

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 43—The Real Property Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), that Bill 43, The Real Property Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill would provide a better protection from fraudulent real estate transactions. It streamlines illegal processes, provides faster compensation for victims, introduces tighter signature requirements and reduces red tape.

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

Bill 301—The Providence College and Theological Seminary Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Rossmere, that Bill 301, The Providence College and Theological Seminary Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le « Providence College and Theological Seminary », be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: The purpose of this bill is to add the word "University" after "Providence" and to expand their investment powers.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Concerns continue to be raised about the number of motor vehicle accidents at the intersection of PTH No. 5 and PR 276 and at the intersection of PTH No. 5 and PR 68.

The Rural Municipality of Ste. Rose and the town of Ste. Rose have both raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about the current speed limits on the portion of PTH 5 in the vicinity of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Other stakeholders, including the Ste. Rose General Hospital, Ste. Rose and Laurier fire departments, East Parkland Medical Group and the Ste. Rose and District Community Resource Council, have also suggested that lowering the current 100-kilometre-per-hour speed limit on a portion of PTH 5 may help reduce the potential for collisions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the importance of reducing the speed limit on PTH No. 5 to 80 kilometres an hour in the vicinity of the town of Ste. Rose from the west side of the Turtle River Bridge to the south side of the access to the Ste. Rose Auction Mart to help better protect motorist safety.

This petition is signed by L. Wildeboer, D. Wildeboer, R. Mousseau and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th in 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by E. Olchowik, D. Tayfel, S. Mrawski and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

Bipole III

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side line—east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build the Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this petition is signed by A. Debusschere, T. Debusschere, C. Bourgeois and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Burntwood Regional Health Authority

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Thousands of people residing in northern Manitoba are devoid of the basic right to adequate health care within the Burntwood Regional Health Authority, BRHA, due to poor administrative practices, lack of staff and an absence of health-care planning.

In just over a year, nearly 40 per cent of the physicians either left or handed in their resignations in the BRHA. Many of the physicians who've left went on record attributing BRHA management squarely for their departure.

* (13:40)

Over the past three years, the nursing shortage in the BRHA jumped 250 per cent and nursing locum costs shot up to \$3.75 million in 2008 from only \$570,000 three years earlier. The nursing vacancy rate of 24 per cent is the highest in the province.

The Burntwood Regional Health Authority administrative costs jumped nearly 400 per cent in just over four years to a very high level of nearly \$6 million in 2008.

Burntwood has among the lowest vaccination rates, highest diabetes, hypertension, dental cavities and obesity rates in the country. Burntwood has seen epidemics of necrotizing fasciitis, whooping cough, H1N1, MRSA and TB, yet the health authority has failed to take adequate initiatives to tackle these outbreaks and improve public health standards in northern Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to consider holding the BRHA board and the management team accountable for their actions.

To request the Minister of Health to consider replacing the BRHA senior management.

To request the Minister of Health to consider ensuring the BRHA hires public health specialists and third-party human resource and financial consultants to audit the working and financial running of the authority.

To request the Minister of Health to consider ensuring that the BRHA initiates adequate public health programs.

Signed C. Spence, W. Jeeper, N. Beglaw and many others.

Mr. Speaker: Before moving on to committee reports, when a speaker—in order to recognize a member, they'd have to be seated in their own seat to get permission to have the floor. We have a little problem here today; we have a broken chair.

So there's two members that—if I can get the permission of the House, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and the Minister for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), if I can get the agreement of the House to recognize them where they are seated. Is that okay? Have I got agreement? *[Agreed]* Thank you very much. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I have the pleasure of tabling the 2010 Annual Report for the Municipal Board.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Even as the flood fight continues in many parts of the province, including areas such as Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin and Oak Lake, we're moving forward with immediate flood recovery efforts and longer term improvements to our ability to fight floods.

While the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was announcing the 2011 flood building and recovery action plan yesterday, I was in Ottawa meeting with federal Public Safety Minister Vic Toews about this plan and the ongoing flood situation in the province. The federal government has been a strong partner in Manitoba's flood fight this year by immediately coming through with Canadian Forces resources in our time of need. They have also been an important partner in recovery and mitigation after past floods, including the Flood of the Century on the Red River. As we all know, 2011 is the flood that will go down in the record books on the Assiniboine, and we are committed to responding in kind with significant flood mitigation investments in the Assiniboine River basin right from the Saskatchewan border to Headingley. I had a very positive meeting with Minister Toews yesterday, and I am confident that

the federal government will be there for Manitobans after this flood as well.

I can also update the Assembly on the Assiniboine River levels, which have been steadily dropping off since the crest six days ago. The Portage Diversion inflows are now within the design capacity of the channel and able to handle additional flows that might come from future storms. As such, we are confirming today that the Hoop and Holler controlled release site will not need to be reopened.

I would also like to assure the members of the House that while flood fighting activities on most of our rivers are beginning to wind down, we are not ending our flood fight. Lake levels in many parts of the province continue to rise and will present an ongoing challenge throughout the rest of the year and even into next spring in some cases. The chance of major storms and other foreseen events could also result in us kicking our flood fight back into high gear.

We will remain vigilant and continue our efforts to protect Manitoba families and communities.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation. As was noted yesterday, there's still considerable work under way around Lake Manitoba as people try to protect residences and other buildings from the rising lake levels. Recent high winds have only added to the urgency of the situation. We continue to be contacted by people from different areas along Lake Manitoba, such as Delta Beach and others, who need help in the flood fight. The type of assistance required includes sand, sandbags and people to help build dikes around these properties.

Concerns are also being raised about maintaining road access to the properties that need to be protected. It would be helpful if the provincial government could further clarify what types of resources are being made available to these people and when they can expect to receive them. There still seems to be some confusion about this. A steady information flow would help reduce the anxiety level these people are experiencing as they try to protect their properties. There's still at least 3,300 Manitobans out of their homes, including many First Nations and the major evacuation of Brandon residents. All are hoping that the flood situation begins to stabilize soon so people can return home and affected businesses can reopen, as some already have.

We will look forward to continued updates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for his statement and for the—his role in the announcement yesterday, in terms of compensation and mitigation activities which are moving forward. Certainly, we have a lot yet to do when it comes to the flood situation, and it is—but it is certainly good to hear that the Hoop and Holler cut will not have to be reopened and that things are stabilizing, to some extent at least, along the Assiniboine River.

I note with concern the continuing issues around Lake Manitoba and—whether it's Delta Beach or the St. Laurent area or the many other small communities or farmers around Lake Manitoba, that they're still facing a very difficult situation with much higher than normal levels and the threat of additional water as a result of wave actions, and I certainly hope that the minister will be paying attention to, for example, the need to restore road access at Delta Beach and to help with some of the roads in St. Laurent which are in danger as well.

I note that the situation at Lake St. Martin and the communities of Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin is still a difficult one, with about 30 per cent of people evacuated from Little Saskatchewan and about 85 per cent from Lake St. Martin, and there is concern about whether, in Lake St. Martin, they may need to be out of their homes until freeze-up. And, so, when the rest of the province has, you know, long passed the time of paying a lot of attention to the floods, there may be communities like Lake St. Martin which are still going to be struggling, and I look forward to announcements from the minister in terms of what the long-run planning is for communities like Lake St. Martin. Thank you.

* (13:50)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us, we have Neil Ballard, father of the legislative page Samantha Ballard.

And also in the public gallery we have from Springfield Collegiate, we have 90 grade 11 students

under the direction of Ms. Marijka Collier. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

And also in the public gallery we have from Churchill High School, we have 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Chantal Bilodeau. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Export Sales (US)

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In light of this morning's announcement, I wonder if the Premier can just indicate whether he is aware that the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin are to the south and east of the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we're aware that the sale that was announced this morning of \$4 billion, 475 megawatts, is the largest dollar-value sale in the history of Manitoba Hydro, and that sale will trigger the development of the Keeyask generating facility in Manitoba, the new dam at Keeyask, for a value of \$5.6 billion, which will generate 4,500 person-years of employment in Manitoba.

That's moving Manitoba Hydro forward.

Mr. McFadyen: His \$4.1-billion west-side power line which more than eats up today's announcement, Mr. Speaker, is going down the west side of the province of Manitoba, and I'll table for the Premier, so he's aware, a map which shows where the generating stations are in northeast Manitoba directly north of Kenora and the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin to the east.

Will the Premier now admit that his west-side power line is a terrible, terrible mistake?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the number he put forward is completely wrong, as usual. Everybody in Manitoba now knows that converter stations are needed. Everybody now knows that additional reliability is needed, and now everybody knows that we need additional transmission and converters to supply our export customers in the United States, who are committed to

buying clean energy from Manitoba which would not be possible if the member tied it up.

If the member tied up Manitoba Hydro in litigation by trying to build it down the east side through the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site, he would destroy the reputation of Manitoba Hydro and tie it up for years and the sale would never get completed.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, once again, he is going to undo all the benefit of all these power sales with his west-side directive. The generating stations that he speaks of are directly north of Kenora, Ontario. The sales are to Minnesota and Wisconsin which are south and east of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, does he have, in the face of all of the evidence now coming forward, all of the evidence which shows that he's made a mistake, does he have the strength today to admit that he has made a mistake, or is he going to weakly cling to the terrible west-side decision that he made?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I want to give the opportunity to the member opposite to stop his silliness in the House here.

He knows very well that in front of the Wisconsin legislature, as we speak, there is a bill that would classify new hydro as renewable, new hydro since Wuskwatim. They will not recognize the hydro from the 1970s as renewable because of the flooding in the north. He wants to risk the designation of new Manitoba hydro as renewable by insisting on destroying the boreal forest and our opportunity to preserve for all generations a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

That is reckless. That would tie up Hydro in litigation and it would lead to the destruction of Hydro and ultimately the privatization of it by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum, please. We have a lot of guests here today. Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about renewable energy, and one of the benefits mentioned by Minnesota today is not only that Manitoba Hydro is the cheapest option but that it's renewable energy.

And I want to ask the Premier: Why is he going to waste 40 megawatts of clean, renewable energy? Why, Mr. Speaker, is he going to waste 40 per cent of the Wisconsin deal with his wrong west-side decision? Why is he wanting to increase greenhouse gas emissions and waste 40 per cent of the Wisconsin deal with one bad decision?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there was a time when we built dams in the north with enormous amount of flooding. You will remember it, and that destroyed the reputation of Manitoba Hydro in our export markets. We have since that time spent \$700 million on compensation. We no longer build dams to the maximum. We prevent flooding. We work out all the environmental issues with the First Nations who are now our partners in this, Mr. Speaker.

We need to build hydro so that it has a good reputation as a clean, green energy source in the marketplace which is looking for a premium product. The member opposite would put that reputation at risk. He would put \$22 billion of sales at risk. He would put Hydro and tie it up in knots with litigation.

We will build it; they will try to mothball it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the concern about the boreal forest might be credible if it was coming from somebody other than the person who's building a highway through the very same east-side forest. So as he—as he's out there with the chainsaws and the dynamite going through the east-side forest, he's going to build a west-side power line that's 500 kilometres longer, that costs \$4.1 billion and that wastes 40 megawatts of clean energy, 40 per cent of the Wisconsin deal.

Why, Mr. Speaker, is he going to allow greenhouse gas emissions to go up? Why won't he answer the question as to why he's going to waste 40 megawatts of clean Manitoba energy?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the rationale is clear: Manitoba Hydro enjoys the potential of being designated a clean, green energy source, a premium value product in the marketplace where our customers are looking for that kind of product. The member wants to put that at risk. We have the opportunity to do it right.

At this side of the House, we learn from past errors. We no longer flood the north. We no longer destroy the boreal forest and put UNESCO designations at risk. We build hydro for future generations. We build hydro in partnership with First

Nations peoples. We build hydro so that our customers can be proud of the product they're buying, and we reduce greenhouse gases.

Today's sale will reduce the equivalent of greenhouse gases of taking five million cars off the road. That would not be possible with the reckless approach taken by the member opposite because it would never get built in the lifetime of Manitobans.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over three years ago on April the 17th, 2008, the government issued a news release. That news release was issued by then-Premier Gary Doer, and it announced a 500-megawatt sale to the state of Wisconsin and a 250-megawatt sale to the state of Minnesota.

Will the Premier now confirm—will he now confirm that today's news release is nothing more than a scaled-down reannouncement of what Gary Doer promised more than three years ago?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased the member asked that question because in 2006 when we first announced these term sheets, the member opposite said they were scratched on the back of a piece of tissue paper. He said it was—

An Honourable Member: What did he say?

Mr. Selinger: —scratched on the back of a serviette, and it meant nothing.

Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Those term sheets have turned into a firm commitment to buy Manitoba Hydro, 475 megawatts. There's another 400 megawatts that Wisconsin power service is interested in.

We will find out very soon whether they will classify that as a renewable energy source. That opportunity sits in front of us, to be classified as a renewable energy source. I can tell you, if they destroy the boreal forest, if they destroy the UNESCO World Heritage Site, our opportunity to be classified as clean and green and a premium power source would be destroyed for future generations in Manitoba.

It's a reckless, irresponsible approach by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again, I'll ask for a little co-operation, please. We need a little decorum here, okay?

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and not only is it a reannouncement of what Gary Doer promised three years ago, the Wisconsin portion of the deal has been cut by 80 per cent by what was announced three years ago by Gary Doer. And I'll table the news release issued on April 17th, 2008, and the news release says: Gary Doer announces 500 megawatts of clean, renewable power over 15 years starting in 2018 to Wisconsin, 250 megawatts to Minnesota.

Today's news release talks about not 500 megawatts, but 100 megawatts to Wisconsin. Today's news release doesn't start—doesn't talk about a start date of 2018. It starts about a start date of 2021 to Wisconsin, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier confirm today that all that the news release confirms today is that the announcement today is 80 per cent worse than what Mr. Doer promised three years ago, and a three-year delay in the power sale to Wisconsin, Mr. Speaker? Will he acknowledge that the more time he spends in office, the more he tries to imitate Gary Doer, he's 80 per cent worse?

Another four years, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be importing power from Minnesota.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, you know, I thank—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Come on. We have a lot of—just take a look up in the gallery here. You should be—we should be setting the example for them. This is time for questions and answers.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate him tabling the release from April 17th, 2008, because it's very clear that a term sheet was

signed, the first step on converting to a long-term power sale. The member opposite described it as being written on the back of a cocktail napkin, as being meaningless. That term sheet, we have confirmed today, has been converted from a term sheet into a firm contract for 250 megawatts to Minnesota, 100 megawatts to Wisconsin, with another 400 megawatts being under negotiation. We have made steady progress.

We've gone from term sheet to firm sales on power to our customers to the south of us: \$4 billion, 475 megawatts, \$22 billion over the next 20 years—never possible to be built under the approach of the members opposite. They would tie Manitoba Hydro up in litigation for years. They would not build the converters, which would make the project impossible.

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, we are taking a responsible environmental approach to building hydro. It will bring prosperity to Manitoba for generations to come, not mothball it like the members opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, three years ago, Gary Doer announced a 500-megawatt sale to Wisconsin. Today it's been cut back to 100 megawatts, so the deal is getting worse the longer he spends in office.

Secondly, it's been delayed by three years from what Gary Doer announced three years ago.

Finally—and they didn't put it in his own news release, but coming off the news wire in Minnesota, it says that one other feature of the deal is that Minnesota Power is going to transmit electrical energy northward from its wind farms in North Dakota's part of the deal. So not only are they cutting back on what they're selling to Wisconsin, the new part of the deal is that Manitoba's going to buy from Minnesota.

Mr. Speaker, he's going backward. Will he not admit today that he's bungled the deal that Gary Doer made more than three years ago? Will he not acknowledge that he's wrong on the west-side power line and he's bungling these negotiations with our neighbours to the south of us?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, that is a remarkable effort to mislead the public. We've gone from a term sheet that the member said was only written on the back of a cocktail napkin; we've gone from a term sheet to a firm power sale.

We've gone from a relationship where there was a commitment in principle and have negotiated in good faith with our customers to the south of us for 100 megawatts to Wisconsin, 250 megawatts to Minnesota, the largest dollar-value sale in the history of the province with the potential for another 400 megawatts which is currently under negotiation at a time, Mr. Speaker, at a time when there's a legislation in front of the assembly of Wisconsin to classify our energy as clean, renewable energy, something the member would put entirely at risk by ramming it down the east side, destroying the boreal forest, destroying our opportunity for a UNESCO World Heritage Site, kissing off over \$4 billion of revenue in the short term.

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Brandon Flooding Flood Mitigation and Business Compensation

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): When the light goes out, the microphone's off.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister responsible for EMO has heard the saying, closing the barn door after the horse has run away. There is no better description of the new promise made to the city of Brandon by this NDP government. Now they promise to construct permanent flood protection for the city of Brandon, but this promise has already been made. In 2006, then-Premier Gary Doer promised the same thing.

If that promise had been acted on, Mr. Speaker, 1,300 people would be in their homes today and 75 businesses would be open today. Is it just another promise made by a tired and desperate government that remains to be broken?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We partnered up with the excellent leadership at the municipal level in Brandon with a \$780,000 investment to improve the dikes out there this spring. And I must commend the City of Brandon for moving on that very rapidly to double the amount of protection there from a one-in-50-year dike to a one-in-100-year dike.

As it turned out, Mr. Speaker, we had a one-in-300-year event, and we moved in to work hand in hand with the local leadership and the emergency operations committee, and I cannot thank the leadership of Brandon and the emergency operations committee enough for the work they did. The water was over 12 feet higher than the roadway

along 18th Street, and the super sandbags we put in place, the Aqua Dams we put in place on top of the permanent diking made all the difference. The evacuation order was precautionary.

Enormous amount of damage was saved, and the people of Brandon deserve our respect and our support, which is why they will get an additional \$20 million to improve their diking system.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, had the original Gary Doer promise been kept, Brandon businesses would not be suffering today. In yesterday's recovery action plan, Brandon received no more than a footnote, \$100,000 earmarked to assist with economic recovery programming and recognition of the flood's serious impact on local businesses.

More than 75 businesses and hundreds of employees have been displaced. This amounts to \$1,300 for each business and their employees. Does the minister honestly believe that this program will soothe the government's conscience for their total mismanagement—total mismanagement—of this year's flood?

*(14:10)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, not only did we invest \$780,000 to double the capacity of the dikes in Brandon, not only did we support them with additional resources and new technologies such as super sandbags and Aqua Dams to meet the unprecedented one-in-300-year challenge there, we also worked with them to deploy military people there.

Yes, there was a precautionary evacuation order in the area which has not yet been flooded. That was to protect people's homes. That was to protect families. That was to protect employees. That was to ensure the safety of the people of Brandon. That was the prudent decision. City council made that decision. We supported it a hundred per cent. It was the right thing to do.

Now the right thing to do is to go to that one-in-300-year level of protection, which is why yesterday we committed \$20 million of additional resources to work with the leadership of Brandon to ensure that a once-in-a-lifetime event will not put them under the kind of stress that they had this spring and which they so admirably rose to the challenge of meeting.

Mr. Borotsik: This government, Mr. Speaker, is very good with reannouncements. That announcement was made in 2006 and not fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, it is not what the action recovery plan has; it is what is not in there that is most distressing. The independent Brandon businesses are the forgotten ones. Two independently owned motels are out of business for more than a month. An independent restaurant and gift store is shut down. A mechanic is without his shop. An RV park and campground will lose a whole year of revenue.

What is the government prepared to do for these business owners and their employees?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to work with the local leadership of Brandon who have done such an excellent job to provide one-in-300-year protection so that they can—not have to go through the stress they went through this year to protect that community.

We are prepared to work with them on an economic recovery program. We've already committed \$100,000 to that. We will work closely with them to help the community reboot itself in terms of the economy as rapidly as possible.

Instead of standing and posturing like the member from Brandon West is doing, we will roll up our sleeves and work with the local leadership in Brandon to move forward in a way that provides long-term mitigation and short-term economic recovery.

Pediatric Specialists Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, over the last 12 years, this NDP government has done an especially poor job of keeping pediatric specialists in Winnipeg, but under this Minister of Health that shortage has skyrocketed. According to freedom of information numbers, four years ago there was a shortage of seven pediatric specialists in Winnipeg. Today that shortage is 19. It has tripled in just four years under the watch of this Minister of Health.

So I'd like to ask her: Are these pediatric specialists fleeing Manitoba because of the growing and crushing bureaucracy at the WRHA?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. I can inform the House that, of course, we are in active recruitment in virtually every area of medical professionals in Manitoba, and

because of investments that we've made not only in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine, not only with our regional health authorities in terms of incentive programs, we have, indeed, seen a net increase of doctors every single year since 1999.

Mr. Speaker, this stands in very stark contrast to virtually every year in the 1990s where there was a net decrease of doctors, a record-breaking year in 1996 when we saw a net loss of 75 doctors.

We're going to continue recruiting in pediatrics and in every other area, but a net increase every year since we've been in office versus a decrease every year that they were speaks for itself.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health needs to cut the desperate and tired rhetoric and just listen.

The pediatric specialist shortage include one pediatric anesthetist, two child psychiatrists, one in allergy, one ambulatory pediatrics, one child development, one emergency doctor, one endocrinologist, three gastroenterologists, one general pediatrics, one neonatology, one nephrology, three pediatric ICU doctors, one rehab medicine and one rheumatology.

So I want to ask this Minister of Health: How are babies and children supposed to get good and safe care when we are short now of 19 pediatric specialists in Winnipeg? How are they supposed to get that care?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that they'll start getting that care in the brand new women's hospital that we've committed to build.

Mr. Speaker, I think that those babies and families are also going to get excellent care at the brand new birthing centre, the first of its kind in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I think they're going to get that kind of care in the brand new maternity ward at St. Boniface Hospital, soon to be completed.

Mr. Speaker, I think they're going to get that care from the net increase of—wait for it—3,026 nurses since 1999—3,026 net new.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're going to get that kind of care from 405 net new doctors in Manitoba, a very stark contrast to the attitudes of the members opposite.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the tired and desperate rhetoric from this Minister of Health doesn't change

the facts. Under her watch, we are seeing a dramatic shortage of specialists for our children.

Over the weekend, we also learned that community pediatricians can no longer admit to the Children's Hospital or to the pediatric ICU. Now we see that Children's Hospital has a serious shortage of 19 specialists.

So in—one area of particular concern is the pediatric ICU where the shortage is critical. Over the last 12 years under this government, they've been short about one person in that area. Now, under this minister's watch, they are short three pediatric ICU doctors.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: How are children in the pediatric ICU supposed to get safe care when they are short three pediatric specialists?

Ms. Oswald: The member opposite has, you know, a very interesting definition of facts.

What I can present to her as a fact is that, in fact, the leader of her party said just about a year ago that the Tories would put less focus on issues such as health care, because we have to pick the issues that we're going to win an election on. I stand corrected: That was the member from Carman, not the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

I can say to the member, when the Leader of the Opposition was given an—[interjection] Oh, they don't like me talking about that. I wouldn't either if I were them. In any event, when the member—the Leader of the Opposition was given an opportunity to correct the record in the *Carman Valley Leader*, my new favourite paper, he did, in fact, not correct the record.

And what I can say to the member: net new doctors, 405; net new nurses, 3,026; new women's hospital; new birthing centre; more midwives. Bring on the debate.

Jaylene Sanderson-Redhead Public Inquiry Timeline

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): You guys just don't get it. You don't get it. And that kind of answer gives no comfort to families of children that need the support and services from pediatric specialists, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the deadline of May 20th has come and gone for the chance to appeal the sentence in the case of the horrific murder of 20-month-old Jaylene Sanderson-Redhead in 2009.

Will an inquest be called to get to the bottom of what went so terribly wrong?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps I can just go right back to statements made by the member when she was the Minister for Family Services, which, of course, in her mind is—was so, so long ago. It was so, so long ago that hopefully, she thinks, people forgot, but she said on June 23rd, 1999, in answer to the very same kind of question—it said here: Minister of Family Services: Ultimately, the Chief Medical Examiner has to make the determination of whether an inquest will be done or not.

I stand by her words.

* (14:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But, Mr. Speaker, it's been two years since this 20-month-old child was murdered, and we still have absolutely no answers as to what went wrong.

Last November, in question period, the Minister of Family Services indicated that there was an investigation ongoing by his branch into the Native Women's Transition Centre.

This year, in Estimates, Mr. Speaker, he told me that no investigation has been started. Why did he mislead Manitobans into believing that he was doing something in November when nothing has been done?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, of course, the Chief Medical Examiner can call an inquest, which is an outside judicially led review. The Children's Advocate has been, I'm assured, conducting a full special investigation report—new powers for the Children's Advocate that the other side got up and voted against. They didn't want that to happen. And, as well, the Province has launched a review of the Native Women's Transition Centre. It's being done by the Child Protection branch and the Family Violence Prevention Program, I understand.

But you know what's important when we have these tragedies, Mr. Speaker? It's also to reflect on the fact that this is horrific, that there had to be, and I'm glad there was, a serious—a listen to the Crown attorneys when they made their presentation to the court.

There has to be a very, very clear denunciation from the court. At the same time, we are always looking to see how we can improve services and see

if something went wrong that can be prevented in the future.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But it's two years since she was murdered. It was two years since the minister promised to immediately look into what went so terribly wrong. He was distraught at the time.

Mr. Speaker, he told us in November of last year that a review was being done by his branch. On May the 5th of this year, in Estimates, he said that review has not been started.

Mr. Speaker, why, why would he mislead Manitobans into believing that he was doing something when there's been no public accountability for the murder of this 20-month-year-old little girl?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first, the—it's important that, of course, nothing get in the way of justice, and that is why, Mr. Speaker, the department was very careful about how interviewing should take place, that it not taint any evidence, and provide alternate interviews that could be used and subpoenaed in a trial.

But once the prospect of a trial was over, work has begun on that.

And, as well, the members opposite were opposed to the Children's Advocate ever doing an outside independent review. We supported that. Thank goodness we had a majority to make sure that that power was in place.

But we know what the views of members opposite are. The view of members opposite is not to return children safely to their home, Mr. Speaker. They want a moratorium on that. That's what they want to do. They were complicit in residential schools in the '60s scoop. Well, they maybe explain their no-return policy that they want today.

Child Welfare System Children-in-Care Fatalities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today violent crime is at epidemic proportions in Manitoba, and the most 'jarring' of the—jarring of the crime statistics is the number of homicide victims who've been involved in the NDP's child and family services system. A staggering 46 per cent of the kids who were victims of homicide last year had had involvement with the Child and Family Services, according to the Children's Advocate report.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) if he can answer today why kids in Manitoba are so

unsafe under the NDP's child and family services system.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, foster parents do their level best, and we are always looking for ways to provide greater support for foster parents because they have, within their care, often children who are very vulnerable in many ways. They've been vulnerable to abuse and neglect, and often, sadly, they are vulnerable to violence in the community as well.

But that is why, Mr. Speaker, we've made significant new investments in child welfare, historic investments never seen in the history of this province.

Mr. Gerrard: It is because these children are vulnerable that there should be extra care taken.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has a track record of dragging its heels when it comes to accountability and launching an inquiry into, for example, the tragic deaths of kids in care. It took five years for the NDP to launch an investigation into the death of Phoenix Sinclair.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier now know why Manitobans don't think that the NDP takes the murder of children involved with CFS seriously when it takes five years to call such an inquiry?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Our policy has always been to let the criminal justice system do its job so there's full accountability for the alleged perpetrators of these crimes, and once that process has completely made the perpetrators of those crimes accountable within the rule of law, then we proceed on other measures, including inquiries.

But while that process is going on, every single year we have increased our investment in child welfare services, and this government has negotiated the first-ever agreement with the federal government to invest resources in prevention of child welfare problems in our system. We've made very—millions of dollars, over \$11-million investment in that to move the programming in child welfare down to the community level, to work directly with families to ensure that they have the supports they need to properly support their children in a healthy lifestyle of growing up.

So we're moving to the prevention level. We've increased our resources on the detection and

protection level as well, and we've also made additional investments in training.

All of these measures are intended to strengthen our child welfare system in a context that supports healthy family development in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, but what are the outcomes? You know, 46 per cent of children murdered last year had been involved with the Child and Family Services, and, yet, at the same time, it took five years to launch an inquiry into a despicable murder of a five-year-old. And, indeed, there's never been an adequate investigation into the death of 18-month-old Heaven Traverse, which occurred in 2005.

Manitobans have made it known loud and clear that they don't think that the NDP is capable of protecting children. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally admit that the NDP's been reckless in protecting children and derelict in his duties to make sure that these tragedies don't continue?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, any death in—of any child in Manitoba is a serious matter, which we undertake to prevent in the future, and that is why we have made very significant investments in the child welfare system.

Every single year, we have expanded resources there, resources for better trained protection workers, resources for stronger communities and families, resources to improve the governance of the system and, also, over and above that, resources into the Healthy Child program of Manitoba, which does things like provide a prenatal benefit and nurses to do home visits to families to help them to get off to a healthy start.

These are all commitments we have made in the name of ensuring the families are given all the help possible to do the job that they want to do, which is to raise healthy, productive children inside the province of Manitoba.

We have never shied away from the responsibility to do that. Even at a time when members opposite wanted to cut millions of dollars out of the budget in the middle of the recession, we continued to support and increase our resources in that area. The member opposite who just asked the question is one of those ones that wanted to cut money from the budget, along with the members of the opposition.

We refuse to do that. We protect our front-line services.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Export Sales (US)

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, it's been said that Manitoba Hydro is our oil, only much cleaner, greener and more sustainable. We know that this side of the House is committed to keeping Manitoba Hydro publicly owned and building our hydro resource for the benefit of all Manitobans and that members opposite haven't shared this vision for Manitoba's Crown corporations. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) has even put down Manitoba Hydro's export sales and commented that Hydro deals were meaningless.

Could the minister provide more details for the House on today's major power sale announcement and its many long-term benefits for all Manitobans?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I want to commend my friend for raising this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I was part of an announcement this morning with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the minister—the CEO from Manitoba Hydro on the sale of MTS for—the sale of MTS, that's what they did. That's their—they sold MTS. We are developing and exporting hydro, and the total sale was 475 megawatts, a \$4-billion—*[interjection]*

I mix it up with MTS, Mr. Speaker, because we know that the members opposite would never bring forward a sale like this. They would privatize Manitoba Hydro, and if you listen to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), that's where he's going.

But we are working in partnership with First Nations, Mr. Speaker. We are working in partnership with the US—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:30)

Minnedosa-Neepawa Area New Medical Facility Proposal

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Minnedosa, Neepawa and the rural municipalities within the region are concerned about the long-term viability of their respective health-care facilities. Eleven municipalities signed a memorandum of understanding in September of this past year and,

collectively, support the construction of the joint health facility in the Minnedosa-Neepawa region.

In February the minister met with the contingent and were told that she would get back to them within a couple of weeks. That's three months ago, Mr. Speaker.

In April, 2008, Dr. Gavin Roche said, and I quote: If it doesn't get off the ground within a year, I have doubts that this will succeed. Hopefully, the government will get behind this quickly.

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say to Dr. Roche and the other health-care professionals who have worked so hard to get this proposal off the ground? It looks like the NDP government has turned its back on this very important health-care facility proposal.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): What I would say to this doctor and the enthusiastic doctors in Neepawa that are working hard to drive this project forward—a very good idea and a very good project—what I would say to them, Mr. Speaker, is that we will not make the choices that members opposite did during difficult economic times and issue a news release that says that they will freeze all health capital spending and investment.

In actual fact, we'll continue to invest, Mr. Speaker. We're now investing in over 100 rebuilt or renovated facilities. We're moving forward on each one of those projects. We're going to continue to work with the municipalities around Minnedosa, Neepawa, on this project. We're not going to freeze health capital like they did while they were cutting the spaces in medical school. We're going to build, build, build.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Samantha Ballard

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to offer congratulations to an exceptional young woman, Samantha Ballard. Samantha is a grade 12 student at Shaftesbury High School. This fall she will be attending the University of British Columbia where she has already been recognized for her hard work.

Samantha is a recipient of a Major Entrance Scholarship from UBC worth \$30,000. The Major Entrance Scholarship is the most prestigious award incoming students can receive. Recipients of this

award must demonstrate excellence—excellent academics, achievements in leadership and contributions to the community, arts, athletics or other school activities.

Samantha is a talented musician with proficiency on a number of instruments. At UBC she will be pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Performance on the harp. Samantha has been playing the harp for two and a half years. In addition to the harp, she has also studied piano, flute and saxophone. She also performs as a member of the Shaftesbury High School band.

At UBC, Samantha will be part of first-class music program. She will have the opportunity to perform in the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, which is renowned for its excellent acoustics and is considered one of the best concert halls in the world.

Samantha is here in the House today. She is one of our hard-working pages. She was nominated for this position by her teachers and has worked for the Legislative Assembly since last August.

The opportunity to participate in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Page Program is reserved for a small number of outstanding high school students each year. Samantha's selection for the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Page Program is evidence that she is highly regarded by her teachers.

Congratulations to Samantha for her recognition of achievement with a Major Entrance Scholarship from the University of British Columbia. We wish her the best of luck as she graduates from high school and begins her post-secondary career. Samantha has a bright future ahead of her and I have no doubt she will have many more achievements in the years to come.

And we want to welcome Samantha's father here with us today; he's in the gallery.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

National Missing Children's Day

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, people across Canada are observing National Missing Children's Day today in memory of the children we've lost. Without experiencing it, we cannot comprehend the suffering parents must go through when their son or daughter doesn't come home. The best we can do, however, is support the families and devote more resources to preventing child abduction. There are over 62,000 reported cases of missing children in Canada

each year, and while many families are reunited with their children unharmed, many other cases are never resolved. Not only must the families go through the pain of losing a child, but they are left in a state of limbo, not knowing their children's fate and the—which is a horror in itself.

In our province many dedicated workers co-ordinate different organizations to locate missing children and to prevent or address some of the main dangers to children such as sexual exploitation. Child Find Manitoba has been at the front lines of this work for over 20 years. All of us can promote Cybertip.ca, which is an Internet-based tip hotline that anyone can access to stop online child predators.

On this day, many people choose to wear the green ribbon of hope to show solidarity with grieving families. It's meant to symbolize the search and safe return of all missing children. However, hope can also be painful for families whose children have been gone for many years, families who will always remember but who also need to find closure.

I ask that we be hopeful for both the children we will recover and for the future of families whose children may have already been lost. We can all do our part in raising awareness around this issue. But I ask this House to join me in recognizing the vital work of the staff at Child Find Manitoba and of the families who've decided to use tragedy to help other families by donating their time and stories. We need your strength. Thank you.

World Multiple Sclerosis Day

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Today, May 25th, marks World MS Day and the month of May is MS month. Multiple sclerosis is a chronic and often disabling disease primarily diagnosed in young adults between the ages 15 to 40, and it's the most common neurological disease of young adults in Canada.

Each day, three more Canadians are diagnosed with MS and women are three times more likely than men to develop the disease. Over 2 million people around the world suffer from multiple sclerosis and over 3,000 families in Manitoba are forced to deal with the plight of MS daily. Canadians have one of the highest rates of MS in the world, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan account for the highest rates in Canada.

Many mysteries still exist when it comes to MS as there is no confirmed cure and no reason why it affects the people who suffer from this horrendous

disease. MS is unpredictable and can affect vision, hearing, memory, balance and mobility. It also has a tremendous affect on the family members of an MS patient as they are forced to watch helplessly as a loved one suffers from the disease.

Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus along with other Manitobans are pleased that Manitoba has finally agreed to proceed with the clinical trials for MS liberation therapy. There is still much work to be done in this area, and it is our hope that Manitoba can be a leader, along with Saskatchewan, in advancing the research. Although there is still no cure for multiple sclerosis, many researchers are working hard to find the answers. World MS Day is a time to bring awareness about MS to people around the world. Multiple sclerosis has a lifelong impact on those who have developed the disease and their families, and I look forward to the day when we have a known cure.

I would like to thank MS researchers in Manitoba and around the world who are working towards this goal, and I would like to acknowledge the families and the patients who deal with this disease on a daily basis and to recognize their resilience in the face of the many challenges that are before them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on May 25th, 2011, to recognize World MS Day. Multiple sclerosis is a chronic and often disabling disease that affects the lives of many around the world. Here in our province, MS affects thousands of Manitobans, and I think it would be safe to say that we all know someone who is living with multiple sclerosis or who has been touched by this disease. Most of us will never know exactly what sufferers of MS go through. But we can still help fight back against MS and we must do so in honour of those that continue to live with the disease.

World MS Day shows us that we can each do our part to help find a cure or to improve the lives of those living with MS. This is our call to action. Whether it is learning more about this disease, participating in the many activities organized by the MS Society of Canada or donating to MS research, we can all have a part to play. We owe it to MS sufferers and their families.

While medical researchers continue their efforts to find a cure, this government is trying to do our part to improve the lives of those living with MS. We share Manitobans' optimism about the potential of the liberation procedure. That is why this

government announced that we are partnering with the government of Saskatchewan to develop a co-ordinated multi-site approach for clinical trials on the liberation treatment. This important step comes in addition to recent investments that will improve the care and treatment available for MS patients. Fortunately, we know that MS sufferers are not alone. In addition to family, friends and neighbours, the MS Society of Canada does incredible work fighting on their behalf. I would like to thank the dedicated and committed staff, supporters and volunteers of the MS Society of Canada, Manitoba Division, for the important work that they have done over the years. Support for their efforts is crucial if we hope to one day find a cure for MS. Today, on World MS Day, we need to send a strong, powerful message to sufferers: that we are here for them.

*(14:40)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Health-Care Workers

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the many Manitobans who work in the health-care field, and who give so much from day to day and from night to night in all parts of our province.

Each day, it's true, I hear of problems in health care in Manitoba, but each day I also hear stories of amazing dedication. Each day, I hear stories of health-care workers: nurses, doctors, or members of one of the many allied health-care professions who've gone to extraordinary lengths to provide the very best possible care to those who are in need. Some of these health-care workers have been helping other Manitobans for a long time, 40 years, or sometimes even 50. Some of these health-care workers are new graduates or new arrivals in Manitoba. These are health-care workers of many backgrounds. Some have come to Manitoba from countries around the world to contribute and to help here in Manitoba.

I want to pay tribute to the extended effort and the extended hours worked by many. I want to pay tribute to the extra effort made by some remarkable individuals: the extra house calls, the late night checking of results and the many other actions taken which contribute to the well-being of Manitobans. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to the extraordinary individuals who care so much. They make the—an extra effort, sometimes a very large extra effort, to help Manitobans in need.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to table the list of ministers requested for a concurrence for May 26, tomorrow: Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby), and the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And, Mr. Speaker, these ministers are to be questioned concurrently.

Mr. Speaker: That—the ministers to be questioned for tomorrow has been tabled.

Now we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

The honourable Minister for Innovation, Energy and Mines, on House business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Deputy Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd wonder if we might dissolve the House into concurrence into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, for this afternoon we'll move into Committee of Supply.

Would—Madam Deputy Speaker, would you please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Madam Chairperson (Marilyn Brick): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The honourable Government House Leader—excuse me.

On May 24th, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mrs. Taillieu) tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning and debate on concurrence motion: the Minister for Conservation, the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transportation and Emergency Measures, the Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Culture and Heritage, the Minister for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, and the Minister for Housing and Community Development, to be questioned concurrently.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): To the Minister of Housing: running out No. 2 Highway to the great village of Cypress River, population about 250, there's the Cypress River Lodge, which is a seniors assisted living facility there overseen by Manitoba Housing and financed through CMHC and by Manitoba Housing. The facility is well run; it's looked after. In fact, it was—Manitoba Housing conducted an audit of the lodge operations last year and did note that many upgrades had been done to—and it's very well run. And I actually have the financial statements here if the minister needs them, as well.

But, beside them—beside the—located beside the Cypress River estates is three empty lots, and as there is a shortage of developed lots in the village of Cypress River, there is a group, started through the Cypress River-Holland Community Development Corporation—a company was started—it's incorporated, called Cypress River estates. They want to build a triplex condominium unit. The lots are presently owned by the Cypress River estates, the seniors housing unit. The housing—the Cypress River estates is very agreeable to selling the lots to the—pardon me, the Cypress River Lodge is very interested in selling the lots to Cypress River estates to build this condo unit. However, there's a lien on the lots with the mortgage of the lodge, and the lodge owes approximately \$120,000. The assessed value of the lodge is \$187,400.

Now, apparently, there is problems within your department about releasing these three lots, releasing the mortgage on these three lots, as there seems to be some issues about equity to service debt. The lodge is well run; it's paying its mortgage every year. These lots have nothing to do with it. The latest twist, now, is that they've asked the Cypress River estates, the condo unit, to do an appraisal on the lodge, and that would come at the expense of the Cypress—there's two problems: first of all, that would come at the expense of the condo unit company; and also, there is a problem about getting an appraiser that's qualified to do this. And we're in a time-sensitive issue here. This—it's a local contractor that's going to build this. It's very timely to get this started.

I'm just wondering if the minister could—is aware—first of all, let's just start: Is the minister aware of this situation?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Right now, across the

province of Manitoba, we are seeing record amounts of apartments being built by the private sector as well as by the Province of Manitoba. So we have a boom that's happening, and I'm very excited about it, with the investment and the hard labour of many volunteers across the province.

This specific issue that the member from Carman refers to, I'm not familiar with the specifics. I'll certainly look into them for him and try and see what we can do to resolve this situation.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, and I appreciate that and I can bring her more information or I can meet with her staff to bring them up to date. This is a very timely issue, as I mentioned, that—because it is a local project, local contractors involved, and there is time-sensitive issue here.

But it—I just want to stress that on one hand, I don't know how people within her department could be concerned about equity to servicing debt when the debt has been paid all along. The mortgage is—continues to be paid. Why would this suddenly be an issue? And, on one hand, you're saying that the lodge is not worth enough to be able to transfer these three lots out, and yet the lots have no value to the lodge in itself. So I would certainly appreciate the minister giving me some direction as to who to contact within her department or whether she will take this and whether we can—how do we get to resolving this issue so we can get some housing—private housing built in Cypress River?

* (14:50)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can assure the member that the staff at Manitoba Housing work very diligently to represent sponsored-managed buildings, as well as buildings that we own ourselves, and work to ensure that we are providing the best quality and affordable housing across this province.

I will ask that the member provide me with the information. I will take it back to the department. We will review the facts as we see them and then I'll be in contact with him to let him know what the next steps would be.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): And for the Minister of Housing, could the Minister of Housing tell me if she knows how many derelict houses she owns?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I cannot give the member the exact number right now of vacancies that we have within our portfolio. But what I can tell you is that we have

vacancies that have happened because of the in-depth renovations that we are making across the province, and that's record amount of investment that's being made. I can tell you that in some parts of the province what we've had to do is we've had to go in and evaluate the property and come up with solutions to engage people in the province to live in the property. We are familiar that there are some properties that need additional work. So we have hired real estate agents that are working with us to do those evaluations and coming up with a solution.

We want to ensure that we have affordable and safe housing provided to all Manitobans across the province whether they live urban, rural or northern.

Mr. Graydon: The minister brings up a good point. Like—and I understand that some of the houses do get—I guess a word would be "trashed" when they're being rented. Sometimes that happens. But I do know that there are some areas that the houses have not been kept up. No one has rented them for the last 15 years, and so those were the ones that I referred to as derelict. I have no doubt that the minister is spending records amount of money to supply affordable housing, low-cost housing to many Manitobans. But, at the same time, paying taxes on these types of properties probably is not a good business model and—so that was the reason that I asked the question about the derelict housing, and that is housing that isn't fit for people to live in at this point. It's not habitable at all.

The other issue that arises from her answer was the vacancy rate in some of the units throughout the province. It's not restricted to my constituency. It's pretty much general across Manitoba. And there is a chronic vacancy in some of the first units that were built; they were bachelor suites.

Is there some—does the minister have some solution to what may or may not happen with these particular units?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Those would be the units that are being assessed by the real estate agents that have been hired by Manitoba Housing to evaluate what are the needs within those communities, what is the interest in moving into those locations.

I can tell you another initiative that we have instituted is capping rents. So ensuring that when an individual wants to move into one of our properties, and there's the assessment that's based on 27 per cent of their income, that it doesn't become a deterrent when we have a high rate of vacancy, that we can

ensure that people are living in our homes, because that's how we know that we'll best maintain them.

I'd like to add as, well, that we knew that in the last number of years that there were—there was no money that was allotted for renovations or new builds, and this has just come over the last three or four years that we've started to make those investments. We know that the federal government has a lot of money, surplus money, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and we'll be—continue to work with them to ensure that they're assisting all jurisdictions in not only maintaining their housing stock but also looking at new builds to meet the needs across the province.

Mr. Graydon: The minister again raises another point when she raises the federal government has a huge pot of money. How does that affect what you do, Madam Minister?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Can you repeat that, please?

Mr. Graydon: You alluded to the fact that the federal government has quite a large pot of money under CMHC. How does that affect the decisions that you make provincially?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Because CMHC were partners of many organizations across the province that helped build these buildings, helped finance these buildings and they have a responsibility to housing. And we need to make sure that it stays on the national agenda and work together to ensure that these investments continue to be made.

Mr. Graydon: The—so, in saying that the federal government was involved in the building of them; were they—was there also some type of an agreement that they would be there, as well, to do the upkeep, or was that a provincial responsibility?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There were agreements around the mortgages of the property and the responsibility of the proponents to pay them back.

Mr. Graydon: Has the minister explored the possibility of a partnering with the local businesses, local individuals, in some of the units that have a high vacancy rate?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm extremely proud of the work that Manitoba housing corporation does, in partnering with many organizations, whether they're non-profit organizations, in looking at, how could we best use our facilities in our housing that we have.

So there are many organizations which are providing services to our tenants. Daycares are a good example of that, as well as resource centres, family resource centres, Boys and Girls Club or Ma Mawi is also on location.

So we are partnering, making sure that, you know, we're not only dealing with the issue of vacancies, but also, looking at ensuring that we're providing services to our tenants.

Mr. Graydon: The second part of the question was for private business. Have you had any approach you or have you approached any of them to partner in a unit or to sell it to them?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm most familiar with the work that we do with the non-profit organizations around our properties at Manitoba Housing. I'm—I'll have to look into specifics around businesses and get back to the member.

Mr. Graydon: The—in some locations, there are units that are not rented and I've had a number of people now say to me, well, I qualify to rent and yet they won't rent it to me.

So, when I check out with the people in charge, they tell me that they have to have a vacancy in case of an emergency. Could you explain that emergency to me?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm not quite sure about the specifics of the question that the member asks. It seems to be very broad. Is there—if there's a particular incident, I'm prepared to review it and look into it.

Not sure what the definition of emergency would be in vacancies. Our goal is to ensure that we're providing affordable, good-quality housing across the province of Manitoba.

* (15:00)

Mr. Graydon: So, then, a minister is saying that there is no vacancy held open for any type of emergency. If there's a request and there's a vacancy, it's rented?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What I did say is I'm not certain about what instance the specific circumstances that the member is referring to. What I said is I will look into it and try and find out this definition of emergency. My understanding is when there is a person in need of housing, and there is an individual that meets our criteria, that housing is provided to them.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the minister for that.

The other question I have to do with housing and—there are some houses that are been available for many, many years and have not been rented. There's been money spent on them to upkeep them; they're beautiful homes. The minister alluded to the fact that she was in the process of removing the cap or putting a cap on the rental. Could she tell me when that would probably take place?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd just like to go back to the previous question. I can assure the member that maintaining housing for emergencies is not a policy of Manitoba Housing. I would like to clarify it, though, that we do have some housing that is available for elder abuse, that is set aside and ensured that people can have access if they're leaving a violent situation, as well as we have units that are set aside to help support individuals as they're aging out of care. So those are some examples. But I do, I encourage the member to forward me the information specific to this emergency, information that was shared with him and his constituent.

The rent cap is a commitment that we made over a year ago. We started in the northern region and it's been very successful, filling vacancies in the area. And now we are working in the southern area. I can get the specifics of how we're rolling it out and what regions we are now and when we anticipate to be in—providing rent caps in Winnipeg.

Mr. Graydon: And when you say the rent caps in Winnipeg, is this going to include rural Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, it will be around all of the housing stock that we manage ourselves. So it will—what we are doing, though, is—was starting in the north, working through the province, so it will include all of the province.

Mr. Graydon: Could I ask the minister why it wouldn't be a blanket policy for the province?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What I have been saying is that it is a blanket policy, but we are rolling it out slowly and making sure, because some of this issue does not—is not the same in each region. So we're having to make sure that we are identifying these rent caps and helping support our system as we are rolling it out and making sure that we are doing the correct evaluations.

So it is a provincial policy, but we are just doing a staggered rollout. It will be throughout the province in a very short time.

Mr. Graydon: Can the minister share with us what the criteria for that policy is?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The rent cap policy is specific to regions where there are issues around vacancies. So any individuals that will—would come in, and a good example is we have a housing unit that's available, we have an individual who, 27 per cent of their income is, like, \$1,500, but they feel that that's not value for their dollar. And what we will do is we will work with them and cap the rent at what's appropriate for that unit, and do it for two reasons. One is to fill vacancies. The second one is to support people that are transitioning from social assistance into the workplace and ensuring that they have some time in order to build some equity to find alternative, if that's what they want, or also ensuring that they are—can stay in the Manitoba Housing and that they can still find it affordable.

We've met with many individuals in Manitoba Housing complexes that have talked about how individuals—they see the progress happening with individuals finding jobs, finding good employment, and then the rents go up too high and they're forced to leave the community, and, you know, have difficulty sometimes finding affordable rent. So that was part of it: that they can continue to live in the community that they know, their children can go to the schools that they're familiar with, and that they can be role models for their entire community.

Mr. Graydon: I commend the minister for that. It's a laudable goal, and I'm just trying to understand or better understand the criteria in—and I'm sure that—then by what she's saying is that she's already identified the vacancies in the province. So then the rest of this should be fairly easy to do, then. If the vacancy rate is high in certain areas, then there's a strong possibility that the cap could be a part of that problem.

But I understand that she started in the north and is working her way south; however, can she identify where the vacancies would be then that would have her look at this situation?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We're always, as portfolio management, we're always evaluating the different regions of the province, looking at where we're building, where the vacancy rates are and working with community members. So our real estate agents are able to identify where the vacancies are. Right now we're looking at what is the best way to manage those vacancies with the goal of having individuals living in them.

The—there's certain initiatives that we can consider: one is the capped rent, one is looking at home ownership programs, and those are two that we're evaluating right now with our portfolio.

Mr. Graydon: When you're evaluating these, is home ownership—have you done a pilot project with any of them?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We have not identified any regions yet around home ownership specific to vacancies. We do have home ownership programs as part of our HOMEWorks! initiative, where we're working with Habitat for Humanity. We're working with the Manitoba Real Estate Association as well as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in looking at home ownership programs through that and seeing much success.

Mr. Graydon: One last question on the vacancies. A number of the vacancies that I pointed out are probably in one-bedroom suites of 400-square-foot units. Has she given any thought to taking three of those units and making two?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Some of the vacancies that we see are not necessarily the one-bedroom units but are the bachelor suites. And as we're going in and we're doing our deep refreshes, yes, that's one of the initiatives that we are doing, is reconstructing them into one-bedroom and multiple-bedroom units.

What we see happening in the province of Manitoba is the—a lack of desire to live in a bachelor suite. Those times have passed. At the minimum one bedroom for seniors, but also we, with our immigration policy, we are seeing large families coming in. So you'll know that in some of our buildings that we are renovating right now, the IRCOM 2, that there will be four- and five-bedroom units that will be in that. So we are always evaluating our stock, looking at the needs of the—of our tenants and ensuring that we're doing the best ability we can to provide them with affordable and safe housing.

Mr. Graydon: I'd like the minister to put on her other hat, and that would be the Community Places grants hat, if she would be so kind.

And I'm wondering about the criteria for Community Places grants, and I'll use an example of a small community that wants to build a community hall. And they feel that they're discriminated against because they're not a large enough community to qualify for the restrictions that have been put out by Community Places. Is the minister aware of that?

* (15:10)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm aware that Community Places is a very successful program, that many recreation facilities, daycare facilities, as well as schools and churches have all benefited from Community Places. I'm not certain what restrictions the member speaks of.

I know that we get hundreds of applicants that are—have approached Community Places. We have some skilled staff. We have a lot of skilled staff in that part of the department that work very closely to help facilitate the documentation that's required, as well as evaluating the site.

I know in some regions what—I'm not sure if this is what the member is referring to—is sometimes the matching funds becomes a difficulty for some communities and we have been able to look at that policy and re-evaluate it, specifically to Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities. But I will certainly listen to what he sees as some of the barriers that he's identified.

Mr. Graydon: I'm referring more specifically to some of the engineering requirements by Community Places, and by the time you go through them—and I'm referring actually to LEEDs, the LEED's situation or the LEED's program. Apparently that's a third-party program that you've adopted, and by the time you go through all of the engineering that's required under LEEDs to qualify with your point system, you've spent more money than what the grant is worth and you do that upfront with no guarantee that there will be a grant. Those are what—that's what I'm referring to specifically.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm not quite sure if the member is saying that he's not supporting the development of green builds. We know that there is lots of cost savings that occur around water and energy and many proponents see those benefits. I've not heard of the owner's task of the engineering requirements. This is the first time that it's been brought to my attention. I know that we have a responsibility to leave as little of a footprint as possible within our communities, and that's why we have that policy specific to LEEDs.

Mr. Graydon: Well, I might make the minister aware that the communities where this is actually taking place have a great deal of respect for the community and for the environment. But they also understand dollars and cents, and what's available through Community Places and through the LEED's

program is a wash. They—in fact, they would lose money by going through it. That doesn't necessarily mean that they're hurting the environment, and so for the minister to sit in her chair and say that these people are doing damage to the environment or even inferring that they may be doing damage to the environment, I think, is wrong.

And so I'm raising it so that she does understand there are communities that don't have those kind of resources and—but they do need the facility and they have raised a considerable amount of money in the community and they will build. They will build their community hall. But I wanted to raise this with the minister so that she does know that there is an issue and maybe she would like to address it.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I never said that those individuals were damaging our environment. I was asking the member if he was saying we should not have a LEED policy. That's all the reference that I was making. We have hundreds and hundreds of LEED buildings across this province, and I've had the privilege of being at many of those grand openings and celebrating with those individuals. You cannot deny the cost savings that occur as far as energy and water for the proponents, whether it's an ice rink or the development of a daycare if that's possible.

So we are working with proponents. I'll certainly take what the member said into consideration as we review the policies around Community Places. But I think that it's a very valuable policy that we have and we need to work with our proponents to make sure that it works, not only for the benefits to our environment but also to ensure that they also see the cost savings that can happen.

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister tell me how many grants have been approved in the past year?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can tell the member in the last fiscal year, 2009-2010, that 297 applicants were approved. I know—I do not have the exact number for this year's projects, but I will get that for him.

Mr. Graydon: Of all of the projects that have been approved, have they all been paid out?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That's a very difficult question to answer. We have—as you know, when you work with community groups, they have different timelines and cash flows, so I can't say for certain that all the projects have been paid out. I do know that we have staff that work with each proponent to assist with the cash flow.

Mr. Graydon: Could the minister tell me, if they were approved in 2009-2010 and they haven't been paid out by March 31st, do they come under, then, the 2010-2011 budget?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: No, they stay on the books.

Mr. Graydon: If the minister could just tell me, and she said she would, but I just want to confirm that she would tell me how many applications has been to date.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Yes, I'll get that information to you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, I'd like to ask a few questions of the Minister of Conservation and, first of all, I'd just—there's a situation next door to—fairly close to the building here, and I just wondered if the minister can give us an update on the status of the project on the Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Madam Chair, the park is proceeding. The honourable member would be aware of some of the developments there. If I remember correctly, the board has been set up and—but if the honourable member wanted—it's not the sort of thing that would be reflected in the Estimates, but if the honourable member would like a, sort of, a status report on exactly where things are with respect to Upper Fort Garry, I could certainly provide that to him.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, that's all I was asking, Madam Chair, was just if the minister could give me a bit of a status update on what he expects to see for work this spring and how soon it might start, and it's a great project. I just wanted to get a bit of an update on it.

Mr. Blaikie: I'll undertake to provide that to the honourable member.

Mr. Maguire: There was—I just wonder if the minister can provide an update on the steps taken, last winter, there was a number of ice shacks and that sort of thing along the rivers and the Red, and can he just update me on what steps have been taken to ensure that these shack owners are in compliance with the rules that they've set up?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Madam Chair, I'm pleased to report that this year the whole ice shack thing went a lot better than it did the year before. There were fewer ice shacks, in part, because of the condition of the ice with the—so there were fewer ice shacks on the river to begin with.

But we also undertook a—you know, we had some open houses last year. There was some education around the topic. It was impressed upon people that if the—you know, basically, if people didn't clean up their act, they were going to have to be much more severely regulated than they had been in the past. We required that people have identification on their buildings so that they could be held responsible. I believe that there were a few shacks that didn't have identification on them and they were removed, but, all in all, going by the amount of feedback that I received about the program, the amount of negative feedback that I received this spring, I think things went very well indeed. Shacks were off—were required to be off a bit earlier this year, and, of course, one of the reasons for that was because we wanted to have the time to do that properly, but, also, of course, in anticipation of the flooding situation that was also a factor.

* (15:20)

So I would say, if the honourable member was looking for an evaluation, at least from my point of view, of how things unfolded this year with respect to the ice shacks, that the owners of the shacks behaved, by and large, as we wanted them to. And the relationship between the community and the people that are fishing on the river and Conservation, I think everything worked out pretty good this year.

Mr. Maguire: I thank the minister for that update. I know I attended the meeting in November in Selkirk that evening as well and heard first-hand from the couple of hundred cottage owners that were there with the department folks, did a good job of making the presentation. A lot of concerns by those there and, of course, they were asking for tougher enforcement on some of the issues around, you know, littering and alcohol and perhaps some of the other areas, particularly in signage, that were there. And, of course, it was—there wasn't as many, as well, because of the conditions of ice being much thinner this year than some because of the high water tables in the river and the faster current underneath and thinner ice and a number of those things. So we'll just have to see what happens in another year in regards to that as well. I thank the minister for that.

The Province has just announced consultations, back last fall, I guess it was, in September, as part of the whole recycling program, disposal of electronic and hazardous household wastes. And I wonder if the minister can just give me an update on what's transpired since then and what his government is

doing in regards to the industry-led programs to manage household hazardous waste and, particularly, electronic waste.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Madam Chairperson, there have been—there were consultations and a plan has been—and now, I believe, been—was submitted. There were public input on the plan, and I believe that with respect to e-waste in particular, a plan is either just been approved or very close to being approved. And I expect to be able to make an announcement in the very near future as to how we're going to expand the collection of electronic waste in Manitoba.

Now, with respect to—the member also raised household—*[interjection]*—and we will—we also hope to be able to announce very soon a program with respect to other household hazardous waste, not the, sort of, panoply of household hazardous waste, but we have identified, I think, about half a dozen different products that we're going to move on in the immediate future and others that will be phased in over time.

Mr. Maguire: I know that there was a program announced some time back—over a year ago now, maybe a year and a half ago—about e-waste programs throughout the province, and I believe there was eight or nine of them established at one time. I know there was one in Virden as well, in my home community in the constituency, and it covered pretty much all of Westman there for that area. But there was just not enough support by the individual. He indicated that there wasn't the support there to purchase the electronic waste that was coming in. And I just wondered if the minister can elaborate to me whether that's the only one that has shut down since out of that eight or nine from that announcement, or are there others?

Mr. Blaikie: I think I'd have to get back to the member on that. Whether—I'm not sure exactly the circumstances that he's referring to, so it's hard to make a judgment as to whether or not those same circumstances have been reproduced in other circumstances, but I will undertake to answer that question in due course.

Mr. Maguire: The minister indicate that there might some new programs that they're looking at. Can he just tell me when they might be unveiled and, I guess, can he elaborate as to—I mean, I know how the Canadian Beverage Container Recycling Association program is working and how it works, and can he elaborate as to whether any of the new programs might be along that line as well?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, I know, Madam Chairperson, it's supposed to be me that's answering the questions, but I'm asking—I guess I want to—would like to know more from the member what it is about the CBCRA program that he wants to know if they'll be—that he wants to know there'll be more of. I mean, that is a separate program for beverage containers.

We will be, as I indicated earlier, very soon, announcing progress on e-waste and household hazardous waste, but they will not be identical to the CBCRA plan, if you like. Every product has its own peculiarities, and every industry has its own peculiarities—or particularities, I suppose, is another way of putting it. And so we try to develop plans that are sensitive to the—to that particular sector's needs. And they submit a plan, the department responds; at a certain point, we have, you know, public input on it, and then the plans are ultimately approved and we move ahead.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, even in the, you know, in the area of containers, beverage containers and that sort of thing, you know, we have the new program in place, and I know the goal is to have 70 per cent collection. When it came in, it was in the 30s somewhere in Manitoba. And I just wondered, you know, with that kind of track record, certainly there's room for improvement, and I wondered what new strategies the minister might be saying that they would implement with some of the new—with the other types of waste that are out there today. Whether they're—maybe he could just outline for me what kind of strategies they would use as opposed to the levy from CBCRA.

Mr. Blaikie: I mean, the CBCRA, I think—got to get that acronym right—one of their goals, with the money that is raised from that levy, is to remedy the situation that the honourable member pointed out, which is to say, to get the level of recycling of beverage containers up to the goal of 75 per cent. By way of doing that, what they're doing with the resources available to them, as a result of the levy, is not only contributing to the—their contribution to the blue box into what is collected at the curb side, so to speak, but also trying to step up the recycling of beverage containers at institutions, at parks, various other public venues where, up until very recently, there was not the same opportunity for people to recycle beverage containers. So it's part of their plan to meet our goal, if you like, of 75 per cent, to use that—funds raised through the levy to expand the opportunities for Manitobans to recycle beverage containers.

And, for instance, last year, right around this time, or perhaps it was in June of last year, we had a kind of a kick-off at Birds Hill Park—maybe the honourable member was there—I think—and, you know, we're—there were going to be more opportunities in provincial parks to recycle containers. So they're still doing—they're doing that sort of thing, and, you know, the proof will be in the pudding. And we should be able sometime within the next—hopefully, in the next year or so, to take a measurement as to whether or not we're getting close to that goal of 75 per cent.

Mr. Maguire: Just along the lines of pollution prevention and that sort of thing, just wanted to ask the minister if he has any plans for changing the way or the direction that they've provided to cities and municipalities for the management of waste. I'm thinking of the Brady landfill as an example. Is there any changes that he foresees bringing through legislation or regulation that would change the way they operate in regards to, you know, in the next year or so down the road, at least in the minister's plans as to how those facilities operate? Or would he continue to operate them in the same way that they are now?

* (15:30)

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Madam Chairperson, the member raised two different points, at least.

First of all, with respect to the Brady Road Landfill, of course, one of the things that we hope for that particular site is that we will be able to reach an agreement at some point for the—with respect to handling the methane, the gas that's produced at the site, in a more environmentally friendly way, either by burning it off, which would convert it to CO₂, which would be an environmental benefit. It sounds somewhat odd on the face of it, but methane gas in and of itself is a—has a carbon footprint in terms of greenhouse gas emissions that is much more severe than CO₂. So the flaming of methane gas is a benefit to the global environment in and of itself, although the preferable course of action, of course, would be to take that methane gas and use it to produce heat or energy or something like that. And that would be the perfect solution, but, at the moment, we're working on trying to get some kind of agreement with the City with respect to how to deal with methane gas.

The other issue that the honourable member raised is, of course, with respect to, I believe, Winnipeg waste-water policy. And we continue to believe that the best possible policy for the—dealing with waste water in Winnipeg would be for the City

to accept the recommendations of the Clean Environment Commission that the new—that the North End plant be replaced with a plant, a state-of-the-art plant, that would be based on the BNR, the biological nutrient removal technology, which we believe would have a number of advantages, particularly with respect to phosphorus but also with respect to ammonia and nitrogen.

So this is an ongoing debate between the City and the Province with respect to how Winnipeg's waste water ought to be dealt with. And I'm not sure the honourable member is, you know, absolutely fixated on my answer.

Mr. Maguire: Clear as a bell. Even though I hadn't asked for water specifically, I know the minister answered some concerns about the new waste-water treatment plants and that sort of thing, and I appreciate that update as well.

For that area, I guess, and just conferring with the member from Morris here as well, the situation in her area that I know the minister is familiar with, with the Samborski situation, and I wonder if he could just indicate to me what the latest consultation is in regards to the movement of that facility off of McGillivray and out into the Macdonald municipality.

Mr. Blaikie: Well, with respect to that particular situation, the member may know that I did meet with the proprietors there some time ago now. There was—they had expressed a concern about an order that had been given to them. I listened to their arguments. I thought that they made some good points, and we've come to an understanding. I believe I'm, you know, speaking accurately here that we expect that all the material on that site will be removed by the end of the summer. But it was very—it was also made very clear to them that if there came to be an odour problem, particularly with respect to the pile of—sometimes called immature compost, that they would be asked to deal with that expeditiously. But, at the same time, we made it clear that they were able to bring in the kind of material to add to that particular pile that would help deal with the odour problem.

So I would say, so far so good. I haven't had any complaints passed on to me about that particular situation. So I'm hoping that their plan to have everything removed from that particular site by the end of the summer, that that will happen as intended.

Just exactly what kind of arrangements they may be able to make, either with the City at the Brady

Road Landfill or elsewhere, I think that is all still very much up in the air, as far as I know. But, hopefully, they will be able to because, you know, in spite of some of the problems associated with it, we do want to have successful composting businesses in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, because it's much better that this organic waste is composted and reused than simply ending up in the landfill in a way that it's neither reused or recycled.

Mr. Maguire: I just want to move on to the cottage lot program, and wonder how many cottage lots have been unclaimed from the Province's cottage lot draw. I know they have the draw every year or have had it for cottage lots in the past, and I wonder if there's—if he can tell me how many are unclaimed.

Mr. Blaikie: Well, I'm—I think that there are unclaimed lots, but exactly how many and where—I imagine the honourable member would want to know where the unclaimed lots were as well as how many there were, and I would certainly undertake to get him that information. I don't have that at my fingertips.

Mr. Maguire: And, while he's doing that, I wonder if he can maybe inform me as to how many have been purchased through the program and how many lots have been leased as well.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Madam Chair, I do undertake to get the member that information.

Mr. Maguire: And just around the parameters of the persons that secured a cottage lot, Madam Chair, was there a requirement that they had to build a cottage in a certain minimum size or a—within a set time frame?

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Madam Chair, I believe that there are requirements that people have to meet when they draw one of these—are successful in a cottage lot draw. I think there is time requirements and—for building, but just exactly the nature of what they have to build within that time frame, I'd want to get back to the member on that.

Mr. Maguire: And, I guess, is there any kind of ramification if they don't meet these requirements? Are they, first of all, given an extension to go ahead and build, that sort of thing, or is there some other action taken?

Mr. Blaikie: My understanding is that if they—if the requirements are not met that the lot can be returned to the Province, but there may also be circumstances in which people are granted extensions for various

reasons, and I would imagine that that would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, Madam Chair, I'll move on to the Tim Hortons Children's Foundation Youth Leadership Camp.

Can the minister give me an update on the proposal as outlined in the Whiteshell and sort of what's the status of the project and relative to the provincial government's involvement in it, you know, in regards to road building, construction and perhaps how much the government has invested in it to date?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Madam Chairperson, I'd certainly endeavour to get more detail to the member on that, but we're at a point now where I expect that the environmental licence for the Tim Hortons camp is very, very close to being issued, and that would permit the road to be constructed and other things to begin to be under way at that site this spring. So very close to the point, I think, where we can see that this camp will move from an—from the idea stage, if you like, into actually coming together at that particular site.

Mr. Maguire: And so the minister's—if everything goes according to the plan, it would begin construction this summer, and will it be finished this summer, this fall or ready for use next year or—?

Mr. Blaikie: Construction would—on the road and some of the infrastructure would begin, but I don't think that—the camp is not expected to be completed for not even next year. I think it's scheduled—be scheduled to be opened beyond that. So it'll take a while, but we're at the point now where the actual physical work of constructing access to the camp and the camp itself is very, very close.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, the provincial government just finished—or held a cap-and-trade consultation, as I understand, and the deadline for submissions was mid-March. And I'm just wondering how many people and organizations made submissions to that consultation?

* (15:40)

Mr. Blaikie: I'd have to get back to the honourable member on exactly how many people made submissions, but, actually, the response was fairly significant. A great number of Manitoba businesses and other stakeholders were invited to give us their opinion on cap and trade and we received a variety

of responses with respect to the idea of a cap-and-trade system.

As—so that information is being compiled and analyzed as we speak and it should provide—it will provide the basis on which the government will decide what to do next with respect to cap and trade. But it is a concept, as the member knows, that is part of Manitoba's involvement with the Western Climate Initiative. And—but we thought it was the first thing to do—what was important to do, was to seek out public input on the matter. That's what we've done. And I'm looking forward to the analysis of that public input as soon as it's all put together, so to speak.

Mr. Maguire: Well, just in relation to that, does the minister have any timing as to when he can expect that report to be made public so we can have a look at the findings of that report? And maybe he can just outline to me what kind of cost has been involved in that process to date.

Mr. Blaikie: I don't have any particular date in mind as to when I think that information will be assembled and analyzed and—in the form of a report. But, I hope that that will happen as soon as possible because that would be, you know, useful information, both for the government and for others who are interested in the ongoing discussion about the merits of a cap-and-trade system, and the different kinds or different ways in which a cap-and-trade system might be implemented.

Mr. Maguire: And does he have any example of how much cost the consultations have had to date? Or what that process has cost to date?

Mr. Blaikie: I could certainly ask for an analysis of what it has cost to date but I think it's probably—well, I won't speculate, but the only thing that's happened so far is that certain ideas have been put forward, both by—in the mail and on website and people have been asked to respond. So it hasn't been a terribly expensive process so far. But, if the honourable member would like to know exactly what was spent on that, I could certainly undertake to get that kind of information to him.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Maguire: Yes, thanks, Mr. Minister; that would be appreciated, if you could.

And I'm assuming that, you know, you indicated there were a lot of submissions came in. I imagine there was those from outside the province, as well as

within the province. Can he just elaborate on whether he knows of, you know, ideas and submissions that came in from outside the province as well—just to confirm that? Or were they all from the province?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Madam—or not Madam Chairperson, but, Mr. Acting Chairperson—the—if memory serves me correctly, I think almost all of the submissions were from Manitobans. They were the ones that were invited to comment. But it may well be the case that we had some comment from Manitoba branches of national organizations. But, by and large, it was a Manitoba exercise, opinions of Manitobans were thought—were sought. And—but there may have been—there may be exceptions to that rule. I could certainly, at some point, make the information available then to the honourable member as to who all submitted an opinion on cap and trade.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, I wonder if the minister can just provide me with a list of Manitoba's major emitters. We've got a number now, versus what was there in 2007, on the major emitters' side of the greenhouse gas emission programs.

Mr. Blaikie: I'll undertake to get that information to the honourable member. And, of course, it's the major emitters that would be affected by cap and trade, but I believe there are fewer large emitters than there were at that time. But, just to be on the safe side, I'll get the detailed information and have it forwarded to the honourable member.

Mr. Maguire: Well, the minister's right. There has been some, and one of them was the closing of the smelter in Thompson, with respect to the impacts on greenhouse gas emissions. And I wonder if he can tell me how—you know, what impact the closure of the smelter in Thompson will have on our grease—greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Blaikie: I don't have exactly the figures for the smelter in Thompson, but, of course, this—it points out one of the particularities of the greenhouse gas emission debate. It's—if the metal that was going to be smelted in Thompson is going to be smelted elsewhere, then there may not be, from the planet's point of view, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. But there may well be a reduction in Manitoba's numbers, so to speak, as a result of what happens here.

But it's not just the smelter, but, of course, there's actions that have been taken with respect to the coal plants in Brandon and Selkirk and a number of other areas where action is—where emissions have

been reduced substantially as a result of those kinds of decisions in the last few years.

Mr. Maguire: I know that, you know, it relates to whether that ore is being hauled away, and if it was being smelted in the same kind of smelter or—your minister would be right. I would hope that if it's being hauled away, we're doing it in a more efficient manner than what was done, and I know the member from Thompson would have a better idea of the smelter process there.

But I have some experience with the copper smelter in Flin Flon as well, in regards to that area, and can the minister indicate to me the impact of greenhouse gases—on the reduction of greenhouse gases from the closure of the copper smelter in Flin Flon as well?

Mr. Blaikie: The exact numbers associated with the reduction from the smelter in Flin Flon, I—again, I don't have it in my fingertips, but I undertake to get that to the honourable member.

But the member points out, in this somewhat three-way conversation here about the smelter in Thompson, that, you know, determining the carbon footprint of any particular action is sometimes not as easy as it appears on the surface, because, of course, even if the—what was once smelted in Thompson is ultimately smelted somewhere else, it's not just a question of the inferiority or superiority of the smelting process elsewhere; it's the carbon footprint of getting it there as well.

So this is the challenge, the environmental challenge, if you like, is to keep that big set of books that—and not look at various sets of books in isolation from each other, but to keep that larger environmental set of books, whether it's having to do with carbon footprint or, for that matter, other environmental factors.

Mr. Maguire: One of those other areas would be the Tembec facility in Pine Falls. If the minister could get me the reductions of greenhouse gas emissions from those three: the Thompson smelter, the Flin Flon copper smelter and the Tembec closure as well, just the impact of those three individually on greenhouse gas emissions and the changes that they expect to see from those in the department.

I guess there's a—you know, there's another area, I guess, of concern as well, and I know it was raised yesterday a little bit. But I wonder if the minister can just indicate to me the impact of the East Side Road Authority and the east-side road and what his

impression is of where that road is going, going up from Bloodvein to Berens River and, in that area, what impacts the road would have in regards to the, I guess, impact on nature there as well.

* (15:50)

Mr. Blaikie: Well, first of all, I do undertake to get those figures about Tembec to the honourable members—to the honourable member.

With respect to the east-side road, my expectation is that the creation of that road, which, you know, contrary to some of the pictures being painted by members on the other side, this is a road that will follow in large measure existing winter roads, and, of course, where those winter roads cross water, then there'll have to be new road cut nearby. But these are—this is not, you know, the Trans-Canada Highway that's being cut through the boreal forest like the honourable member's colleagues sometimes want to speculate when they're trying to generate an argument against—or for, rather, building the bipole down the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

The fact of the matter is is that if we have a road system which permits automobiles and trucks to reach these communities in a way that they're not able to do, my hunch is that the greenhouse gas emissions will be greatly reduced, because what has to happen now is that everything has to—especially in the kind of circumstances that we see now where the winter roads are not usable for as long as they used to be, more and more supplies have to be flown into these communities. And we know that airplanes are—when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile, per freight ton or whatever the appropriate measurement is, that we're going to get a lot more—a lot less greenhouse gas emissions per tonne and/or per passenger if people are able to access those communities by surface transportation rather than to having to fly everything in.

Mr. Maguire: I raised part of that issue. I know that the—I know there's been a number of—well, the former minister of Highways indicated 600 kilometres of winter roads built in the last 10 years of this government's rule, and I guess, you know, the minister makes the case exactly of why we think that the east-side line should go down the east side or the hydro line, Bipole III, should go down there. It's because unlike, you know, if he's saying that we are believing that the winter road is—or the new road, the east-side road, will follow the winter road, knocking those trees down whether it was

10 years ago or now is the issue, you know, and I mean, his side of the House probably goes on and on.

I've heard it many times about how if you put a line through the forest, it'll be the destruction of the world, and so I guess if he's making the case that the road isn't as bad as it might be indicated, then I can certainly make an equal claim that the—putting a hydro line through the east side isn't going to be anywhere close to as 'annihilous' as the minister has indicated as well. But—so I appreciate the minister for being able to get me some of those numbers on greenhouse gas emissions in some of those areas.

As we move forward, the Victoria Beach shoreline erosion weather bomb contributed to the Victoria Beach area—I was there last year and last fall and I'm wondering what the department's current involvement is in this area. March 4th saw some stop-work orders on the erection of erosion control structures on Crown lands, and I wonder if, you know, on March 17th there was an order to remove unauthorized erosion-control structures built on the Crown land at Victoria Beach. And so can the Minister of Conservation just—has he got a representative on the Shoreline Erosion Technical Committee, and can he give me an update on just where those programs are at?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Acting Chairman, first of all, before I answer that question, I want to return to something the honourable member said about him wanting to be able to make an equal claim about the lack of serious harm associated with building the bipole down the east side. He could try to make that equal claim but, of course, he would be wrong. If he thought that the claim about the bipole and the east-side road were in any way symmetrical or equal in their impact on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the boreal forest there, but I have a feeling that debate is going to continue in many other venues.

With respect to Victoria Beach, the involvement of the Department of Conservation and myself as minister was predicated on the fact that when there was—when it was thought appropriate to stop the work that was going on there because of the controversy that it was creating, it was discovered that the only way that that could be done was through the power of the—of Conservation over that particular piece of property because it was Crown lands and because, in part, because the municipality was unwilling to exercise what power it had over that particular piece of property. It was actually—if you looked at the map, it was actually a road and—but the

municipality was unwilling to act, so it fell to Conservation by virtue of the fact that Crown land was involved.

But, as the member may know, both the stop-work order and then the order to remove some of the revetments or other structures that had been built was challenged in the courts by some of the cottage owners there, and their challenge was upheld by the courts and it was our decision not to— we fought that as far as we could in the courts but, at a certain point, we were unable to proceed the way we had planned and so now there is a pilot project going on there with respect to shoreline erosion.

There is a shoreline erosion committee. Conservation does have a member on that committee as far as I understand, but it's primarily now something that lies within the bailiwick of the Ministry of Water Stewardship.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, there was some emergency work being done at Traverse Bay as well, along their shoreline after the weather bomb, and I wondered if the minister could elaborate on the work that was undertaken there. Did it involve shoreline protection and some type of work in front of the cottages? There's privately owned cottages in that area as well, and can he just elaborate a little bit on the Traverse Bay area as opposed to the Victoria Beach one?

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, there was emergency work done on Traverse Bay, particularly—at least the work that was done by—on contract with Conservation. It had to do with emergency work on lots that had been the responsibility of Conservation in terms of a cottage-lot draw.

Mr. Maguire: Yes, just a question in regards to—there was a lot of citizens, concerned citizens, in the eastern beaches area as well, and last May we raised the area—some concerns about the canal in the Beaconia Beach, Beaconia Marsh. There was concerns there about the access to the artesian drinking water well in that region, and I wonder if the minister can provide an update on his government's involvement in that and the actions taken to rectify some of these public concerns around that artesian well and the work that was being done there on the boat access.

Mr. Blaikie: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairperson, with respect to Beaconia Beach, there were at least three different issues there. There's the one with respect to the public access to the artesian well that the

honourable member's just raised. I'd have to get back to him on just the status of that particular concern.

* (16:00)

The other concerns were the canal that had been constructed in that area, and the third concern was the piece of property that the Province had a caveat on, and there was concern that that land might ultimately be transferred to the rural municipality and that it would become a piece of land that might be developed in a way that would restrict people's access to the beach. And that's no longer a concern because it was decided that the caveat would not be lifted, and that some other arrangement would have to be made. So many of the concerns that people had about access to the beach at Beaconia have been dealt with in a quite satisfactory manner. I haven't had anybody complaining to me about that for some time.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Graydon: I—my questions will be for the Minister of Agriculture.

I would like to—just like to review some of the things that we had talked about in Estimates, and one of those was the MCEC and the new proposed slaughter facility, called ProNatur. I'm somewhat confused by the 90 per cent-10 per cent ownership, and so I'd like the minister just to reiterate what that really means.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Excuse me, Madam Chairperson, the issue that the member for Emerson is referencing is what I think is a very good project, a very good beef slaughter project that will be a great benefit to ranchers in our province. We've been working very hard as a government to increase slaughter capacity in our province, and this project is one of those projects that I do have a lot of faith in. We've seen some improvement in terms of slaughter capacity in some smaller facilities around Manitoba, but this one, I think, is a very good project that will fill a niche market, the kosher market, that no one else seems to have the ability to fill.

The member references a 90 per cent-10 per cent split. It's a 90 per cent—the 90 per cent is a share, the portion that the MCEC is representative of, and the 10 per cent is the founding group that came forward with this concept, that had been working with the MCEC to put in place. We want it to be clear, as I said earlier in Estimates, that if other equity partners come forward, that we can accommodate, but that is—

that's where the project is now, and I'm very hopeful that that will continue.

We have, as the MCEC has contributed money to this project, as has the federal government made its commitment. Now, the only thing that this project is missing right now is a contribution agreement from the federal government, governing its \$10-million commitment that it made.

Mr. Graydon: The minister raises a good point. This commitment agreement, it's been two years now since the federal government committed \$10 million. I find it strange and almost un-understandable that this commitment was made two years ago, and there isn't a signed agreement. Could the minister explain that?

Mr. Struthers: I could explain it, and the federal minister could probably explain it even better.

We—I believe it was at the very start of November in 2009—November 2nd, I believe it was—that they agreed through a news release to commit \$10 million to this project. We've been working on them ever since to come forward with a contribution agreement. We've—in the last number of weeks, we've even doubled and redoubled our efforts to get information to the—our federal counterparts that they needed to put together a contribution agreement. I wish that they had—I wish that they'd have signed the contribution agreement months ago, but they haven't. That's just a fact of where we're at. I'm hopeful that the federal government will fulfill its commitment and sign up with us on this contribution agreement, because I think they understand that this is—it's a good goal, to increase slaughter capacity. It'll work well for ranchers and provide jobs in our province.

So I look forward to the day that the federal government does sign that contribution agreement.

Mr. Graydon: So, Mr. Minister, who would be the lead, then, that would take this to your caucus? Would that—would you be the lead minister, then, of the caucus Economic Development Committee? And would that be your responsibility to take that and get that signed?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we are signed in. It's a federal contribution agreement that is the only piece of the puzzle that's missing. I wouldn't be taking anything to the federal caucus or to the federal Cabinet. That would be the responsibility of the federal Minister of Agriculture, who would need to take this federal contribution agreement to his caucus or to his Cabinet colleagues in Ottawa to get their agreement

on that. We're in; we're waiting for the federal government to be in as well.

Mr. Graydon: Then perhaps I misphrased that, then. Are you the lead on—or the caucus chair for the Economic Development Committee?

Mr. Struthers: I—yes, I chair the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet.

Mr. Graydon: So then it's your responsibility to get it signed and—if the project is supposed to go ahead?

Mr. Struthers: I want to be really clear with my friend across the way. The Province is in. We're there. We're at the table. We've been encouraging and cajoling and working with the federal government to get its contribution agreement on the table so that they can back up their \$10-million commitment that they made. The Province is at the table. We need the federal government to sign on as well.

Mr. Graydon: I understand fully, but there has to be a responsibility. If there's going to be partnerships, and an announcement was made in November of 2009, then someone had a responsibility at that time to see that it was signed. There seemed that there was a—there was certainly the appetite by both parties at that time to have it signed. So then, as the caucus chair, would that not have been your responsibility at that time, or were you not the chair at that time?

Mr. Struthers: I think the member is a little bit confused. This is a federal minister who needs to sign on the federal contribution agreement.

I have met with him. I have talked to him on the phone. Officials from MAFRI has talked to officials from Agriculture Canada. We have made all those connections.

Our money is on the table. We're there. We've tried to work with the federal government to make sure they are there. The federal government made a commitment in a news release at the beginning of November in 2009, and the federal government hasn't signed on yet to a contribution agreement to provide the \$10 million.

It's not my responsibility to get the federal money through the federal Cabinet; that's the federal Agriculture Minister's responsibility. I have faith in Gerry Ritz to do that. He has come through on a whole number of other announcements and commitments and contribution agreements with us. I have every faith that he has the ability to get this through his Cabinet, through his Treasury Board.

Whatever his process is, if there's a will, I think there's a way for the federal government to live up to their commitment that they made by coming forward with a contribution agreement.

Mr. Graydon: Then—I'm not confused. I understand that it's a federal caucus and federal money, but I am confused if this is normal practice, that you run out and make an announcement without having an agreement. Is that a normal practice?

* (16:10)

Mr. Struthers: See, I agree. I agree with the member for Emerson, and that's just that we did. We made an announcement. We put forward our money on the table. We've been working on this project. We've been—

Madam Chairperson: Order. Sorry to interrupt. I just want to remind all members that there are loges. If they wish to have private conversations, please take advantage of those.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

The—we've put our money on the table to match the announcement that we made. The difference between our position and the federal position: they've made the commitment through a news release, but they haven't followed up with the money. They haven't signed off on the contribution agreement. I wish they would. If the member opposite has any connections with the Conservative government in Ottawa, he can arm-twist too, Madam Chairperson. He can easily pick up the phone and call Gerry Ritz, and say, you know, Gerry, this is a good project. We need slaughter capacity in Manitoba. This is a good market. It's a good project. The Province has—and the MCEC has dotted every i and crossed every t. It's ready to go. We need you to sign off on the contribution agreement now. He could do that, and I would encourage him to do that.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Minister, I fully understand that you have an issue.

Now I—what I need to—what I would like to know, were you the caucus chair at that time that the former minister failed to get the agreement signed when she made the announcement? Were you the caucus—

Mr. Struthers: I have never been the caucus chair. I have chaired the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet.

Our committee has worked hard to make sure that the provincial money was on the table and has been right from the beginning. As the minister, I have met with the federal Minister of Agriculture to make sure that their money is on the table, Madam Chairperson. My commitment is that I'm going to continue to work on the federal Agriculture Minister to make sure he does come through with the commitment that his government made.

Mr. Graydon: Are there any other economic development projects that are going on that you have been involved in as the community chair?

Mr. Struthers: How much time do I have to answer that question? In Estimates, the member for Emerson asked me to name all 613.23 staff in the Department of Agriculture; I thought that was going to take a long time.

To talk about all the good economic development initiatives that this government has put forward, even in the last year and a half as I've chaired the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet, we could be here a long time, Madam Chairperson. There are—I think that the member—I think the member can think of a ton of economic development initiatives we've taken—undertaken. I'm going to—

An Honourable Member: Name one.

Mr. Struthers: Well, you know, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) wants me to name one. How about the Boundary Trails Railway that we've put forward.

Madam Chairperson, I don't know what—you know, it takes real leadership; it takes a government that's willing to listen to farmers; it takes government that—it takes a government in place that understands the economic payback of working with farmers to get short lines in place, and the Boundary Trails example is a good one, the kind of success that we've seen at Boundary Trails in keeping farmers' money local and getting farmers' product out to market.

What we don't need is the kind of government we've seen in the past where they were sticking their heads in the sands as the big rail companies just made decisions, just willy-nilly without even thinking about what the farmer needs, Madam Chairperson.

And that's not the only shortline railway that we've been working with. I know the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) has approached me

about a project in his area which we've been moving forward on, and I think has a great deal of hope, a great deal of prospect for success. And it's driven, again, by the needs of local farmers. Sometimes we have cases where it's a local farmer and local business together that can benefit from shortline railways.

So, Madam Chairperson, what we try to look for are those kinds of projects that, from this Agriculture Minister's perspective, deals with improving the lot of the farm community and agriculture, improving the lot of business people in—whether it's in rural Manitoba or in larger urban centres. And we're going to continue to do that.

Mr. Graydon: Well, I thank the minister for that answer. It certainly explains why the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province looks to him as the go-to man for any economic development. And, if I understood right, he was also the go-to man for the stadium as well. And so I see the work that you're doing in agriculture, but you don't limit yourself, so I really appreciate that.

Madam Chairperson: Order. I'm just going to remind all honourable members one more time that if you would like to have conversations, please take advantage of the loge.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Madam Chair, I really appreciate you getting control of this rowdy bunch.

I would like to ask the minister if in its 10 per cent of the group, the 10 per cent that were the founding members of the Keystone Processors, if Kelly Penner is still part of that group?

Mr. Struthers: I think that was a question in Estimates that we took as notice, and I will endeavour to get that information to the member as quickly as we can.

Mr. Graydon: I'm shocked that the minister wouldn't have the answer to that when his deputy is the chairman of the board. I'm sure that it will be there soon.

Could he tell me, then, if Kelly Penner is not part of the group, what it cost to buy Kelly Penner out?

Mr. Struthers: Well, I'm glad that the member for Emerson referenced my very capable deputy minister, Barry Todd. He's provided the kind of leadership and stability that the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council really needs to fulfill our goal of increasing slaughter capacity in Manitoba. He has

done a very good job of moving this file forward despite the lack of federal contribution agreement. I think he's dotted every i and crossed every t that needs to be done, along with the other folks at the MCEC.

But, as far as Mr. Kelly Penner is concerned, I'll endeavour to get that information for the member across the way.

Mr. Graydon: Management group Astana, are they going to be part owners in this facility?

Madam Chairperson: Order. It appears that we are having some trouble, and the members are having trouble hearing the questions and answers back and forth. So, once again, I'm just going to ask for co-operation from all members.

The honourable member for Emerson, to repeat his question, please.

Mr. Graydon: The management group that has been retained, the group that is called Astana, are they going to be—part of their mandate, is that just to manage and bring this into 'fruitation' or are they bringing in money as well?

Mr. Struthers: They are a management group with a set of skills that is very necessary at this time to take this project from the concept that was brought forward by the founding group in co-ordination with the MCEC. This is the—this is a stage of this project that I think is critical, that really needs to bring a certain set of management skills and experience to this project, and Astana brings that in spades to this project.

* (16:20)

I've met a number of occasions with the principals of Astana. I've met with them along with the folks from MCEC. I—it's my opinion that this is a group that really, right now, needs to kick this project up a notch. It needs to provide the kind of managerial leadership that they've shown in other parts of the world on projects much like this one and they need to be able to draw on that experience to move this project along.

As far as their future contributions on to a phase of this project after that, that still is in question. But their focus right now is to provide those managerial skills to get this project up and running and started and, then, as I said earlier in a previous question, if there are equity partners that want to step forward, we would certainly look forward to that.

Mr. Graydon: So, just to refresh my memory, Mr. Minister, the—ProNatur now is looking at 12.5 of MCEC money, and 10 of federal money if you sign an agreement at some point down the road. So we're looking at a \$22.5-million slaughter facility in the city of Winnipeg. Is that what—

Mr. Struthers: The—those numbers are—just going by my memory, those numbers are pretty close. They're certainly in the ballpark of what we've been dealing with. The—we want the—like I said earlier, we want to make sure that the federal government does sign its contribution agreement. I think what's very—what should be very clear to the member for Emerson is that if the federal government steps back from its commitment, what a huge hole that will leave in this project and what a huge setback that would be for ranchers who need to have a place to slaughter their cattle.

So the—so, if the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), or anybody else has any pull, maybe the member from Steinbach can get the senator working in the course of—and so, sort of—maybe instead of using that—this—maybe instead of using his Senate income to organize Tory elections, the senator can be more positive and, you know, maybe instead of working for the forces of evil become more of a—more of the white knight in this and use his influence on the federal government to make sure they come through with their \$10 million, which is their commitment that they've made to this project.

Mr. Graydon: It is true that the member from Steinbach is a go-to person, the same as every member on this side of the House. I just—I was just checking my notes, and it—I may be wrong when I said \$12.5 million is a contribution of MCEC. That might be minus the \$3.9 million that's already been spent. Is that true, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we have—I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, that the \$12 million would be inclusive of that. The—but that is money that we have put forward to move this project along. One of the big questions, if we can't get the federal government to sign on to its contribution, and if they actually don't come through with their \$10 million, I would want to know if the federal government is going to help us out with those costs. Much of the reason we moved forward with this was based on a commitment that the federal minister made in November of '09, so I think he would have a responsibility to work with us to make sure that those costs, and as the member knows, those are costs that

ranchers have contributed to, and I don't want to leave ranchers hanging on this; I want ranchers to be treated fairly.

Mr. Graydon: So, if that has already been spent, and if I understand right in my notes, the minister is suggesting that the present facility will be knocked down, demolished and start new. So that \$3.9 million, there'll be no salvage value left in that; that will be gone, plus the additional monies it takes to remove the existing plant. And then would it be correct to say that the minister believes that you can build a killing plant in the city of Winnipeg to kill the numbers of cattle that he has suggested are going to be killed there for \$19.6 million?

Mr. Struthers: I want—I don't want the member for Emerson to mischaracterize what the money has been spent on so far. This is a project that has received environmental licences and had to do some work in order to receive those environmental licences. Thus, they incurred some expenses along that route.

We're not going to propose that we build a facility without knowing and be able to sign off on environmental licences: to protect water, to protect soil, to protect the area. So some have gone—some of that money is towards those. Some of the money has been design money, bringing people together who can look at what the plant needs and design the plant in such a way that it maximizes not just the, you know—not just the efficiencies of the plant, but also minimizes the amount of money spent in order to slaughter cattle in Manitoba.

So many of those expenses that we've incurred—all of those expenses that we've incurred are legitimate expenses in a project at this stage. They were expenses that were incurred on the basis of federal participation in this project. So we're working towards getting the federal government to come through on its commitment, and we are making sure that the steps that we need to take to make this project move forward are, indeed, taken.

I—if we can—if there's ways that we can be prudent in terms of the amount of money we spent to create this facility, whether it be \$19 million or more or less, my goal is to build a facility that is efficient and build a facility for as efficiently and as inexpensively as we can because, in the end, it's not just taxpayers' dollars going into this, it's not just private money going into this, but it's ranchers' money collected through the MCEC that's going into this, so we have to be very diligent. And we have to

do our due diligence at every turn, at every stage of this project, and that is being done.

Mr. Graydon: The minister raises a good point that—and he's raised a number of good points with this. We do need a slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba; there's no question about that. There's been a number of attempts. His government has attempted once before and failed, and that's why I'm asking these questions. I think they're very important in order to keep this project from failing.

When he referenced the environmental permits, I understood that when Kelly Penner and the group MCEC was involved at the same time, when they bought that particular facility, the environmental permits were in place, and it was—and that was the reason that they were buying it, is that it didn't have to apply.

So, if they've had to apply, I would like to—I'd ask the minister if he would get the dollar value that it took to apply and receive all the environmental permits, and whether they're all in place today, once they knock the building down and start from scratch again. And so if the minister would endeavour to get those for me, I'd really appreciate that.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, I can get that for the member. I can get him a more precise—I can get him more precise information as to what money has been spent already. I think that should be fine.

* (16:30)

I do appreciate the member for Emerson recognizing that we've been attempting to build slaughter capacity in this province for some time now. I don't want him to leave the impression on the record that it—that the words he used was "a failure." We have several examples around the province—in Carman, in McCreary, in Beausejour—of examples of slaughter capacity increases on a smaller scale than this project, but still a very valuable increase in slaughter capacity, which has worked well for ranchers, local ranchers, and has also worked well in terms of providing local jobs.

So I know that we're going to continue to work hard to increase that slaughter capacity in Manitoba.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Yes, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

I have a question regarding the environmental farm plans that were I think fairly positive for rural Manitoba. Certainly, the first round of the environmental farm plans put quite a bit of money

into rural Manitoba. The second round, obviously, there was less money available for that particular program.

I wonder if the minister could share where we're at in that particular program, and what I'm interested in is the list of projects that have been approved. And I wonder if the minister could—if that list is available publicly and versus what the applications were for in terms of that program as well.

Mr. Struthers: I could endeavour to get that kind of information for the member for Turtle Mountain.

One of the things that I think is really obvious is the amount of work that farmers have done in terms of their environmental farm plans, the amount of thought and planning they've put into this, the amount of co-operation between farmers and staff from MAFRI. I—you know, I've seen some very good examples of farmers and my staff getting together, sorting their way through some complex problems sometimes, and I think this is a perfect opportunity for the agriculture sector to be able to show off some of the good environmental decision making that it has been undertaking, not just recently but back through the generations.

I think the Growing Forward announcements that have been made which contain many of the kinds of projects that you see coming through environmental farm plans have been very beneficial to our province and to our farmers in the agriculture sector; \$117.5 million is what we have signed up, together with the federal government, through Growing Forward.

Many of those projects, as I've said, are the kinds of things that farmers are undertaking through their environmental farm plans. It's a very progressive step. I think it's a very progressive step forward, and it highlights a lot of the good work that's happening on farms right across our province.

Mr. Cullen: Well, the minister's right in that regard. The frustration a lot of producers are feeling is that they're going through the process, and, as the minister knows, it can be quite a time-consuming process to get through and then actually fill out the application, submit, and then at the end of the day be rejected time after time, so there's getting to be quite a bit of frustration out there.

So the point I'm trying to make, if the minister would endeavour to get the value of the applications that have been submitted and then, again, of course, the value of the various categories that have been

approved, I think it might be quite telling in terms of, you know, the benefits that—the potential benefits that this program have—have had and could have going forward.

So, if the minister could get that to me, I'd certainly appreciate it.

Mr. Struthers: That's certainly fair. The—one of the first things we came across—it was a problem, but in a way it was kind of a nice problem, because we had I think a substantial amount of money contributed by the feds and the Province, and we had a lot of farmers all across the province who were interested in participating in the program. It was the kind of problem that you like to have, in that there was so much interest in it that funds were taken up quickly in each of the rounds that we've done.

I'm interested in ideas that can make the program better, especially if there's some administrative improvements that we can make. I know my counterpart in Ottawa, the Minister Gerry Ritz, he's interested as well in how we can make these kinds of programs better. Whether that be through Growing Forward or any of the other business risk management programs that we currently have, we're always looking for ways to make those programs meet the needs of farmers better.

And I have heard back from some farmers about the amount of time that it consumes. That's why we've made staff available to work with them through their environmental farm plans. We have some very good people in the department with a lot of experience on these that we can match up with individual farmers and producers in every region, and my encouragement always is, to the farm community, to step into one of our GO offices and talk to somebody there if they need that help.

But I take the member's point. We need to look at the overall program and make it as easy as we can for farmers to access that kind of support.

Mr. Cullen: I thank the minister for that response.

I do have a question for the Minister of Housing and Community Development, and just a follow-up to a letter that the minister sent me back December 16th of last year. It was in regard to a housing development in the community of Ninette. And in that letter the minister said: In order to address this demand, the department is considering a process to solicit and evaluate project proposals. This process will likely take the form of a publicly advertised call for proposals issued early in 2011.

Would the minister be able to advise us where that particular call for proposals is at?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I thank the member for the question. We've been working across the province with many proponent groups and building record amounts of housing, whether it's family housing or seniors' housing, across the province. I ask the member to have patience and stay tuned.

Mr. Cullen: Just a follow-up question to the minister, then. When she says stay tuned, is there an expectation we're one or two months away, or how soon will the announcement be made?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What I'd like to assure the member is that since that letter we have continued to announce many projects across the province: Riverton is one, Sprague is one, Grunthal, Steinbach. So many projects have continued to be announced and opened, and we have a process that we are working on that we will be releasing to the public in the very near future.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I have a question for the Minister of Infrastructure.

This morning I drove in, coming in from East St. Paul, and an individual was cutting the boulevards. And it is a little narrow of a boulevard and I guess the grass was about a foot and a half high and he cut it all onto the street, along with some paper. And then where it widens, there's about twice that he goes over it and there were substantial mounds of grass, and it looks nasty. It really looks nasty. So I pulled over and I asked the individual, I said, so does somebody come and clean up after you or does it just stay like that? And he said, no, I guess it stays like that, but you have to go to the East St. Paul work yard. So I drove over there and they indicated that, no, they did not have the manpower to deal with it, and it—Minister, it looks really, really junky. That's what you drive in when you see and it's on Henderson. It is a provincial jurisdiction. Is there really nobody who can go out there and just rake that up and clean it up? I mean, it looks really, really rough.

* (16:40)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): And I do want to indicate that it's very nice to be answering questions about the maintenance that is being done in our ditches. And I know the member was able to participate in Estimates for part of the Estimates, but one thing I did indicate to the critic is that we will have a full

maintenance schedule. I know that was something that was raised throughout rural Manitoba as a concern, so I'm glad the member has given me the opportunity to put on the record that we are doing full maintenance and I will undertake to look into the specifics of the concern raised by the member.

Mr. Schuler: I'd like to ask the Minister for Family Services a question. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: In the meantime—

Madam Chairperson: Yes, the honourable member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): For the Minister of Justice, in the main Estimates on committee, we were discussing accidental releases. At that time, he indicated that there was an individual who'd been accidentally released in mid-April who was still at large. Can he update us whether or not that individual is now back in custody?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I understand he was apprehended by the police.

Mr. Goertzen: And was he apprehended incidentally or was it—was he involved in another criminal act?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I don't have any information on that individual case, other than the fact that he was apprehended.

Mr. Goertzen: So you could endeavour to find out how it was that he came back into custody?

Mr. Swan: Well, it normally wouldn't be my practice to comment on an individual case, but I'll take that request under consideration.

Mr. Goertzen: Can he indicate if there have been any further accidental releases since the last time we questioned him on this—I think it was about three weeks ago. Have there been any accidental releases between then and now?

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

Mr. Goertzen: I believe there's a question on the floor for the Minister of Family Services. I'm not sure if—he might need that repeated by the member for Springfield.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, could the minister tell us what are the monthly numbers for EIA for January, February and March, not looking for caseloads but for the number of people?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): That was a question that was asked in the Estimates by the critic, and the answer was taken under advisement because there has been a need to look at the numbers that were initially arrived at for earlier months, because in the numbers was included those who were getting an allocation for a benefit that didn't mean they're on welfare. So, in other words, I think it was extended health benefits under the Rewarding Work initiative. So, in other words, the numbers had included individuals who were not on welfare, actually, even though they received a Rewarding Work benefit, but they were in employment.

So the department had been tasked with providing the corrected numbers. and I understand they're teasing out the—those persons that should not be tallied for the months of the last fiscal year. So I understand that's in the works. I can find out the—I'll ask the department where they're at with those numbers now.

Mr. Schuler: And, again, to the minister, we're not looking for caseloads, but for the number of people that are on EIA for January, February, March of this year.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, we'll find out where they're at then in getting the correct numbers.

Mr. Goertzen: Back to the Minister of Justice, could he indicate—I know the issue of cameras in courts has been a long-standing issue of discussion in Manitoba, and we've had assurances from the former minister of Justice, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I think he said three years ago that—his exact words were, it's—the time has come for cameras in courts. And then, of course, his time came and went, and we still don't have the cameras in the courts. Can you indicate in your discussion with the Chief Justice whether or not that's an initiative that we can expect to see move forward soon?

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, as I think the member's aware, it's actually a decision that would be made not by one chief justice but by two chief justices and a chief judge, that being the Court of Appeal, the Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court. Those three individuals I know had been meeting to deal with the question of cameras in courts, and I await their advice on how they'd like to proceed.

Mr. Goertzen: And my understanding is they've been meeting on this issue for about four years. Is that correct? I mean I know technology is sometimes

difficult, but we're talking about a camera and there are obviously issues around what kind of cases would it be involving. You don't want to have anything that's—where privacy is important so I think there was some discussion even about having it at the Court of Appeal maybe at first and giving that opportunity, but does four years to be meeting on this not seem like an unreasonable amount of time to come up with a conclusion?

Mr. Swan: Well, again, the judges determine how procedure works in their own courtrooms and once they have any advice for us, then we'll see what we can do to accommodate that. In—generally speaking, I think the member's right. I mean, the Court of Appeal might be the easiest court in which to put one camera that could capture proceedings. There's other issues for the Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court which are primarily trial courts, but I'm going to wait to hear from the judges and we'll act appropriately once they've given us their word.

Mr. Goertzen: The former minister of Justice, the member for Kildonan, a number of years ago, when he said, its time had come, he was expressing support for the concept of cameras in courts. Is that still the position of the government, that they support that, or are you just now waiting and you've backed off from the comments from the member for Kildonan?

Mr. Swan: Well, again, we have independent judiciary in this province and in this country, and I'm quite interested in hearing what the judges have to say. And, if they are of the view that moving ahead with cameras in the courtroom is something they believe advances justice, we will work with them to find a way to have that happen.

Mr. Goertzen: So do you think that the former minister of Justice was wrong to speak out in favour, then? He should have been waiting for the decision of the judges and he spoke out of turn?

Mr. Swan: Well, I know the former minister, the MLA for Kildonan, always has the best interests of Manitobans in mind. He also appreciates fully the independent role of our judiciary and I think his comments were entirely appropriate and we're waiting to hear what our independent judges conclude when they've thought through all of the issues that would be involved with having cameras in courtrooms.

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, his comments were quite different than yours, so that's fine, yes. There's ways to express disagreement with a colleague that you

have in Cabinet without exactly saying it, and I—clearly, you have that disagreement and that's valid. There's nothing wrong with disagreeing sometimes on issues.

On—in relation to the police helicopter, I wonder if the Minister of Justice can tell us in general terms about the hours of operation of the helicopter. I don't want to know when it's in operation because that isn't something I think that should be discussed on the record, but how many serviceable hours a day are we getting from the police helicopter?

Mr. Swan: Yes, the Province of Manitoba doesn't operate the helicopter. It's the Winnipeg Police Service that operates the helicopter.

Mr. Goertzen: I think the Province does provide or has provided some funding. I know, at one point, the minister was reluctant to provide additional funding and was shamed into it by the mayor of Winnipeg, so that was positive. But, since there is provincial funds going into the helicopter, since you were cajoled into getting it going, are you not curious about how it's operating, whether or not—what the hours of operation are, not the specific hours but sort of the daily usage we're getting out of the helicopter?

* (16:50)

Mr. Swan: I'm glad the member opposite can let me point out, of course, the Province of Manitoba is providing \$1.3 million a year in operating funding for the police helicopter. I know the member for Steinbach and all of his colleagues voted against that money, but so be it.

We will be looking for information from the police as to how often it's being used. I certainly want the police to provide their details on how successful it's been and, as we made clear when we announced the commitment, we do want to review this after three years. Hopefully, it'll be a success and funding will continue, but we do want to hear from the police service on how the helicopter is doing.

Mr. Goertzen: And I know in terms of the initiative, the police helicopter, are very supportive of it. In fact, we're out—with a lot of different things—we were out ahead of the government, sometime trying to convince them to do it and we were glad that the—we were glad the initiative came forward. We were sorry that the mayor of Winnipeg had to be so rough on the Attorney General. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had to step in and commit to the money after the Attorney General couldn't get the job done, but at least it got done.

And, in terms of the budget, you know, I know he's sensitive of the fact that his own Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) voted against the budget, and maybe that's one of the things—maybe she didn't agree with it, but whatever the reason was we can leave that debate for another day. It's probably not a fruitful debate at this particular time, Madam Chairperson.

In terms of gangs in the province, I know the Attorney General eliminated the gang database—not this Attorney General, one of the former attorney generals—and during this Attorney General's brief leadership run, he committed to bringing back the gang database at that time, and that was supported, that particular announcement, by police, and I certainly supported it, I think it's important to have that information.

Since he—he then abandoned the leadership race, and I don't know if he abandoned that promise. Can he indicate whether or not he supports or still supports the idea of reinstating the gang database which his government unplugged?

Mr. Swan: The member for Steinbach is wrong on a couple of different fronts. The gang database was operated by the Winnipeg Police Service and it does no longer exist.

We think that there's many things that can be done to take on gangs in our province. Certainly, in Manitoba, there's many things that we've done, first of all, to make sure there's the appropriate laws in place where it's within control of the provincial government. We've passed strong leading-edge laws to try and take on gangs and criminal organizations. Where we think it's appropriate, we've called on the federal government to make sure that there's appropriate laws in place. We know that, certainly, support for our police is very important in taking on organized crime and gangs. And we know, as well, preventing individuals from being involved in gang activities is important.

Now, I—I'm sorry. The member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) is making it a little bit difficult to continue. I know he wants to talk about gangs. He doesn't want to talk about the fact that organized crime found Manitoba a very fertile place to be in the 1990s. He doesn't want to talk about how our laws have been targeted at taking on gangs. He doesn't want to talk about how our Criminal Property Forfeiture Act has now padlocked the Hells Angels clubhouse on Scotia Street.

I would like to get back to the discussion that the member for Steinbach and I are currently having on gangs. Now, in terms of the gang database, we work closely with the Winnipeg Police Service and we do our best to accommodate the priorities that they bring forward. Certainly, a priority was the police helicopter. I am very pleased that we are providing ongoing support for that.

Another priority that was identified by the police was getting their cadet program going. I'm very pleased that we share the cost of that with the City of Winnipeg. We had 30 police cadets last year. This year there'll be 50 police cadets out on our streets, which we think is good.

We'll continue to work with the police service, as we will with other law enforcement agencies across the province and make real investments in public safety in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: There's a question that wants—that needs to be posed to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton). Do we know if he's returning to his duty in the House? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: If there's other questions other members wanted to pose while the member returns.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I—just to express this point, but, obviously, I know that—and this is something the House leaders can discuss, and I won't interject in their negotiations. But, when ministers are called for concurrence, I think there's an understanding that they'll be here to actually answer questions. So we're sort of disappointed that there doesn't seem to be that commitment by the government.

But the—continuing on with the Attorney General, and I know he put some incorrect information on the record. I have to correct him again. I—looking at an authority here on biker gangs, it indicates that the Hells Angels came into Manitoba July 21st, 2000.

An Honourable Member: Who was the government?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd have to check. My understanding is, maybe the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) is—he was here before me. I think he would know that the government was the NDP government who let this gang in.

But, on that topic, though, in regards to the gang database, the police indicate that the Province did have a role in support of it before they unplugged it.

And they indicate that it was a good tool—a good tool not only just in determining the number of known gang members in the province of Manitoba but in establishing contacts and tracking down gang members.

When somebody was accused, they could determine their likely whereabouts, their associates, and can the minister not indicate whether or not he believes that it's a valuable tool, at least, and that it was an important tool. Could you hear me?

Mr. Swan: I hear the member for Steinbach has asked a decent question. I know the member for Springfield is a little frustrated, never getting any questions and has been trying to talk over him. But I think there was a serious question posed by the member for Steinbach.

Yes, the Winnipeg Police Service decided to discontinue the gang database. And, again, if the police service is—wants to make that a priority, of course, I'll sit down with Chief McCaskill and the City of Winnipeg and see if there is a way to make that happen again. Any evidence that law enforcement has to deal with gangs is, in my view, a good thing. But, of course, law enforcement sets their own priorities in what they think is best for the citizens of Winnipeg or the citizens of Manitoba, as the case may be.

Madam Chairperson: Just prior to rising at 5 p.m., will the opposition please indicate on the record

whether questioning is completed for the ministers who were called for concurrence today, or will questioning of these ministers continue the next time the committee meets to continue consideration of the concurrence motion.

The ministers called today were as follows: the Minister for Conservation, the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation, the Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, the Minister for Family Services and Consumer Affairs, and the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Madam Chairperson, the ministers of Family Services, Housing and Corporate Development, and Cultural, Heritage and Tourism are not being called for tomorrow. The rest are being called for tomorrow.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

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