all those monies that you get from the federal government, are they used within the department for language training or whatever the designation is of those dollars?

Ms. Howard: The money that we get from the federal government, they're very specific on the use of it, so that 60 per cent of it will go to language training and about 40 per cent of it will go to settlement services.

So I'll give you—and sometimes the line between those things is blurry, but I'll give you an example. So someone's in English as an Additional Language classes; that's language training. Somebody goes to a settlement agency, like, for example, Accueil Francophone in St. Boniface, and they need help finding housing; they need help integrating into the community; maybe they're having difficulty finding the right school for their kids; that's considered settlement funding. Now, in the process, of course, of finding all those things, they're also practising language.

But that's generally the breakdown, is between language training and settlement services to help people integrate into Manitoba.

Mr. Dyck: Okay. Talking about settlement services, which areas in the province would you be providing these services? I'm sure that would be

more in your—in the more—or the areas where you have more immigration taking place.

Ms. Howard: So, as the member said, of course the funding has a direct link to the number of immigrants in an area, but we fund settlement services all over the province, certainly in Winnipeg, but also in places like Steinbach and Winkler and Brandon. Those would probably be some of the major centres outside Winnipeg, because those have some of the greatest population of newcomers, but we also fund services in places like Neepawa and Dauphin and Thompson. So, you know, wherever there is enough immigrants to—for it to make sense to deliver services in that community in that way, we'll do that.

Sometimes what also happens is we'll set up a service hub, and I think your—in your constituency we have a few of these where they'll deliver services in smaller communities as well. So it might not make sense—for example, if we have a very small community, maybe with one immigrant family—it doesn't really make sense to set up an office there, but it does make sense if there's somebody not too far away, that they visit that family and work with that family on their needs.

And, when I was in Steinbach talking to some of the settlement workers there, that's exactly how they deliver their services. There's a critical mass in Steinbach, but there's also surrounding areas where they will go and meet with those families.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you. Yes, I would agree. I think those services are working out well in the community, and, I mean, I'm not asking these questions on a critical basis; it's for to understand a little better. But, certainly, they are utilized and needed in the communities.

To some more specifics, I guess I would just like to know in the year 2010, you mentioned the number of immigrants who had come into the province—if you could repeat that number, and, then, also, you could give me, you know, the retention that you see over the last, let's say, '08, '09 and into '10, because that would sort of give you a little bit of a pattern as to what is taking place within the province.

*(10:20)

Ms. Howard: The number of immigrants that came to Manitoba in 2010 was 15,803, which represents a 17 per cent increase over 2009 and the highest number of new Manitobans since the start of modern recordkeeping in 1946. And the retention rate is generally around 80 per cent or better. I have specific

figures on those years for you. One of the ways we track retention is working with the federal government through tax filings, so it takes a few years for those to catch up, but the latest figures we have have the retention rate at over 80 per cent.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. The reason I ask that question, as well, is that I'd say in the last, probably, two years, and with some slippage within our economy, we've had some out-migration to neighbouring provinces. Do you track that, and is there a way of being able to determine the out-migration?

Ms. Howard: So, because people come here and they land their permanent residence, they're protected, of course, by the Charter, and so they have the freedom to move around Canada. So we don't have the ability to track individuals and where they move. But what I would say, I think, from the reports from service agencies, there may have been some initial movement, certainly, to provinces like Alberta, when the economy was booming in that province. But I think, because some of that boom has started to flatten out, we certainly heard reports of people now returning to Manitoba. And I think, you know, you see the same kind of ebb and flow reflected in the general population.

Certainly, over the last decade, the population has been growing every year, every year. The data that we do have shows very steady retention rates, and the recent information that we have through the University of Winnipeg study that was done on provincial nominees, one of the questions they asked was about intention to move in the next five years. And the response rate, I believe, was 95 per cent saying they had no intention of leaving Manitoba in the next five years.

So everything that I see indicates that we have a very good retention rate, and that's one of the reasons why other provinces and other countries look at our immigration system. But, certainly, as the economy ebbs and flows in other places, we do see some movement. But I think what's hopeful is we also see, when the economy ebbs in other parts of the country, that people coming back to Manitoba.

Mr. Dyck: Before I ask my next question, I'm just going to put forward an observation. And what we're seeing, and, of course, in the area that I represent, a lot of people coming from Europe, and they were in very, very small townhouses out there, so, of course, their dream was to get an acreage. And, after a number of years, they're finding out that, actually,

there's a lot of work that's involved in keeping up an acreage. And so we're seeing a little bit of a shift from that, from the larger acreage into smaller—even into the city setting, because of the work that's involved.

But, again, it's an observation, and it's just interesting to watch, because this spring, especially, we—there were a number of for sale signs on these acreages and we tried to determine whether they were actually leaving the province or moving somewhere else within the province, or what their real intent was. And so it wasn't that way in all cases, but I'd say the majority, they were just looking to simplify life a little bit.

Okay, the different programs that we have and the other issues that have been out there are the wait times to get them processed. Can you give me some, you know, wait times that are out there right now with your nominee program or any of the other programs that you might have?

Ms. Howard: This, of course, is an issue that the department has worked very hard on, to get those processing times as efficient as possible. Generally speaking, the department, the nominee processing centre, has the capacity to process applications within six months, and priority applications within three months. Now, where we sometimes hit a snag in that, one of the things that has been affecting those times, at the end of last year, was when we reached the federal cap. So, when we reached 5,000 nominees, even if we processed them and sent them on to the federal government, they were not going to move them further, because that was the cap and they weren't going to move them any farther until January. So those folks who would have applied at the last part of the year may have had a longer wait because of that.

The other thing that can happen, and can increase waits, is when people submit applications that have missing documentation, that aren't complete. Sometimes we deal with issues with federal visa offices. There are some visa offices that are renowned for taking a long, long time to process documents. So where we have control over the application, and everything is complete, we can generally get things done within six months. But there are some that wait longer and it's usually for the reasons that I've outlined.

But I would also say, you know, when—certainly, we've heard of cases where people haven't heard anything for a very long period of time, the

department does get right on that and find out what's going on and make sure those people get that information.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, could you then just give me the name or the department that a person should call, because I do occasionally have calls from people who are—and these are actually immigrants themselves who, you know, will get in contact with my office and ask, you know, how do I proceed, or who do I contact. And I'm just wondering if you could give me the name or the names of the people in the department.

Ms. Howard: I will—the way that I handle them and this is the way I would suggest that you handle them, is that you direct people to Fanny Levy, who is the director of the Provincial Nominee Program. And, certainly, if you contact my office we'll make sure you get her contact information.

But the other thing I would say to you, sometimes—immigration is a very complicated area. I find it very complicated, and I think sometimes what I run into with constituents that I'm dealing with, is they will think that, you know, I personally handle every immigration document, and I certainly do not. You do—you would not want me to be in charge of that level of detail, I assure you.

The other thing that I think we run into is, many programs are federal. So, for example, we'll have people who are here, who are seeking to bring family members, and they are trying to bring them through the Family Unification Program, which is a federal program. Our division has nothing to do with that program. We can sometimes help find, if something's gone astray, by our communication with federal officials, but we never handle those applications. So, sometimes we're dealing with something where people believe that they are contacting me because it's immigration, but, in reality, we've no control over that application. So we try to steer them into the right direction.

But I would say your best bet would be to get in touch directly with the director of the nominee program, and if you contact my office we'll get you that contact information.

*(10:30)

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you, appreciate that. Now, before you mentioned, and I know you mentioned this yesterday as well, the federal cap that was put on at 5,000. I guess I would ask what steps you are taking in order to try and increase that number.

Obviously, if we're going to be increasing the numbers as are projected, we've got to get around that cap that's out there. So if you could just indicate some of the steps that are being taken.

Ms. Howard: This has been an issue that we've been very active on, that we've worked very closely with our partners, especially in the business community and many of the other communities that work with immigrants, on. I have raised it at every possible time I've met with the federal Minister of Immigration. I know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) raised it at the Council of the Federation meeting, and he's raised it also in conversation with the Prime Minister. It's something that I've certainly talked to other ministers of Immigration in the western provinces, because I think it's something that we all have in common, and in the Atlantic provinces, where we see immigration as an economic driver, whereas in Ontario and Québec it's not viewed necessarily in that way, and so sometimes the view of those provinces is the majority view in the federal government. So that's how we've worked on it.

We've also met. We did bring together a group of people from the business community, municipal leaders, people from various cultural communities together to meet with the federal Minister of Immigration when he was in town to put that case forward. We had been, previous to the call of the federal election, seeking a meeting with him in Ottawa, and when the federal election has concluded we'll seek a meeting with whoever the new Minister of Immigration might be to put our case.

We'll work at it at the officials level. Our officials co-chair the part of the discussion about how to put in place the different levels, and we've tried to put forward an alternate view of how you do that. I think the current view, frankly, of the federal government is the way that you assign caps in the Provincial Nominee Program is based on past caps and population. So what we hear from them is, well, Manitoba, you're 3 per cent of the population of Canada, so, essentially, you should always be 3 per cent of the population of Canada and you are already getting more than your share. What we have said is, if there has to be a cap, then that should be determined on the basis of evidence. It should be determined on the basis of where are immigrants doing well in the country, where are there economies that can sustain that level of immigration, and where are there provinces who have the settlement and language training programs in place to help those immigrants be successful. And we think if that's the

evidence that's used, then we will be allowed to grow. Of course, you know, I think we accept that growth is not infinite in this realm, but so far the cap has been fairly arbitrary. I think there's openness on the part of the federal government to this discussion. Certainly, they have always been very keen to talk about Manitoba as a model when it comes to how to do immigration.

So we'll continue to put forward that case and work with other provinces and work with the community here. I will say that this is one area of, I think, total consensus in the community, that Manitoba has to begin to—has to continue to grow. Whether I'm talking to somebody who, you know, runs large farming operations in the rural areas or talking to someone who works in downtown Winnipeg in a business, everybody agrees that we have to be able to continue to grow. So we'll continue making that case very forcefully to Ottawa.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, just to elaborate on that, it used to be where, if you had a job opening, that the employer had to sign that. And I know that took place in the area that I represent over the years. And the frustration there was that the employer had signed the need for whatever it is, a welder, and it would take a long time in order for that person to come. By then, they needed to have filled that job opening.

Now, is this still a requirement? And the other thing is, is this something that needs to be stressed as well with the federal government? Like, you know, we do have job openings. You know, there's a listing out there of requirements for people, whether they're professional—and I just used the, you know, the welder as an example. But I know that it used to be that the employer had to sign the paper, and he became very frustrated.

And, in fact, I talked to one of the owners of a fairly large company who's got a number of immigrant employees, and he said he wouldn't sign a document again because of the lag time to get them. He says, when I need somebody to come and fill a job opening, I need it, you know, not in six months, but I need it, at least, in a few months. So that's some of the frustration that's out there.

Ms. Howard: So I think the form that you're referring to is probably the Labour Market Opinion, and that's a federal program that employers have to sign a labour—have to get a labour market opinion from the federal government that essentially says, yes, you're right; you can't find a welder here so you can have—you can get one from overseas.

That can take a long time and it can be very frustrating.

The Provincial Nominee Program, part of its success, and part of the reason why it's important that we continue to grow it, is that that Labour Market Opinion and the Federal Skilled Worker Program was never serving Manitoba very well because the criteria for that is set centrally in Ottawa. So maybe we need welders here but they don't need them so much in Ontario, so that occupation doesn't make the list of the occupations that are needed.

So what we've been trying to do through the nominee program is to match employer needs with people who are coming here through the nominee program so they can find a job with that employer. One of the initiatives that is going on in the Winkler area, that I've just been informed about and you might find interesting, is an immigration initiative with the Winkler-Stanley Economic Development committee and the Provincial Nominee Program to try to assess the local employment needs, involve local employers and recruit from overseas to fill those jobs, and I think that that will hopefully be quicker than the LMO process.

That being said, the immigration process for someone to come here and be a permanent resident is about a year and there's not much we can do, provincially, to shorten that. We certainly raise with the federal government the issues of labour market opinions. It's something I hear from employers, also.

The other thing that we've tried to do is help employers who bring people over here as temporary foreign workers and have permanent jobs for them—convert those people into provincial nominees so they can stay here beyond the two years that they're allocated by the federal government. That's been very successful in places like the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon and other places.

So, if there are specific employers in your area that are having that issue, if you want to get me their contact information, I'd be pleased to pass that on to the department and see if there's a way—you know, we may have someone already here who fits that need, who's looking for a job or there may be another way that we can help them fill those jobs.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, thank you. Appreciate that. Okay, I'm going to be giving it over to the member for Ste. Rose right now. He's got other commitments later on, so go ahead, please.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): And I just have a couple of questions revolving around the new farm building codes.

I'm starting to get some feedback now from various farmers, and I think the feedback's going to come—you won't get it overall because they're not very familiar with it. You'll get it as they decide they're going to go out and build a building, and so we're just starting to get some of that.

* (10:40)

One of the things I'm wondering about is classifications on farm buildings. I know we're talking about buildings that are either over 6,000 square feet or 6,500. But how are they classified? Because there's a dramatic change—difference between a straight cold storage for farm machinery and a livestock barn, for instance.

Ms. Howard: Okay, I'm going to try to relay a bunch of details to you. So let's both hang on to our hats here. I was up early, I will confess, watching the royal wedding. So I may not be as sharp as I might have been, but I have recorded it for the member. So we can adjourn later to my office for tea and crumpets and some—

So the farm building code really took a lot of time to craft. The office of the Fire Commissioner worked very closely with producer groups like the Keystone Agricultural Producers and the Pork Council and the vegetable growers to try to get it right because it was the first time we were going into regulating farm buildings. And I think the member is correct, that as people actually build the buildings and live with the code, we're going to find out where the little bumps are along the way, and we'll do our best to address those as they happen.

So the way that they've been classified, they're classified using the industrial classification. The square footage, it's about—it's over 600 square metre, so 6,400 to 6,600 square feet. And the three classifications used are F1, F2 or F3, and it's based on the hazards that are in that building. So an F1 classification will be a high hazard, F2 would be a medium and F3 would be light. The farm buildings are classified, really, as medium or light, not generally the high hazard. They're classified using the same industrial code that we would use to apply to other industrial applications.

And I'm informed that storage sheds generally aren't included in the classification. So I know this has been a concern from some producers that their

shed to store equipment is going to be subject to this. But I'm informed by the office of the Fire Commissioner that those sheds shouldn't be included in the building code. What we're looking at, mainly, is places where there are hazards present, so—and where there are people working. So we're talking about livestock operations, chicken barns, hog barns, vegetable production facilities, and it's—the classification would be based on the hazard that is in that building.

But we also have been trying to work our way through this with producers. So if there are particular concerns that the member is aware of, the Fire Commissioner is here, and if you want to pass those along or those names along, I know that he and his staff would be pleased to try to meet with those folks and work out what those concerns are.

We want the farm building code to work for farmers. It's designed to help keep people safe, and so we want—and we want it to work for them. And we're only going to be able to do that if we get that kind of feedback.

Mr. Briese: Yes, I am getting some concerns. One of the concerns I'm getting is timeliness. I'm not sure of the staffing at the Fire Commissioner's office, who are looking after an increase in the farm building permit applications, and timeliness is sometimes very critical, it depends on when contractors are available.

Another concern I've been getting, and I will probably take this up with the department at a later date, is on the permit fees. They seem to be quite high when it's strictly an implement storage building, for instance, and maybe they're—I think they're all done probably on a so-much per square foot or square metre fee, and maybe there should be a differentiation in fees on the classifications of the buildings too.

I was on a planning board for many years, and one of the things we did—we had no fee on farm buildings, simply to get people to start taking out permits for farm buildings so that we knew what was there. That way we could get them added to the assessment and things like that. So, sometimes the fees are a little onerous and, from what you've told me, I think, certainly, on the classifications of risk factor is what is—what drives the classification. So those are some of the concerns I'm hearing, and if you do have a short response, I wouldn't mind hearing you.

Ms. Howard: Certainly, there's currently staff in place. There are two structural engineers in place who are working on this. The office hasn't been overwhelmed with applications, so I think that they should be able to meet those things, those—in a timely fashion. In addition to that, we are planning to fill a position for a farm code officer, someone who has some agricultural background and experience, who can also work on these issues and help with that. So I hope that that will help with the timeliness.

The other thing, the offer that we've made to some other producers who've been concerned with this, and one of their concerns is, you know, they hire engineers, they hire contractors, they plan, and then they go and try to fit it into the code, and then there's all these changes, and that delays the project and adds cost. So what we have said to the folks, we are very interested, and the office of the Fire Commissioner is capable of sitting down and doing some preplanning with the producer and the construction company and the engineer who are working on the building, so that we can make sure that when they're planning the building, the building's going to meet the code. So that they're not getting into multiple change orders and somebody coming back to them, week after week, saying, no, you have to do this over again. So that's something that we would offer to people to help with some of those time issues and some of those cost issues.

In terms of fees, I hear the member and think some of the suggestions are worthy of consideration. What I'm informed about the fees for this is those fees are among the lowest in Canada. And, certainly, the fees that are charged by the office of the Fire Commissioner for permits are lower than the fees charged by municipalities who have that ability to grant building permits, not in respect to the farm code, because the farm code—the only place is the office of the Fire Commissioner. So the fees seem to be relative to other jurisdictions where they should be. But if that's causing a hardship, you know, I'm happy to take a look at it.

* (10:50)

The other thing that I would say is that the fee, as I understand it, is based on the value of the construction, not based on the square footage of the—I guess the square footage could be related to the value, but that's how the fee is assessed. And, as the value of the construction goes up, actually the fee is assessed at a lower rate.

So I—if the member's hearing that it's the fees that are keeping people from wanting to do this, then I'm interested in that feedback. But I would say to you, also, that if you're having these conversations, do stress with people that they should try and take advantage of the preplanning option, because I think that can save them money on construction and can also help us make sure that things are to code before they get too far down the building process.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to ask about the current situation of the cap that's been imposed this year on immigration. And maybe the minister could tell me where we are at the moment, because I know that there was an announcement of a cap, and I just wonder, you know, the minister had indicated that there were some negotiations and discussions going on. What's the status of those?

Ms. Howard: Yes, thank you for that question. The cap is still in place; it's been set at 5,000. It was set at 5,000 for last year. We were able last year to get an increase. The initial cap was set at 4,600 which would have been an effective cut from the number that we had the year before—I think a cut of about 100 nominations.

So we were able, through a lot of advocacy work with the federal government, not only from ourselves, but from other leaders in the community to get that lifted to 5,000, which had been our initial target. So that was hopeful. The cap has been set again for this year, this current year, at 5,000.

And so we continue to work with, not only our—I guess, our partners in the business community especially, but other communities as well to advocate to the federal government that that kind of cap isn't appropriate to Manitoba, that we need to continue to grow immigration in this province, that Manitoba has had a very good track record, and it's something that is acknowledged by the federal government in immigration in matching those needs to the economic needs of the province, but also in making sure that those immigrants have successful outcomes, because they have good settlement and language training programs in place.

So that discussion continues. I have worked at every opportunity I have to put that case forward to the federal Minister of Immigration. I know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has put that case forward to the Prime Minister. I know that he raised it at the Council of the Federation when it was in Manitoba, and got agreement from the other premiers, that

increasing immigration through provincial nominee programs was a priority.

We've also had very good support, not only from the business community in Manitoba, but municipal leaders, leaders in many of the communities that have seen immigration increase. And we continue to work with them to put this case forward to the federal government. And pending the outcome on Monday, we will continue to advocate to the federal minister, not only at a political level, but also at the officials level. Our officials are very involved in the discussions around levels planning. And I would say, to their credit, our officials are highly respected from other provinces and from the federal government for the work that they've done.

So we continue to make the case to Ottawa that if a cap is necessary—I'm not convinced it is, I do think one of the other abilities for Ottawa is to look at going higher on immigration generally in Canada—but if it is necessary, then it should not be set arbitrarily. It shouldn't be set based on Manitoba's 3 per cent of the population now so you should be 3 per cent of the population forever.

It should be set based on some evidence, and the evidence that we would put forward is where are immigrants needed economically, where are economies able to integrate and absorb immigration, and that would be economies like the Manitoba one, and where are immigrants having success, and that would also point to Manitoba.

I think we accept that you can't grow—we can't grow infinitely, but we would like to be able to go, certainly, to 5,500 and then to 6,000, and we'll continue to lobby to achieve that.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, now just that 5,000 cap is for the Provincial Nominee Program, just to be absolutely clear, and, second, can the minister tell us where we are at the moment in terms of the number of immigrants who've come, for this year?

Ms. Howard: I can give you the number for 2010. The number of arrivals in 2010 are 15,803. So it's important to note that when we talk about nominees, for every nominee we generally expect, I guess, two, 2.7 arrivals, because people come with their families. So those 5,000 nominees are likely going to result in 15,000 or more arrivals.

I don't have the number of where we're at so far this year. We'll endeavour to get that for you. But, you know, these numbers are generally tracked by

Canadian Immigration, so it may take some time to get that number.

Mr. Gerrard: Just the numbers coming in last year, of arrivals, 15,803, was that all through the Provincial Nominee Program or was that including other programs as well, just to be clear.

Ms. Howard: That's total arrivals from all sources. Generally, provincial nominees account for about 75 per cent of arrivals. So in 2010 the number that we had of arrivals through the Provincial Nominee Program—and so these are permanent residents—were 12,171.

It is really the only part of the program that is growing. The other classifications which tend to be federal classifications stay about the same year over year. So those haven't grown tremendously. So, really, the growth in the program is attributable to the Provincial Nominee.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister tell us what the current wait times are for people through the nominee program and through the other streams?

Ms. Howard: I can tell you what we are striving for in the Provincial Nominee Program; I can't answer for the federal streams. The Provincial Nominee Program, our goal—and we're usually able to meet it—is to process those applications within six months.

Now, I will say that I don't want people to believe that everything is done in six months, because that represents our part of the application process. After we receive and process an application and send it on as a nominee to the feds—the federal government, there's another process that happens where they check. Then there's a visa process that has to happen in the home country, and that can take a long time.

But we have been, I believe, quite successful in keeping those wait times to within six months. Now, there are some people who experience longer wait times than that, and some of the reasons for that can be the cap, as I mentioned. What happened last year is when we hit the 5,000 number we continued to receive applications, but the federal government was no longer processing it, so those people are going to experience a longer wait time, and I think we hit that 5,000 number probably around September, October. So that is an issue.

The other thing that sometimes will happen is people will submit applications that are incomplete,

and so that can also add to the wait time to make sure that people have all their documents.

And then sometimes there are issues where things get held up, and when we find out about that we can certainly try to find out what's happening and get those applications back on track.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, one of the concerns—and I was talking about this to the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan)—was the high level of poor literacy status of adults in Manitoba, that we've got something like 285,000 Manitobans who were at the literacy level which was not be sufficient for what is needed in today's knowledge-based economy.

I wonder if the minister can tell us, of the 15,000-and-so immigrants, and specifically, as well, for the nominee program, what the literacy status of immigrants has been.

* (11:00)

Ms. Howard: I think that the literacy challenges that the member is referencing, we would see those show up mainly in the refugee population. The Provincial Nominee Program, some of the criteria for people to qualify under that program includes educational requirements and includes language requirements. So, generally, the challenge for people coming through the Provincial Nominee Program is English language, and we have in place several programs to help deal with that. The majority of the new funding going to Immigration is going to language training, and specifically language training at higher levels of language, because that—that's where the need is.

For those people who come, and particularly come through the refugee stream, who have literacy challenges and language challenges, we work with the Department of Advanced Education, so that those people are getting both language training and literacy training.

I will say that, certainly, and I know, you know—no surprise to the member—some of the highest-need newcomers are refugees. And so, part of the funding this year that is in the budget will be some new money allocated to meet the high needs of that refugee population, working with the federal government. We've been working for a few years, now, to get that money from the federal government, to recognize the needs of refugees in Manitoba, and I—and we now, I believe, have it in place. I think we signed the documents right before the election was called, so I hope that it's all in place.

And because the other thing that I don't think is well known is that Manitoba actually welcomes more than its share of refugees on a per capita basis. And so we want to make sure that we also have good programs in place to meet their needs. Even though they're a relatively small number overall of the Immigration budget, they are some of the highest needs newcomers in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, so the minister is saying that she doesn't—that there's no assessment done of the overall literacy level of immigrants coming to Manitoba.

Ms. Howard: Provincial nominees are assessed based on their education levels and their language levels, and there are criteria in place to make sure that people have sufficient education and sufficient language so that they can be integrated into the economy of Manitoba and successful relatively quickly. We do also offer those folks language training to help get them into a place where they can be successful here.

For refugees, certainly, it is not a criteria of the federal government what someone's literacy level is before we welcome them to Canada as a refugee. But, once they are here, we will work with them to assess what their needs are, and to make sure that they are matched up with programs that meet those needs.

I'm not sure that that data is collected in any kind of aggregate way that I can deliver to the member. I think it's a very individualized assessment, one-on-one, with those newcomers to assess what their needs are. But, for us, really, the literacy challenge would be with the refugee population, not so much the provincial nominee population.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, even with the Provincial Nominee Program, you may have spouses or other close relatives who are with them, who will not necessarily be screened in the same way coming in. So it would seem to be important that you have some sort of idea overall of what the literacy situation is of, not only the person who's nominated, but of the others who are coming in. So, at the moment, you're telling me that you don't actually have that. Is that right?

Ms. Howard: So, certainly, when spouses and family members of nominees come to Manitoba, they are also assessed for what their needs are, and then we match up their needs with the existing programs. So if we found, for example, that those folks had literacy needs, we would certainly match

them up with literacy programs, and as well as programs for English as an Additional Language that would probably be at a lower level than the nominee would require.

And I don't have those sorts of numbers for you today, but, certainly, we can go back—it's going to take some time, but we can go back through the referrals that we make to those programs and give you a sense of how many people are referred to the lower-level language training programs.

Mr. Gerrard: I look forward to receiving that information in due course.

Want to just now raise a couple questions about migrant workers, and there's been cases—I think the minister's well aware of the three amigos who sought to come here and who—as my understanding is, that they are now being sent back to the Philippines.

Can the minister give us an update on what the situation is in terms of treatment of migrant workers and what's happening?

Ms. Howard: The case that the member references, of course, is entirely within the federal jurisdiction and is a decision that's made through Immigration Canada and through the board—the Immigrant and Refugee Board and Canadian Border Services, so if there are questions specific to that case, probably the best bet would be to address them to whoever the federal Minister of Immigration is going to be after Monday.

But I can tell you about temporary foreign workers and some of the work that we've done with agricultural workers who are here on temporary—from overseas on a temporary basis. We have, I believe, some of the strongest regulations in the country for those workers. And I know this to be true because I've recently met with labour activists from around the country who work with these workers in many other provinces, who are astounded at the level of protection that we've managed to put in place in Manitoba.

And, certainly, every office that I am in charge of has some interaction with those migrant workers who come here to work, mostly in the agricultural sector. So, for example, the office of the Fire Commissioner is involved in inspecting the housing conditions for those workers. Workplace Safety and Health is involved in inspecting the workplaces to make sure that they're safe, and Manitoba is one of the few jurisdictions where workplace safety and health rules apply to those workers. As well, the

Employment Standards division is involved in inspecting those places where temporary foreign workers go to work and make sure that their rights are being respected.

* (11:10)

Now that—with regard to the specific case that the member references, it is a case that I'm also concerned about and concerned for the welfare of those three workers who came to Manitoba. The situation, as I understand it in that case—and, again, it's totally federal jurisdiction so I'm not privy to the details of it—but the situation, as I understand it, is these are workers who came from another province.

Provinces—other provinces don't have the same regime that we've put in place in Manitoba. They don't have a worker recruitment and protection act, so one of the things that I have asked the federal minister, that at the next gathering of the provincial and territorial and federal ministers that we put on the agenda a discussion about temporary foreign workers and how each province interacts with them so that, hopefully, we can start to work on a pan-Canadian framework so that we're going to avoid these situations in the future.

But I believe Manitoba has been a leader when it comes to how temporary foreign workers and how migrant workers are treated. We have more work to do—absolutely—but we will continue to do that, and I think if we can get other provinces on board and if we can ultimately get the federal government on board, then we'll be able to have a much more fair and more protective environment for those workers in Canada.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, my understanding is that the problem arose when they working in Thompson and their employer failed to fill out the required paperwork and make sure everything was in place before the employer had them working and that this is, you know, I mean they may have come from another province, but that they were actually—the problem arose from the situation here in Manitoba and that—was there any effort to use, for example, the Provincial Nominee Program then in this case?

Ms. Howard: Well, my understanding of the case and, again, I think, you know, to be absolutely certain of the details, these questions are best put to the federal Minister responsible for Immigration, because it is the Canadian Border Services Agency and Canadian immigration that are responsible for this case. So my understanding is totally second-

third-hand information, but I would say that my understanding is that these workers were brought in through Alberta, through an Alberta employer, and in Alberta, they're not subject to the same rules that they are in Manitoba.

I don't know what the employer in Thompson told them or what they failed to do. I believe there are charges pending against that employer that would be under the federal act. Yes, that's—that is the case. So they were not able to get sponsored by their employer under Alberta's provincial nominee program. Had they been employed originally in Manitoba, it may have been possible for the nominee program to sponsor them, because we have something unique in Manitoba where temporary foreign workers, if they have an offer of permanent employment, can go through the nominee program.

Certainly, the officials in my department worked very hard with the folks that were working with those workers to find out if there was any way possible for us to find them more secure employment, to use the Provincial Nominee Program but, ultimately, we can only have people enter Manitoba through the nominee program if the federal government agrees to let them come here and stay here. And, in this case, the federal government has not agreed to do that.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, thank you. I turn the questions back to the MLA for Morris. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Just to advise the minister then that my questions are going to focus around mechanical engineering and the office of the Fire Commissioner. So, if she wants the rest of the staff to stay, they can, but if they don't want to, I won't be asking any questions other this area.

At first, I just want to ask the minister when she became aware that Manitoba lost its A1A accreditation?

Ms. Howard: First, I want to just clarify something I'd said earlier. I think it was a question from—the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) had asked about qualifications recognition, and I think what I said may not have been completely accurate. I think what I said was that the College of Registered Nurses exam was offered in the Philippines; in fact, it was a prescreening exam that was offered to see if people would be eligible or would—what—how they would do on the final exam offered by the College of Registered Nurses, and that was done in partnership

with the college. So I just want to be absolutely clear about that.

In terms of the certification that the member is talking about, I am informed that we notified ASME in December that we no longer met the requirements for those kinds of inspections. And as we did that and I became aware of that, the first thing that I wanted to do was make sure that there was still the capacity to do those inspections for those people that required it, and so we contracted with Saskatchewan to be able to deliver those inspection services. I also wanted to make sure that people who needed those inspections were not facing additional costs as a result of that, and so I instructed the department that we would cover any additional costs. People would continue to be assessed the normal fees that they were assessed for those inspections, but if there were additional costs with regard to bringing people from Saskatchewan then we would absorb those costs.

The other thing I wanted to make sure was happening was that we were putting in place the required inspectors so that we would be able to regain that certification and be able to service those people. And so we have been sending folks in Mechanical and Engineering for the necessary training so that they can become accredited inspectors and so that we can regain that accreditation.

Mrs. Taillieu: And the information I have was that the—subject of the email is suspension of Province of Manitoba as an ASME—A-S-M-E, American Society of Mechanical Engineers—authorized insurance agency, and the date of that was the 11th of November, 2010, 21:35 a.m. Central Standard Time. And the email says—and it is from Alan Bagner, director of accreditation and certification—that the QA1 Subcommittee of Accreditation has taken action to suspend the Province of Manitoba as an ASME authorized inspection agency. Since ASME has the Province of Manitoba listed as your A1A, you will need to contract with a new A1A during the suspension period. The period of suspension is currently uncertain. So it appears that the minister may have been notified before she actually claims to have notified them.

She—the minister is saying that she's moving towards training people that have both endorsements, and I know it is a requirement for accreditation that the director of the department be a member of the National Board of Pressure Vessel inspections—

Inspectors and hold a commission with the organization with both A and B endorsements. And I also understand, from speaking to people within the profession and within the industry, that there is a prerequisite before you can actually train to take these endorsements.

And I'm wondering if the minister can confirm how many people are taking the training and what their level of pretraining is at this current time.

* (11:20)

Ms. Howard: I can't recall, for the member, the exact date when I became aware of this issue. I can tell you what I did when I became aware of the issue. And what I did when I became aware of the issue was first to ensure that people who were relying on these kinds of inspections were able to get them, because what I understood was that those companies needed those inspections to be able to continue their business. And so what we did, immediately, was make sure that there was going to be an availability of inspection services through Saskatchewan, and those services would be offered at no extra charge.

I also asked the department to proactively talk to those people who were reliant on those services so they understood what we were going to do to address the issue, and if the member would like to share that email that she's quoting from, that would be appreciated.

Further, I would say, in terms of the inspectors who are going for accreditation, there are four inspectors who are going for both levels of the credentials to be able to do these inspections, both the A and B. There are four that are going for the A level; there are two that will be going for the B level; and the acting chief inspector will be going for both of those levels. As well, the current director of the—acting director of Mechanical and Engineering is herself an engineer, has those qualifications, and she will also be going for the B part of that credential so that she's also able to carry out those inspections.

I would also just say, for the member, that I think it's important to note that the department was proactive on this issue and that as soon as it became clear that we were going to lose our ability to do these inspections, it was the department that notified ASME that we weren't going to be able to do those inspections.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I believe that the minister should be aware—probably is aware—that the two people that had these qualifications, one retired and

one was on sick leave and was advising the department of the possibility of having nobody qualified when that person retired. In fact, that person is very—he feels that he was forced out of the job, actually, and had warned, I guess, the department that without qualified people with both endorsements in A and B, they were going to lose their accreditation. So this was known to the department well in advance of losing the accreditation, I would believe, because there was many meetings that did take place.

Now, the minister has said that the current director is an engineer. Is she a mechanical engineer?

Ms. Howard: I, of course, am not going to discuss personnel matters in a public forum. I think that would certainly be inappropriate for anyone to do. I'm certainly not going to speculate on personnel matters in a public forum. What I can tell the member is that, as the department became aware of this issue, they put in place immediately and we discussed immediately how best to serve those clients that were relying on those inspections, and so that's why we've made available and we've contracted with Saskatchewan to provide those inspection services and we're covering the additional costs for those services.

The other thing that we have done is to make sure that we have a number of people who are getting the adequate training so that they're in place also to provide those inspections. The current director of mechanical engineering is, indeed, a mechanical engineer.

Mrs. Taillieu: Then the four people that are going for A training and the A certification and two that are going for the B, what levels do they hold right now for qualifications to actually take this training?

Ms. Howard: So the people who are taking this training, one is a mechanical engineer, one is an engineering technician, two are power engineers who are also pressure vessel inspectors. All of these people have had their applications to take this training approved by the national board.

Mrs. Taillieu: I'm informed that it can take two years to actually get the A and B certifications or accreditation for each individual. Is that what you're thinking, or what is the time frame required then to get both endorsements, because, obviously, the Province needs two people with both endorsements?

* (11:30)

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that the requirement has to do with the number of inspections that someone does. It's not a year requirement, and so certainly we are working to get those folks trained and certified as quickly as possible. And so some of them are currently—at least one of them is currently working with inspectors in Saskatchewan to do inspections. And I'm informed that some of those inspections that they're currently doing, they will be able to get credit for, so that hopefully will also help them move through the process more quickly. But certainly we're committed to getting these inspectors in place as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Taillieu: When does the minister expect to have two inspectors with both A and B endorsement in place?

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that the first phase of that training, the A part, should be completed by fall. And then, of course, the B part is dependent, as I understand it, on the number of inspections that people do. So that will take some additional time, but we are working proactively now with those people so that they can start to do some of those inspections, and they'll be able to get credit for them.

Mrs. Taillieu: So it's going to be another six months before the—for anybody to have the A endorsement and then unknown after that for the B endorsement.

When did these people first start working on this training? I'm assuming it would have been December 1st, once you lost your accreditation. So when did they start?

Ms. Howard: Certainly, it was one of the priorities to—the first priority was to make sure that those people who relied on these inspections were getting that service.

Now, thankfully, these inspections are very important to the people who receive them but they're not an overwhelming number of inspections that the department is responsible for. The department does about 8,000 inspections annually, and about 35 of those have the requirement for this kind of certification. So that meant that we were able to work with the folks who were affected and get in place inspection services from Saskatchewan and make sure they weren't incurring additional costs.

The other thing I would say is that applications—the first part of the process, as I understand it, for the training was making an application and that was done in January. The training is available starting in June and that's when people will start their training,

but in the meantime people have been studying the documents and the books that are required for these courses, and, as I also said previously, they're also working in Saskatchewan—one of them is working in Saskatchewan doing the inspections that will be required as part of the experience for the B part of the training. So they've been working hard to get everything they need to get in place so that they can become trained and certified.

Mrs. Taillieu: It does sound like it's going to be a bit of time before there are the two qualified people.

With the inspection services having to come from Saskatchewan, can the minister indicate the process, then, where the industry stakeholder—what steps they would need to do to get the service from Saskatchewan and then be reimbursed for the costs.

Ms. Howard: So the way I understand the current process is that the client will contact us, as they have done in the past. We have the contract with Saskatchewan for inspection services. We arrange the inspection service with Saskatchewan. The client pays the same fee as they've always paid and we pay Saskatchewan for their services, and we pay the difference in cost between the fee that we receive and what it costs to pay Saskatchewan to do that work.

There was—early on in this process, there was a client who was billed directly from Saskatchewan. When we became aware of that, we worked with that client and reimbursed them for the costs that they had been assessed, and then following that, the department sent out a letter to all of the clients who use these kinds of inspections to tell them of the process that we would be following until we regain our certification.

So the case in December—what I'm informed is when we became aware that the client had been billed, we paid that bill. We didn't reimburse the client. We actually paid the bill to Saskatchewan.

*(11:40)

Mrs. Taillieu: I'm informed that when a person or a business is contracting the services from Saskatchewan that they must guarantee the bill because they are—I'm assuming Saskatchewan is not confident that Manitoba's going to pay the bill because the business has to guarantee the bill. Is that correct? That's not correct?

Ms. Howard: That's not our understanding. But if the member has a constituent or someone that she's

worked with and they've been told that by Saskatchewan, then we certainly appreciate receiving that information of that specific case and we'll follow up.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I will refer the person to the minister, then, because I just spoke with this person this morning and that was what he indicated to me, that he had to sign a personal guarantee that if the bill was not paid that he would be required to pay it.

Ms. Howard: Well, again, that's not my understanding. I believe that, you know, Manitoba, with the successive credit-rating upgrades, is generally thought to be good for the bills it incurs. So I believe that there should be no concern from Saskatchewan at getting those bills paid. But, if that is happening, then certainly, if the member wants to direct that person to my office, I'll make sure that our department follows up with them and follows up with Saskatchewan and makes sure that that issue is taken care of.

If that person is someone who falls within these 35 inspections that are performed, I can't, you know, without knowing the case, I don't know for sure that they're within these kinds of inspections. But if we have that person contact our office, we'll certainly get the department to follow up with them.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, there—I mean, there's numerous people in this industry that are affected in some way, whether it is—there may be a smaller number, as the minister is saying, but it's a larger amount of money for the industry. And there's one industry I'm thinking of in particular that they have this ASME audit that they have to do with the companies every three years, I think. So to do this, they have to have an ASME-qualified, A- and B-endorsed inspector on-site during the audit. So they have to bring in someone to—from Saskatchewan to sit in their offices while the audit is being done. So—and that's a cost of about \$30,000, I'm told.

So that kind of thing also, is he going to be reimbursed for that?

Ms. Howard: Of course, the clients who depend on these kinds of inspections for their businesses, I know how important those inspections are to them. That's why when we became aware of this issue, my first concern was to make sure that there were inspection services in place for those clients, and that's why we moved quickly to contract with Saskatchewan.

I'm informed by my officials that that cost seems very high with the costs that we're aware of, but certainly, those few companies that have the need of the audit, it is the intention to cover the costs of the audit; however, I would say the cost that the member is quoting, from what our officials understand, seems to be about 10 times higher than the cost that's generally incurred.

So, again, if this is an individual who's facing this issue, if you want to get me their contact information, I'd be pleased to have the office of the Fire Commissioner follow up with them to find out what their needs are.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I will certainly do that, and that number is—number that was given to me by the individual, so I trust that he is giving me the correct information.

I'm going to ask—I notice in your press release of February 10th of 2011 that the office of the Fire Commissioner will also bolster the number of inspectors on staff, including increasing the number of elevator inspectors.

So, between February 10 and April 27th, I guess, how many inspectors—new inspectors were hired?

Ms. Howard: I'm informed that we expect to have two additional inspectors hired by June. One of those will be a full-time elevator inspector. One of those will be an inspector that will be able to be cross-trained and will be able to do elevator inspections but will also be able to do other inspections that are seasonal in nature, and we think this will be a better use of resources and we'll be able to get more inspection services out of this person by using them in that way.

Mrs. Taillieu: So my understanding from that is that after this press release was issued there were no inspectors hired and you are just going to do that now.

Ms. Howard: There were inspectors hired to do electrical and building code work, and, certainly, the process began to hire inspectors for elevators, and that process should be completed by June.

Mrs. Taillieu: Okay, yes, we'll just go through the wording on that one.

Okay, just in regard to the recent elevator accident, can the minister indicate was the elevator certificate—I mean, let me rephrase this. There seems to be a bit of discrepancy because it was reported that, first of all, the last inspection was 23 years ago

for that elevator in the Children of the Earth School. I believe it was the Children of the Earth School.

It was reported that it was last inspected 23 years ago in 1988, and the minister in the House yesterday said that the most recent certification inspection was on March 3rd. So I'm wondering if she can just clarify when the elevator inspection was certified to be safe.

* (11:50)

Ms. Howard: I think, if the member carefully reviews *Hansard*, what she will see in my answer was—what I said was that the last service inspection for this elevator, as we were informed by the principal of the school, took place on March 3rd, 2010.

And, certainly, I think one of the things that's important for everyone to understand is what kind of a device this was. My understanding is it was a lift that's generally used to help make buildings more accessible. I believe that it's a lift that some of us may have been in where there's a key required and you turn the key and the lift operates. It operates by hydraulics. It's not an elevator like we would enter in this building. So it's required to be serviced monthly, and that is something that was required of the owners of that building.

Now, there is a national building code that lays out requirements for certification of elevators, and the requirement for that kind of lift, which is different from the kind of elevator that most of us are familiar with, is a requirement for certification at installation. I became aware of that requirement two days ago and what I said at the time in consultation with the Fire Commissioner is it doesn't seem to me that that's adequate, and so even though that's the national standard, I instructed our office to take the steps to make sure that Manitoba has a higher standard and that those kinds of lifts get inspected annually, and so we're currently preparing regulations to do that.

In addition, we have been in contact with the Winnipeg School Division that's made the decision to suspend the use of those kinds of lifts. The office of the Fire Commissioner has been in touch with the Winnipeg School Division to offer our inspection services so that we can inspect those lifts and make sure that they are able to continue to run as soon as possible, because there are students who need those lifts to get access to their schools. So that is also happening.

Later today, I believe, the office of the Fire Commissioner plans to also publicly communicate to everybody who has a lift like that that if they have concerns about those lifts, certainly they can do a few things. They can get in touch with the company that services those lifts on a regular basis to have them inspected, or they can also get in touch with us and we will make every effort to come and inspect them so that those folks can know that those lifts can be operated.

The inspection for this particular incident is ongoing. I hope it will be concluded shortly and the findings of that will be able to be shared with those companies that service these kinds of lifts but also those places that have these kinds of lifts. One of the things that we have done is to go back in the records to see how many of these we know about and to—and we are planning to proactively get in touch with them. However, it's very possible that there are lifts that we don't know about and so that's why we're also going to—through the office of the Fire Commissioner, proactively communicate with the public so they know what they can do to ensure the safety of the people that use those lifts.

Mrs. Taillieu: What are the qualifications of the person that would be doing the inspection of the elevator? What qualifications do they need to have to ensure that when they inspect that elevator that they can say that it is deemed to be safe?

Ms. Howard: I'm informed there's a national certification process for inspectors and, certainly, all the inspectors that we employ are certified through that national process.

Mrs. Taillieu: Was the person that inspected—did the service inspection on this elevator a qualified person then?

Ms. Howard: Certainly, that question is part of the ongoing investigation so it's not something that I can answer until that investigation's been completed.

Mrs. Taillieu: It certainly makes it, I think, more important, I guess, to look at this because if there was a recent inspection done on March 3rd and the elevator failed within—what?—six or seven weeks, that makes it even more critical, in my opinion, because something went wrong here, even though it was inspected.

So I imagine that's part of the ongoing investigation, as well, but it really—it makes one wonder, if you have an inspection and six weeks later you have an accident, how many, you know—

when the elevators are inspected have those inspections been done by a qualified person with the levels to do those inspections and to, I guess, refer any questions or assessments to another person that may have higher expertise than that.

So I'm just wondering if this has been—is this going to be part of the investigation—looking at?

Ms. Howard: Yes, I agree with the member. It's a very serious incident and, you know, there were injuries sustained and thankfully there were no lives lost in this incident. So it's something that certainly the inspectors, both from the office of the Fire Commissioner and from Workplace Safety and Health, are taking very seriously. And that's exactly why we're doing the investigation that we are doing, to find out what went wrong, what can be learned from what went wrong, and so we can get that information to other people who have these kinds of devices in their buildings.

I'm sure that for the people who have these devices they're very concerned that those devices are safe and can transport people. So we are going to do that investigation thoroughly and in as timely a fashion as possible, and absolutely the inspections of that elevator will be part of that investigation.

Mrs. Taillieu: It just goes to the broader issue, though, I think, of the backlog of the number of elevator inspections that are currently there and the requirement to have more inspectors hired. And we certainly would not want to see inspectors rush through an investigation of—or not investigation—inspection of an elevator to lessen the backlog so that it looks better and yet at the expense of public safety.

So, you know, I'm wondering if two inspectors is actually going to do the work. I mean, you certainly don't want to hire two inspectors and miraculously get rid of the backlog and have an issue of public safety out there.

Ms. Howard: Certainly, it is not the intention, nor has it been the direction from anyone to the inspectors that they should move more quickly to get rid of the backlog. I think our concern, and certainly the concern of the office of the Fire Commissioner, is that, ultimately, of public safety. The backlog has begun to be addressed. There's been significant progress made, the reduction of 20 per cent in that backlog, and that has been done, I think, through 'prioritizing' those inspections.

* (12:00)

It's also been done through being more able to do inspections in a timely fashion. One of the issues that we had faced in the department was that the software that was being used for inspections only let us know that an inspection was due on the day that the certificate expired. So there was always a built-in backlog using that system because the moment that you found out that an inspection was due was the moment that the certificate expired. So, even if you went there the next day, that elevator device would have been listed as part of the backlog of elevators.

So we've been working to reduce that backlog. The inspectors have been doing it in a 'prioritized' way, certainly 'prioritizing' those elevators in places like schools and hospitals and apartment buildings. The office of the Fire Commissioner believes that adding to staff will help to dramatically reduce that backlog as well as some of the efficiency measures that will happen because of the transfer to the office of the Fire Commissioner, like the software that I talked about, like the ability to cross-train inspectors so that inspectors can be doing elevator inspections and can fill in for other inspectors when they're off on vacation or on sick leave. But I will say, if in the next several months after these people are hired and working, it still appears that we need more staff, then we will add more staff.

Mrs. Taillieu: I—I've actually talked to a number of people in the industry, and it, you know, it is a large industry. There's a number of people in this industry that's affected by inspections, and there seems to be a growing unease and fearfulness of what could happen. You know, we talked—there's been talk about elevators, there's been talk about pressure vessels and boilers and the need to have these inspected on a timely basis as well. So does the computer system apply to these as well, so that you only know when these need inspection when they come due, that's the day they expire?

Ms. Howard: The software program will be revamped for all of the inspections, and it's going to be based on the same software program that is used in the fire service currently. And I think that is one of the advantages that's—that is realized by having inspection services all under one roof at the office of the Fire Commissioner. The other advantage, I think, is that, certainly, the office of the Fire Commissioner has a sterling reputation for the protection of public safety and for the inspection services that they offer. I meet with industry frequently, and I hear very good things from their interactions with the office of the Fire Commissioner. And I know where there have

been issues and there have been problems, certainly that office is active on those problems and actively tries to resolve them.

I have had meetings with people in the industry who have given us very positive feedback about the recent changes, the move to make sure that things are more documented, that processes are more documented. They're very hopeful for the future partnership. They feel that they've gotten very good information from the office of the Fire Commissioner and that the approach has been one of partnership.

We will be—the office of the Fire Commissioner will be holding open forums with industry as we move into the spring to have further discussion and get feedback on inspection services. Certainly it's something that we want to hear from the industry what their needs are, how we can better meet their needs, and what their concerns are. And I think we also want to make sure that we're establishing that relationship so that when there are concerns, people feel comfortable in having them addressed and we can get them addressed in a timely way.

I believe that the office of the Fire Commissioner is well equipped to do this. They have a good track record of having done this in many areas, such as the building code work that they have done where they've brought home builders together with environmentalists and accessibility advocates to come up with building codes that address all of those needs and formed consensus on it.

Certainly, inspection services is not an easy task. By nature, when you go in and inspect something, there is some fear by the person who is having the inspection that there's—something is going to be found and there's going to be some kind of requirement. But I think the office of the Fire Commissioner is well equipped and extraordinarily committed to working with industry to give them the best level of service on inspection services possible while keeping in mind that, for that office and for us, public safety is the priority.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under The Steam and Pressure Plants Act, where inspectors are only allowed to sign off on approved repairs to boilers and pressure vessels that they know are in compliance with code requirements, I'm assuming they—that means they have to have an A and B endorsement or at least be qualified as a boiler and pressure inspector—actually, it's boiler or pressure vessel inspector. So how many

of those are employed within the office of the Fire Commissioner?

Ms. Howard: I believe that what the member is referring to in terms of the A and B certification is the certification that's required for those inspections that are ASME-certified inspections. And I think those inspections—you know, we've had a good deal of discussion about them—those inspections are very important but they are relatively few in number of the overall inspections that the department does.

The department currently has nine pressure vessel inspectors. These people are power engineers. They are qualified to do those inspections according to the legislation which has been in place for many, many years. We're also filling two vacancies in Brandon and those vacancies should be filled by July.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister indicate if there was any serious incidents that occurred in Brandon area in regard to pressure vessels or boilers?

Ms. Howard: If the member has an incident she'd like to ask a question about, I'd invite her to do that.

*(12:10)

Mrs. Taillieu: I don't know the specifics of it. I thought that you may because—that's why I asked the question. I thought there was some indication that there was something that had happened in Brandon. I don't know the specifics and that's why I asked the question, to see whether you might know the specifics of that case.

Ms. Howard: Well, if the member can get me a little more information about it, then I'll endeavour to get her the specific information.

Mrs. Taillieu: From a couple of answers ago, the minister indicated that the office of the Fire Commissioner was going to be doing some meetings with industry and consultation. But I'm curious as to why consultation would not have been done prior to dismantling the Mechanical and Engineering branch and transferring it the office of the Fire Commissioner. I'm wondering why that consultation process did not take place already.

Ms. Howard: Certainly, the change to move Mechanical and Engineering to the office of the Fire Commissioner—and I will be clear, it's certainly not dismantled; it was transferred to the office of the Fire Commissioner and the people that worked within that branch were transferred to the office of the Fire Commissioner.

Some of the things that we'd heard from industry over the years, concerns like, you know, having to go to multiple inspectors, having one office, the office of the Fire Commissioner be in charge of building code inspections and fire inspections and somebody else being responsible for other inspections. They certainly—one of the long-standing issues from industry has been trying to make things more seamless when it comes to inspection services and all of those services that government provides.

And another, I think, ongoing issue with industry was having more documentation about the requirements. I think, sometimes to industry, inspections have seemed a bit arbitrary and requirements have seemed a bit arbitrary. And so, having more documentation is also something that they had asked for.

And in the meeting that I had recently, I think it was with the mechanical contractors, they expressed that both of these things they saw were going to be positive changes with the move to the office of the Fire Commissioner.

So, although there were no, you know, formal consultations done on the move, certainly, it was in response to many issues that had been raised.

As we move forward, we certainly want to build inspection services that are responsive to industry, and that's why these open forums will be held by the office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mrs. Taillieu: I have about five more questions and I'm hoping if we get through those, that we'll be able to pass today. Otherwise, we might have to go back on Monday.

An Honourable Member: I'm here on Monday.

Mrs. Taillieu: Okay, I am, too. But, I—you know, I'd just like to see if we can't, you know, free up the staff, but, anyway.

The fire chief might like this question. How much funding was provided to the office of the Fire Commissioner to assume the duties that this—has been reassigned to them from Mechanical and Engineering branch?

Ms. Howard: I think I answered this question yesterday. The amount that was transferred was \$3.6 million and 33 regular full-time equivalencies for the Mechanical and Engineering branch to the office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mrs. Taillieu: So I'm assuming that there was just a staff transfer from—interdepartmental and nobody was let go or anything like that.

Ms. Howard: That's correct.

Mrs. Taillieu: I would like to know the—if there's a backlog of inspections under the welding category.

Ms. Howard: I'm going to ask the member for some clarification. The welding program that I'm being informed about is a program for testing of welders and that program is now going to be delivered through the Emergency Services College. And I'm not informed that there is a current backlog, so if the member has additional information of people that are waiting, I'm pleased to receive that, but those—that testing is sort of done on an as-needed basis. People come for their testing and examinations are set. Examiners are sent out to certify them.

Mrs. Taillieu: Is there going to be an anticipated increase in the cost of permits or special acceptance permits now that the Mechanical and Engineering branch is under the jurisdiction of the office of the Fire Commissioner?

Ms. Howard: I don't anticipate an increase in those fees because of the transfer to the office of the Fire Commissioner. Fees do go up from time to time, but there are no fee increases planned that I'm aware of.

Mrs. Taillieu: I may have addressed this and you may have answered it; I just want to confirm. Is there a backlog in inspection, then, of boilers and pressure vessels?

Ms. Howard: The current number of outstanding inspections in boiler and pressure vessel and refrigerator units is 840. That's a decrease of 45 per cent from the number that was in December. The number in December was 1,500 so the number as of April 26th is 840, so there is progress being made there. And also established, a newly established chief inspector in the office of the Fire Commissioner will also be overseeing those inspections, so it is the hope that we'll also be able to make significant progress on that, those outstanding inspections.

Mrs. Taillieu: This new department, the inspection testing services of Manitoba, is that going to be similar to TSAA in Ontario?

Ms. Howard: The office of the Fire Commissioner's going to be visiting other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan and may visit Ontario to see what they are doing. The way it's set up currently is that is

Inspection and Technical Services Manitoba. It's a division of the special operating agency that is the office of the Fire Commissioner.

* (12:20)

Mrs. Taillieu: I'm just wondering how they came up with the name. I understand there was a contest and somebody came up with the name and won a prize.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I'm informed there was a contest, and one of the staff picked the name and won the contest and won, I think, a trip to Elkhorn, to the hotel there that was part of the credit that the department built up.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, just—I just want to be assured that there is going to be consultation with the industry in regard to this new department because there does seem to be some—you know, there's unease with people when they don't really know what is going to happen, and they look at other areas and see that's not the model that they want or works well.

So I'm hoping that that's going to be what the minister is advocating, that there is going to be adequate consultation with the broader industry to ensure that that's—it's getting what is going to be working the best.

Ms. Howard: That is certainly the plan and I've also found in my work with the office of the Fire Commissioner that they're very open to not only formal consultation but informal consultation. So if there are people who are having some anxiety, as the member has stated, and she wants to forward their contact information, I'll forward it on to the office of the Fire Commissioner and they can be included in those consultations.

Mrs. Taillieu: And I want to thank the staff for providing the answers today and being here today and to the minister, and I guess we can proceed.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 11.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,258,000 for Labour and Immigration, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$37,173,000 for Labour and Immigration, Immigration, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$521,000 for Labour and Immigration, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2011.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 11.1.(a) Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 11.1. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Okay, Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$809,000 for Labour and Immigration, Executive, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

The time being 12:24, what is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Committee rise.

JUSTICE

* (10:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer): Will the very efficient government—will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's my honour as Minister of Justice and Attorney General to provide opening remarks for the Justice Estimates.

Manitoba's continuing to make significant investments in the administration of justice. The total budget for the department has increased by \$27.5 million or 6.9 per cent over last year's adjusted vote, and I'd like to provide you with an overview of new resources this budget is dedicating to the department's core priorities, objectives and strategies.

Our investments can be categorized in three significant priority areas: No. 1 is safer communities; No. 2 is offender accountability; and the third is maintaining the integrity of the justice system.

Our core objective in the first priority area of safer communities is providing strong support for policing. In this budget we've committed to a further 36 officers to police services across the province. With this new investment by Justice, in partnership with local government, the Province will have funded an additional 255 police officers since 1999. By directing federal funds, 30 more officers will be added across Manitoba communities in the coming year.

With ongoing multi-year provincial and federal funding, 66 officers will be dedicated to forces across the province, including 32 officers for the Winnipeg Police Service, 20 officers for the RCMP provincial police service, two each for the Dakota Ojibway Police Service and RCMP municipal policing in Thompson, one each for the independent Altona, Brandon, Morden, Ste. Anne and Winkler municipal police services and one each for the Dauphin, Portage, Selkirk, Swan River and The Pas RCMP municipal police services.

To address recommendations from a task force of experts from policing, protection and Corrections, we'll—I'm sorry, Prosecutions and Corrections—we'll be introducing legislation to create a warrant enforcement unit composed of specialized investigators dedicated to apprehending those who are the subject of outstanding warrants who pose a risk to public safety. This new unit will work closely with police services to enhance public safety across the province.

The implementation of Manitoba's new Police Services Act is advancing. It will modernize policing and police governance in Manitoba. The new act includes a number of major components under development, including: first, the creation of the Manitoba Police Commission; second, the development of an independent unit of experienced investigators to investigate serious incidents involving police officers and allegations of unlawful conduct by a police officer; and, three, the establishment of police boards to oversee local police services.

The department's been undertaking significant work to prepare for the full implementation of the new act. The modernization of policing was advanced on February 11, 2001, when I announced

the appointment of nine Manitobans to the Manitoba Police Commission. It will be led by noted criminologist, Dr. Rick Linden.

The commission has already started work on its mandate of providing advice on policing regulations and standards, developing training materials and a policy and procedures manual for local police boards, recruiting and training civilian monitors, who will monitor certain investigations of the IIU, consulting with the public on policing issues and undertaking studies on matters which may be referred to it by the minister.

Shortly we'll be taking steps to hire the director of the IIU. This position will be filled by a civilian who will oversee the work of the unit. Police services, police associations and a wide range of Aboriginal and community leaders and academics supported the creation of the unit. The budget also includes funding to hire four investigators to commence the work.

In this budget, Manitoba, through local government, will be funding 50 per cent of the cost of hiring 50 police cadets in Winnipeg. An additional 20 cadets will be trained and deployed this year to join the 30 cadets that started working on our streets in January 2011.

Our government continues to work in partnership with Winnipeg to support the ongoing operation of the Winnipeg Police helicopter.

Another critical objective in the priority area of safer communities is taking action on gangs and organized crime. This budget strains our investment in GRASP, the Gang Response and Suppression Plan, with details to be announced in the future. The pilot program, Gang Awareness for Parents, or GAP, will be extended. The pilot project helps parents, caregivers and other adults identify signs of gang involvement, deglamorize the gang lifestyle, and link people with resources to deal with children who are at risk of, or are involved in, gang activity.

This budget will expand the capacity of the Public Safety Investigation Unit, which has become very successful at targeting properties that adversely affect the safety and security of neighbourhoods. Since 2002, the Public Safety Investigation Unit has successfully shut down very close to 500 drug, sniff, prostitution and other related operations across the province. The unit's also enforced the groundbreaking Fortified Buildings Act and has been

a leader in helping other jurisdictions establish similar units.

The department's Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit has been very active in pursuing court applications against properties believed to be instruments or proceeds of unlawful activity. Since it started operations in 2009, the unit has filed 47 statements of claim or applications in the Court of Queen's Bench against properties believed to be instruments or proceeds of unlawful activity, and more claims are expected as we go forward.

A third objective is improving supports for children and victims of violent crime. In this budget, we're pleased to announce further grants from the Victims Assistance Fund for the Aurora Family Therapy Centre in Winnipeg to provide an innovative therapy service for the families of missing persons.

Plans are under way to establish five more Lighthouses sites for after-hours programming for young Manitobans, bringing the total number of Lighthouses to 71. In this budget, there's more resources to enhance the Turnabout program, and in this budget we'll also address the objective of strengthening prosecutions in the safer communities priority area.

The department's budget adds 17 new, full-time equivalents to the prosecutions service, comprised of 10 new prosecutors and seven support staff. This investment is a key step in our commitment to add 82 new staff to the Prosecutions branch by 2016.

There's important work also under way to strengthen the ability of the courts to provide fair and effective dispositions in the safer communities priority area. Earlier this month, I announced amendments to The Provincial Court Act to support the creation of a senior judge program. This would allow retired judges to return to the bench to serve as needed. This year's budget dedicates funds to establish this program.

The Provincial Court is also planning to add weekend bail sittings with judges to increase access to justice, and resources are being dedicated to support the work of these judges along with various criminal justice personnel to participate in bail sittings on the weekends.

A significant milestone has been achieved by Courts Division in preparing for this year's budget. The division has completed the conversion of analog recording machines to digital audio recording in all

courtrooms in the province, so capital budget increases will no longer be required in this area.

Offender accountability is another core priority area. Several initiatives will address the important objective of maintaining the physical infrastructure needed to safely house sentenced inmates. Construction is well under way in the Rural Municipality of Headingley on the new women's correctional centre. Substantial completion of the structure is expected in the fall of 2011, with occupancy scheduled for early 2012. This facility will require a further 137-plus full-time equivalents and \$5.3 million in the staffing. This new correctional centre will have an emergency response unit, and funds are being dedicated to establishing this critical function. And, as well, there'll be upgrades to existing emergency response units in other institutions across the province.

Construction is also in progress on a further expansion of 64 beds at Milner Ridge Correctional Centre to help address the adult population challenges faced across the correctional system. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year, and this budget dedicates 35.5 FTEs and \$2.4 million to operate the new unit.

Operating resources are also dedicated to support recently completed expansions of Brandon Correctional Centre and Agassiz Youth Centre in Portage, as well as the expansion under way at The Pas Correctional Centre.

Since 1999, the government has increased the capacity in our facilities by 520 beds. Construction projects currently under way will result in 262 additional beds in 2011-12 and a further increase of 160 beds in 2012.

* (10:10)

The department's capital budget includes resources for the acquisition of core equipment, such as physical security equipments for the province's correctional facilities, closed-circuit TV upgrades and video conferencing equipment for the new women's correctional centre.

I'm also pleased to announce a new partnership between Corrections and the John Howard Society in this budget. John Howard will offer a new bail supervision program, including a residential component, to remand offenders who are deemed eligible to participate after the completion of thorough risk assessments.

Final core priority is maintaining the integrity of the justice system. There's been investments in information and communication technology, which I'm sure we'll get into in more detail. This budget will also continue our investment in the establishment of a new maintenance enforcement information management system with \$2.2 million in capital and operating funding.

Staff safety is another core objective, especially for probation officers and community correction workers, and a final core objective in the priority area of maintaining the integrity of the justice system is maintaining an effective legal aid program, as required by The Legal Aid Act.

To ensure continued services for low-income Manitobans who require legal services, this budget dedicates an additional \$2.8 million to Legal Aid Manitoba. While the federal government was once an equal partner in Legal Aid, this funding has diminished significantly in recent years, resulting in challenges to all provincial governments in maintaining their programs. At the same time, because of interest rates, funding from the Manitoba Law Foundation has declined in recent years.

In closing, I would like to re-emphasize the vital importance of the department's three priority areas: safer communities, offender accountability and maintaining the integrity of the justice system. Our government has, once again, 'prioritized' critical strategic investments in Justice in this budget, with the goal of meeting the government's commitment to safer communities for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those opening comments.

Does the official opposition critic have anything similar to add?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Chair, I'm not sure that it will be similar, but I appreciate the opportunity and—to again participate in the Estimates process. I think this is the fifth or sixth year that I've been able to do the Justice Estimates. I think, at this stage of the game, staff know the questions before I even complete asking them, but that's more a testament to their skill than to my lack of creativity on new questions.

The Estimates process I always find to be a useful process. We—with this minister and others in the past, his two predecessors, I think we've had

some good discussions and dialogue on terms of the issues that affect Manitobans in a critical area. And one that I think that's, if not top of mind—there are a lot of issues I know that are top of mind for Manitobans—it's certainly one of the top issues that we hear about. As politicians and as policy-makers, we hear lots about concern about the justice system both in Manitoba and across the country.

So we have a responsibility to raise those issues and do so in a way that sometimes provides alternatives and other times just simply brings forward concerns. And so we'll do that in this Estimates process like we've done in prior processes.

I listened intently to some of the minister's announcements. Some of them we've heard in the past. Of course, we, as an opposition, have supported some of those initiatives, called for some of them, we talk about the police helicopter or issues around, perhaps, the cadets. There are certain things that we've called for for a number of years and supported and are glad that they've come into fruition.

We sometimes know that it's a bumpy road to get these things off the ground, literally and figuratively sometimes, but it's good to see some of them happening, and appreciate the fact that there's a lot of different partners in that. The City of Winnipeg and Mayor Sam Katz, we know, have been very strong proponents of a number of those different initiatives, in particular the helicopter. He is very strong in advocating for—and in discussions that I've had with his office, I know that they believed for some time that this would be an effective tool and were successful in getting the provincial government finally on side in terms of funding.

The cadets program—also a key initiative of the City of Winnipeg and the mayor's office in the City of Winnipeg. Also mention the Police Association and the work that they had in ensuring that it would come to fruition, because I know that there are sometimes concerns with the different organizations about the multiple levels of policing and how individuals obtain status as peace officers. And so it was, I know, a co-operative effort from a number of different groups. And I think that—it's my hope, anyway, that in the long term it will pay dividends.

We do still hear many concerns, of course, from Manitobans about the level of crime and violent crime in the province. It's not just violent crime, but this office was focused in the news and in—and often in question period or in the Legislature, that's usually what gets attention. And so that's something that

we'll be talking about during this Estimates process, about why it is that Manitoba seems to be bucking the trend in the wrong way when it comes to violent crime.

I'm sure the minister will have some ideas in terms of why that is and solutions in terms of how we can move forward, because I do think that all of us feel badly about how the reputation of our province and the city of Winnipeg is often played out on the national stage. Each of us live here in the province and we all have a vested interest in ensuring that it's portrayed in the best light. We all are proud of our capital city and of our province and want to have that reputation bolstered across the province so that others are attracted to come here, to live here, to invest here and to raise their families here and feel that they can do so in a safe manner.

And I think at this stage of the game, where we are today, in 2011, that's not always the case. There are people who won't go to certain places or won't leave their homes or their neighbourhoods at certain times, where they might have a few years ago or a number of years ago, because they simply think that they're not safe to do so. That's on the violent crime side.

There are also many other crimes that sometimes they get labelled by the media as more minor crimes. I don't think that any crime is a minor crime, because it often leads to more significant things and to the person who's been victimized, of course, it's not minor. It's not simply an inconvenience. It often comes at a price of the loss of personal safety. So when we talk about property crime or those other, sort of, crimes that happen in the justice system, those are things that we need to pay attention to as well, even though they don't get the same, sort of, media attention.

And Estimates is a good place for that in the discussions that I've had. And I mention, simply because he's here, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and the discussions we've had previously in his role as the Justice Minister, I think we've had some good discussions in Estimates that it doesn't always lend itself so well to question period, which often focuses on, sort of, the issue of the day.

I know that if people would read the Estimates *Hansard*, and I suspect there aren't thousands who do, but if there were even a few who did, they would probably learn a lot about what the challenges are in the justice system and the challenges that staff in the department face. And they wouldn't get that same

perspective in question period where they would simply get, sort of, the issues of the day and not, sort of, see that broader perspective.

So I appreciate this process, and I think that the minister and I—we have a good personal relationship and it doesn't translate well into question period, but outside of question period, I think it translates just fine, and look forward to this process as we go forward and getting some good discussion about the—not just the challenges that are in the province, but also some of the positive things and the solutions that we can have going forward.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, we thank the honourable opposition critic very much for that.

Moving forward under—just a reminder for everyone, 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 4.1.(a) contained in resolution 4.1.

At this time, we would invite the minister's staff, or at least some of them, to join us at the head table. Maybe once they get settled, Minister, if you'd be kind enough to do introductions.

Mr. Swan: I will introduce the tip of the iceberg, the folks who are up here.

Next to me is Jeffrey Schnoor, who's the Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General. Next to him is Dave Brickwood, who's the assistant deputy minister of admin, finance and innovation. We have Don Saltis, who is the executive financial officer; Mike Horn, the assistant deputy minister for the Criminal Justice Division; Greg Graceffo, who is the assistant deputy minister of Corrections.

* (10:20)

Moving further down, we've got Debbie Baker, who's the acting assistant deputy minister for Courts, we got Karen Fulham, the executive director of Judicial Services; Michael Mahon, who is the assistant deputy attorney general for Manitoba Prosecution Services; David Greening, the executive director of Policy Development and Analysis; and Maria Campos, the comptroller of Corrections.

Mr. Chairperson: We should get a couple more chairs. If you just want to pull two off of the table here and use those.

Okay, next, a little housekeeping item, in terms of how the committee wishes to proceed. The usual

two options: chronological or a global discussion. Any preference for either of?

Mr. Goertzen: I think, in—historically, in the past in these Estimates and others in the Assembly we've gone on a global basis. I would suggest we do that again, recognizing that, if there are issues where the appropriate staff isn't here, we might be able to get those answers the following day. I think we'll be in this Estimates process for two or three weeks, since we'll have some—I'm kidding—I—we'll have some time to get some of those answers back. And, maybe, you know, I don't feel safe having half of the department here in the room; they should be doing some other crime-fighting things.

Just to give some sense of where we're going, I think for today we won't have a lot of time, because I also think that one of the independent members wants to ask some questions. But we'll do some of the routine questions we usually do around staffing. Probably talk a little bit about police funding and the recent federal announcements regarding that, and then probably do a fair bit of questions on the prison population and maybe get into electronic monitoring as well. That's sort of a general road map. I don't want to be held to that in a legal way. But I would like to give some indication for staff where we're going, so that I don't necessarily have to have everybody from the top part of the departments here.

Mr. Chairperson: Honourable Minister, is that proceeding with a global discussion all right with you? *[Agreed]*

Okay, very good. Thank you all.

We will, therefore, proceed in a global manner, and all the resolutions will be passed once all the questions have concluded. Oddly enough, the floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Goertzen: Seeing no others—

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no other takers.

Mr. Goertzen: Typically, I ask the minister—and I won't break with tradition—just to indicate who the ministerial staff are in his department, any departures that have happened within those ministerial political staff in his department and where they may have gone. So his SAs, EAs and any other advisers that he has in ministerial staff.

Mr. Swan: Janis Bermel continues to be my special assistant. I think Janis has served since this government took power in 1999. I can't recall whether I had the same executive assistant working

out of my constituency office. It's Matt Schaubroeck. My previous executive assistant was Andrea Dyck, who's actually taken a job here in caucus services.

Mr. Goertzen: Just in terms of ministerial travel, and I know in the past we've asked the minister to provide all those, I'm assuming that all of the ministerial travel that he is engaged in up until today is posted online. There's no—nothing on there that's not up to date on the online version of your ministerial travel?

Mr. Swan: As far as I know, everything, all the travel has been put on the website, in accordance with the rules.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister for that. I had a question regarding one of the travel expenses that I saw online, was to attend the western attorney generals conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, I think that the abbreviation would stand for, in July of 2010. So July of last year—summer of last year. It indicates that there was no airfare but that the minister incurred other travel of \$1,960, and just sort of curious if you could explain what sort of transportation that was.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I actually drove down there and what we did is we calculated the shortest route from my house to the conference hotel in Santa Fe.

Mr. Goertzen: And, not to pry incessantly, but is there a reason the minister would drive to New Mexico instead of taking a flight? Like, would a flight equivalent have been \$2,000 to New Mexico, or is there a particular reason he would have chosen to drive?

Mr. Swan: Well, going to Santa Fe was part of a larger trip that my family and I took. So rather than charging, of course, for the entire itinerary, it was the shortest possible route between my home and the hotel. I should mention that Santa Fe doesn't have an airport, so you actually have to fly in to Albuquerque and then rent a car and go from there, so, really, the difference wasn't material.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and I appreciate that. And certainly I understand, having a young family myself, the need for members to take vacations with their families and I would never say otherwise. I think that that's important.

Just for clarity, though, so the minister claimed for the entire travel mileage from his home to the conference, but in between there was a holiday or he just extended the time in New Mexico?

Mr. Swan: It wasn't a direct route to Santa Fe. So it was a longer family time, but the amount that was claimed was the shortest possible route between the two cities.

Mr. Goertzen: And maybe he could just clarify, because I am—and certainly, and this goes for all the questions, is I don't ask questions in a way of allegations, they really are for clarification—but if the minister took sort of personal time on the way, is it appropriate to claim all of that as government travel, or should he have excluded sort of the driving part to wherever the family vacation was? Just as a question of process.

Mr. Swan: Yes, you know, in discussions with the department, again, it wasn't the full itinerary. It was the shortest possible itinerary had we driven straight to Santa Fe, and that's how the calculation was done.

Mr. Goertzen: Is the member—did they ever check to see what a flight equivalency to Santa Fe would be, and maybe that that might have been the more appropriate amount to claim as opposed to claiming a travel amount as where there was a portion there that was more of a personal portion?

Mr. Swan: You know, I think the airfare to Albuquerque—I mean, it's not exactly a hub city. There's—you can fly to Denver, sometimes to Phoenix, to Dallas for reasonable amounts; unfortunately, Albuquerque isn't one of those places. And if I had gone to Albuquerque, it would have then meant renting a car for five days. So I didn't do a specific analysis, I sort of ballparked it, and, really, the difference isn't material.

Mr. Goertzen: Moving on to other questions not related to the minister's travel in particular but to costs out of the department. And some of these relate back to the Public Accounts 2009-2010 volume, which I think is the most—would be the most recent volume we have for costs.

I just have some questions, and I've done this in the past, where I've asked the department to get some answers on where cheques were written to from the department. And again, I—you know, a lot of them are just things that I just simply don't know. I think I remember last year asking one about Hanford Drewitt, and wasn't suggesting that Minister Chomiak was spending a lot of time spending money at Hanford Drewitt, given what his normal apparel is. But there was a logical explanation for it, and that was that the guards, I think, and other uniforms were—came from Hanford Drewitt. And so I'll have

this number of questions regarding some of the expenditures that came out of the department, and can just maybe provide some of that.

On a more global side, staff calculated for me that the total number spent on hotels for the department was \$518,000, so just over half a million dollars on hotels in that budget year, and a variety of number of hotels ranging from northern Manitoba to a number in Winnipeg. Can you give me some indication about what the primary usage would be? Are they—obviously might—some might be staff-related, maybe some conferences, that sort of thing. But in terms of the Justice side, who would they be using the hotels for, generally?

*(10:30)

Mr. Swan: Well, that—those hotel expenses come from a wide number of possibilities. So, what I'll do is I'll give the member some examples and then, you know, we can discuss it further if he wishes.

For example, the Queen's Bench and Provincial Court sits, not just in Winnipeg and Brandon, but in many places across Manitoba. Sometimes it's necessary to have judges, and sometimes even an entire court party put up in hotels. Many times, there'll be hotels provided for witnesses who need to travel to a court centre to give their testimony. There's staff travel out into the regions of Manitoba. There are also training opportunities during the course of the year, and in many cases, Justice will pay the hotel costs of those employees. So those are just four examples of why there would be hotel expenditures incurred by the department.

Mr. Goertzen: Of the \$518,000 spent on hotels, what would he believe, or staff believe, to be the bulk of those expenditures? What would entail the highest number of expenditures, the reason for that?

Mr. Swan: Yes, you know, I want to try and put the best possible information on the record, and we—it's hard to know for sure. One of the expectations is that a substantial amount of this is for court proceedings. The Provincial Court sits in 69 different communities across Manitoba. In many cases, especially remote communities, the court party flies in for the day, but, in many cases, it may require judges, other court officials having to go to a more regional centre and staying over.

Of course, for the Queen's Bench, there's communities like The Pas, Flin Flon, where there aren't resident judges. Judges may go and conduct multi-day trials in those communities, and there'd be

a hotel expense. In many cases—well, I expect that would be one of the major components, but I don't want to suggest that's necessarily the largest percentage.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, maybe the department could do a bit of analysis on that, and sort of let me know what the primary reason would be for some of the expenditure. I know most of them seem to be—probably half of them are actually in Winnipeg. So I definitely understand why, when you're talking about some of the remote court proceedings, why you'd be flying in, obviously, judges and those who are involved in the process to be part of that. And that's certainly understandable and justifiable.

I'm just more curious about some of the different expenditures. You know, there's \$52,000 at the Delta, and \$44,000 at the downtown Best Western, \$21,000 at the Fort Garry, \$41,000 at the Place Louis Riel, so there's probably different reasons. And then I just would—if you get some sort of an analysis of that, that would be helpful.

Also, probably on a similar vein, and maybe there's more information coming on that. I'd be happy to take that answer as part of this next question. In a similar vein, there's \$682,000 spent on airlines in the 2009-2010 Estimates. I know that some of that will certainly be for those court proceedings because the vast majority of that \$617,000 was from an airlines from The Pas.

Can the minister indicate the kind of travel that that entails? Is that moving individuals for—on remand from—to different places or why it is that there was, specifically, \$1,600—or \$617,000 spent on The Pas airlines, but then more generally on the \$682,000 from the department?

Mr. Swan: Yes, again, there's a number of different reasons why airfare expenses are being incurred, and as the member's pointed out, northern travel is a big challenge. There is a government aircraft that's used wherever possible to fly in court staff to remote communities—or the court party, I should say. Wherever possible that's used, but many times it's not possible and it's necessary to charter. There's no commercial air service that would work into most of those communities.

Many times it's necessary to fly in expert witnesses if they're going to be testifying in a criminal trial. Another example of airfare costs would be when an independent prosecutor is needed, and we would pay the airfare of that prosecutor to

come into Winnipeg or whichever other court centre to conduct the case.

Mr. Goertzen: Now, just to mention again that the cost, particularly for The Pas, was \$617,000. It seems like a lot for witnesses and even to some extent, for court staff. Was there some component of that that was moving individuals on charge or on sentence back and forth from different facilities?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I understand that sometimes there will be airfare costs for moving prisoners, primarily out of northern communities to facilities in the south.

Mr. Goertzen: Could the minister just be a bit more clear when he says prisoners. Are these people on—who've been charged and they're on—going to the Remand Centre in Winnipeg, generally, or what's the nature of the offender that he's speaking of?

* (10:40)

Mr. Swan: Yes, I understand it would be primarily individuals who are on remand, and they haven't been convicted. For youth, of course, the two youth facilities are the Manitoba Youth Centre here in Winnipeg and the Agassiz Youth Centre out in Portage. There may also be some, on rare occasions, some transport of individuals by air from Thompson to the correctional facility at The Pas.

Mr. Goertzen: And so would that be the bulk of the \$600,000 for the last year in travel, in getting those who are charged and on remand coming down to Winnipeg?

Mr. Swan: I understand it would be a component, but, again, there are the other—and there's the simple difficulty of getting court parties in and out of many remote communities. In some cases, it may also be a sentenced individual or even a remand individual coming out of those communities with the court party, wherever that's possible. So it is a component, but I can't really tell you—I can't tell you exactly what proportion would be remand prisoners travelling south.

Mr. Goertzen: Has there ever been any sort of cost analysis done in the department on maybe having certain facilities in The Pas and what savings that might be over time, if any? You know, you look at 10 years of expenditures—and I don't know, I didn't go back and calculate every year for the airline costs—but assuming it's \$600,000 a year or in that range, give or take from different years, you know, that's \$6 million dollars over 10 years. I mean, could that be—have been better directed into facilities in the

north that would have prevented some of the costs on a longer-term basis? Has that analysis been done?

Mr. Swan: I think it's fair to say the biggest challenge in this area is Manitoba's geography. I mean, the north of Manitoba is vast. We serve many, many communities spread across the north. Of course, there is an expansion at The Pas Correctional Centre which has added more capacity in that community. As the member knows, there is a Throne Speech commitment to take a bigger look at the general idea of whether there should be further expansions and how those expansions should take place.

So, on the other hand, the two youth facilities in Manitoba are both located in the south. Although there's an effort made not to incur air travel, sometimes it simply does happen, and that's a function of the geography of the great province that we live in.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm assuming that there hasn't been a specific analysis, then, that's been done in terms of whether or not, in the long run, it's more cost-effective to have different kinds of facilities in the north. So, we can sort of move on from there. Maybe we can return to it at another time.

There was—and this is a bit of a one-off, until we go to—into the policing, but it's timely just because of things that are happening in Manitoba these days, and not related to the—a federal campaign, although we might get to some of those questions a little bit later on.

Sandbagging and the use of prisoners for sandbagging. I understand that in Saskatchewan there was—at least the idea was floated, I don't know if it was ever followed through on. Milner Ridge, I think, used some individuals for sandbagging in close-by RMs. Can the minister indicate whether or not we had prisoners in our provincial institutions who were helping in the flood fight this year?

Mr. Swan: Well, in Manitoba, as well, the correctional centres have been considered for this kind of work. This spring, so far in this flood season, Brandon Correctional Centre is the place where a sandbagging machine was brought in to have—I'm sorry, I should correct that. There was a little bit of creative work done to create a Corrections-specific sandbagging machine to get the inmates busy on that.

For the other facilities, including Headingley Correctional Centre and Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, Corrections stands ready and willing to assist

if requested by municipalities and Emergency Measures Organization. As long as it can be done in a way that doesn't negatively impact the safety of our staff, of inmates and public safety in general, it's certainly something we're prepared to consider.

Mr. Goertzen: And just terms of BCC then, and I know you mentioned a sandbagger in Brandon, which right away got my antennas up about a different sandbagger that had gone there—I'm not sure that it had much use, at least at the initial stages anyway. Were they working with the sandbagger that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had announced and that didn't have enough people to facilitate it? Did they go and make that sandbagger operational maybe after it became publicly clear that it wasn't being used?

Mr. Swan: No, it was actually an apparatus that was put together at the correctional centre.

Mr. Goertzen: So why would they have made a new sort of apparatus to fill sandbags when the government had had a announcement about this other sandbagger that went to Brandon? Is there a reason why they wouldn't have used the \$35,000 machine? I'm not an expert on sandbagging or sandbaggers, but it just seems passing strange to me that they would create some sort of MacGyver-like sandbagger at the BCC centre when they had this other, apparently high-tech sandbagger already in the city.

Mr. Swan: Yeah, you know, I can't speak to it; you'd have to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) that question. As I understand it, the other machine that you're talking about was available for municipalities throughout southwestern Manitoba to be used for their purposes. As I say, at Brandon Correctional Centre inmates were involved in filling sandbags. We think that's a positive thing, and Corrections remains ready and willing and able to assist if we're asked to do so.

Mr. Goertzen: So I'm assuming then—my understanding is from the \$35,000 sandbagger that was in Brandon, one of the problems was that they didn't have enough people to operate it. It wasn't as though it wasn't operational but it took a lot of individuals to operate it, like 30 or some people had to be there to actually make it work. There was never a request then from any other department in government to the Department of Justice to say, you know, we've got this sandbagger here in Brandon, we had the announcement, can we use some of the BCC prisoners who are sort of down the street to come in and make that sandbagger operational?

Mr. Swan: Yes, again, I mean, we provided our services on Brandon Correctional Centre grounds. As I understand it, rural municipalities across the west and communities across western Manitoba were able to use that new provincial sandbagging machine. As I understand that, that has happened with success. We weren't going to take correctional inmates out of Brandon and have them into smaller communities. They stayed on-site in Brandon to do their work.

* (10:50)

Mr. Goertzen: Would it have been possible—and I've toured the BCC facility and I want to thank your staff who've often accommodated those tours. They're not fun things to do, and I always come away with a real appreciation for those who work in those correctional facilities. You leave there happy that you can leave, and it was Brandon that I toured and Headingley and Dauphin, and I want to get—and I've been to the Remand Centre on a tour, not for any other reason, just so you know—you may have already checked that out, probably—and that I want to go to the Youth Centre, as well, because I've never had the opportunity to go there. So I appreciate those opportunities.

But when I went to BCC, I'm just trying to think of the way out of the grounds and would there have been an opportunity to have had that machine there, if there was a concern about prisoners leaving the facility, and having that machine used.

Did any kind of a request ever come to Justice about that sort of an operation, or am I just assuming that nobody from any level of government department came to the Department of Justice and said, hey, we need some people to fill sandbags and instead of emptying the schools, why don't we get some of the prisoners to do it?

Mr. Swan: As far as I'm aware, I was—the department was asked by the City of Brandon to assist with making sandbags and that's what happened. As far as I'm aware, Justice didn't have a request from any other entity or any other organization to be part of sandbagging.

If requests come in, again we're quite prepared to consider them.

Mr. Goertzen: All right. It just doesn't seem very proactive, not necessarily from the Justice side but maybe from the other departments in government who are more primarily involved in the flood fight to come and to say, you know, we understand that—and I think the minister had made some public comments

about the availability of prisoners to do some of this work—that they wouldn't come and say, you know, maybe we can get more involved. It was kind of left up to the City on that side, but this vaunted sandbagging machine that needed people wasn't sort of matched up with the people in the prison. That seems concerning or it's interesting anyway, and I'll sort of leave it at that point.

Can the minister tell us how many sandbags were filled, then, by BCC prisoners and how many prisoners actually participated in that process?

Mr. Swan: Well, the best advice I have is thousands and thousands of sandbags. I can try and get a better number if that's something that's helpful to the member.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm probably more interested in the number of prisoners who actually participated. The sandbags is—and I asked and it's interesting, but I'm more concerned about the number of prisoners who would have participated.

Mr. Swan: I'll see if I can find that information and provide it to you.

Mr. Goertzen: What participation do you think there might be going forward in terms of removing some of either sandbags or I also understand that these tiger dikes—and, again, I'm sort of speaking out of my area of expertise which is always dangerous, especially when it goes on *Hansard*, but, you know, these tiger dikes, I understand can be difficult to remove, very time intensive to remove for municipalities, more so than I would've expected.

But there's certainly some of these dikes that are difficult and very time intensive to remove. They have to be rolled up which is a slow process, and that's as far as my expertise goes. I've been told by the municipalities that's it's a very time-intensive process.

Would there be availability for some of the prisoners to leave the facility to do some of that work, whether it's BCC or Dauphin or Headingley?

Mr. Swan: You know, Justice would listen carefully to any requests by an RM or any other entity. If we're talking about actually taking prisoners off-site and having them working out in a community, we'd have to make darned sure that there wouldn't be a risk to staff, risk to the inmates or risk to the communities they'd be working in. So, we'd be interested to hear from RMs with their thoughts, but public safety

would really have to be paramount for anything to happen on that front.

Mr. Goertzen: Just going back to the issue of the sandbagger: Is my memory correct in recalling that the Province provided a sandbagger to Milner Ridge, one of the automated ones, to use for filling of sandbags?

Mr. Swan: Are you talking about this flood year or previously? Or what time frame are you looking at?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'd be open to any year. I mean, has it been in the past, or this year, where they brought a sandbagger sort of into the facility, the automated ones?

Mr. Swan: Well, we have pretty good institutional memory in the staff that are joining me today, and there is no recollection that there's been an automatic sandbagger provided to Milner Ridge this year or previously.

We're also aware that the Rockwood federal institution provided some assistance with sandbags but it wasn't using automated—automatic—I'm sorry, there was an automatic sandbagger that went to the Rockwood Institution this year.

Mr. Goertzen: That's the same kind of sandbagging machine that would have been in Brandon; it was an automated one. The one that was at Rockwood, would that have been similar to the one in Brandon?

Mr. Swan: I think we may—you and I may have an overly optimistic view of what this sandbag machine was like at Brandon Correctional Centre. I understand it was pretty rudimentary. It was just meant to speed up the process a bit, but effective, comments my assistant deputy minister of Corrections.

Mr. Goertzen: Just on the Rockwood one, that I'm looking at an article from *The Stonewall Argus & Teulon Times*, a well-read paper, I'm sure. It just indicates that at Rockwood the Province provided a sandbag machine to the institution which is located adjacent to Stony Mountain Institution. The machine requires at least 48 workers to produce at full capacity. Is that the rudimentary machine that we're speaking of, the one with the 48 people or is that a different machine?

Mr. Swan: No, I'm talking about what we had at the Brandon Correctional Centre, which was pretty limited. It wasn't—I believe the term is an octopus, I think is the higher tech sandbagging machine—that wasn't in place in Brandon.

Mr. Goertzen: Now, we're really into the weeds on sandbag machines here but, just to go a little further, so the machine at Rockwood, the one that was provided by the Province, requires 48 workers. Would that have been similar to the one in Brandon, that wasn't being used?

Mr. Swan: I don't know. You'd have to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Goertzen: All right, I think the point probably is made that it's probably a similar kind of machine and for whatever reason, it never made it to BCC, the one that was in Brandon. And I'm not suggesting that that's a mistake by the Department of Justice. I suspect that those—in fact, I don't think it was a mistake by the Department of Justice. I think that those who are engaged in flood preparation should have been in contact with your department to making the same provisions that they did at Rockwood.

* (11:00)

I'll ask some questions around the announcement of police funding—and we'll see the great shift here from the sandbag team to the police team—from the federal, particularly, the federal side of the announcement, the \$14.4 million was allocated to the Province of Manitoba.

Can the minister indicate when those funds became available to the Province to hire—or to recruit and to hire police officers?

Mr. Swan: I'm happy to talk about the investment in funding.

But I do want to, sort of, start by talking about what happened with the original promise for 2,500 police officers. I mean it was an election campaign, a federal election campaign that, you know, the party that wound up winning promised 2,500 police officers across the country. I'm not sure what happened between that promise and what was actually delivered, but what wound up, I thought, providing Manitoba with 80 or 90 police officers in perpetuity, turned out to providing 30 police officers to Manitoba for a limited period of time. Frankly, I'm not sure how a recruitment and training fund, that only provides funding for a limited time, is really adding police officers.

Be that as it may, the—Manitoba's share of that fund is \$14.4 million over five years. It was the 2008 budget in which the federal government announced the actual size and scope of the fund, and

Manitoba did indicate in 2008 our interest in participating in that fund. So, as the member knows, we are moving to make sure every dollar of that \$14.4 million gets spent on actual police officers. Other provinces have made some other choices. Some have paid for equipment. Some have paid for technology. One province in particular has set up the equivalent of our Public Safety Investigation Unit as they follow Manitoba's lead and have their own safer communities and neighbourhoods act now in force.

So every province has done this differently. As I said, Manitoba is pushing out every cent of the \$14.4 million to actually have officers on the street. We're hoping that we'll have good support from the mayors and reeves across the province, whatever happens in Ottawa after Monday, to push the government to make this commitment permanent. So, hopefully, we won't have to be going back to the communities in the next couple of years, and saying, well, the federal money has run out.

So I know I can count on the member's support to—whoever happens to be in Ottawa, whether it's Prime Minister Harper or Prime Minister Layton, to make sure this is permanent. I know that the NDP have promised a further 2,500 police officers. I would do everything I could to make sure that that actually is a commitment for permanent officers for communities in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and we'll see if the orange surge continues this weekend. It might be the minister who's going to his federal friends more often than he goes to our federal friends these days. But we'll let the voters decide. We never want to presume these things, and it seems to ebb and flow faster than the water these days.

In terms of the funding, then, and I'm going to ask this question—I'll return to it—my colleague from Tuxedo has a couple of questions she wants to ask as well. But just on this announcement from the federal government in 2008, so the money was made available, then, in 2008 through the 2008 budget. Is there a reason why the money didn't flow, then, in terms of an announcement for new officers for three years in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Yes, just to make it clear, Manitoba responded in 2008, saying that we were interested in participating. We've been making investments throughout Manitoba on policing, in the city of Winnipeg, with Brandon and also with the RCMP. For—as an example, the RCMP complement in Manitoba has gone from being under 600 in 1999 to

now being over 700. The police in Winnipeg have a limited capacity to recruit. The RCMP, until very recently, had some challenges, from our view, in being able to recruit. We wanted to make sure that when we announced this federal money going out that we're actually going to have officers to fill the positions.

I know the member opposite, in the past, in his young and foolish days, used to complain about positions not being filled quickly. We wanted to make sure that when this money was put out there that there would actually be officers to fill those spots. And I'm very excited as I travel across the province talking to the mayors and police chiefs in communities that are getting another officer of the diverse but the interesting ways in which they'll be using those additional officers, and some very different communities across Manitoba will be receiving the money. I'll be meeting with more of them in the days and weeks to come, and we're looking forward to it.

Again, I'm certainly hopeful that we can take a temporary commitment and turn it into a positive permanent one.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): One of the primary concerns of constituents in my area is in the area of break and enter. And, certainly, we all know—certainly, I know when I was growing up we wouldn't think twice about leaving our doors unlocked and walking across to the park with our kids and playing, coming back later, and now I think people are generally more and more afraid to do that. They don't leave their house without locking their doors and their windows, and things have just really, really changed over the years, to the point now where even when people are in their own homes they're making sure that their doors are locked, their windows are closed and locked and even, at times, making sure that their alarm systems are on when they're home, just to make extra sure.

And I guess, moving in this direction where people are more and more afraid in their own homes to live on a daily basis, I'm just wondering if the minister can indicate what it is that his government is doing to make things better for Manitobans in this area.

Mr. Swan: All right, well, let me start by saying that, certainly, people are entitled to be safe in their communities and safer in their homes, and that comes about a number of different ways. And our government believes that you do that by having the

right laws in place, both provincially and federally, and I'll cover that. You get there by having adequate investments in policing and police-type services across the province, and you also get there by attacking the root causes of crime.

On—I'll start with the policing side. I mean, as you know, we've made significant historic investments in providing more police officers to the City of Winnipeg. The numbers continue to increase each and every year, and that includes officers that will be stationed in District 6, in the area that you represent in the Legislature. We think that's important.

We know that it's not just the officers making the arrest that are important. That's why we've invested heavily in more Crown attorneys. In Manitoba, we've made great investments: 58 so far, with more to come over the next five years.

But there's other things that we've done too. On the laws side, as you know, the criminal law is made by the federal government in Ottawa, and Manitoba has consistently been a very strong voice at calling for appropriate changes to the Criminal Code. And one of the things that I discussed just a couple of weeks ago with Minister Nicholson in Ottawa was the need for a separate stand-alone offence of home invasion under the Criminal Code. It's a bit of a surprise, I think, to most Canadians that there is actually no crime of home invasion. There is a crime of break and enter and a crime of robbery, but home invasion itself is only an aggravating factor in sentencing, and there's a couple of reasons why we think that's a problem.

First of all, to make sure that sentencing is appropriate. I understand in Manitoba the sentences are quite serious, eight to 11 years is the range that I'm told, but, at the same time, the specifically violent nature of a home invasion doesn't then get reflected if somebody ever gets in trouble again in future, and, certainly, when judges are making decisions on bail, when judges are subsequently making decisions on sentencing, I think it would be in the interests of Manitobans and Canadians that that be known.

* (11:10)

Second area that I think is important is reporting, because there's no specific section in the Criminal Code. We want proper reporting of how many home invasions are happening, how many break and enters are happening. The other piece is Victim Services

and even though Victim Services in Manitoba do a very good job, they take their lead from what charges are laid and sometimes they have to do more work and it takes more time to get services out to people who, unfortunately, become victims of what is a very, very terrible and serious crime.

You know, a parallel really would be auto theft. Today is actually a day we can mark, not just because of the royal wedding. This is the day that, for the first time in Canadian history, auto theft becomes a stand-alone offence. Until now, there's not been an offence of auto theft in Canada and, frankly, I praise the federal government for moving ahead and passing Bill S-9.

That's criminal law. I've told you our position on that and where we think we're going. I should note that the idea to have a separate provision for home invasions is something that was mentioned by the NDP during the election campaign. I think that Minister Nicholson, if he remains minister, is also interested in pursuing that, but I guess we'll have to see what happens in Ottawa after Monday.

The other piece is the underlying causes of crime and what we're doing to deal with that. I can go on probably for the rest of the morning talking about that. That probably isn't what you want, so I'll stop here and let you ask any follow-up questions you may have.

Mrs. Stefanson: Can you just follow me—or walk me through the procedure of what happens in the event of a home invasion. The police come. They catch who—the person who'd invaded in the home. Police takes them back to the—presumably to the police office, or whatever. And can you tell me what happens from there? Because this is—I mean, I think one of the significant problems is that many of these people are being let out into the street again and are being able—and are reoffending.

And so there's—I'm not sure all the numbers. I don't have my colleague here today to tell me. I'm sure he's aware of some of the backlogs in the system but can you indicate what—maybe just walk me through the process of what happens.

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, I'll try to walk through this a little bit. I mean, if there's a home invasion and if the police are successful in getting there while it's in process or soon after and can make an arrest, which they do in many cases, the person would generally then be taken to the Public Safety Building

downtown and appear before a magistrate and would generally be then put into custody. It would then be up to that person to make an application for bail, which they could do before a judicial justice of the peace or they could go before a Provincial Court judge and ultimately, that judge would make the decision.

I can tell you that in Manitoba, where somebody commits a home invasion, the Crown routinely, consistently opposes bail for those individuals. But the Crown doesn't have control over what the judge ultimately decides and, as I think you're aware, there are some real concerns when the individual who's committed the crime is a youth, and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, I think we can all agree, has some major problems with it. It is frustrating many times for the police, for the Crowns, for everybody, that many times, youth who appear to be out of control are being given bail and being released back into the communities where they have to be managed.

And that's why, at first, we were pleased last year when the government did introduce some amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. We were less excited when I got the analysis back from my department that raised some very, very serious concerns. One of the concerns in Bill C-4 was that it would be even harder to keep young people in custody pending trial.

As you know, we met with a number of different attorney generals from other provinces and wrote to the government. Bill C-4 died when the government fell, so I'm sure—I'm hoping that whatever happens after Monday, we can get back, open up the Youth Criminal Justice Act again and make some positive changes to try and control youth who are a real risk to our communities.

But I can repeat that the Crown takes home invasion very, very seriously. They will oppose bail, but it's ultimately not the Crown who makes the decision of whether somebody is released into the community. And one thing that's pointed out again—of course, there are Justice statistics that are pulled together that are provided every year. As I'd said a few minutes ago, because there's no specific crime of home invasion, those statistics don't give the kind of clarity that I think we'd like so we can see whether home invasions are increasing across the country, whether they're staying the same or whether they're going down. If they were their own offence, it would make it that much easier to get that clarity.

Mrs. Stefanson: Isn't there a way that your department—or that we can gather those statistics here locally, though, and not just rely on what the federal government is doing?

Mr. Swan: You know, there isn't really an automated or effective way to do that. Again, Victim Services in Manitoba will try to make contact with anybody who's been a victim of this very serious crime as quickly as they can.

As I understand it, the way they receive their information is they see what the nature of the charge is. So, for example, if it's a sexual assault, that would be a specific section of the criminal code. In the case of a home invasion, there will be a break and enter, a dwelling house charge, but that charge itself doesn't let you know whether there was a victim and somebody at home.

So Victim Services has to—they have to try to get a handle on it and get services out to people as soon as possible. So, again, there's—we think there's a solution in the Criminal Code that would make it much clearer for victims but also for the case of reporting.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Chairperson, yes, I do—I think it's important to note that while I do understand that there is significant—you know, there is a significant amount of this that falls under federal jurisdiction but I know that there are areas that—where there are shared jurisdiction in terms of walking through the whole process of what happens when someone is arrested and goes through the system itself.

And I just hope that—I'll just leave it at this, that I hope that it's not just—it's very easy, I think, sometimes to just blame it on the federal government that the laws aren't tough enough and this kind of thing. But when people are getting out on bail and reoffending and this sort of thing, I mean, that really falls under provincial jurisdiction. And I think that is happening not just necessarily in this area but in other areas of the law.

And I just—I'll leave it with the minister that, you know, I thank you for your comments today. But I think that it's incumbent upon all of us to accept this as all of our problems, and it's not just a federal government problem. And I think there are some things that you and your department can do, and I hope that you just won't dismiss it and just sort of say, okay, it's the federal government's problem. But I thank you for your comments.

* (11:20)

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, I mean, again, our Crowns—and the example we've been discussing is home invasion—our Crowns do oppose bail as a matter of course in cases like that. They put their best evidence forward. I mean, one of the solutions the Province can be part of, and, certainly, more police officers is something that we've taken to heart, more Crown attorneys to assist them in doing their work; that's certainly part of it. Again, we don't ultimately control the decision that's made when a bail application is made.

On a positive side, one program that your constituents, especially seniors, may not be aware of is the SafetyAid program. It's a small but effective program that we think gives seniors more security in their own homes. The SafetyAid team will actually come to the homes of low-income seniors. We'll do a safety audit. We'll look at the perimeter of the house, see if there's improvements to lighting, other ideas, and they will actually install deadbolts, because many people don't even have proper deadbolts in their home. They'll do that free of charge. Sometimes the hard part is convincing seniors that it actually is free of charge. They may be a little suspicious.

Anything you can do in any of your communities to spread the word about the SafetyAid program I think is a positive thing, because our seniors are entitled to be safe in their homes.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate my colleague from Tuxedo raising those concerns, locally, that she has and that are more than just local. They really are across all parts of the province, not even just in the city of Winnipeg. I hear those same concerns in the community that I represent as well.

Just before I get back on the police funding, you'd mentioned, Mr. Minister, your concerns about some of the initiative on the federal reform of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which I've shared concerns with, as well, about the YCGA–YCJA and the need to strengthen it. I understand the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was introducing Mr. Layton, the man who would be premier, a few days ago.

Have you spoken with Mr. Layton about his perspectives on the Youth Criminal Justice Act and how he would strengthen it and your proposals to strengthen it to him, if he becomes premier, either through the electoral majority or through a coalition?

Mr. Swan: Well, if he becomes Prime Minister, I mean, certainly that will be something New

Democrats will celebrate, but I think others can as well.

I can let you know I've had a series of conversations with Joe Comartin who is the—has been the federal Justice critic for the New Democrats, and we had some very good discussions, and certainly the New Democrats, federally, supported the changes that were sought to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, not just by the NDP here in Manitoba and the NDP in Nova Scotia but also the Liberal Party in British Columbia, the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta and, of course, the Saskatchewan Party in Saskatchewan.

So I'm quite satisfied that certainly we know that at least two of the parties in Ottawa are quite committed to improving some of these things. There may be a couple of other parties that aren't quite as interested.

Mr. Goertzen: I might suggest the minister built a bridge too far on that one. I think looking at some of the voting patterns of the federal New Democrats on justice initiative is a bit spotty in terms of where it is they would be tough on in crime.

And if he truly is, and I think he is out there campaigning for the federal NDP, he might need to be a little stronger in his advocacy for some of those federal positions, or he might want to consider—it's not too late—switching his vote and supporting the Conservatives on Monday if he truly believes that these tough-on-crime measures are important. He may want to do that. It's a big tent we're building, I think, federally, so we'll welcome his support if he wants to join that tent.

But that's probably more political than I wanted to be in Estimates. I think I started off saying—I think I said—started off saying that we didn't want to make this too much of a political process and, then, there I go again, right? So I'll try to rein myself in and go back to the issue of police funding, although it was a federal initiative.

The minister indicated that in 2008 it was in the federal budget and that they moved quickly to secure the funding. I think what they did through the—either the former Minister of Justice, the member for St. Johns—he may have been acting as the Justice critic at that point for the member from Kildonan, but, regardless, they indicated that they would accept the money, which we didn't expect that they wouldn't.

But they didn't actually put the money to use until the announcement, and it's not really to use now because the officers haven't been hired and they're not on the street, but there are a number of other jurisdictions, I think, that put the money to use quicker and it got some of the hiring processes done quicker.

Can he indicate, in terms of other provinces, have most of the other provinces already put that money to use from the 2008 announcement? Are we, sort of, on the back end of that?

Mr. Swan: Well, first, although we are being non-partisan, I can't let the comments the member made earlier go without comment. You know, we've talked for a long time about the Youth Criminal Justice Act and, you know, I'm not sure what the government in Ottawa was thinking when they introduced Bill C-4, which would make it, actually, easier for young offenders out of control to get bail. I'm not sure what they were thinking of when they introduced legislation which would actually make it tougher to seek adult sentences against young people, even when they're committing serious, violent and, sometimes, sophisticated offences. I'm not sure what they were thinking when they introduced Bill C-4, would actually make it easier for young people to get deferred custody sentences, which are the equivalent of conditional sentences. It didn't seem to match the narrative that comes out of Ottawa.

That's why I was very pleased that it wasn't a partisan thing; it was four provinces in the west, each with a different provincial government, writing to Minister Nicholson to raise those concerns. It was the unusual trio of Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia appearing on Parliament Hill, and I want to commend David Greening, who did a tremendous job on behalf of Manitoba, presenting our concerns. So, sometimes the facts don't match the narrative that we're told, and, perhaps, we'll just—we'll leave it at that and get back to some more productive things.

In terms of police funding, of course, the announcement that was made when we said we would be participating, is that we would use the money on top of all of our additional commitments for police officers. And that is exactly what we're doing. As I've said, other provinces have gone different ways. Some, I believe, have taken the money and spent it on technology and equipment. As I'd indicated, one province has taken the money to

follow in Manitoba's footsteps and set up the equivalent of our Public Safety Investigation Unit.

I should mention that there isn't really a formal reporting mechanism that was put in place by the federal government. We're committing that every single dollar of that \$14.4 million will be used, not for technology or equipment, not for other quasi-police bodies, but it's all going to be used for police officers, as long as the money remains in place.

Mr. Chairperson: The Chair certainly appreciates all the self-imposed restraint happening in the dialogue, but questions that did relate to the Estimates process would also be welcome.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate your admonishment, and I'll certainly do my best to stay within the four squares of the Estimates process.

The Ontario government do, also, of course, like all provinces, receive some of the federal funding. In the 2008 budget, made an announcement in 2009, and just got the—looking at their press release from May of 2009—their portion was \$156 million, of course, larger because of the population differences, and, then, they indicated they were beginning the process of hiring 329 officers. So their announcement came about two years prior to Manitoba's, and, in fact, a lot of those officers are already on the streets. They've had subsequent announcements about how those officers were out there already fighting crime in their urban centres and their rural municipalities in Ontario.

Why would we have waited those additional two years, when, arguably the need is as great here in Manitoba as it is in Ontario?

Mr. Swan: Well, I don't believe any province has been as powerful as Manitoba at adding police resources from provincial money. And, if we take the same proportion for—between Ontario and Manitoba, if you can tell me the Ontario government has paid for a further 3,000 to 3,500 police officers in Ontario since 1999, then, maybe, I'll feel differently. Manitoba has been consistently adding resources for police, for the Winnipeg Police Service, for Brandon, for the RCMP since 1999.

The budget that we're now discussing only continues that process. Again, as I've indicated, the police in Winnipeg have a limited capacity to train their recruits. We want to make sure that they're able to actually recruit and train people to fill those spots.

* (11:30)

Until recently, there was some challenges with depot in Regina of getting RCMP recruits that we could have in Manitoba. I'm very pleased with the hard work of Bill Robinson, the Division D commissioner here in Manitoba, and the work of the RCMP, that those problems seem to be behind us, and we're quite satisfied that this money will actually allow officers to be out on the streets within a reasonable time.

Mr. Goertzen: And the minister skilfully evaded the question. The question was—and we could have that broader debate about police officer hirings and, you know, how we rate per capita or how we rate per crime, and all those interesting debates, and we may have those debates later on in the Estimates process.

But, in particular, on the 2008 announcement by the federal Conservative government, they announced the money was available to the provinces based on proportion of the formula that they established. And Ontario was one, and I can give you the example of Saskatchewan as well, who flow their money, the federal portion of their money, quickly and hire the officers more than a couple of years ago. But just using the Ontario example—because I don't want to go province by province, although I could if we needed to—Ontario, in May of 2009, announced that they were using the federal funding that was—that had been announced in the previous year's federal budget to start the hiring of their officers, and many of them are already on the streets in Toronto, their municipal force, or their provincial force are already out there now today working.

Why would Manitoba, given the serious problem we have with crime, why would they have sat on that money for those three years, and certainly two years longer than Ontario did? Is there just an explanation, a simple explanation in terms of why we held back the flow of that federal money for two—for three years since the announcement and two years longer than any other province did that I've cited?

Ms. Sharon Blady, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Swan: Well, again, Manitoba hasn't sat around and waited for federal money to make investments in police. And, again, since 1999 we've added 255 positions. We've added police in Winnipeg. We've added police in Brandon. We've added police in—throughout the RCMP. Again, the complement's gone from some—from less than 600 to over 700 in the province. So we haven't sat around and waited

for a campaign promise of 2,500 officers, which suddenly became something less than that for some limited period of time to do our work.

So we appreciate the federal money. We appreciate the \$14.4 million. Again, it's going to have a limited impact, and I'm not sure how communities can simply rest saying, well, that's great; we've got money for an officer for three years.

The 255 officers we've added are permanent; they're sustainable, and it's allowing communities to plan. This money, while appreciated, is going to have a limited time impact, and that impact is going to start now for, unfortunately, for only a short time unless the federal government reverses its course and makes this a permanent funding.

Mr. Goertzen: And the reality is the parameters around the funding haven't changed from 2008 to now. We can both argue that perhaps we'd like to see that change, but the minister knew three years ago what the parameters were around the funding, and he knows now what the parameters are, and he knew a year ago when we brought this up in Estimates about where the money had gone. And then he was very elusive and didn't really have any idea about where the money was or when it would flow, and so this isn't a new thing. It's not as though I've just brought it to this Estimates. I mean, last year I asked the minister why the money hadn't flown, and he couldn't describe if it had flown or where it had gone. And now we know that it hadn't gone anywhere, instead it had been sitting there since 2008, the ability to get the funds in anywhere utilize the funds.

And all these other provinces have been putting the money to work for the last couple of years, and Manitoba, which is labelled the violent crime capital of Canada—to all of our chagrins, none of us appreciate that, all of us want that to change—wasn't using the money when it was available. One would think, looking at our violent crime position, we would have been the first ones—even given the restraints. I mean, we've already bought into the program now, so if it was good enough now, it certainly would have been good enough three years ago.

I'm just wondering why. Is there any explanation at all why you wouldn't have hired those officers for all of these communities who need it, including the city of Winnipeg, two or three years ago when all the other provinces were doing that?

Mr. Swan: Well, obviously, the Province doesn't hire police officers. We offer funding to various communities and also, as part of—to the RCMP as our provincial police force. And, as I've indicated, there's certainly been challenges for the police service in being able to get people through training as quickly as they'd like. There's been challenges with the RCMP.

We've—again, we've been adding police officers, and I would ask the member why his party has voted against every single police officer that we've added since 1999, which now totals 255, not counting the federal money which is going to be spent on policing in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it'd be easy to argue that we voted against the fact that you sat on that money for two years when people needed it. I mean, I knew that it was available. It was in the federal budget in 2008. You knew that it was available. The Brandon Police Service was contacting you and others asking for the money because it needed to be available. There were smaller municipal police forces, including some that actually got the money now, who have been calling for the funds for a couple of years. The City of Winnipeg Police Service was wondering where the money was, and the mayor of Winnipeg finally came forward earlier this year and said, why are you sitting on the money for two years?

So there's a pretty good explanation in terms of why we would sit on—or why we would vote against the government—not the minister in particular—the government holding back this money when it was desperately needed on the street. Why would we vote in favour of you holding back that money that other provinces were advocating and were already flowing—sorry, not advocating, were already using and putting it on their streets?

Well, the minister, obviously, is not going to answer that, and I suspect it's because there's not an answer, or not a good answer. The answer probably lies into the fact that we're in an election year and this would have the most impact in terms of flowing the money this year as opposed to two or three years ago like the other provinces did. So I think his non-answer is, in effect, an answer in itself.

Can he indicate the process by which the federal funding was allocated? How—what was the determination in finally coming to the decision of where the additional funds and officers would go in Manitoba?

Mr. Swan: Well, again, I just want to respond to the other comments made by the member. I'm not sure why 30 temporary police officers are something he'd support and 255 permanent, sustainable police officers are something he opposes, but I guess he'll have his own reasons for that.

I think it's also important to point out that we added police officers in 2008. We added police officers in 2009. We added police officers in 2010, and now, in 2011, we're adding more police officers. What they all have in common is that the opposition has opposed those resources in our budget, and I guess the member will have to answer for that.

In terms of the federal funding, we have added approximately—used approximately half of the money for the Winnipeg Police Service, given Winnipeg's size within Manitoba. We've also added officers both in RCMP contract communities and also in some independent municipal communities.

And in terms of the independents, there's an officer for each of Altona, Ste. Anne, Morden and Winkler, and those are the four largest communities that have independent police services. From the discussions that my department had had with those police forces, from discussions I have had with the mayors, with the police chiefs in those communities, each of them identified some real need and some really innovative ideas on what they would do with more police resources.

With respect to the RCMP, it's important to note that there's different ways that communities use the RCMP for policing. Larger communities have a police contract with the RCMP. Smaller communities basically have an RCMP detachment that's run more completely out of D Division. The communities with the—with contract policing—the communities we added officers were the ones that the RCMP D Division suggested had the greatest need for additional resources. So Thompson received two officers, given some of the challenges they've got. We also added officers—one officer in each of Selkirk, Portage, Dauphin, The Pas and Swan River.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister indicated that it was the D Division branch of the RCMP here in Winnipeg that made the recommendations based on the RCMP allocation. Can he provide the analysis that the RCMP provided him—or the recommendation and the analysis that came to that recommendation?

* (11:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, I can tell you, generally, it was based—and not just on population—it was based on the actual crime rates, some of the challenges in each area that resulted in us going down the list as far as we could this year.

Mr. Goertzen: And I appreciate the general answer but I'm asking if I can get the actual documentation of the recommendation and the analysis that came from that. If it's simply general crime rates, I mean, a lot of those are publicly available. I know in different municipal forces it's not a matter of police operations.

But can you just provide the actual analysis that the RCMP provided?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I can advise that it was actually conversations between my department officials and the RCMP.

Mr. Goertzen: Is there a reason why there wouldn't have been any sort of formal analysis? And, you know, the point being that police officers and those—where they get allocated can be a pretty sensitive thing in a lot of communities. There's not a community in Manitoba that doesn't believe that it needs more police resources, I would think, and so when you're denying some and providing officers to others, you'd think it would be an important thing to be able to back that up with an analysis so that it's not simply open to the suggestion that one didn't get the officers they deserve for a variety of reasons—poor analysis or maybe lack of understanding of the situation or an inability to bring forward one's case or all sorts of other reasons that one might suggest.

I mean, wouldn't that have been important to have that sort of formal analysis to ensure communities that they were getting their fair shake?

Mr. Swan: Well, I think communities are being treated very well with these officers that are being added. It's important to remember that Manitoba already provides a general assistance going out to communities that most communities use for their policing purposes. Communities make their own choice on, when they have a contract with the RCMP, of how many officers to hire. I mean, there is certainly a cost in having the RCMP provide policing in a community. Each community is free to make amendments to that.

It was need, and, again, with the municipals, we really wanted to make sure that if we were adding an officer, there would be a plan and there would be an impact of adding an officer to that community.

Mr. Goertzen: Taking off my hat as Justice critic—I know you're getting worried about where I was going with that, but just taking off my hat as my role as Justice critic and putting on my role as—hat of the MLA for Steinbach.

The city of Steinbach and the rural detachment, which polices a good part of southeastern Manitoba, the minister will know either through visits or just through reputation that that region of the province is growing as fast and perhaps faster than any other region in Manitoba. The city of Steinbach is, I believe, probably the third largest city in Manitoba. I suspect the census will bear that out, although my friend from Thompson, if he were here, would take objection to that right now, but we'll see when the census comes back. But I suspect that it is already the third largest city in the province, and it didn't receive any funding.

And so I've obviously heard from residents of the community who believe that there are reasons why that's the case. I won't put those on the record. The minister can draw his own conclusions about why members of the community might feel that they didn't get an officer. Certainly, those involved with the RCMP detachments have made the case very strongly that they're overwhelmed with the amount of calls. And it's not all, of course, certain kinds of crime, but they are overwhelmed with calls for service because the RCMP do many other kinds of things these days. We ask them to do many other things—and that's not just true for the RCMP, that's true for all municipal forces—than just simply deal with violent crime, for example. There's a lot of other things that they're asked to do that are important for the community.

In the discussions, then, since there was apparently no written analysis given by the RCMP, can he—can he give the community and the region that I represent—and it's represented by other members as well, I should say—I pick on the rural detachment—why the Steinbach detachment, city and rural, did not receive any allocation for officers?

Mr. Swan: Well, I think the people in Steinbach and the surrounding area should be very pleased to live in a fast-growing community that is also a very safe community. The population, I accept, is getting near 15,000, and you may very well be right. I had this discussion at dinner with the mayor of Steinbach just a couple of days ago who also believes that the new census may show that Steinbach, if not the third-largest city, is certainly closing in on that title.

It is one fast-growing area of the province. Of course, Morden and Winkler nearby are also growing at a very fast pace.

One of the things that was taken into account is that both Steinbach RCMP and the Ste. Anne police force work very well and very closely together. And the Ste. Anne police force, although small, has been a key part of some major events in policing in Manitoba, including Project Divide, which, of course, brought down many members of the Zig Zag Crew. I've heard from Ste. Anne that actually the Steinbach RCMP have been, although they'd like to have an officer, have also been pleased that this will allow greater integration and better safety throughout the southeast.

If—having said that, Steinbach remains on the list, and as we move forward, I'm hoping there will be a way to add an officer for Steinbach as well. I mean, everybody, wherever they live in Manitoba, should be safe in their own communities. In Steinbach, people generally, although I know there's a—there is some crime, people are—can generally be proud of living in one of the safest communities in the province, if not the entire country.

So Steinbach remains a priority. It just wasn't a high enough priority, based on the information that we received.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and the challenge then, of course, is in accepting that analysis is there really isn't any analysis. And that's why it makes it difficult to say to the minister, well, you know, thanks for the consideration.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

And I understand what the decision was based on because it seems to have been based on conversations, as opposed to a more in-depth written analysis that one could bring back to a community. I agree with you that the city and the area, on a proportional basis, you know, would have less of certain kinds of crime, but I would also tell you that that's changing, and the changes with any sort of community that's growing, it's not a reflection on the community itself, it's a reflection on the fact that with growth brings different sorts of activities. And they're not all positive activities, and if you don't sort of get a handle on it early on, it can be a challenge.

I've had the opportunity a number of times now to go out with the RCMP on ride-alongs as—that's what they used to be called; I think they're observers now or they call us observers when we go out with

the RCMP. And I've done that on a few different nights. So if you see in me in a police car in Steinbach, it's probably for that reason. And it's an interesting experience because you see that police are responding to so many different things, some of which are specifically crime-related; others are, you know, more traffic accidents, sometimes fatalities, unfortunately, responding to calls of domestic issues. We ask so much more of our police. And that's really the burden, I think, that's being placed on these growing communities.

So I'm disappointed, not only that the city didn't receive and the rural detachment didn't receive that support, but there's no analysis. And it's not about—I've also had very good discussions with the police officers, the municipal police force in the town of Ste. Anne, and I support the fact that they got an officer. I know they were looking at one point, and they had a submission regarding an integrated officer, an integrated RCMP officer, into their municipal force, and that was sort of the integrated model that they were looking at, and that's not exactly what they got. I think they're happy to have got an officer, don't get me wrong, but it's not the model that maybe the city was—the City of Steinbach was looking at as a benefit to them, if there'd been an integrated RCMP officer who could have done some more cross-jurisdictional work. So I express that disappointment.

Now, the minister indicates that there might be things that are further to be announced. Is—are there additional funds within that \$14.4 million? Is that what he's referencing?

Mr. Swan: Well, first of all, I mean, I thank the member for Steinbach for standing up for his community. I'd expect nothing less.

It's important to note that rural detachments haven't been—haven't received any of the federal money. What has happened is that rural detachments have gained over the past 12 years with the number of positions being added to the RCMP in D Division but, again, I do appreciate the member's concerns and his job is to come here and stand up for his community.

* (11:50)

There—it's not intended there would be any additional officers, in addition to the ones that are already mentioned in the budget this year but, you know, for years forward, we would certainly continue working with communities across the

province to make sure that they have the policing resources they need to make their communities as safe as possible.

Mr. Goertzen: On the \$14.4 million, I know it's a five-year funding commitment. Is the minister indicating that the officers that were hired on this round are being funded over five years or was it a shorter time period?

Mr. Swan: You know, we will keep the officers in place until the \$14.4 million is fully expended.

Mr. Goertzen: Is there an estimate, you know, for those municipalities in areas that got officers, how long that would be?

Mr. Swan: We've told them three years.

Mr. Goertzen: So on—because I don't trust my own math—can maybe they determine on 30 officers for \$14.4 million over three years, what cost is that per officer?

Mr. Swan: I'll put the numbers on the record and it may well be that you want to figure it out and come back with questions on a later date.

I can tell you the exact amount of funding being provided to individual municipalities. Independent police services will receive—so each of the independent police services getting an officer will receive \$78,750 in year one, taking into account the annualization because we know they won't have an officer in place tomorrow, and \$135,000 in each of the two subsequent years. For the RCMP municipal police services, they'll receive \$46,700 in year one and \$80,000 in each of the two subsequent years per officer.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the minister and I may come back with questions and that, after we've looked on—at that.

I know at some point in the next little while—and it's not because I have any sort of Kreskin-like ability to know these things, but the official—or the Leader of the Liberal Party is going to be coming in with questions soon.

So I do expect to get to questions related to the prison service. I may have some questions around youth facilities and the nature of our youth facilities. We've had discussions around things like wilderness camps or boot camps or whatever the current acronym or the name for them is these days. You might have some general discussions about where

the Province is on things like that and their feelings around that.

In terms of the prisons, I'm going to have some questions around, obviously, the population numbers—staff are always well prepared for that question—the costs per prisoner, questions around the nature of the makeup of the composition of the prisons, remand versus sentence, how things have changed under the two-for-one sentencing legislation—and now we're maybe seeing some effects or maybe not seeing some effects of that.

I'll ask some questions around accidental releases both from the prisons and from the courts, recidivism, most recent re-offence rates, and some of the need to deal with that.

I'll have some questions about the operation of the prisons, services that are paid for within the prisons—television, cable, phone calls, those sorts of things.

So I'm putting staff on notice about those questions.

And now, just thinking that my time may be running a little short before I fulfill the commitment that I made to the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I want to just read into the record some of the different payments that were made from the department in 2009-2010, that if staff could hunt them down—I know this is always an exercise they enjoy greatly. But some of you might know offhand, and if you do, once I've gone through the list you can certainly explain those to me and I can stroke them off of my list. *[interjection]* Yes, sure. Otherwise, if you could provide them next week, that's fine.

So this is from the 2009-2010 Volume 2, Supplementary Public Accounts, starting at page 198, which is the Justice allocation. There's a payment to Acme Sport and Promotions in Kingston, Ontario, of \$27,628. There's a payment to Alberta Health Services in Edmonton, Alberta, of \$16,200. I'm just going to list these and then you can deal with them as you want. There's a payment to—this goes on to page 199—the Circle of Courage Communications in South Dakota of \$15,922. There's a payment to—also on page 199, second column, EXCO Ventures, \$51,882. *[interjection]* Page 199, the second column. Also, page 199, in second column, payment to Fat Boy Restaurant, The Pas, for \$29,345—sounds like a good place to eat. Right at the bottom of 199, Globalstar Canada Satellite Company in Toronto, \$6,099. Below that slightly, I'll try to pronounce this

correctly, Gollamudi Krishna, Mountain View, California, \$28,812. Page 200, the first column near the bottom, International Personnel Management Association in Alexandria, Virginia, \$25,136. Page 200, the second column, MD Charleton Company Limited, Brentwood Bay, British Columbia, \$36,486. Page 201, first column, Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations for British Columbia, \$284,838. Bottom of page 201, first column, Panasonic Canada in Mississauga for \$17,352. Page 201, second column, Reclaiming Youth International, Lennox, South Dakota, \$50,922. We're nearing the end, page 202, first column, Servo Electronic Systems, \$54,150. Below that, Shaw Business Solutions, Calgary, \$12,152. Same page, first column, Sir Hugh John McDonald Memorial Hostel, \$206,365. Same page in column, Supreme Basics, Regina, \$20,731. And, I think, the final one is Supremex Incorporated, \$32,288.

So there's a number there, and I don't expect the staff to know all of those expenditures and what they were for off the top of their heads. If they did I'd be shocked and maybe somewhat concerned. But, if they can address those in the coming days, that'll be fine.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, we'll see what we can do.

And, just to put one correction on the record, because I know the member will be firing up his calculator this weekend, I reversed the level of funding numbers, and I just want to correct the record. In fact, it's those communities that have RCMP municipal services, they'll receive \$78,750 in year one and \$135,000 in each of the two subsequent years. The independent police services will receive \$46,700 in year one and \$80,000 in each of the two subsequent years per officer.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm going to relinquish the floor as promised in the commitment I made to the member for River Heights.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that. Recognizing now the honourable member for River Heights.

* (12:00)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the member from Steinbach.

And I'd like to start by looking at the—if you could give us a number for the number of people in remand at the moment.

Mr. Swan: Just to clarify, only those individuals in correctional centres who are awaiting trial. So, on remand, that's what you're looking for?

An Honourable Member: That's correct. Yes.

Mr. Swan: I'm told the most recent numbers, the number of youth in remand, 164. The number of adults in remand, 1,329.

Mr. Gerrard: And could you give us, you know, numbers in terms of the average length of time that youth and adults are in remand?

Mr. Swan: No.

Mr. Gerrard: Just—I mean, if there's not numbers available for the average length of time that people are in remand, can you give us any sense of, you know, how many people would be over one month, how many people over six months, how many people over a year.

Mr. Swan: While I'm just working with my department to see what we can possibly give to assist, I just want to put on the record that the remand population is comprised of a whole bunch of different segments, if you will. There are some people who are in longer term remand. They may have a multi-day trial that is scheduled for many months. The remand population will also include someone who's been placed in custody who may well be making a bail application the next day.

So taking into account those extremes and everything in between, what we can do is try to provide an average which will take into account all of that and try to give you some idea. I just—I don't want the member to—to put it another way, I don't want to over-promise what we can deliver to you. It may be of limited use, but we'll do what we can to get that to you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yeah, and I certainly appreciate that. Can the minister provide details like the number of people in remand who have, you know, mental health conditions, for example?

Mr. Swan: I understand that we cannot.

Mr. Gerrard: Is—to what extent are individuals who come into remand screened for conditions like FASD, for example, or Alzheimer's disease?

Mr. Swan: You know, anybody who comes into a correctional facility, there is a screening process when they're admitted, and the purpose of that screening is to determine their immediate health requirements, which can mean a number of different

things. Certainly, there's an assessment done to see if they—if the person poses a risk to themselves, if there is a suicide risk. It would clarify whether somebody has a need for prescription drugs to make sure that arrangements are made to get those to the person, as well, if there's any other health requirements, as well as security concerns.

Now, again, when somebody first comes in, it's very unclear whether they're going to be staying for a short time or staying for a much longer time. So the screening process is really based on dealing with the immediate requirements when they first arrive. And, obviously, there is some real challenges at things like FASD, which I know the member for River Heights knows is not something that can be easily diagnosed or determined in the short term.

So there is screening done for everybody who comes in, but it's really focusing on the immediate issues.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the things that comes up in terms of youth in remand is that, you know, these are, some of them, youths who, particularly now that the age for staying in school has gone up to 18, that—who should be in school. So what attempt is made to keep these young people so that they're still getting an education?

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, I can tell the member for River Heights that there certainly are school programs at both youth facilities—that's Agassiz Youth Centre out in Portage la Prairie and the Manitoba Youth Centre here in Winnipeg. The school programs actually run 12 months a year. There's no summer break. If you're at the youth centre, we have qualified teachers at both of those facilities and, actually, we've added resources in the past year to include the—improve the offerings and keep kids engaged. You can actually go all the way through up to and including grade 12. So there are, actually, inmates at those facilities that—they graduate while they're at the youth centre.

Also, at the Agassiz Youth Centre out in Portage there's a carpentry program. There's also a meat-cutting program, both of which are qualified and are examples of how, hopefully, people can be integrated back into their communities when they're ultimately released.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister—I mean, you know, one of the things that comes up repeatedly is the, you know, concept of a revolving door. Can the minister give us some statistics in terms of the outcome for

youths and how many go on to have—get jobs or work in, you know, whether it's meat cutting or carpentry or any other facilities, and how many will reoffend?

*(12:10)

Mr. Swan: Maybe we can just clarify the question a bit more, because when you say revolving door, I—that sort of, I think, for most people, raises concerns about the Youth Criminal Justice Act and how it works.

The other part, though, is the idea of reintegration and what's available to assist young people in how they fare at going back into the community. I mean, for example, any custodial sentence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act also includes a—under the way the act is written—includes a component of the youth being back in the community, which can sometimes pose some challenges.

So we're going to try and work as best we can, but if you can just clarify, are you thinking more about the process of the way the young people are sentenced, or are you talking more about outcomes once, for whatever reason, they return to the community. It would help my staff to get going on it.

Mr. Gerrard: Let's focus on those who are in the remand centres. We talked about the fact that there's some education there, with the concept of reintegration, that is for those who've been in remand centres.

Is there any follow-up to know, you know, how many of them, after they leave there, maybe after a sentence or what have you, but those who are in the Remand Centre, what the outcome is in terms of, you know, those who have subsequent offences versus those who are getting productive jobs?

Mr. Swan: Okay, and, again, I'm not trying to be difficult; I'm just trying to focus us. Are you talking about individuals that have been sentenced, or are you talking about youth who are in remand, meaning they haven't been sentenced yet?

Generally, Agassiz is where sentenced youth go, not entirely, but generally, and primarily youths at the Manitoba Youth Centre are on remand, although there are—that's not complete.

So I'm just trying to get a better handle on the question so we can try to give you a—as good an answer as possible.

Mr. Gerrard: You know, what I'm looking for is some follow-up assessment, you know. You've got, it would appear, two groups, I mean, one who are in remand and one group who then go on and have a sentence and serve in Agassiz, right? But—and maybe it's easiest for you to break it down into those two groups, but I just don't know what has been done in terms of follow-up and what kind of useful information has been obtained whether they are in Agassiz or whether they're in the Remand Centre in Winnipeg.

Mr. Swan: Okay, I'll do my best to answer. I mean, if there's a youth who's sentenced under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, they're sentenced to a custodial sentence. That—the Youth Criminal Justice Act provides that a portion of that time must be spent with the youth being released back into the community. It's not a choice. It's not a choice who Probation Services need to deal with out in the community.

So that would be the place where I suppose there would be some measure of follow-up, because the individual is still under the control, if you will, of the justice system, meaning that they will be assigned a probation officer. That officer will use the best available tools to determine the risk that the youth is going to reoffend, and there will be terms put on that individual which, many times, may be the requirement to attend at school, which may be where they can/cannot reside, who they need to reside with, who they cannot be in contact with—and it's up to the probation officer to do their best to get compliance with those conditions.

If a youth successfully completes that period, the justice system doesn't actually have further direct contact with that youth. I mean, there's not an ongoing follow-up by the justice system. Similarly, if somebody is simply released into the community with a probation order, it's up to probation services to try and get compliance with that order for the length of that order. Once that order is complete, it's not the justice system that continues any kind of follow-up.

As the member knows, though, many youth who are engaged in the justice system may be in some way engaged with some other system which does its own follow-up and its own work. So, generally the way the justice system follows up is through probation services for the length of those orders.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I think, you know, basically what I'm hearing you say is that the—those who have been sentenced have spent some time, primarily, I

would guess, in Agassiz, that there would be follow-up while they're on probation, but there's no longer-run follow-up to know, you know, whether the educational programs and others are working to keep them out of jail in the future.

Mr. Swan: It's true. I mean, when somebody has involvement with the justice system, it's done according to the law. If a probation officer is working with a young person, it's because there's a court order, a probation order, which allows that to take place. So the member's right: Once somebody has completed their sentence, there isn't any further direct contact by the justice system with the young person.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, another area—to move into a slightly different area that I'm hearing concerns about—is children and families where there's an issue with Child and Family Services, that sometimes the—it takes a long time to resolve this situation. Can the minister, you know, tell us a little bit about the wait times in terms of—

Mr. Swan: I'm sorry, are you talking about the length of time to resolve protection cases in our court system?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Swan: Okay, this may lead to some follow-up questions. Of course, the—I mean, the justice system doesn't operate the child welfare system in Manitoba, but you're absolutely correct there is an interface with the court system when there's an apprehension. There are court proceedings that need to be taken by the agency to, you know, effectively take the legal control for a child.

* (12:20)

I can say generally that there are a number of different factors that would play into that. Judges will make decisions, but they only do that when cases are ready to be heard. And in any child protection case, there's a number of different aspects that would come into play. In some cases, there may be expert advice that's needed. In some cases, if the parent and the agency don't agree on a plan or don't agree on how things should look, it can even result in the need for a trial to decide whether or not the agency has the right to take permanent control of the youth.

So if you have more specific concerns, I'll do my best with my courts folks to try and come up with an

answer. But do you want to give more detail or is this something you want to take off-line?

Mr. Gerrard: The fundamental concern here is that when you've got a child who comes into protection that the—you want to make sure that the situation in terms of the family, particularly if it turns out that the—you know, that there was a mistake made, for example, that you're not disrupting the family. And so it would—it's healthy to be able to resolve these issues as fast as possible, of course, as well as possible, too. And so—I mean, the issue that comes up, you don't—from what I'm gathering—have any particular information on sort of wait times for people to get into court and to resolve things.

Mr. Swan: No. I mean some of the child protection matters can be heard by a master, who is sort of a judge with limited powers, to deal with these things. We have the full complement of masters in Manitoba. In Winnipeg, if there's a trial or a more substantial proceeding, it would be dealt with by a Queen's Bench judge that's a federally appointed judge who sits in Winnipeg and various other communities. Outside of Winnipeg, it may well be that the case is heard by a Provincial Court judge. And, actually, child protection cases can be—can go forward in any of the communities where the Provincial Court sits. I think there's 69 of them across the province of Manitoba.

So I haven't been made aware of any real concerns about delays to get to a court hearing. So if there is information the member wants to provide to me, I'd be happy to look at them and try to get some sort of answer back.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the other areas that I just have a little bit of time here to ask you about is a follow-up on the case of Heaven Traverse, who was very much in the media because she was—she died and the—from the little bit of what we know, there was concerns of what happened while she was in Child and Family Services' care. And we just wondered what an update of the status of that was—is there ever going to be any further investigation or review of this?

Mr. Chairperson: Just before recognizing the honourable minister, I'd like to ask if the honourable member for River Heights could link the question to the Estimates for Justice—like if—is—it may be more appropriate to ask that question in a process related to a minister for Family Services, for instance. If there's a link you can make to Estimates for this department, then please feel free to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I—because my understanding is that there was some concern about whether there might be further charges laid in this matter, that it might be a matter of the justice system.

Mr. Swan: I'm sorry, I don't know anything about the specific case and, as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I generally wouldn't speak about a particular case. I cannot direct the police in whether to investigate or what to investigate and I don't direct prosecutors in specific cases, so I think that's something you'd have to put to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh).

Mr. Goertzen: The Liberal Leader managed to second an extra five minutes from me there. If that results in a Liberal surge this weekend, I'll be in trouble with my federal colleagues, but I'm going to defer now to the member for Portage who, I know, has questions related to the—his community. I just want to advise staff, when we start again on Monday, we'll start in on the prison questions that I sort of left on the record.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to ask the minister—I know he'd given an update in his opening remarks as to the progress of the women's correctional facility and the imminent closure of that facility in Portage la Prairie. Wondering about the progress towards addressing some of the shortcomings that exist in Portage as it pertains to the provincial judges court that is now located in the government building. The holding cells are woefully inadequate. Also, too, I'd like to ask the minister about, has their final decision yet been made as to an additional capital investment in Agassiz Youth Centre with another cottage of a high-security nature. And I'd also like to ask the minister, with the announcement in the budget of more resources to Crown attorneys office, does that then mean additional staff person in the Crown attorneys office, because currently in Portage la Prairie, the Crown attorneys still hold more than a hundred files per Crown attorney more than their counterparts in Winnipeg.

Mr. Swan: Okay, the member's asked some good questions, and I know he's always representing his community of Portage well. The first piece I can get to is the new women's correctional centre is on track to be substantially completed late in 2011. The goal is to have occupancy early in 2012 which would be the time that the old women's jail in Portage would close.

I can advise that with respect to the Agassiz Youth Centre, there is no plan for further capital expansion at this time. The—we're very pleased that the expansion there was completed, and, on the youth side, the numbers seem to be quite positive that we have enough capacity right now to handle young offenders in Manitoba.

The other two questions are with respect to the Crown attorney; we'll try and give you an answer right off the hop on Monday. As well as a question about the Portage court facilities and the Provincial Court, we'll get to that on Monday as well.

Mr. Goertzen: Not expecting to have the time, I wonder if the minister can provide the most recent recidivism rates for the adult and youth population. I know they're calculated on a three-month rolling basis, I believe, if he's got the most recent numbers.

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, thank you. I'll take the member's request under advisement, and we'll—we should be able to discuss it next week.

Mr. Chairperson: With the dying seconds in this hockey game about to expire, the honourable member for Steinbach.

Mr. Goertzen: I wonder if the minister could also look at providing the number of individuals on conditional sentences, then, on Monday, as well.

Mr. Chairperson: With regret, the timekeeper is very precise. The hour being 12:30, thanks to all. Committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (10:00)

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of Executive Council.

Would the First Minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 30 of the Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday afternoon, the Premier had indicated that he had responses to questions that had been posed Wednesday. I just want to invite the Premier to go ahead and provide those follow-up responses now, if that's—that works for you. Okay. Good.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yesterday or two days ago, the Leader of the Opposition asked me questions about the stadium and—which is currently under construction at the University of Manitoba, as well as bipole, so I wanted to provide some responses to him, and I thank him for the opportunity to do that.

There is a strong partnership in place with respect to the stadium, and the partnership for the stadium facility is called BBB Stadium Inc. It's a non-profit, non-share capital corporation. It has equal shares held by the City of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Football Club.

BBB stands for Blue Bomber Bisons, a new hybrid sporting—no, just kidding—as this stadium will be the home field for both these teams and it will be made available for community use. Its board of directors includes Bill Watchorn of the Winnipeg Football Club; and as the Leader of the Opposition identified earlier, Phil Sheegl, the deputy CAO of the City of Winnipeg; John Alho, the vice-president of the University of Manitoba; and Angela Mathieson, secretary to CDC of this provincial government.

I know the member is familiar with these individuals; they are a capable group. They are overseeing the administrative aspects of the construction of this project with support from their respective administrations.

The BBB Inc. has contracted with Dominion Construction, who is overseeing all tenders and subcontracting on the project. It has been a collaborative effect externally and has been a collaborative effort within our government. The project crosses many departmental portfolios, that is why we have a body like the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet to co-ordinate these cross-departmental initiatives.

In this case, it has involved the ministers and officials conducting the diligence in Local Government, Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation, Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, the Department of Finance and at Manitoba Advanced Education.

This ability to work with a broad base of stakeholders has been fundamental to the project moving forward, and as the member can imagine, it's actually quite a complex project and we're pleased that it's proceeding.

As to its progress, thus far, \$24 million has been advanced towards this project as of March 31st. The loan is being advanced to the University of Manitoba because the project is being built on university property and the university is a key stakeholder.

Advances to the university are treated as loan receivables, and the progress to date is impressive. Excavation of the bowl is finished and, as of this week, all the approximately 2,400 piles have been installed. The in-ground bowl designed for the new stadium will provide Manitoba football fans with a truly unique experience and, in the view of the proponents, will be unmatched in any other outdoor football stadium in Canada.

The Dominion Construction has also begun to pour the concrete for the main floor on the east side of the stadium and will continue to pour concrete for the main floor of the remaining parts of the stadium in the weeks ahead. Over 1,000 cubic metres of concrete have been poured to date.

Dominion has also finished installing the underground piping between the stadium and the Red River that will be an integral part of the drainage system for the in-ground playing field.

*(10:10)

Beginning in early July—June, Dominion expects to start installing the steel framing, and we'll be able to see the physical structure of the new stadium take shape shortly thereafter.

The construction site is a hub of activity and is a quite massive and impressive operation. There are currently about a 180 construction workers on the site at any given time from Monday to Friday. However, Dominion expects this will increase to about a thousand workers beginning in late summer to early fall of 2011 once construction of the stadium fully ramps up.

Our Department of Infrastructure receives regular briefings from Dominion Construction on the progress of this project, and I am happy to report the project remains on budget and on track to be finished on time for the '12 CFL season.

The undertaking of the stadium is governed by a series of agreements put together by all the partners in the project. Most—all the—most of these agreements have been completed and were made available to the public some time ago. I was informed that you may have requested many of these agreements through FIPPA requests, and they should

have been delivered to you as a result of those requests.

These agreements can explain the former partnership with Creswin and the current partnership as it exists today. So the transparency factor has been addressed as we go along, and if there's any other agreements to be finalized, they will be made public as well. This is similar to the process we followed with the MTS Centre.

I do have, as well, some comments on bipole. I'd leave it to the member to decide whether he'd like to do some follow-up on the stadium piece at this stage, or would you like me to proceed and put the comments on the record with respect to bipole as well?

Mr. McFadyen: I would suggest that you go ahead with the bipole comments and then we can do follow-up.

Mr. Selinger: On the subject of bipole, the member asked questions about the transmission line and power converter stations, and I'd like to take this opportunity to provide him with some further information about these critical elements to the project.

Manitoba Hydro powers our economy to the tune of half a billion dollars a year. It provides the lowest power rates in North America, and this is a huge benefit to families and businesses. Hydro is the heart of our present and future economic well-being. The Hydro project, Bipole III, including the new converter stations, will allow Hydro to export new power being generated by northern dams, and it will ensure long-term power reliability.

Reliability is not just a luxury we may—might choose to buy; it is essential. The converters are essential. Not building the converters would likely—would be like a family choosing not to take out insurance on their home.

Let's look at the converters in more detail. A new northern converter station will connect a new bipole line to northern hydro generating stations. A new southern station, the Riel Station, is needed to back up the Dorsey Converter Station, currently the only southern converter in Manitoba. Between 70 to 75 per cent of our power supply flows through the existing Dorsey Station. It is shared by both Bipole I and II, and it is also the terminal for the Dorsey-Forbes international line, which is a major import-export line to the United States. The consequences of losing Dorsey Station for even a

short period of time are very grave. If it were to be lost as a result of fire, tornado, ice storm, sabotage or some other event, Manitoba Hydro could lose access to its northern supply for months and even years. The highest risk to the Dorsey Station comes from a once-in-a-generation fire. Although steps have been taken to protect against such a fire, it remains a serious concern.

The risk is not hypothetical. The loss of our northern power supply has happened before, in 1996, when a storm impacted both of our existing bipoles at the same time. Luckily, it was an off-peak time and we were able to manage it, but we need to be more responsible going forward. The government at the time did not follow up on that high-risk event.

Manitoba Hydro has told us that the complete loss of Dorsey Station could result in an extended outage of up to three years. If such an outage occurred, without a new southern converter station as backup, Manitoba Hydro would only be available to serve two-thirds of the load for much of the time over the coldest winter months. This would mean rolling blackouts and would force Manitoba Hydro to import power to meet the demand for Manitobans and lose its profitable export markets.

Manitobans' hydro rates would be forced to rise sharply, and both the financial health of Manitoba Hydro and the economic stability of the province would be shaken to the core. Hydro is at the heart of the Manitoba economy, a \$56-billion economy. Imagine a scenario in which Hydro loses Dorsey and is forced to implement rolling blackouts. How many weeks are we willing to gamble on, one week, two weeks or more?

The cost of the required new converters is less than two weeks of the Manitoba economy. Are we not willing to make this investment? Would not members of this House seriously suggest that it's responsible to gamble with stakes like those? Of course not. That's why I was pleased to hear earlier this week that there now seems to be acknowledgement by all members, including members opposite, on this critical point. Converter stations are not optional for Bipole III; they are essential, regardless of the route taken.

So what about the cost of the converters? When we consider the risks of a catastrophic loss of power without a backup converter station and the benefits being able to export—increase export sales, the price of the converter stations can be viewed as reasonable.

We have been clear that there have been other—been cost pressures. That's why Hydro started an external review of the costs last fall in preparation for their application for environmental licensing. They're moving forward to get Bipole III built.

There have been two confirmed estimates for this project. The original, from 2007 when the project was announced, and the updated one released by Manitoba Hydro in March of this year when Hydro updated its cost projections with advice from external independent experts. The cost of the converters has gone up, as Hydro anticipated it might, from \$1.166 billion to \$1.829 billion. And the cost of the line of itself has gone up somewhat, from \$1.082 billion to \$1.26 billion. And I would point out that this increase would have applied to any route chosen.

So let's be clear here. The major cost driver is the converters. But as we now all seem to agree, we need them no matter what and no matter what route is taken. Given that we all agree that converters are necessary, Manitobans have every right to feel confused about some of the claims made by the members opposite. Many Manitobans have received partisan advertising claiming that Manitoba families will have to pay \$11,748 on their hydro bill because of the west-side route. Those numbers do not add up.

First of all, Bipole III will not cost taxpayers a cent. Manitoba Hydro will use Bipole III to sell clean power to customers outside of Manitoba, generating revenues far in excess of their investment, keeping rates affordable for all Manitobans.

Moreover, if we multiply \$11,748 by the number of Manitoba families, 325,000 approximately, that would make the additional cost of routing down the west side \$3.8 billion. Well, this amount is actually much greater than the entire cost of both Bipole III and the conversion equipment and has nothing to do with routing bipole down the west side.

So let's review. We know the members opposite agree the converter stations are essential. We know the real cost pressures come from the converter equipment, and we know members opposite are capable of multiplying \$11,748 by 3,200–325,000 Manitoba families. A reasonable observer could only conclude that the numbers being thrown around are designed to be misleading.

Why would they do that? What is it that Manitoba members opposite are up to here? I would

like to invite members opposite to retract these misleading figures.

Of course, there is another option here. If members opposite are not wilfully misleading Manitobans about the facts of Bipole III and converters, the alternative is that members opposite are, in fact, not talking about east and west, but are in talk—in fact talking about cancelling the whole project, both Bipole III and new converter stations. If so, that is consistent with what their party has always done. The members opposite opposed building our last major hydro project, the Limestone generating station, which came in on time and under budget. It cost \$1.4 billion, and it has supported more than \$6 billion worth of export sales.

To build the converter stations would—to not build the converter stations would effectively cancel all future hydro development on the Nelson River. That includes cancelling planned projects Keeyask and Conawapa. That would mean a huge blow to Manitoba's future. It would be wasting our hydroelectric resource and hobbling our potential as a province.

That is why we support Hydro's decision to build the bipole, including the necessary converters, why we have been and always will be completely open with Manitobans about the costs, risks and benefits of this important project, and why we are committed to keeping Manitoba Hydro strong, growing and publicly owned for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank you for the opportunity.

* (10:20)

Mr. McFadyen: Firstly, I just want to thank the Premier for reading that prepared statement. There's some good rhetoric there.

Just in terms of the timing of the decision to go down west versus east, can the Premier just clarify when the government made that decision?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to check specific dates, but it certainly was announced before the last election.

Mr. McFadyen: And the Premier's also indicated that the basis for the decision was the Farlinger report. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: The Farlinger report clarified the issues involved on east-versus-west-side routing. The decision, I believe, by the government on the principle of moving it down the west side was

actually taken even before then and announced before the '07 election, as I've said.

Mr. McFadyen: And what reports were available—expert reports were available to the government then, prior to the '07 election, with respect to routing options?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to check the record for him on that.

Mr. McFadyen: So the Premier's previously said on many occasions that the decision was based on the Farlinger report. Was that incorrect?

Mr. Selinger: No, it wasn't. The Farlinger report was commissioned to give a broad discussion of the routing alternatives because there were questions raised about them. And the Farlinger report canvassed the issues of the different routes—environmental issues, reputational issues, economic issues—and took a thorough look at them.

And the reason the—Mr. Farlinger was commissioned, because he's—has a very strong reputation as an engineer and as a person who does very thorough work in reviewing policy questions and takes a broad perspective on that, not only from the technical point of view but from the public policy point of view. And his work, in my view, allowed for a more thorough discussion of the policy considerations in deciding which route and gave information both to us as a government and to the board of Manitoba Hydro in finalizing what route they should change—take.

There had been some preliminary indication that the government would prefer a west-side route, but the final decision had to be made by the board of Manitoba Hydro, and the Farlinger report was done before their final decision and allowed them to have more information on what that decision should be and what factors should be considered in taking that decision.

Mr. McFadyen: And so, just to be clear, then, the Premier's saying that the government made its decision before the Farlinger report, then, was issued. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: The government indicated its broad interest in an alternative route to the east side and firmed its position up after it received reports like the Farlinger report and had opportunity to discuss that with the public and with members opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier said in response to the first question that a decision was made and

communicated prior to the 2007 election. Can he just provide any documentation to back up the—that decision, the timing of that decision in advance of May 2007?

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

Mr. McFadyen: And the—can the Premier just indicate whether there were any routing analysis documents prepared in advance of the decision that was made? We're now told—and this story keeps changing—we were told previously the decision was made in September '07; we're now being told it was made prior to May. But can he just indicate whether there were any routing analysis studies and documents prepared and discussed at Hydro prior to May of 2007?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the government indicated an interest in an alternative to the east-side route before the '07 election, but the final decision on the route was made by the Hydro board, and that was subsequent to the Farlinger report being published. So, we need to be clear about that. And as to any technical information, I will seek to see what's available.

Mr. McFadyen: Yes, I agree with the Premier we need to be clear. He just said that the decision was made and communicated prior to the election in 2007, and he now seems to be saying the decision wasn't made until September 2007. Can he just clear up that contradiction?

Mr. Selinger: As I said earlier, there was a broad concern expressed and a preference 'conceded'—expressed by the government before 2007 about an alternative to an east-side route. But the final decision on routing was made by the Hydro board itself, subsequent to the Farlinger report.

Mr. McFadyen: Just looking at *Hansard* from Wednesday of this week, April the 27th, the minister—current Minister of Hydro said, and I quote: When the government of the day, in 2007, made the decision that they—that we were going to go down the west side instead of the east side of the province, that was before an election.

Was that correct, the minister's statement in the House of this Wednesday?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'd have to take a look at the exact wording of what the member said but, broadly, the government expressed a desire for a west-side

alternative to the eastern route before the '07 election, and that was in the public domain.

Mr. McFadyen: The minister says that the decision was made, and that was before the election. I'm just wondering if you can just clarify: What's the—what is a broad expression of interest versus a decision?

Mr. Selinger: As I said, the concerns raised about an east-side route, and the interest in having an alternative route down the west side were communicated to the public by the minister of the day. But the final decision, and I don't want to—the words here, I think, are important and I understand the member might think that the word "decision," if that was what was in the *Hansard*, implied a final decision by government in advance of what Hydro decided itself.

I think, to try to clarify the language, I think the government expressed a broad preference for a west-side alternative, as the stakeholder and shareholder in Manitoba Hydro, but that the final decision on the route was made by Manitoba Hydro's board of directors. And, of course, there was—the government's views were expressed prior to their making that decision, so they could be informed of the shareholders' preferences. And the Farlinger report was also prepared as a document—it was commissioned by Manitoba Hydro itself as a document to get a broader review of the issues involved.

Mr. McFadyen: So, when the minister says that the decision was made to go west versus east before the election, Premier's saying that she just used the wrong word there. Is that what he's saying?

Mr. Selinger: What I'm saying is this. We—the word "decision," I think, should be understood as a broad preference was expressed, whereas the final decision by the Hydro itself was made by its own board of directors. And, I know we can perhaps parse that language there. I think the member should understand it: that the spirit of the government wanting to have a west-side alternative was expressed before the '07 election, and the final decision was made by the Hydro board, to clarify how the language might be best used.

Mr. McFadyen: And so, then, to be clear, then, the decision was made before the Farlinger report, then.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I've been trying to clarify that by suggesting the government's preference for a west-side alternative was expressed early—as early as 2005, I understand. But that the final decision, as

opposed to a broad preference, was made by the Hydro board itself, subsequent to the publication and preparation of the Farlinger report.

Mr. McFadyen: The—all the public comments to date have said that the decision was based on the Farlinger report, but what the Premier and the minister now seem to be saying is that, in fact, the government's view on it was established before the Farlinger report was done. Is that correct?

Mr. Selinger: I would say no. I would say that a preference was expressed by the government. The Farlinger report, commissioned by Hydro, gave further discussion of all the issues involved. This also allowed the government to further refine its views on this matter. It allowed the Hydro board to make a final decision on which route they thought made the most sense from all the issues that were discussed in the Farlinger report. So, it is correct to say that the Farlinger report informed the decision of the Hydro board, and also helped shape the views of the government.

* (10:30)

Mr. McFadyen: I just want to thank the Premier just for clearing up the past misstatements that he and his minister made on that point.

The—on this issue of the preference that was expressed by government prior to the election of 2007, can the Premier just provide any documentation that would indicate where that preference was documented?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, and I'll undertake to get that information for him. And I want the member to understand that his characterization of a misstatement may be unfortunately taking too much precision with certain words, and I've tried to clarify it by using different words, preference versus final decision. So I don't know that you could characterize that as a misstatement unless you are looking to do so.

Mr. McFadyen: And, just in terms of the Premier's acknowledgement that they've been using unclear language to date, can he just indicate the—what expert reports were relied on by government prior to arriving at its preference for a west-side route in advance of the 2007 election?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll see what information was available. But I think the member should understand that when a government expresses a broad preference, they will then continue to search for

information and be informed by subsequent reports, including the Farlinger report, which can allow them to refine, clarify their views, and that those kinds of documents can be very helpful in reviewing these matters.

Mr. McFadyen: And so, just in terms of the sequences, the Premier is saying that there were no expert or technical reports produced prior to the expression of the government's preferred route.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I've just indicated, I think, more than a couple of times now that, well, I'll find out what was available at the time.

Mr. McFadyen: Were there any—he was minister of Hydro at the time, were there any studies or reports that he had reviewed prior to taking the position that he favoured a west-side route?

Mr. Selinger: You know, I will—again, it's the same question. I will get the information for him about who the minister was at the time and what information may have informed their preferences.

Mr. McFadyen: And the Premier has said that the Farlinger report was prepared subsequent to the decision. Are there any other reports that were prepared that back up the expert reports that state that the west side is the preferred route over east side?

Mr. Selinger: Actually, I didn't say that. I said the Farlinger report was prepared prior to the final decision made by the Manitoba Hydro board on which route to be chosen. It was a report prepared—the government had expressed its preference for a west-side alternative, or a non-east-side alternative, as early as 2005. The Farlinger report was prepared after that '05 date and prior to a final decision by the Hydro board.

Mr. McFadyen: And the Premier, who at the time was Hydro minister, wrote to the Hydro board formally in September of 2007. Where did that letter fit into the sequence with respect to the Farlinger report?

Mr. Selinger: The Farlinger report was commissioned and prepared by Manitoba Hydro. It informed my views as Minister of Hydro and the views of the government, and one of the main points that was made in the Farlinger report was—is that the issue of the route was larger than Hydro itself, and that the shareholder, i.e., the government, should properly have a view on this that they could express and put in writing as a matter of fact. And this was

considered to be emerging best practice with respect to the relationship between Crown corporations and ministers and governments, that, on major policy questions, it would be helpful to the board to know the broad views of government on these matters.

Mr. McFadyen: Just given the then minister's, current Premier's reliance on the Farlinger report as a basis for the decision, how much time did he spend analyzing that report before writing his letter to the chairman of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I'm not going to be able to give him a precise amount of minutes and hours. But, definitely, it was a report well worth reading.

I do actually have some further information here that—if the member's interested, on some of the timing questions he's asked.

The first article expressing the government's views on whether the route should be the east side or the west side were published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on the 29th of May, 2005.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just indicate whether there are any routing studies that were done in the early part of 2005 prior to the expression of that view of government?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll have to see what was available at the time.

Mr. McFadyen: And again, in terms of the Farlinger report and the minister's follow-up letter to the chairman of Hydro, the report itself is dated September 2007, and the minister's letter is dated September 20th, 2007. Subsequent information we received indicated that the Farlinger report was finalized on September the 19th, 2007, and that the minister's letter to the chairman was dated September 20th, 2007.

So can the Premier just confirm that he had had the Farlinger report for less than 24 hours before the letter was written to the chairman of Hydro?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to check to see how long I had the report, but, clearly, the report was very influential in my views, as expressed in the letter, and, as a matter of fact, as I recall—I don't have the letter here; the member seems to have it—as I recall, I believe I quoted some of the Farlinger report in my letter.

Mr. McFadyen: Right, and the printed date on the cover of the Farlinger report is September 2007, and we're subsequently advised that it was delivered on

September 19th, 2007, and the minister's letter is dated September 20th, 2007, which is the next day.

So can the Premier indicate that his letter to the chairman of Hydro was based on one day's analysis of the Farlinger report?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'd have to check the specific sequence of that information, but there's no doubt that the Farlinger report informed my views, as expressed in the letter.

And, if—I might add, I think we should, again, for the record—oh, here we go, here's my letter—good—thank you—helpful. We can now follow each other in quoting it.

The member might recall that we had 80 community meetings on the east side as part of a comprehensive east-side planning initiative, and that informed our decision as well, and it also followed experience in Minnesota with stakeholders opposing hydro sales based on their views about how hydro had been developed in the north with flooding and relations with First Nations up there.

So there were many factors that went into the views that government subsequently adopted on what the preferred route would be, including consultation with local communities on the east side, including experience in the United States with export customers and, of course, some of the material that was put forward in the Farlinger report and quoted in my letter of September 20th, which I'm now happy to have in my possession.

Mr. McFadyen: Just in terms of the Farlinger report itself, on page 1, the third bullet, the question is posed: Will there be international opposition from environmental groups to an east-side route, even if there were First Nations agreement to proceed, and the conclusion is very likely, but the tenor of the debate may change as environmental groups can no longer point to a lack of First Nations support for the east-side route as part of their opposition, and it could possibly place them in conflict with First Nations communities with whom they have previously partnered.

In light of that ambivalent response on that issue, I'm wondering how the Premier could have arrived at their conclusion that international opposition was inevitable.

* (10:40)

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, there had been negative experience in the marketplace where our customers

live in Minnesota, that for years there had been very serious opposition to purchasing Manitoba Hydro because of flooding activities in the north and conflict with First Nations communities about the outcomes and impacts of that flooding, and that was well known to us. And, as a matter of fact, we had to make some interventions down there to protect Manitoba Hydro's reputation from some legislation that was passed, and we had to work very hard to get some of that legislation changed so that it didn't single out Manitoba Hydro. So there had been quite a bit of experience over the years of activity to oppose the purchase of Manitoba Hydro in the marketplace where our customers did business.

Mr. McFadyen: One of the other conclusions that is arrived at in the Farlinger report is on page 5, under the discussion of the west corridor, and the report says that routing the Bipole III line along the west corridor would provide the greatest separation between the existing lines and the proposed new line. But it would also be the longest, most expensive and least useful for emergency operation in the event of the loss of one of the transmission corridors.

I was wondering if the Premier can indicate whether he gave that concern about reliability, cost and the fact that this would be the least useful route for emergency operation when he made his decision the next day.

Mr. Selinger: The Farlinger report raised a number of important issues, and that was one of them, and it was taken into account.

The member has asked about sequencing on the bipole, and I have further information for him on that if he wishes to receive it now.

Mr. McFadyen: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Selinger: The information I have today indicates that the board of Manitoba Hydro asked Hydro to consider alternatives to the east side in 2004-2005. Hydro studies into a range of options concluded that the west side was the only other viable solution to improve reliability. Based on the technical scope of their studies in the fall of '06, Hydro management recommended proceeding with bipole on the west side, if the east side was not available. The Hydro board requested additional information beyond the technical aspects of the routing options, including environmental impacts and risks associated with environmental opposition to the east-side route. This spring—that spring, prior to the election call, CMC Consulting Inc., which is

really Farlinger, was engaged to prepare a report into environmental considerations and risks and benefits associated with environmental opposition, including with respect to Hydro's export markets.

The Farlinger study recommended that government play a major role in routing assessment, noting that many routing considerations fall outside of Manitoba Hydro's mandate, and government is significantly impacted and has much at stake in the decision. The board requested that—oh, thank you, this is the Farlinger report—the report requested the government clarify its position. Government provided its position in writing. Management repeated its recommendation to proceed with a western routing if the east side is not available. The board performed thorough due diligence considering risks to export markets and resultant risk to Manitoba Hydro customers, potential of licensing delays, capital costs, reliability issues, technical issues, environmental factors, as well as public policy considerations of the government in making the routing decision, and I do have a copy of the Farlinger report. So, if the member's referring to a specific page, I could probably get there pretty quickly now.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for that information. One of the other conclusions that the Farlinger report reaches at page 8, under heading 3.1.1 ecological integrity, first paragraph provides some summary of the issues, and it concludes—this paragraph concludes with these two lines, and I quote: "Ecological integrity is sporadically, but increasingly, cited as the reason to save the boreal forest, which is discussed in more detail below. A high-level review of ecological integrity issues indicates that this is a complex subject; neither the east nor the west side would be particularly favoured."

Just wondering, in light of that statement, that neither east nor west would be particularly favoured on that issue, how the minister at the time could have arrived at the conclusion he did the day after receiving this report.

Mr. Selinger: Well, again, I would encourage the member to read subsequent paragraphs where there's further discussion of what ecological integrity means. It includes things like intactness, ensuring continuity of systems and processes, unfragmented and distant from human infrastructure, and then it goes on in the first line of two paragraphs after the one the member cited.

Clearly, the east side has greater existing ecological integrity than the west side. The west side has a 90-year history of mining, forestry, hydroelectric development, an associated infrastructure of roads, rail lines and cut lines for geophysical exploration. The Flin Flon-Snow Lake greenstone belt and the Thompson nickel belt are two of the most prolific mining districts in the world. Forestry operations extend throughout most of this northern area to be traversed by a western corridor save for the Split Lake resource management area.

While the east side is also traversed to some extent by transmission lines, for example, north to Poplar River, east to Little Grand Rapids, and then the north-central project region and by winter roads with plans for all-weather road development to Bloodvein, and potentially further north, it is of a different scope and intensity. The existence of extensive development in the west, however, does not mean the biophysical impacts in that region would be less nor would it be necessarily be easier to find a route. Several other observations irrelevant to this debate include—and it goes on.

But the main point that's made in those subsequent paragraphs is the east side has greater existing ecological integrity than the west side, and that informed our views as well.

Mr. McFadyen: Madam Chairperson, I just want to carry on from where the Premier left off.

On page 9, the Farlinger report goes on to say, and it's the second bullet down: A west-side routing will cross not only boreal shield but also boreal plains ecozones from roughly Ponton to Red Deer Lake. This latter ecozone is considered to be highly impacted and at greater risk according to Global Forest Watch. Less than 15 per cent remains in large, intact areas. This includes the same ecozone that was identified for protection as part of the proposed Manitoba lowlands national park. Although there are potential routing options through this ecozone that could parallel existing developments, an argument could be made this region has greater urgency for protection of ecological integrity than the vaster boreal shield forest to the east side. However, this forest does not have the same profile and emotional appeal as the east side.

I'm just wondering if the Premier gave any heed to the point about that western region having greater urgency for protection than the east side, off-set by the comment that it didn't have the same profile and emotional appeal as the east side and whether he can

just indicate that really the decision he made a day after getting this report was to focus only on the profile and emotional appeal of the east side versus the reality of the urgency of protection cited in the Farlinger report for the west side.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, and I think the member raises legitimate points that were discussed in the Farlinger report. The Farlinger report clearly indicates that the east-side intactness has—results in greater ecological integrity. It does not deny that there are issues that have to be addressed on a west-side route as well. And that's why the west-side routing was very carefully considered by Manitoba Hydro on how it actually sited the line.

So, there are no absolutely perfect solutions when it comes to routing transmission lines anywhere in the world, but some solutions are better than others in terms of protecting ecological integrity. And the east side, with the potential to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was considered to be one that would have greater ecological integrity and greater long-term value to protect it, in view of the fact that the west side has a 90-year history of mining, forestry and hydroelectric development and an associated infrastructure of roads, rail lines and cut lines for geophysical exploration.

So the report provides a lot of information that was useful in trying to arrive at a policy position by the government and, of course, by the Hydro board itself.

Mr. McFadyen: One of the interesting parts of the quote that the Premier just read was the reference to the west side having a significant amount of development, including roads, railways and cut lines. Does the Premier have any concern about the impact of a road going up the east side?

*(10:50)

Mr. Selinger: Again, it all depends how it's done. And the road being developed to date is, for the most part, following the footprint of the existing winter route and is proceeding in a—on that basis. But, because the winter roads are becoming less and less useful for less and less periods of time because of weather change—climate change initiatives, there was a growing need to have an all-weather road to provide what we consider essential goods and services in our own lives to people on the east side. So the road is being developed with close partnerships with First Nations on the east side to do it in such a way that it minimizes impacts and has the

consent and support of the communities on the east side.

Mr. McFadyen: And those are fair comments and I'm not taking issue with those comments. But the—what the Premier now seems to be saying is that any concern about the integrity of the east-side forest that may be interrupted by a road is overridden by these other factors in this case. Is that a fair way to sum up his position?

Mr. Selinger: No, that would be not a fair summary of my position. My—the summary of my position would be—is the road on the east side is following the, broadly speaking, the pattern of the existing winter road to reduce impacts and is being done in close consultation with local communities on the east side so that they are comfortable and consent to where the road goes, to prevent ecological damage.

Now, if I might, some of the other quotes in the Farlinger report that were influential. Page 7, the second line starting under bullet 3—point 3: In very broad terms, a west-side routing will traverse roughly 500 kilometres of forest from Henday to The Pas and then 760 kilometres of rural landscape from The Pas to Riel. An eastern routing would traverse 800 kilometres of forest from Henday to the Winnipeg River and 85 kilometres from there to Riel. So there's less forest traversed on the west side than on the east side according to the Farlinger report. The forested areas of the west route are much more intensively developed than on the east side, with roads, rail lines, geotechnical survey lines and transmission lines, as well as forestry and mining operations.

So that—those are comments that informed our thinking on this, and I just draw them to the attention for the member opposite because there are many, many good points made in the Farlinger report, and, in that regard, I always felt that it tried to canvass the issues on both sides of the question in terms of routing as fairly as possible.

Mr. McFadyen: The—just, again, the note—the point is made in Farlinger report, as the Premier has indicated, about the impact of roads on the west side. And I'm wondering if the Premier can just indicate—our understanding is that the right-of-way required for the east-side road project is a little wider than the winter roads and that, in fact, some trees will be knocked down. Can you just confirm that that is going to happen as part of the development of the east-side road?

Mr. Selinger: Sorry, I didn't hear the entire question. Was he asking whether the east side road would knock down trees?

Mr. McFadyen: That's correct.

Mr. Selinger: I think, subject to further information, an all-weather road will require some tree removal because it has to be built to a higher standard than a winter road and will likely straighten out some of the curves and bends and make it a road of higher quality; there's no question about that. But, by trying to follow, as much as possible, the footprint of the existing route that those negative impacts should be lessened.

Now, just on a similar point, on page 12 there is a quote on the western corridor in terms of the transmission corridor. The western corridor options provide opportunities to follow existing transmission lines, rail lines or highways for most of its length. So that is to suggest that a western transmission route could minimize negative impacts on the environment as well because of the already existing transportation on other corridors in existence there.

Mr. McFadyen: One of the other comments that's made in the Farlinger report is that an east-side transmission line could be developed in such a way that provided a level of protection necessary to get a UNESCO designation.

I'm wondering if the Premier is aware of that finding on the part of the Farlinger report, and whether it had any impact on the decision that he made.

Mr. Selinger: You know, I think the Farlinger report was very thoughtful in this regard. I think it suggests that there are significant risks to a UNESCO World Heritage designation of an east-side transmission route. For example, on page 21—and I'm hoping this Farlinger report does not become biblical in its importance, the way we're going at the quotes here. We'll start being up in the Legislature very soon saying Ephesians whatever, and—but I can see that it has a lot of value to both of us, at least for the purposes of discussion this morning. And it does. I mean, it was a very well-crafted report and I think it speaks to the integrity of the authors, that they tried to be very fair in what they said here.

So I'm going—the second paragraph under 5.1: Just as projects may be inscribed—and he's referring to UNESCO projects—they may also be removed from the World Heritage List if they do not maintain their cultural or natural values. A number of sites are

listed as being in danger of removal. These include a site in China where UNESCO has serious concerns over a controversial proposal to build dams and water power infrastructure near the site. China has been asked to provide a report within the next year on the environmental consequences of the project.

Parks Canada is the lead federal agency for the implemental of the World Heritage Convention in Canada. Sites considered for a nomination by a state party are placed on a tentative list. Canada has updated this—last updated this list in '05. At that time, over 150 sites were identified as potential sites, with 10 being placed on the list and that—one of those 10 is the one that we're talking about, the UNESCO World Heritage site on the east side.

So I think we have to be careful—and on page 22 what does the—Parks Canada say. They say on page 22—and—in the second paragraph on the top of page 22—and we can both become scholars on texts after this—the precise boundaries of the site are not known, and will not be known, for some time but while the boundaries of the site are not well defined, Parks Canada believes there is a high potential for conflict with the transmission line. Furthermore, First Nations territories extend all the way to Lake Winnipeg, meaning there is no place where the line can be built without impacting, to some degree, the cultural values of the Aboriginal population.

These are all factors that had to be considered in this very complex and difficult decision. And just to be fair, on page 22 there's another quote, a little later on, from the Farlinger report. He indicates that some World Heritage sites have fully developed modern infrastructure systems. The member probably has noticed that, but the Farlinger report notes that these were in place before inscription. A transmission line within the site would certainly weaken the case for inscription, based on natural values.

So there are examples of sites that already have infrastructure in place but they were in place before they were designated. To impose them after the site was designated, or in the process of trying to designate it, would weaken its natural values and make it more difficult to get that designation. I think that's the logical conclusion of the comments in the Farlinger report.

* (11:00)

Mr. McFadyen: And I share the Premier's view that there's a lot to be found within the Farlinger report and it is a, I think, quite a balanced report. And we

can certainly find sections within the report that support different arguments but I would just want to not allow the opportunity to go by without also noting the conclusion arrived at by Farlinger that—and this is on page 9 and, again, back on the issue of the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation, he says—the report says, a more detailed discussion of the potential UNESCO World Heritage Site is provided below, but some references suggest that if 50 per cent or more of a region's land is given protected status, then integrity is protected. As noted above, the Province already considers this natural region to be adequately represented in terms of enduring features.

This means that provided that the Bipole III line does not alter the potential UNESCO status, a routing scenario for the east side could be developed if it were coupled with real and perhaps additional protected status. That line—and we certainly—because we're dealing with an application that hasn't yet been complete, we certainly understand that we are talking about things that may or may not happen in the future in terms of that application process and issues that would have to be dealt with as part of it.

But the—just given the engineering and the financial and the reliability benefits of east side, which I don't think anybody disputes, given that there are conclusions arrived at that it may be possible to develop routing scenarios if coupled with real and perhaps additional protected status, I'm just wondering why the Province would not have pursued that potential more vigorously than it has to date rather than just arriving at a conclusion and sticking with that conclusion even though Farlinger and others seems to be saying that it may be possible to achieve a win-win scenario of a more reliable, less expensive line if it were coupled with real and perhaps additional protected status in the area.

Why not pursue that more vigorously than has been the case to date?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I think it's a good question and the quote that the member refers to speaks about the ecological integrity of the area, that there might be some potential if additional land was protected, but that's a risk. That's a risk that has to be assessed in light of all the other factors involved, and it's very clear that there had been a—and I've given him quotes in this regard, that the intact, pristine nature of the boreal forest on the east side was one of its enduring values under UNESCO criteria.

But that was only one of the values. The other value was the cultural integrity of the area, and I've just given him a quote that showed that the traditional territory of First Nations extended really through the—from Lake Winnipeg to the border and beyond on the east side.

So when you put it together, the strength of the application is its ecological integrity as well as its cultural integrity. That makes it a stronger application because it's got a double-barrelled value as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

And I think that's an important consideration. If you can get an application—and I think the member knows that these applications are not slam dunks. They're competitive applications. There are other sites that are competing for these designations, over 150 narrowed down to a list of 10. So, if you want to have the strongest application possible, you want to strengthen your cultural values and your ecological values and put the best case forward possible.

And in addition to that, you want to ensure that the routing decision is the right one from a reputational point of view for the Crown corporation, and we know that the reputation of Manitoba Hydro had taken a lot of criticism because of previous decisions about flooding in the north. So you have your customers and the communities in the area where your customers provide service raising concerns about previous Hydro development and putting the reputation at risk.

And I might add to that that hydro itself in the United States also had lots of reputational issues involved with it as well, riparian damage, Tennessee Valley Authority flooding in the United States.

So, even in the context of an American marketplace, hydro, not Manitoba Hydro but hydro more broadly, had issues attached to it in terms of the impacts on the environment. And then specific to Manitoba Hydro, there had been significant issues raised in Minnesota, for example, about how hydro had been developed in previous experiences in the '70s, for which there had been over \$700 million of compensation paid out.

And I think this is actually a meaningful discussion for us because as we develop the resource regardless of who the government is, we have to make prudent decisions about how we can get the most value for that resource.

Do we want to go back to the '70s and have those fights replayed on environmental questions

with respect to the east side replicated? Because they accumulate, right? I mean, for a lot of the folks in the United States, the '70s are fairly fresh memories for them. They recall that experience and they're concerned about it still, even though we've been working for—since the '70s to address those issues with the Northern Flood Agreement, with the arbitration process, with \$700 million worth of compensation paid out.

And we've taken a new approach to developing hydro in the north in terms of generation, where we work out all the adverse environmental impacts with First Nations before we decide to proceed with the project. And this is—and this requirement has intensified even further with section 35 requirements under the Constitution, which did not exist in the 1970s. They came subsequent to that, and jurisprudence, as the member will know, has evolved quite dramatically with respect to section 35 requirements. And, if I recall correctly, there's just been a hydro project in British Columbia which has been struck down by the courts because they felt section 35 had not been adequately addressed with respect to First Nations.

So we have an evolving legal and constitutional context with respect to respecting First Nation rights for consultation. We have the experience of the '70s, which created a lot of problems in the marketplace for export sales. We have the report on Farlinger suggesting that there are issues and risks attached to attacking an east-side route that would have implications for the cultural integrity as well as the ecological integrity, although they might be offset in some circumstances. But could they be offset sufficiently to overcome that history? Could they be offset sufficiently to address section 35 concerns? Could they be offset sufficiently to protect the cultural integrity of the area, not to mention the environmental groups that the member often likes to throw in front of me in the Legislature here? I think he raises the name of the Kennedy family and others like that.

I mean, the reality is it's a very complex policy context, and not only section 35, the whole climate change issue which comes and goes, as we know. And right now it seems to be at a relatively low ebb, even though the water is high in Manitoba and throughout North America. But we all know that climate change is occurring. I don't—I hope the member is not disputing the science on that. I don't think he is. That would be a refreshing point of convergence for us on this question, unlike other

members of his political party at other levels of government who seem to be in denial about that.

But, if there is some convergence on the fact that climate change is occurring, even though we do not have a complete inventory of the impacts of that, we have to ask ourselves, how can we position the resource to be a resource that is perceived as having a good reputation from an environmental point of view, as to being a responsible steward of the environment, and can command a good price? Because green energy, over time, I believe, and I think the member might agree with me, will command a higher value in the marketplace as opposed to a energy source that is considered not to be clean. And we can see that with some of the debate around the oil sands project in Alberta, and just the enormous reputational challenges they have to overcome.

We know that in Alberta, for example, they've taken very significant steps to reduce the carbon footprint of the energy they're developing there, but they are saddled with enormous pressures and enormous resistance to purchasing that product in the American marketplace in spite of their best efforts to do that.

I do not want to take Manitoba Hydro into that kind of negative policy context and I know that it exists out there because I've been in these communities and these states where our customers exist and I've heard the feedback. I've had legislators come to me and say, why should we buy your product given what you did to Aboriginal people? Why should we buy your product given the damage you've done to the environment? And what assurances can you give us that you will do business differently in the future? And I think that informs our decision making here.

I can go on, but I'll take a pause and give him a chance to respond.

* (11:10)

Mr. McFadyen: And, you know, I would say that the government is right to consider all the factors that the Premier has just discussed. And the—*[interjection]*—and to consider those factors. And I want to stress the word "consider."

And I—the issue we have or the concern we have about the decision is that the facts don't seem to be lining up with some of the rhetoric that we're hearing on this. The—you know, and I'll use an example. The cultural integrity, which is really, I think, if you were

to define it, is really going to be a function of the level of consent and buy in on the part of the people who live in that part of the province, the First Nations people primarily.

And, you know, I would go back to the article that the Premier tabled, the May 29th, 2005 *Free Press* article, and it makes reference to a campaign by the Island Lake Tribal Council at the time, led by former member of Parliament, Elijah Harper, who says that he supports an east-side transmission line. He is a respected, now elder, from that part of Manitoba, former member of Parliament who said that, and I quote: We're the poorest region in the country. We don't want to continue to look at government handouts. We want to look at development of resources. And he's gone on to talk about responsible development and sustainable development of resources.

And that would align with what Farlinger is saying about the potential to provide appropriate and added level of protection on that side, in a way that's consistent with a transmission line, which has a lesser impact on the forest and the region than a road would. And, I'll—I can share with the Premier, and he's travelled through the region—that region of province, as have I, up and down the east side, that the community members in those communities that we have met with have expressed a considerable level of frustration at what they describe as a lack of meaningful discussion and consultation on this issue. That no real proposal, or concrete proposal, was made.

And we'd—and we're aware that there are certainly areas of resistance which are well documented to the idea of a transmission line, from Poplar River in particular. But there are many others who've expressed to us concern about the fact that the consultations were suspended a number of years ago, and that there hasn't been any meaningful dialogue in the period since about the ways to try to develop a solution to this challenge of a new transmission line, that are consistent with those cultural values that the Premier is referring to. And so I would just make that as a point.

The other issue is that the Premier has made a lot out of the potential risk of opposition coming from the east side, but seems to have put no weight whatsoever on opponents who will be impacted by the west-side corridor. There are First Nations communities that are within the vicinity of the west-side line. There are hundreds of private land

owners, primarily in agriculture, whose land will be traversed. There are pockets of forest, there are marshes, there are other points along that route that have ecological significance, and there are people along that route who have very legitimate and significant concerns and opposition to the west-side route.

And so I wonder if the Premier can just explain why so much weight attached to the potential for opposition on the east side and no weight being attached to the reality of opposition to the west side.

Mr. Selinger: I wouldn't characterize it that way. I think it's always the case when you build transmission, or just about anything you build these days, you're going to have some reaction to it. That's—I mean, we often refer to it as the NIMBY syndrome, not in my back yard, and it's a very real phenomena in any kind of development that occurs. Particularly in development that involves major infrastructure that involves cultural values, that involves ecological values. And the member will recall, there were 80 meetings on the east side, and those meetings gave a view to government that there would be very significant concern and resistance, in the main, from people on the east side.

So the First Nations people expressed that view. Was it 100 per cent consensus? No. I think the member has identified that himself. But let's not forget that the member, and I think he held this out, there is this desire to own the transmission line by third parties, including potentially First Nations third parties. And our government felt that that was not an appropriate decision to allow transmission line not to be under the ownership of Manitoba Hydro.

And there was some expectation going into the '07 election, and I think the member may have been part of this, that they might get ownership of that line if they supported it going down the east side. And then I recall the member repudiated that view after the election.

So I think we have to be very careful here of what people's expectations were when they were making those kinds of statements.

But, on the larger question, could there have been an accommodation made on the east side as opposed to the west? The west side, and I've given very strong quotes on this, had a lot more industrial development attached to it. And that industrial development had compromised, not entirely, but had compromised the large, intact pristine nature of the

boreal forest on the west side, whereas it was much more intact and much larger in scope, as I've indicated by the quotes in the Farlinger report, on the west side.

Are there environmental issues that have to be addressed on the west side? Yes. And Hydro has taken those seriously through their consultation process of where to site the line. I don't think it's fair to say that they've disregarded those concerns. I think they have listened to all of the concerns on possible routing locations for a bipole on the west side and have tried to pick a route that would accommodate those concerns as much as possible.

And we all know that when you build a transmission facility, no matter where you build it, there are going to be concerns raised. But part of the consultation process is to, as much as humanly possible, to address those concerns in the way the route is chosen. And I believe Hydro has done that, and the government also has to do that, with respect to section 35 requirements under the Constitution, if it impacts on the traditional territory of First Nations people.

So these are extremely complex processes that require a high degree of respect for the people potentially impacted by it. The question remains: Where is our best chance of being able to build the transmission line in a timely fashion in order that we can develop hydro as a resource to generate wealth for Manitobans? And the view was that the west-side alternative gave the greatest potential for developing transmission in a timely fashion for all the factors we've discussed: the ecological integrity, cultural integrity, reputational concerns, previous issues in the marketplace where our customers buy our product, and the potential for the UNESCO World Heritage Site and how competitive a process that is and what you have to do to be able to succeed in that process.

All of these factors have to be considered. Is there a perfect solution? I think both of us would agree there is not. Is there a best solution? I think we can say there is a optimal solution, a solution that takes all of these factors into account and tries to accommodate them in a way that allows you to build the wealth of Manitobans for the benefit of all Manitobans. And that was why the west-side route was chosen.

Mr. McFadyen: And I thank the Premier for those comments. I—it's a good debate to have. I think we're going to have a difficult time persuading each other

to change our minds at this stage of the game, but it is a good debate to have. And the points that are being raised are the right issues. They're the right issues to be discussed in the context of such an important project.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

In—just in terms of the west-side impacts, can the Premier just indicate how many First Nations within the vicinity of the west-side route are—or potentially have an interest or potentially have traditional territories that would give rise to the duty to consult, and also just provide an update on where they are with those consultations to the extent that they may be taking place?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I'll undertake to get that information for him.

Mr. McFadyen: And one of the other issues that has arisen just in terms of the economic impact of the decision is the—in addition to the agricultural issues and the impacts and the removal of some productive land and other impacts, the mining industry, which is important to a lot of northern communities in terms of their viability, and certainly a lot of the jobs of northern Manitobans are based on the health of the mining industry, can the Premier just indicate what impacts the western route would have on mining and just the status of the government's discussions on those issues?

* (11:20)

Mr. Selinger: Again, Hydro's conducting the consultations with all parties that have an interest or a concern about routing, and there have been some mining interests that have raised issues. And I believe that consultation process is taking a look at those issues and addressing them as part of the routing decision. And so that process is going on, as we speak, and I think that's important.

I think, regardless of where you put it, you have to consider those factors, but, again, we know that the east side would generate significantly more opposition than we've seen to date on the west side. And that is an important factor to consider. It's not the only factor, but it's an important factor, and it's a factor that impacts on the reputation of Manitoba Hydro and its ability to conclude sales for a long-term—on a long-term basis into the export markets. And we have to take those factors into consideration. This is part of the fundamental decision-making process.

What are the environmental impacts? The Farlinger report indicates more intact boreal forest on the east side. What are the cultural impacts? The Farlinger report indicates that there's broader cultural values to be protected on the east side, given the traditional territory and how it spreads itself across the east side. There are certainly First Nations on the west side as well, and their concerns have to be addressed and accommodated as part of section 35.

The Farlinger report indicates that the east side has what he calls more of an upscale address and—which has garnered international attention and has become important in efforts to save the boreal forest. And the east side has formally been recognized by Parks Canada as a place of outstanding universal value when it was added to the tentative list of World Heritage Sites. There is not a similar attribution to the west-side routes that are being considered.

And this notion of an east-side address is important in understanding why an east-side route would likely attract fire, while a west-side route may move through the environmental licensing process in a somewhat easier fashion. That's a quote with a little bit of change to it from page 17. It actually says: an environmental licensing process somewhat easier. So these factors were considered by—in the Farlinger report commissioned by Manitoba Hydro and were considered by Hydro in its final decision-making process and certainly informed the views of our government as well.

And, again, the member, I think he correctly says, we're having an important debate here and we may not be able to influence each other's positions on it at this stage, but I still think it's important to give some serious consideration to these views today. And I actually do think we are listening to each other, as best as I can tell from body language, which is always at least one indicator of whether we're listening to each other. I think we are doing that, and I think views may very well be sincerely held here, and that's why it's important that we spend the time challenging each other on these matters.

And that's why when I read my statement this morning, I was very strong on the point about the need for converter stations, because I really sensed yesterday in our discussion that the member genuinely believed the converter stations were not needed on the east side. And I'm really concerned about that because, if we're going to ensure reliability for Manitoba Hydro for our own economy and for our export economy, those additional converter

stations are deemed essential, regardless of where the route goes. And so that makes a big difference on the price tag.

If we need those converter stations, regardless of route, that changes the economics of this very much and if we're going to have further development of Manitoba Hydro in terms of Keeyask and Conawapa, we're going to need those converter stations.

And I believe that Manitoba hydro will become a more valuable commodity as the climate-change debate continues to mature throughout the world and as there's more and more concern expressed about sources of energy, such as coal, that have very strong emissions that affect the climate. And we saw and we discussed this a couple of days ago, we're seeing now that as other jurisdictions develop their coal assets, they're doing it in a much more expensive fashion now, because they're looking at the necessity of carbon capture in sequestration.

The minute they have to do that for coal, hydro becomes much more competitive as an alternative energy source and positions us well for the future, because we can provide that energy reliably and affordably and with a clean reputation with proven technologies that we already have—high-voltage direct-current technologies. With a lot of expertise on how to abate generation capacity in terms of not flooding and not damaging the environment. A lot of these issues we've made tremendous progress on since the 1970s, which, I think, positions Manitoba hydro well to be a preferred energy source as we go forward.

And that's why we're doing what we're doing; is to make sure that we can have prosperity in this province with clean energy. And, whether or not I convince the member opposite of that, I just want him to know that those are some of the factors we're considering when we make these kinds of policy recommendations.

Mr. McFadyen: I will say that there is agreement in terms of our optimism about Hydro's positioning in the context of the environmental issues that are being confronted globally and, in particular, the ability of Hydro to supply clean energy to customers who may currently be relying on coal burning or may only have coal as an alternative to hydro, in terms of future generation development.

And one of the other issues—and I know that the views are sincerely held. I think the issues that are being covered are, are the right issues to be

discussing. But one of the other engineering issues that has arisen, which is an environmental issue, is the amount of the line loss, because of the added length of the west side and lost opportunity to displace some coal-generated electricity because of that.

I'm wondering why that factor has not been more seriously considered by the government in the context of its decision.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question. That's a good question.

Just before I do, though, I want to say that the east-side road, the southern part of the road, will be 80 per cent on existing winter roads and the northern section will be 90–on 90 per cent winter roads. So that was just to underline the point where we're trying to follow the existing footprint over there to reduce environmental impacts.

I think we have never denied, and I don't think—I think we can agree that technically, the east-side route, because it's shorter, would have greater efficiency versus a west-side route, on the straight technical merits of it.

The fundamental question is: Can an east-side route be built in a timely fashion? And the answer, in my view, is, no, that it cannot be built in a timely fashion, if it could ever be built at all. I do not actually believe it is a real alternative that could be constructed in a period that would be beneficial to the future development of Manitoba Hydro's Keeyask and Conawapa projects. And that means it's not a viable option. And Manitoba Hydro needs additional reliability; it needs additional transmission because of the existing bipoles being so close together through the Interlake.

So the west-side alternative will increase reliability and will increase efficiency until the new dams come on-stream, in which case the transmission line will be fully utilized. So it is the alternative that gives the best prospect of increasing reliability. And that's separate from the converter station discussion, which I don't believe there's anybody out there saying we don't need additional converter stations. They are required to increase the reliability of Manitoba Hydro and the security of power supply within Manitoba as well as to the export market.

And I tried to put that in context for the member in that the economy is projected to be \$56 billion this year in Manitoba—more than a billion dollars a week. And the cost of the converter stations is less than two

weeks of that economy. So that puts in perspective how important it is. You'd only have to have an outage for a couple of weeks to be the entire cost of building this additional reliability in terms of converters, and three weeks, if you include the transmission line itself.

* (11:30)

So these are the kinds of decisions we have to make to position our economy to be an economy that is considered to be a stable, reliable, diversified economy that continues to grow through good times and bad times, which is a very good place for the Manitoba economy to be. And we want to accelerate that economy's growth in the future, which has been quite strong in the last decade and, particularly, the last five years. Even during the recession, the economy fared better than most others in Canada and North America.

So the hydro—the energy equation is a fundamental underpinning to a strong diversified economy. And fundamental to the energy question is how to increase its reliability and its ability to remain affordable, which requires us to continue to develop our export markets and our generation capacity to supply them, and to have a good reputation for Manitoba Hydro so that the product will be wanted by our customers at a time when there is growing concern about climate change, but also at a time when there's an abundance of natural gas in the marketplace at very low prices.

The member will know about the whole new shale gas phenomenon that's developing out there. And right now the American economy is still fragile, but there's been an abundance of shale gas that's coming on-stream. There are serious environmental issues that are starting to be raised about that with this new term that I think we've all become familiar with called fracking, which is not a fraternity term, but it's a term of geological attack on the environment. And fracking is starting to raise some big concerns. But, in the meantime, there's a huge amount of natural gas out there that could easily displace hydroelectricity if that product was damaged in terms of its reputation. And we—I think we need to bear that in mind as an additional factor that has come into play since the early decision to build the transmission line down the west side.

So fracking is a factor; reputation is a factor; cultural values are a factor; ecological values are a factor. Timeliness of being able to build additional transmission is a very important factor, particularly

with the possibility of term sheets for the product being converted into long-term sales. All of these are requirements that we have to take into account.

And the bottom line is if we can't build hydro, we can't displace any coal. So what is the best way to get that hydro built and transmitted to customers so we can continue to have an alternative to coal for people that want to have clean energy sources?

Mr. McFadyen: I think that there's an honest disagreement about the viability of building on the east versus west that the Premier has raised. And I think we've repeated our positions enough times on that issue that it doesn't need to be repeated again.

But, in terms of the issues of resistance and potential obstacles to the west side, can the Premier just—one of several issues with the west side—we know that both sides have hurdles that need to be overcome, but on the west side we've got a lot of private land that's going to be traversed. Hydro has indicated publicly, previously, that they would not expropriate any property in order to get this line built. It seems unlikely that it can be built without expropriation.

Does the Premier have any analysis at this stage of how much land would have to be expropriated, what that would cost and what is the timeline for going through the expropriation process?

The reason I ask that question is just some recent experience with the landowner on the west side of the Red River at Letellier for the purpose of the Letellier bridge project. There was a need to go through, or certainly to initiate the expropriation process, and that went on for some time. I think it was a matter of two years or more in the case of one landowner for a bridge. We're talking about hundreds of landowners that have to be dealt with in the context of the west-side power line.

What expert advice does the Premier have about the potential for years of delay in the expropriation process with west side—people who have an interest in property on the west side?

Mr. Selinger: I don't think either one of us would portray ourselves as experts on expropriation. But the one thing we do know is there's very clear legislation put in place for the expropriation process, and including compensation, and including the formal process of decision-making, so that an expropriation process, in the context of current legislation, has a time horizon attached to it that is reasonable.

So I think what we can say is that nobody believes that expropriation is necessary. I think that the hydro lines can be developed on the west side without expropriation, and I think that that's part of the consultation process, and part of the negotiation process with landowners. Landowners have told us that they can accept a transmission line as long as it doesn't have serious negative impacts on their agricultural operations. And I believe Manitoba Hydro is trying to position the transmission line to minimize any negative consequences for producers in Manitoba, and are offering appropriate and proportionate compensation if there is any negative impacts.

So, anecdotally, without having an official report in front of me, when I've been out talking to producers and people that represent producers, they have told me that discussions have gone quite well with Manitoba Hydro in this regard. And I have had expressions of support for a western transmission line from local leadership in western Manitoba as they see it unfolding.

So I'm optimistic that a transmission line can be built without expropriation, but if, in the unlikely case, or, hopefully, not at all, expropriation would be required, there are clear procedures put in place to protect landowners and to ensure that they are appropriately compensated and treated. But given what I've heard, I think that—at least from what I know today—is that the transmission line can be built without major expropriation or expropriation being required. And this is part of the respectful process of just dialoguing, consulting and negotiating with people where transmission lines are being planned to be put.

Mr. McFadyen: And I want to thank the Premier for his responses, and we agree that it's a significant issue. We, perhaps, disagree on the conclusions that have been arrived at, but I appreciate the fact that he's—he is putting forward the issues that need to be addressed in the context of this debate.

The—I want to just switch back just to follow up just in connection with the stadium, and just to say I'm not sure—and I want to go back just over *Hansard* from Wednesday. I'm not sure that the information provided earlier today covers all of the issues that arose from Wednesday, either on the stadium or in connection with bipole. But to the extent that we feel that anything has been missed, I can follow up in writing with the Premier subsequent to Estimates, and we can move forward on that basis.

Just back on this—on the stadium issues, the Premier has indicated that—just indicated today that there have been about \$24 million advanced as of March 31st, 2011. Can you just indicate—can he just indicate what the timing of the first advance was in connection with this project and the amount of that initial advance?

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

Mr. McFadyen: And to be clear on that point, I used the word "advance" and I would want to just be clear that what I mean by that is any payment, even if it wasn't characterized as a loan advance, even if it was an expenditure in connection with planning or work on the stadium, we would appreciate that information. And, in addition to that, could the Premier just indicate who the recipient or recipients were of those initial payments?

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

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier just indicate what binding agreements were in place prior to any payments being made in connection with the stadium construction?

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

Mr. McFadyen: And I wonder if the Premier could just indicate how certain he is as to the final cost of the new stadium at this stage.

Mr. Selinger: Well, as I indicated in my statement, the project's under its current guaranteed maximum price is within budget, and that's good news, and we hope it continues.

* (11:40)

Mr. McFadyen: The—and I'll table a letter. The Premier correctly indicated that we were in receipt of some documentation under FIPPA. I'm not sure that it is all the documentation that's been requested, but some of that documentation has been provided to us. And the document I've tabled is a letter dated November 26th, 2010. It's addressed to Creswin Properties Inc., attention Dan Edwards, and it's signed by Angela Mathieson, who is the secretary to the Community Economic Development Committee. And there's reference within the letter to prior comfort letters. And I wonder if the Premier can just indicate what is meant by that terminology "comfort letters."

Mr. Selinger: Well, I'll have to review that correspondence and get back to the member on that. I note that the dates are mentioned here, and I'll have to review the correspondence and be able to characterize it for him.

Mr. McFadyen: Just—and I appreciate that—and just the inference is that there was comfort provided with respect to incurring liabilities and costs and expenses in connection with the project. Is that what the reference is to? Is it that the Province was, in essence, providing to Creswin, written assurances that the Province would pick up any costs, ultimately, in connection with the project?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll have to review that correspondence and then indicate to the member how we would characterize that.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier just indicate—just the purpose of the comfort letter that we've tabled, the November 26 letter? What would the purpose of that letter be that's been addressed to Creswin?

Mr. Selinger: I think it's indicated in the first paragraph.

Mr. McFadyen: The indication is that there is interest among various parties in proceeding and there's confirmation of certain obligations on the part of Manitoba. The letter is addressed to Creswin and there's a copy to Phil Sheegl, who is an official at the City of Winnipeg, but the letter is not addressed to the Winnipeg Football Club, the University of Manitoba or to the entity that was then in place, B & G Stadium Ltd. partnership.

Can the Premier just indicate why those parties, in particular the football club and the University of Manitoba, would not have been party to any of this correspondence?

Mr. Selinger: I'd have to seek clarification as to who was copied and why. But the member's asked a question; I'll undertake to find out more information for him.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just indicate and confirm the date of the first comfort letter that was issued and provide copies of the comfort letters that have been referred to in this correspondence?

Mr. Selinger: I'll review that request and see what's possible.

Mr. McFadyen: The letter is marked private and confidential. It's dated November the 26th of

2010; there's a time and there's a lot of public debate and discussion about this project. And I wonder if the Premier can indicate why that information was kept secret from the football club, the University of Manitoba and the public.

Mr. Selinger: And I've said I would take that—those questions under advisement and get back to the member on that.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable—

Mr. Selinger: Just to clarify—did he say November 26th or November 16th?

Mr. McFadyen: If I—the intent was to say November the 26th, 2010, so if I said November 16th, that was not what was intended. The reference was to the November 26, 2010 date on this letter.

Mr. Selinger: Okay. Thank you for that clarification. I'll get back to him.

Mr. McFadyen: And can the Premier just indicate what the initial completion date for the stadium project was at the time it was announced?

Mr. Selinger: Well, as I indicated earlier today—what announcement date are you referring to?

Mr. McFadyen: The reference to the initial public announcement of the project. What was the date of completion that was provided at that time?

Mr. Selinger: Is the member referring to a line in the letter here?

Mr. McFadyen: No, the reference is to the initial public comments that were made. My understanding is that there was reference at the time to a completion date that is different from the fall, 2012 date that's now being discussed.

Mr. Selinger: I'll check the record on that and see what was initially indicated.

Mr. McFadyen: And the next question is just whether the stadium is currently behind schedule and if so, why that would be the case.

Mr. Selinger: I was informed that the stadium is proceeding on schedule.

Mr. McFadyen: Just in terms of the earlier comments about best estimates, it implies that the number that's been made public may, in fact, not be a firm number. Can the Premier confirm that there's still the potential that the final cost will be different from what's currently being discussed publicly?

Mr. Selinger: Again, the contract that's been signed is a guaranteed maximum price contract. Everybody believes it can be built within that because those numbers are the result of various tenders that have been carefully looked at and reviewed by the contractor and the parties involved, but, as I indicated earlier, even a guaranteed maximum price contract does not cover all contingencies. There is the possibility of some specific types of contingencies occurring, and we'd have to check what specific ones I'm referring to, but the indication I have now is that the project remains on budget and is on track to be finished in time for the '012 CFL season.

Mr. McFadyen: And I thank the Premier for that response and I want to just move over to some issues with respect to long-term care within health care.

There was a situation about six months ago where hospitals were being advised and personal care homes were being advised at the time that there was a bed shortage and that personal care homes were only to admit new patients or residents on an emergency basis and that hospitals were instructed to discharge patients as rapidly as possible. I'm wondering if the Premier can just indicate why it is that the number of beds that have been added, particularly in light of the significant demographic pressures, is so small over the past 11 years.

Mr. Selinger: Well, there have been additional personal care home beds built. But, in addition, there has been additional supported living facilities built to provide for seniors' care and assisted living facilities built by the private sector as well. So there have been very significant investments in increasing the housing supports available to seniors and, as we know, in Manitoba, we need a continuum of housing supports for people, from being able to live independently, from being able to live independently with the support of home care, from being able to live independently with the support of home care, and our recent announcement to strengthen home care to provide for additional home care hours and additional home care with people that require intensive rehabilitation after an injury. The objective has always been to allow people to—who—the elderly to function as long as possible as independently as possible in their communities and in their homes.

And at the stage where they're no longer able to be supported with home care and the additional supports that we've recently announced to be provided there, then there's a continuum of housing

alternatives, assisted living, supported living, and personal care homes. And in Manitoba, there needed to be development in all of those areas but there had been a shortage of assisted, or supported living housing alternatives, and several hundreds of those—and I'll have to get the specifics for him if he wishes—several hundreds of those units have been brought into reality as a result of policy in Manitoba as well as additional personal care home beds.

* (11:50)

And as the member will know, we've announced recently a \$200-million commitment to build first—more personal care homes beds in Manitoba, including projects in Lac du Bonnet and in the Holy Family nursing home in the north part of Winnipeg.

Mr. McFadyen: And there absolutely is a need for an array of options for seniors. The issue's really in the area and there are issues across the board, but in the area of long-term care beds, the numbers that have been released show that there has been an increase of only 4.1 per cent in terms of the number of beds available for long-term care.

The number as of 1999-2000 was 9,385 and then the number provided for 2009-2010 is 9,770, which is 4.1 per cent over a period of a decade at a time when the population has been aging rapidly. I just want to ask the Premier why there's been so little attention to expanding the number of long-term care beds available for Manitoba seniors.

Mr. Selinger: I've answered that in my previous question. I said that there had been more personal care homes built and more beds built in the personal care area. And the member indicates that's 4.1 per cent off a base of 9,385. And, in addition, there's been more supported housing facilities put in place and more assisted living housing facilities put in place and a continuing and expanded commitment to home care in Manitoba, which allows people to function in their homes and in their communities independently for a longer period of time. And we've recently made policy improvements and program improvements to home care as well.

So it's an array of measures to support the elderly to live as independently as possible. Personal home care, enhanced home care, personal care beds, assisted living beds and supported living beds, all of which are part of the total story. And, if the member wishes, I'll get him the numbers of units in those other areas that have been produced in the last decade.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Acting Chairperson, and we would appreciate those numbers. I think the Premier will know, just from being out in the community, and he does get that opportunity to speak to people in the community as we all do, that there are a lot of families and a lot of seniors still struggling to find that appropriate housing arrangement, and it's quite severe in some parts of the province. And here in Winnipeg it's a significant issue for lots of families, and there are people that we've both had a chance to speak to.

And the numbers that have—that the government has released on the long-term care side even show a drop from '08-09 to '09-2010 from 9,802 to 9,770. So there seems to be something going on in terms of reductions in long-term care beds. And I wonder if the Premier could just offer any insight into why that may be.

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll have to get the specifics on those numbers and see what is going on there. But the member needs to know that we've taken a range of measures to improve supported housing and supported arrangements to allow people to function independently in their communities. And that's why we announced this \$200-million personal care home bed initiative, which includes Holy Family personal care home, Lac du Bonnet personal care home. And this is more than the \$180 million identified by the Auditor General, and builds on a new 80-bed personal care home set to open this summer in Winnipeg and also plans to build a new personal care home in the Morden area as well.

So—and I've already mentioned the improvements we've made to rehabilitation program—a rehab program for home care, as well as more hours for home care during that critical time of the day when people need that support, and also a new income protection benefit to make supportive housing a more affordable alternative for people.

So these are major initiatives. They've been informed by research done by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, and they build on the significant investments we've made over the last decade in a range of supports for seniors.

We have added over 930 personal care home and supportive housing beds across Manitoba, 430 personal care home units, over 500 supportive housing units, and we've created, as well, a caregiver tax credit for caregivers of home care clients which, this year, will be increased by 25 per cent.

And in '06 we also announced a \$119-million long-term-care strategy. So this has allowed us to add supports for 3,400 seniors living in group living situations, help with transportation, help with activities, 449 more supportive housing units, 328 specialized supported-support spaces, as well as the expanded home care.

We've also improved on—worked on improving the quality of home-care supports, and that's why, for example, we've got more nurses being made available in personal care homes so that there's more people that can provide support to people that are in existing facilities. We've added more—400 more staff since 2007 to the present—to the present, and we've introduced rigorous provincial standards in '05 and announced inspections in creating the office for Protection for Persons in Care.

So there are been several key initiatives taken to have higher quality care, to have more care, and to have a greater range of alternatives for people that require care.

Mr. McFadyen: In the area of support for seniors and their families, the Premier is aware, and it's not unique to Manitoba, but there are increasing needs for support and appropriate facilities for patients who have dementia and Alzheimer's. It's a heartbreaking situation for those families who have loved ones who are dealing with dementia or Alzheimer's, and we know that those numbers seem to be growing with increasing number of people who are aging here in Manitoba and elsewhere.

And, in very rare cases, there are individuals who may have a disposition toward violent behaviour, and we saw the very sad case recently of that, having quite tragic consequences here in Winnipeg.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Can the Premier just indicate what the government's plans are in that area? And I would just observe that the number of beds available seems to be very low, 26 in Winnipeg. We understand 10 more coming at Taché. The numbers seem to be very, very low when one considers the scale of the challenge.

Mr. Selinger: Well, as the member has himself indicated, there have been specialized beds put aside for people that are at risk of violent behaviour suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's or related types of diseases and syndromes.

This is an important question. It is one that requires people to be better—well-trained to detect the potential for violent behaviour, and that training is important for the caregivers. Proper protocols have to be put in place to ensure that, if the potential for incidence is becoming imminent or incidents occur, that proper procedures are followed. And this is one of the reasons why we've provided additional staff in these facilities, so that these kinds of activities could be undertaken.

The degree of care required in personal care homes and other facilities has grown, and some of the specific incidents that the member mentioned have also become very prominent in the planning of staff resources and the training that they require and the practices used to address them, to minimize restraints, minimize the use of drugs to ensure that the dignity of each of these individuals is protected and respected, while at the same time, protecting their behaviour from having negative or violent consequences on others.

* (12:00)

These are challenging circumstances with a population that, perhaps, is living longer and then is, in some cases, displaying some of these diseases and the consequences of some of these diseases. So resources are being put in place, as the member has indicated and, if more resources are needed, that is the reason we have planners, health planners and people within our health systems, like our regional health authorities, to be able to look at these issues on a systemic basis and identify what resources are needed. And that's why we fund research centres like the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy so that they can look at these broad trends and indicate to us what additional resources need to be put in place. And, as that information has become available, we have acted decisively to put those additional resources in place.

Mr. McFadyen: On the—just the question of spending priorities within health care, can the Premier just provide us with the final costs of the WRHA headquarters on Main Street?

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

Mr. McFadyen: And, also, could he indicate the location of all WRHA offices, both leased and owned, within the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Selinger: We'll get that information for the member.

Mr. McFadyen: And, also, could the Premier provide the number of employees, including both management and support staff, that are—that work for the WRHA within those office spaces in Winnipeg?

Mr. Selinger: We will endeavour to get that information for the member. That's a large request. We'll try to certainly put it in perspective and get that information. But I don't know if the member's asked for this through FIPPA in the past or through the Health Estimates, but that would be the normal course of proceeding on this. If he has not done that, I would encourage him to do so. If he wishes us to follow up on requests that have been made in the past, we will do that as well. But we'll see what we can provide in that regard.

Mr. McFadyen: My understanding is that past requests have not—the responses have not been responsive to the requests, so I'd—we would appreciate any follow up that could be done on that issue.

Just on the issue of wait times, we know with MRI wait times there was a commitment to an eight-week wait time and that that situation, according to latest numbers, is that the wait is now roughly 18 weeks on average, with over 11,000 patients waiting.

CT scans, the average wait, the most recent number suggests four weeks after the government had promised that it would cut it to two weeks. Ultrasounds are five times higher than what the promised wait time was at 10 weeks. I wonder if the Premier could just indicate why the government seemed not to have been able to meet its targets on—and commitments on wait times.

Mr. Selinger: I'll get a specific response for the member, but, for example, in the case of MRIs, when the member opposite was in government, I believe the number of MRIs that were done were in the order of 9,000 to 10,000, and now the number of MRIs that are done in Manitoba are in the order of 57,000. And the time frame for getting an MRI, I believe, in '99 was in the order of 32 weeks, and now it's in the order of 18 weeks and, at some points, has been lower.

There have been additional MRI machines purchased and put into use in Manitoba, including the first MRI outside of Winnipeg, in Brandon. There have been additional staff trained to be able to operate that equipment, but there has also been an

increased demand for those technologies to be applied for diagnostic purposes.

And so there is a growing demand for those procedures, and the demand has been increased by six-fold, close to six-fold, and much more resources put in place to deal with that. And I—as I understand it, the wait time for an MRI is still significantly lower than it was in '99, and we will continue to work towards improving those wait times in all cases so that people can get timely information for either diagnostic purposes or treatment purposes. And that's a very significant commitment that we have every intent of continuing to focus on and improving as we go forward.

Mr. McFadyen: Just on the issue of public safety. There was about \$14.4 million in federal money provided around 2008, and that money was recently announced as being committed to funding 30 officers. I want to ask the Premier why they waited, what appears to be about two years, to put those funds into public safety, why it took the eve of a provincial election to allocate those funds.

Mr. Selinger: The member will know that that money that was made available in a federal budget was one-time money. It's not permanent money, and that creates a problem. You don't hire police officers for two or three years; you hire them for a career. And, if you're going to hire a police officer for a career, you need the resources to keep them employed and trained and available to the public. And that was the problem with that federal budget announcement. They put \$400 million in place for the whole country. But it had a time limit. It is expired money.

What we did is we, every budget, put money in the budget for additional police officers and permanent funding so that the people that were hired under those additional resources could have continuity of employment and security of employment and know that their careers are going to be in place for a long time. It's not particularly helpful to have time-limited resources when you're providing police officers to be on the streets and to know communities and to take all the training that's required. A police officer needs many years to develop the skill set that makes them as effective as they are, and you can't do it over three to five years and then lay them off, and that's the problem with the federal commitment. It's inadequate in terms of its long-term duration.

So the money has been made available on our budget with a priority on permanent funding of police officers, and we've gone to the extent of providing an additional 255 police officers in this province on a permanent basis. The federal money has been made available with the knowledge by municipalities that it's time-limited money, and in that regard will pose some future challenges. There's now an understanding among the police forces and the municipalities that they will work with the Province and the federal government to make that money permanent. But our first priority was permanent resources for police officers in this province.

Mr. McFadyen: But I'm not sure that deals with the question that there's record high levels of federal payments coming to Manitoba in terms of the level of equalization and under the health and social transfers. In addition to that, there's the \$14.4 million that was provided in 2008. I think the question really relates to the delay in making this announcement and moving forward on this. I wonder if the Premier can just explain the thinking behind the two-year delay.

Mr. Selinger: Again, the thinking was is that the resources we wanted to provide were long-term permanent resources, and we've done that to the extent of 255 officers. The transfer payment for equalization is down this year, as it was last year. In total, transfers from the federal government are down \$141 million this year, as noted in the budget. So that is not relevant factor. We have provided permanent funding for police officers at a time when budgets have been very stressed by the great recession. Every single year, we have provided additional funding for permanent police officers in this province. The federal money was time-limited money, and it has been made available with the full understanding now that that money is time limited and there will have to be work done to try to make it permanent. That will be a challenge going forward.

Mr. McFadyen: It was revealed fairly recently that a number of warrants were purged, in 2009, from the system. We've been asking how many were purged and what offences they related to, and, to date, that information hasn't been provided by the government. I wonder if the Premier can undertake to provide that detail to us.

Mr. Selinger: I believe that's in the hands of our Justice Minister and department, and they will see what they can do in that regard to provide that information and whether it's—how able they are to do

that. The member will know that recently we announced the reinstatement of a program that had been cut in the '90s, a warrant squad that will follow up on warrants that are issued. That resource had been terminated in the past in the '90s. So now it's been reinstated, and we are working in collaboration with the RCMP and the police departments in Manitoba to ensure that that resource available for following up on warrants allows warrants to be pursued where they're not being respected.

*(12:10)

Mr. McFadyen: In education, the numbers that have just come out from the OECD on their program for international student assessment are not flattering to Manitoba in terms of the position of Manitoba students versus students in other provinces in Canada. More specifically, there is a—it was found that Manitoba had been roughly middle of the pack in 2003 to the back of the pack in 2009: in mathematics, average test scores dropping 27 points; in science, going from a ranking of sixth down to eighth, with a drop of 17 points; and reading going from fifth to ninth, with a 34-point drop in average test scores below the national average.

How does the Premier account for this deterioration in the performance of Manitoba students under his government's watch?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I think it's important to note that OECD test scores through the PISA instrument demonstrate that Canada and all the provinces, regardless of their ranking in relation to each other, has among one of the best education systems in the world. It ranks very well on an international basis.

Within the interprovincial rankings, there has been, as the member indicated, some change in rankings among various provinces, and I've noted that there's also been some very significant changes in the ranking of the United States as well.

For us, a good education system is fundamental. We have seen an increase in graduation rates by about 12 per cent from about 70 some per cent to over 82 per cent. That is important to retain young people in school. The member will know that we've got a legislative initiative to require young people to stay in school till 18, with a mandate for school divisions to provide a variety of programs that encourage young people to stay in school, whether it be traditional academic programs or programs related to the trades and other applied skills that will

allow them to function in the world and to be able to get into the labour market.

The member will also know—might not know—but we are moving on curriculum improvements. Mathematics curriculum is in the process of being upgraded and implemented in the schools. The science curriculum is being upgraded, and the language arts curriculum is going to be upgraded so that we strengthen our programming capacity and our curriculum capacity to have a strong education system.

So we put a high value on the education system. We've got a consultation process going on currently with parents and people interested in education. Some of the initial feedback they've given us is they want a simpler report card, and we're working towards a simpler report card. They've indicated that they'd like professional development days to be less onerous when children attend—when their children attend more than one school, so we're working towards standardized dates for in-service days so the parents can better plan around that.

And all of these initiatives are intended to have greater transparency and accountability for parents on reporting, greater ease to ensure their children stay in school, greater incentives and resources for their children to stay in school, which is why we've increased funding for the public schools at least at the rate of economic growth every year and often in excess of that.

And we've put special programs in place to increase student performance, programs that will allow young people to stay in a school longer, programs like Pathfinders, where we're getting some significant investment from some of the banks like the Royal Bank to allow people to have a place where they can do homework and get peer support and coaching support to perform better in school. So you're going to see, and you are seeing, a number of initiatives to strengthen our education system.

I, for example, recently visited the Neelin alternative high school in Brandon where up to 200 people that had, for various reasons, dropped out of school were now available to go to a storefront operation right down town in Brandon where there was a group, a team of at least five teachers and a counsellor, that were there and they allow young people to come in. Some of them are parents. Some of them are working to be able to get their grade 12 completion with support from these teachers. And that was a very successful program with a—number

of those young people are graduating. I think over 35, 34 have graduated. In each year they've been building that up, increasing graduation rates.

So we're interested in finding ways to have greater success in education for young people. Our Brighter Futures program is a \$3-million commitment for innovative programming to allow people to succeed in school, and we've put more money into English as an Additional Language so that newcomers coming to Manitoba can adapt more readily to the school system and succeed in it. And we've put more money into resources for persons with disabilities going to school, so they can have a more successful school experience. And we've put more money into First Nations and Aboriginal education so that people in that part of our community can have great success in school.

So all of these are initiatives intended to intensify the resources and the support and the collaboration. We now have a Premier's Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship, which is bringing together educators from all the different levels of the school divisions, as well as parents and community people, to work on how to strengthen our school system in Manitoba.

So it's a very important priority for us, and I look forward to continuing to increase the success rate, in terms of graduation, strengthening curriculum and allowing our students to score well on any of these tests in the future.

Mr. McFadyen: And just on the issue of trade, we've had some debate about the New West Partnership. There was a trade mission that was undertaken in September of 2010 to the Asia-Pacific region, China specifically.

I wonder if the Premier can just outline just the—some of the details of that mission, in particular, the meetings that were attended, the individuals who attended those meetings and just the other participants on that mission.

Mr. Selinger: Which meetings—are you referring to the New West Partnership meetings?

Mr. McFadyen: The reference was to the Asia-Pacific trip taken in September of 2010.

Mr. Selinger: Oh, the member's referring to the Asia-Pacific trip that we mounted out of Manitoba into Hong Kong and China and latterly, the Philippines.

There were about 43 participants in that mission; many private sector members; members from school divisions; universities; some government officials, of course, that went on that mission; the Lieutenant-Governor was the co-lead on that, the Honourable Philip Lee and his wife, Anita Lee.

I consider it a very successful mission. We visited with people in China, in Beijing, in Shanghai. We saw some tremendous partnerships between companies in China and some companies in Winnipeg. For example, a heavy equipment manufacturing, the electronic components and the Lonking [*phonetic*] manufacturing facility are developed in Manitoba here through a company that they have an ownership stake in now. We met with some of that—the people doing that successful work.

We met with some of their health institutions and saw what technology we produce in Manitoba that they might be interested in. We met with investors over there who have an interest in Manitoba. We explained the initiative we're taking around CentrePort and the potential for exports and imports inside of—in and out of Manitoba through the CentrePort route, the north-south route, that we're developing through Churchill and through Winnipeg, and they showed some interest in that.

We visited with many people that have been educated in Manitoba who now work in China and have a long-term relationship with us. We had delegates from the Wheat Board with us who, as the member might know, the Wheat Board has had a long-standing relationship with China, going back to the—its days of inception and was very instrumental in providing wheat to China during the great famine in their early 1960s, I believe 1961. And some of the people that work for the Wheat Board are people that come from China and have returned there.

We went to Hong Kong and there's a very large community of people with linkages and relationships to Manitoba that live in Hong Kong. We met with them, many of them were educated here. Some of them continue to invest and spend part of their year here. Some of them live in Hong Kong and one individual from Manitoba, who grew up in northern Manitoba, has started a hockey league in Hong Kong—the member might be familiar with, which when you think about it, a hockey league is a pretty innovative approach to broadening the cultural base of Hong Kong.

* (12:20)

And so—and then we went, of course, to the Philippines for a few days and had some very good contacts there with some of the investors there. And at the time we were there, there were people from the University of Manitoba there that were doing training with local organizations on how to start up small businesses. Robert Warren was there from the Asper School of Business, and so we saw some excellent linkages going on there.

So the trade mission, in my view, was successful. It built a base for our tourism initiative in Manitoba. We had some excellent tour operators that joined us over there. As the member might know, Canada has been designated a preferred tourist destination by the Chinese government, which allows Chinese citizens to travel here more easily and take advantage of the tremendous tourist opportunities we have, not only in Manitoba, but across the country.

Mr. McFadyen: I appreciate the overview of the mission and I wonder, just in terms of the particulars of the attendees and the meetings, if the Premier can just follow up and provide us with the particulars at some point following the conclusion of Estimates.

Just in terms of contracts signed or any other particulars, were—can the Premier just outline details of any particular contracts that were signed or deals entered into in addition to those other particulars?

Mr. Selinger: Again, I'll undertake to get information for the member about what the follow-ups have been with the mission to China and what long-term relationships have come out of that, including specific commercial arrangements that may have been arrived at.

Mr. McFadyen: Can the Premier just provide an indication of whether his government is pursuing entry into the New West Partnership and if so, what steps are being taken in that regard?

Mr. Selinger: We are having discussions with our counterparts to the west of us and they've been positive discussions in my collaborations with the premiers of Saskatchewan and Alberta. And, as we know, we have a new premier in British Columbia now and so we'll be following up with that government as well. And we've looked at the range of issues and how we can further an existing set of positive relationships that we already have with Saskatchewan and Alberta and British Columbia.

The member will know that we've had our first-ever joint Cabinet meetings with the government of Saskatchewan. We've worked closely

with Alberta on a variety of matters, including securities regulation, and we've worked closely in the past with British Columbia on matters relating to hydroelectricity and climate change, and we're all members of the western premiers' group and work well there. That includes the territories of Nunavut and the Yukon as well as the Northwest Territories.

So those discussions are ongoing. I note that before the New West Partnership was developed as a follow-on to the TILMA agreement between Saskatchewan and Alberta, that it was a three-year process. We've initiated our discussions within the last year, and I believe that we can move those discussions forward in the future. But we're not waiting for a formal agreement. We're already continuing to find practical ways to collaborate with our partners to the west of us on trade and government-related matters through the Council of the Federation, through the Western Premiers' Conference, as well as through the bilateral, joint Cabinet meetings.

Mr. McFadyen: And just one final question, and it really just comes out of some feedback from some parents and parent organizations around the province and it's playing itself out in a couple of particular communities just in terms of the need for child-care spaces for parents for both pre-kindergarten age as well as for those who have kids in half-day kindergarten, before and after school. There's been some progress made in terms of making space available within schools where that space exists.

In the case of many schools, the space doesn't exist within the school building itself, and so communities are looking at the alternative of building child-care centres on school property. And I think the Premier may have had some discussions in Wawanesa as a particular example where there's a community initiative to build a child-care centre on the school property just for ease of convenience for parents and kids making the transition from child care to school. It's come up in my constituency at-well with parents at Bonnycastle and other schools as well, looking for that alternative of child-care space close to schools.

Can the Premier just indicate whether the government's looking at any kind of policy to support that kind of building on school property where it makes sense? And it's clear that, where there's space in a school already, that it makes good sense to make use of that space for child care; where it doesn't exist, to do something on school property

just to make it easier for kids to make that transition and also just to make it more convenient for parents who may have kids of different ages and at different stages in school. It's something that's come up as a suggestion in various places, and I just want to give the Premier an opportunity to comment on that.

Mr. Selinger: I believe we've already announced the policy change which will allow daycares to be built on existing school sites. So that also goes along with our policy that all new schools will have daycares built into them, and it also goes along with our commitment to 2,100 additional daycare spaces to be put into operation through this budget.

But the change that allows an existing school to add a daycare on to it, I believe, has been made, and I will get the information for the member on that, because it does seem like a logical use of existing public assets where that can be done appropriately.

Mr. McFadyen: And the change to permit that to happen is a positive one, and I want to acknowledge that. I think that some of the questions that have arisen just relate to the funding arrangements where it's done as a renovation within a school versus a building on school property.

And I won't belabour the point. It's just arisen as an issue that there seems to be a difference between how those two things are approached and some question as to the logic of differentiating between a renovation within an existing building and the construction of an addition or a new building.

With that said, I want to acknowledge that the ability to start to do these things makes a good deal of sense, and it's a positive step. I think we're out of time, but, clearly, if the Premier wants to add anything, that's certainly his prerogative.

I think we are out of time and ready for the question, if everybody's ready.

Mr. Selinger: Briefly, the Public Schools Finance Board can review these matters to see what funding arrangements are there, but there's also money in the Family Services Department for daycare as well.

Madam Chairperson: Are there no further questions?

Are we ready for the resolutions? *[Agreed]*

Resolution 2.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,000 for Executive Council, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is item 1.(a) the Minister's Salary, contained in resolution 2.1.

At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the Chamber, which they have done. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. McFadyen: I have no questions on that point.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,812,000 for Executive Council, General Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2012.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the committee are the Estimates by Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Order, please. The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Marilyn Brick): Order, please. The hour being after 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 29, 2011

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