

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Friday, July 5, 2013**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

*(Continued)*

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

**(Concurrent Sections)**

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Chairperson (Mohinder Saran):** Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. As had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Yes, there was discussion yesterday about the operating rules for the Portage Diversion. I'd like to table copies of the operating rules.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Chair, if I could just ask for a update, whereabouts are we as far as staff is concerned? Are we ready to move into EMO? Shall we wait a bit? Or—I have a number of questions in that particular area, or I can continue on in regards to some other questions if we need more time.

**Mr. Ashton:** Deputy minister for EMO should be here within about five minutes. So it's up to the member, and if he wants to start on EMO, I can deal with EMO as well, either way.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, I'll continue on, and then maybe when the deputy minister gets here, we'll move over to EMO with the intent to try and—so I'm very clear—we want to try and wrap up today is my goal, so I want to allow enough time for that.

So the LEED and Green Globe program that was instituted, if we could get an update on that and how many certified buildings has there been since the conception of this particular program. I think I have it from last year, so maybe just from 2012-2013 would be sufficient.

**Mr. Ashton:** Just before doing that, I did undertake to get the cost of the women's correctional facility. The budget was \$79.5 million. The actual cost was \$77.2 million, so follow up on that.

What I can do, by the way, I just gave a speech on this just about two weeks ago. I can get that information and probably table it, probably within the next period of time before the sitting ends. But we do have a pretty good record and we are moving ahead with some of our major buildings, such as the UCN campus, is, in particular, becoming a signature building. But, rather than spend a few minutes, given the shortness of time, I can track that down.

**Mr. Eichler:** I appreciate that, but we don't have to rise 'til the second Thursday of December. So I'd like it before then, if that would be all right with the minister.

Just to carry on from there, I would like to talk about photo radar in regards to the analog versus the digital. And what is the cost change on this particular program?

**Mr. Ashton:** It's administered by the City. We did receive the request. We did review their request, and they have now put in place a system that reflects the technological reality that everything is digital. So it is—again, it's operated by the local police authority. In this case the City of Winnipeg operates the Winnipeg program.

**Mr. Eichler:** So I'm very clear and the public's clear on this, all costs, then, is borne by the City of Winnipeg? Of course, their portion of the revenue comes back to them. Of course, a portion of that comes back to the Province as well. So there's no cost to the provincial government, is that correct?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Eichler:** On the portion of the fines, how much, approximately—I mean, we don't need it down to the dollar, but approximately how much money comes back to the Province in photo radar revenue?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, there are the court costs side of it. I can undertake to get that information. Again, that's more of a, you know, it's more on the justice side, you know, the actual fine side itself. We're responsible for the—for this. But I'll undertake to get that information for the member.

**Mr. Eichler:** Okay, so that would be appreciated, thank you.

I do want to talk—and I know that the ministers have—because I've asked this question every year in the last three years I've been in Estimates, and that's in regards to the east-side road, and we know the benefits of that for those folks over there and we certainly support that. What is the—an update, so to speak, on the east-side road? I believe there's a hundred million dollars that's been allocated each and every year out of your budget. Would that—would the minister confirm that, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Ashton:** It's—the actual operation of the East Side Road Authority is the responsibility of the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson). However, the capital, obviously, is allocated through this department, and the current cost this year for the East Side Road Authority is \$75 million. What's been happening, you know—and I will defer to the minister—I can get—I can give the member sort of a one-minute summary. What's—what has been happening is route selection has taken place, community benefits agreements have been negotiated, I believe, in most communities. There's been significant progress on the south end with Bloodvein. There's been a bridge that's been opened, and it's a pretty historic project and—but it's continuing, and over the next number of years there's going to be some very significant benefits coming from that as the network increases.

I can talk on the winter road side. This year we did have a good season, but generally speaking, in the last number of years the winter road system's become less and less reliable. So it's not only, you know, the advantage of an all-weather road system in and of itself, it's also the fact that the winter road system is increasingly unreliable. So it is proceeding again. The amount out of this year's budget is \$75 million.

**Mr. Eichler:** I would like correction if I'm wrong, but in the past it has been a hundred million, is that not correct?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, I think the member's including some of the floodway costs. You know, the floodway—you know, we have had a number of projects that are related to the floodway because it's the east side, which I am responsible for. So what you're seeing now is the floodway is all but complete. You know, we completed the capacity first, but we've done some work, you know, on the flood works itself. So that's probably what the

member's referring to. The actual \$75 million is an actual direct expense that's—it's—doesn't appear under this budget. It's—that \$75 million is entirely the East Side Road Authority.

**Mr. Eichler:** I did have the opportunity, Mr. Chair, to tour the east-side road this past winter and, course, went on the winter road just so I would have a little better knowledge of how it works. I was a bit surprised in regards to the width of the road, and I know the department's not ultimately responsible for it, but who makes those decisions on the width? I know that we have, you know, called for the hydro line to go down that side. It looks like there's more than enough room even with the road, or are they—is the department planning on four-laning that road, or is it—I just can't believe the width on the swath through the forest in regards to the road. You know, I'm just curious to why it was so wide.

\* (10:10)

**Mr. Ashton:** The east-side road—if this—the member said something about the actual all-weather road itself, the road is designed to the same standards we have for provincial highways. You'll see a big difference between all-weather road and a winter road in terms of the—you know, the width of it, largely because when you're dealing with a road you have, you know, road allowance; you've got drainage, which is an important part of it; sightlines. Again, you know, one of the key issues with divining—designing an all-weather road is the geometry and sightlines.

So that's the reality. I'm not going to get in—I'm tempted to get into the bipole debate, but I can tell you that even if the bipole was to go down the—you know, the east side, it would not parallel the road for security reasons. They have made that clear, you know, including in their design right now in terms of the other—you know, the west side, if you want to call it. But the design standards for the east-side road will be provincial highway standards.

**Mr. Eichler:** On the \$75 million in the bridges, is the bridge allocation a separate fund in regards to the amount of revenue that's put into the east-side road project, because we know how expensive bridges are, or does that come out of the \$75 million in total?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, the—yes, the—what we're dealing with includes the full cost. However, we have been investing in structures on the winter road system now for the last decade or so, so there—we have had some structures put in place in advance of that and we are

ensuring with the route selection now that we do, you know, look down the line at where the all-weather road is going to go in. That can impact our investments on the winter road site as well, so there—you know, there may be other structures that are outside of that that predate it, but it does include the full cost including the community involvements, as the member understands, and I—he's seen it first-hand. It's a historic project. It really will dramatically change that area, have huge benefits for the province.

And he's quite correct; bridges are expensive. But, again, one of the issues that they looked at, I know, in the design, was, you know, the all-in cost, you now, to minimize crossings and rationalize them, and, again, it's an expensive project, but they've done a lot of significant work on the engineering side to—you know, to restrict the cost.

Well, I just—I'm advised here that, yes, we do have two for bridges, for example, that we put in for the winter where they're—are being used for the all-weather road.

**Mr. Eichler:** Is the Province allowed to recoup some of those costs from the federal government in utilization as a winter road, some type of a revenue-generating shared program? I know the federal government puts a fair amount of money into the all-weather road—or the winter road, but not the all-weather road. Is my—am I correct on that? If there—if not, is there any negotiations with the federal government to try and recoup some of that cost for some of those First Nation communities?

**Mr. Ashton:** The member raises an important question; I agree with him. We do get cost-sharing of winter roads, including new winter roads, and when we put the winter road in Lac Brochet, Brochet and Tadoule Lake in 2000-2001, that was cost-shared with the federal government. However, when it comes to the all-weather road, thus far the federal government has not agreed to overall cost-sharing, which we think is something that should be considered.

There are elements of the transportation network where we do have some cost-sharing. I mention from Pauingassi to Little Grand Rapids there is a—an access road that's being built that is being cost-shared by the federal government. We are continuing on the assumption that Wasagamack, Ste. Theresa airport and the access roads are, you know, something that should be cost-shared with the federal government. They were committed in 2001-2002, the government

of the day. So there are elements that we either have federal cost-sharing or would anticipate, and we continue to have the position that we would encourage the federal government to be part of that overall, you know, situation.

And there are some situations outside of the East Side Road Authority. The communities of War Lake, the First Nation community of War Lake and York Factory First Nation, which is York—located at York Landing, and the community of Ilford have been looking at an all-weather road. Supposed to be built in the '70s, it was cancelled at the time. A lot of history to it, but they have landfill, so they're engaged in discussion with AANDC, Aboriginal and northern affairs development Canada. And, you know, one of the initiatives they're looking at is a potential federal cost-sharing of that. We're helping co-ordinate the route selection as well.

So there are specific cases where we have the federal government either involved or certainly involved in the discussions. The reality for the east-side road is, and I'm sure the minister responsible for it would be the first one to point to it, the more federal funding we have, the quicker we can build it, and that is really our message to the federal government. We really encourage them to partner.

**Mr. Eichler:** My first thought there is in regards to the federal government's share on that would be, because if my understanding is correct again, is that the First Nations folks that, for medical reasons, one way or another, have to be either airlifted out or boated out, so if they were able to drive themselves out would be a significant saving for the federal government. Is that not correct or—Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Ashton:** You know, I think we—I'll have to take the member to some of these discussions and get him to make the arguments because, at the risk of confusing people here, we're on the same wavelength, believe you me, on this one.

Actually, I would go even further. Federal government has fiduciary responsibility for 99 per cent of the population of the east side. It will save money on medical transport, obviously. It would save money on cost of bringing in building materials for housing, for public buildings. It would save money for bringing food and essential supplies in. And all of these in some way, shape or form have a financial benefit to the federal government, and, actually, not the least of which is if we don't need

winter roads anymore, they don't have to come out with their cost-share of that.

Now, above and beyond that, probably the biggest advantage for a lot of the communities is—and I've seen it. You know, one of the last communities to be hooked up on the all-weather road network is the Tataskweyak Cree Nation of Split Lake I'm proud to represent in the Legislature. And if you look at the employment in Tataskweyak, it's not a hundred per cent, there's some significant unemployment, but it's much lower than many similar communities that are remote. And the cost of living is dramatically lower because of its direct connection into Thompson.

And here's an irony, by the way. And the member may know a bit of the geography of the winter roads, but actually last year—or no, the year before, there was a winter road put in from Oxford House to War Lake, so people drove from Oxford House to War Lake and from War Lake over to Split Lake for groceries rather than go to Norway House. Why? Because Split Lake is about an hour and 15 minutes from Thompson, it has to compete with prices in Thompson, and actually it's ironic because it's a Northern store and the Northern store is a part owner of Giant Tiger. So what it means is people were willing to drive that far to connect to Split Lake. Split Lake, formerly a remote community, now has pricing for groceries that's comparable to an urban centre and to a much larger, you know, First Nation like Norway House.

So you name it, the benefits are there. And I can get into all the potential for resource development; the member is more than aware of that.

We've made a strong argument and I do think, by the way, it's—I think we need to have some of the vision, you know, Roads to Resources, the Diefenbaker government in the late '50s into the '60s. You know, we've had various different northern visions, and the North isn't just north of 60. You know, there's a lot of potential there as well. South of 60 here in Manitoba, huge potential. Northern Ontario, I mean, they're looking at the Ring of Fire, a lot of developments there. If you have partnership with the First Nations and other communities in the area and connect the infrastructure, I think you can turn communities that have significant social issues and unemployment, you know, into model communities in terms of economic development.

So roads, you know, to my mind are the key. If you got that and some of the other basic

infrastructure, that's where you start economic development.

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Eichler:** Thanks to the minister for that.

In regards to the federal government contributions, would be able to obtain the amount of money that was spent on winter roads or revenue that was brought to the province from the federal government for the last, say, four years?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, no problem—[inaudible] We'll have that shortly.

**Mr. Eichler:** I do want to move on to snow clearing. I know that was a bit of a contentious issue in the past. And why were those changes brought about, and what have we seen as a follow-up study in regards to the snow-clearing policy change?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, we basically have a pretty aggressive policy in terms of snow clearing.

We did—yes, four years ago we did put in place, on a trial basis, a rather different approach. Right now it's been on a, sort of, as-needed basis. So we had a number of extra shifts particularly on a number of the highways. We are assessing that.

We've gone back to the previous arrangement. I want to stress that that's what, prior to the four years ago, that's exactly the same kind of snow clearance we've had probably for decades in the province. It's done on an as-needed basis. We are reviewing it currently.

I think the feeling, you know, was that it had some limited benefits in some circumstances so we're not ruling out some form of that. But, you know, again, it was really put in place more on a trial basis, and we continue to have some very significant focus on snow clearing.

I can get the dollar amounts that we put in place.

And as someone who drives the highways, you know, I know how important it is. And it's not that there isn't snow clearing, it—really the only difference was this trial period we had with, you know, with the additional shifts.

**Mr. Eichler:** I know in the past, up until last year, if I remember correctly from our former Estimates, that No. 1 Highway, I believe, and also No. 16 Highway, there was trucks—snowplows running in the wintertime close, at least, to the snow season all night. Is that still happening?

**Mr. Ashton:** We still have the shifts on the Perimeter Highway. The other additional shifts were not continued.

Part of what does happen, you know—and I know this myself as a regular driver to Thompson, as I'm heading on the highway as soon as we're done—don't have to worry about snow, maybe smoke this time of year.

But I can tell the member that—he knows this, you know, he drives regularly—especially when you deal with long-distance truckers, they do factor weather in. And the traffic volumes do drop dramatically when you have either snow or anticipation of snow. So it becomes a, sort of a, you know, an issue really in terms of, you know, putting those additional resources in versus some of the other potential uses in their department.

Now, we—as I said, we kept it for the Perimeter Highway, and we are reviewing it in terms of the rest of the system.

I want to stress again, the normal snow clearing that we've had for decades, that system is still in place, and we've seen some significant enhancement of equipment over the last number of years. So, if anything, it's more, you know, an effective snow-clearing system than we've had in the past.

But we will be reviewing some of the experience. I'm not ruling out some elements of that system that we had in place being added back in.

As I said, we have kept the Perimeter. But, of course, the Perimeter is, again, a bit of a different case. You know, it does have traffic pretty well 24-7, 365 days a year. Some of the other major highways, the traffic will drop off dramatically anyway. So it's a question of, you know, whether it's the best use of public resources, but we are reviewing it.

**Mr. Eichler:** Kind of want one final question on the snow-clearing aspect and, of course, that with winter ice. And we know we've seen changes in technology, you know, and especially to our neighbours to the south, with chemicals being used rather than salt.

Is there an update or is there studies under way that looking at other methods of which we can get rid of the ice rather than relying just on the salt?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I know, you know, you constantly look at all the alternatives. We do have a somewhat different weather situation than a lot of other provinces. I mean, it doesn't always seem that

way, but we do. We actually do have less storms than most other jurisdictions.

Yes, we do, and we do use chemicals. Yes, we use the salt brine as well so there, you know, there's a mixture—been that way for several periods of time. You know, one of the issues I do want to identify in snow clearing, by the way, is we are going to be reviewing, in fact, we are reviewing with the RCMP our policy in terms of closure of roads. This spring, I had a meeting scheduled with the mayor of Fargo, prior to the flood. It was interesting because the mayor of Fargo, no problem, met with him; Grand Forks, they'd shut down the city hall. I drove on the interstate and arrived at the border and found out that Highway 75 had been closed. Now, I happen to know the mayor of Emerson quite well. I phoned the mayor of Emerson, I asked if, you know, if the other combination of highways was open. All of them were. So I was able to drive all the way up to 59 and around; you know, I found my own my detour. And it is an issue. It's an issue he's raised because what essentially happens is—I'm not being critical of the RCMP—but the highways close, the padlock goes up, a gate goes across and a lot of people were stuck there for quite a few hours. And they had no idea that the highway was, you know, was closed there but alternate routes were available.

And, you know, like, we'll be engaged in discussions with the RCMP because it did strike me that the fact the interstate was open and the only highway in the province that was closed was Highway 75 is an issue, a certain issue for truckers and, you know, I'm pretty careful when I drive. It was a difficult situation, but I've seen a lot worse weather on, you know, Highway 1, with Highway 1 being open.

So, yes, you know, I want to stress that there are other issues that we're going to be looking at, not just sort of the maintenance, but our goal here, I mean, on Highway 75 is to keep it open as long as possible and I'm not criticizing the RCMP. They obviously have to make judgment calls but we're looking at alternate ways to keep 75 open. My view is 75 should be open virtually no matter what. I mean, you know, if you get a '97 scenario, where there was significant problems, you know, I actually was caught in the States in that time, I can understand that, but if the interstate's open, we should be able to keep 75 open. And not just because I was involved.

Believe you me, though, I had to make a few phone calls the next day to the department. It wasn't

the department's call and I did want to stress, too, because I've discussed this with the mayor of Emerson, we have to have a much better way of getting information to people. You know, if I hadn't found out from the customs officers what was happening, and if I didn't happen to have the cellphone number for the mayor of Emerson, you know, which goes back to various flood scenarios, I wouldn't have known either.

And, you know, so there are other elements as well that we're going to be looking at. Snow clearing, yes but also policy in terms of closures of roads. And I have some numbers here. We spent \$45 million over the last six years on new equipment. We have tandem plows which snow clear and have de-icing material. And our winter maintenance budget was \$35 million last year. And we are removing the, you know, reviewing the policy moving to a corridor plowing from community to community for more consistent service levels. We're doing an overall review of efficiency.

So, again, you know, the question the member asked about the additional shifts is part of the broader review. The general feeling, I think, from the department is that we can, for similar resource levels, get more efficient service by changing the way we approach it which is currently community to community. So what we're talking about here is part of a broader review that does reflect the fact that, yes, we don't get as many storms as a lot of other areas but when we do get them, they're pretty intense.

**Mr. Eichler:** You know, this is pretty important to me because I, you know, the minister brings up a very interesting point and I think it's worth a little more discussion before I move on. But when I look at our neighbours to the south and, of course, Ontario has a bit of it but, you know, the weather information that's available along the roadsides, I believe it's 511. I'm not sure if that's the right number, but if you go on to the website and you see the cameras that tell you—and they're pretty current. There's cameras that'll tell you exactly what the road conditions are like. The road conditions that are on by either the state of North Dakota or South Dakota or Colorado, whatever state you want to use. Those are pretty reliable. Is the department looking at something down the road in regards to the same type of technology? I know that—and I'll get into that in a minute in regards to the weather information that was brought forward by the government just

recently, but I want to deal with that particular issue first.

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Ashton:** We did bring in a 511 system at the beginning of 2012, as the member is aware, and it proved quite useful for not only standard, you know, road conditions, but also flood updates. We're finding more and more people, too, are accessing information over the Internet and using social media so that, you know, the—our sense of what kind of platform we need to get the information out has gone up. We're working very hard to get the awareness of 511 up and, yes, we'll certainly consider enhancements of it, you know, over time. It actually does provide the useful information. I used it myself a number of times when I was travelling in the winter. You could, you know, go online before and track down a lot of the information, but it was—it's fairly difficult.

But, you know, the fact you'd get real-time weather forecasts, road conditions or flood conditions is proving a real asset. So I appreciate the suggestion on some of the enhancements to it, but we're getting a very good response, especially from truckers. I think the member—identified really, you know, when people are used to it in other jurisdictions, you know, when they come here, I mean, the feedback we're getting is they kind of expect it. And now we've got the 511, and it really is, you know, a significant enhancement for truckers.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, I appreciate that and we'll look forward to more updates as we move forward. I know that, you know, with CentrePort being, you know, developed and we're going to see more and more growth there, we're going to have more and more truck traffic and, of course, the better information we can give them.

I can tell you I do—I have—I use it on a fairly regular basis when I do travel for updates and current information. I do find Manitoba's very difficult to use and to try and locate. And I know I've referred other family members and friends to it, and I think we need to look at some type of a public awareness program whereby, you know, the public will have a better access to it.

And, of course, comes with that is road safety. You know, the more informed we are, you know, the safer we are, so sometimes we spend money to save money. I think that would probably be one of those



situations that might be something worth having the department look at.

In regards to the weather radio program that has just been, you know, been more criticized than anything else, you know, with the funding and maybe the misinformation or the lack of information that's been forwarded to, you know, the radio stations and so on, would the minister just take a few minutes and outline for us the changes and how we can inform the public better and where we need to be going with this down the road?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well—and, first of all, just to finish up the 511 discussion, if the member would like, I'd love to get him the chance to sit down with our people dealing with the 511 to get his input, you know. So maybe as a follow-up to this if he wants to, through my office we can set up a meeting because I'd appreciate any suggestions and ideas. We do take it seriously and, you know, particularly when I look in other jurisdictions, you know, he may have experience or, you know, have access to information, so we'd love to set that up.

On the weather side—and I assume the member's talking about the 'nat'-having a national system, you know, to provide weather warnings. What has happened there is as ministers, including the federal minister, Vic Toews, we have been working nationally. We've identified the need for a national weather and, actually, disaster warning system because it's not just for weather. It has been mandated by the CRTC, which is the body that has jurisdiction federally over telecommunications.

Some jurisdictions—or some media outlets do provide this information, but you're—it's basically right now caught in a—something of a limbo, because unless it becomes mandatory, then we're reliant on, you know, some media outlets which are providing the information and some that aren't.

I want to stress, you know, again, you look at what happens in other jurisdictions. You know, this time of year, if you're flipping through any US state, you'll see Minneapolis, you know, has a tornado warning, thunderstorm warning. You'll see regular bulletins, et cetera. That's the goal of the national system, and not just with TV and radio, but would include, you know, smart phones, any platform that we could get that information out.

We have, with licence renewals, been urging the CRTC to make it mandatory. We believe that that would do two things: One is it would actually ensure

that information's available, but I think it also would deal with some of the liability issues. You know, some broadcast outlets do have concerns about the liability issues. But we do have—you know, systems already provide that information. The Pelmorex system, you know, is in place.

So our goal is to get a national system. We did look at, you know, provincial options. Alberta's had a provincial option. They've had difficulties with it. The recommendation from the Alberta minister and the Alberta department was that they wanted a national system themselves. They actually had some difficulties with incorrect information being broadcast, which is problematic.

My concern is it's particularly important for rapidly developing scenarios we see with this kind of weather, when you can go from a—you know, from a thunderstorm watch to a thunderstorm warning to a tornado watch to a tornado warning very rapidly. And tornadoes in particular and thunderstorms are often very site specific, as the member knows. And, you know, you can have your—all the generalized warnings you want but if you can't then pinpoint where you get that information out, it can become problematic.

And I'm not suggesting the only way is through broadcast media, but one of the complications is, you know, years ago you could probably put a broadcast on the radio and people might be listening to one radio station, you know, a local radio station, or they might be watching one, you know, one of two or three channels. In the world of cable TV, satellite radio and, you know, the numerous other options people have, you really have to—if you're going to reach everyone, you have to find all the platforms.

And, of course, you have, you know, a generation that's coming up of—young people sometimes don't even watch TV, you know, in a stationary sense. They only see it on the internet, you know, and various clips on YouTube. So that's the current focus. We believe there has to be a mandatory system, period.

And in Manitoba it's a particular concern because not only do we get floods, you know, a lot of the issues that we know for [*inaudible*] but we had the—the strongest ever tornado in Canadian history was here, level 5, you know, the tornado in the Elie area.

So we are very subject to tornadoes and we've seen the power and the, you know, the damage in the

States in—like in Oklahoma, which is very susceptible. Well, we're not Oklahoma, but with climate change we're more and more susceptible to tornadoes and we need to be more and more aware of the, you know, the dangers and the need for more information.

So that's kind of the quick summary. We're pushing for a mandatory system.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the minister, for the update on that. And I'm very passionate about this. You know, any time we can save or protect a life, I can't stress enough the importance of public safety and awareness of trying to prepare for emergencies. And, of course, the best way to do that is to have the, you know, the best technology that we can have.

And I'm just—I don't want to leave this because I think it's so important that we have a conversation. Is it because there's three partnerships or government departments that's running with this particular program, because I believe there's Pelmorex, AccuWeather and Comlabs. Would it not be more efficient to have one program or provider rather than three?

And, like, I'm not real clear on communication strategy and how that information gets out to the general public because one may be relying more on the other. I would like to have that discussion if I could, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Ashton:** There's actually one system. It's Pelmorex. They gather the information. There are, you know, various different ways of delivering it. Some media outlets are already using Pelmorex. I think Global, they use it, you know, intermittently. This was a decision of Public Safety Canada. I do want to credit Vic Toews, our minister, who's been very committed to this.

\* (10:40)

The real problem, though, is we have a system. We have information, but it's not mandatory and, if it's not mandatory, that's why we're continuing to encourage people to use the other mechanisms, including weather radio. And I want to stress, too, we've also proactively, as a province, we've moved to get weather radios into municipal offices, schools, child-care centres. You know, and if you look what happened in Oklahoma, you can see why that's so important. Anyone can buy a weather radio. I have one in my office, and I think people should be aware that they are, essentially, you know, you can have

them on, and—I mean, a lot of people in rural Manitoba, I know, have them anyway. But a lot of people should be aware that, you know, it's not playing music. It's—it only comes on in the case of a weather bulletin. So, you know, you can put it in your home, turn it on, plug it in, forget about it, and you only have to worry about it when it actually reports an emergent situation. So there—that does exist. But Pelmorex is there. We believe Pelmorex is a good platform. We just need to get it out through all the different telecommunications platforms.

**Mr. Eichler:** I know the member from St. Norbert, I don't know if he has a system on his, but I know on my motorcycle I use the weather channel quite regularly, and that comes back to my 511. That's one of the reasons that we always make sure that we have safety first, and we want to protect ourselves, of course, and so, certainly, appreciate that.

What's the difference between Comlabs that Québec is using and the Pelmorex that is recognized Canadian-wide? Why is there two different programs there?

**Mr. Ashton:** We're not sure of the details. I was just talking to my deputy—but they are part of the Pelmorex system. So I can undertake to follow up on that. Pelmorex is, basically, the platform. Information is available. It is used intermittently by some media outlets already, and our view is: the platform exists, let's put it to maximum use.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** I want to ask the minister if he can give a update in regard to Highway 32 south and indicate whether that project at this point in time has been added to Manitoba's highway renewal plan and, if so, if he could indicate a completion date for the expansion of that roadway from two to four lanes.

**Mr. Ashton:** I mean, we have had numerous meetings with the city of Winkler and of course, you know, I'm very proud of our history in responding in Winkler. We—essentially, it's part of the highway system, but we did pave the main street in Winkler early in our mandate. And I can indicate, I know there's a lot of growth pressures in Winkler—again, a good sign. And, like a lot of other communities Winkler is looking at some, you know, essentially, urban traffic issues. And we are—we, actually, as part of this budget, have brought out a new program that identifies exactly that—not just Winkler, but elsewhere—that allows for cost-sharing of, you know, urban-related issues and, say, urban—it's important to note that outside of the city of Winnipeg there are

many urban situations where, essentially, you know, it's a provincial highway, but it does have various overtones in terms of urban issues.

The program, of course, you know, won't be able to be rolled out until we're finished with Estimates and our other finance processes, so, really, it won't be available until the end of this session. But it is an option for not just Winkler, but other communities, and not only in terms of the highway itself, but it does allow for some of the other issues. We're under a lot of pressure across the province for traffic lights, for example, turning lanes, a lot of the other, kind of, amenities are an important part of it. So even though it's not currently in the capital program, that pro—that additional cost-share program will be available as an option not just for Winkler, but for other communities dealing with urban traffic issues.

**Mr. Friesen:** I didn't really sense a commitment from the minister in that answer, anything concrete that would give the community any sense of confidence in what they could expect in terms of a project completion date.

The minister alludes to the fact that this area has experienced a lot of growth, and I concur with that. I know the last time I was here at Estimates and the minister said he was in discussions with the city, at that time I shared with the minister the new population figures coming out of Statistics Canada that showed that Winkler itself had experienced more than 17 per cent growth.

Within the last five years the region of Winkler, Morden and Stanley experienced a combined growth rate of more than 22—well, about 22 per cent. I know that there were 271 housing starts in 2012 alone, and at the end of April there were already another hundred permits.

So, when the minister alludes to the fact that there is growth taking place all over Manitoba, I don't dispute that. But I think he has to recognize that there is tremendous growth going on in the city of Winkler and that this community has waited very patiently for a long time as, the minister has said, the issue is under discussion.

As a matter of fact, I was looking back at our discussion transcript from last year where the minister did indicate that the project was under discussion. Now, I know that the minister at that time last year said, really, the primary reason that the project couldn't go at that time is because he had to focus on some very big flooding issues.

Because of the fact that we're not right now having to concentrate in the province of Manitoba on big flooding issues, can he give assurances today that this project will be measured and adjudicated and special consideration will be taken because of the fact that this area is experiencing such tremendous growth and the city needs this expansion of the roadway to ensure safety and the continuation of a strong economy. Can the minister provide those assurances?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I do have to disagree with the member on the impacts of the flood. I think he has to recognize that there are multi-year impacts of the flood, perhaps not in the Morden-Winkler area, obviously, but we're, for example, we are dealing with two major bridge projects in southwest Manitoba. And I'll just give a quick update. This was asked yesterday by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

The question was when will work be starting on the PR 251 at Coulter and at PTH 21 at Hartney. These are the two bridges. Mr. Chairperson, 251 at Coulter, the work was interrupted due to spring and subsequent runoff. Work will resume as soon as water recedes with completion anticipated later this fall, which is a very significant development in that area.

PTH 21 at Hartney, the Acrow detour bridge is currently in place. The tender is to close later this summer with work to start shortly after, with completion expected the fall of 2014.

Those are just two of the major bridge projects we're dealing with. We had 80-plus bridges impacted by the flooding in 2011, so those pressures are multi-year.

I do want to stress, with Winkler we were involved in discussions. The City of Winkler did come up with some ideas that they thought could help deal with some of the costs of the program. We're continuing to be available for discussion.

And the reason I mention the new program, we have two new programs that are included in the capital program. The capital program, by the way, has increased. The total capital program this year is \$468 million, and that, you know, is a very significant increase.

We have two new programs, one which deals with the ability to partner with businesses, and, you know, whether it's the oil industry in southwest Manitoba or businesses in the member's area. Again,

in a lot of cases, projects that wouldn't necessarily make the capital program would be eligible, you know, and we'll be releasing the applications shortly. So that option's there.

But the—we do have a \$25-million program that does give municipalities the opportunity to, you know, for projects that might not necessarily be in the capital program to cost-share part or all of those projects. So, again, that's I think a very significant commitment by our government to recognize the fact there is a lot of growth out there and there are urban traffic pressures. And, you know, this would allow for 50-50 funding that would help relieve a lot of those pressures.

**Mr. Friesen:** Highway 32 south in Winkler is listed as a secondary arterial road. I know from the Province's own information that such a road is expected to have traffic counts between six and ten thousand vehicles per—or actually one in 6,000 vehicles. Can the minister verify if that's correct?

\*(10:50)

And then, if so, can he please provide information that would indicate the most recent traffic counts for Highway 32 south? My information from a year ago indicates that the traffic counts on a daily basis were exceeding 17,500 at some intersections, which is triple the estimate of what such a classification of road should have. Is there new information coming forward? And would the minister please put that on the record to indicate what the newest traffic counts are.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I, you know, the member should be aware that we do have—[interjection] Yes, we don't have 2012 numbers yet. That's, you know, that will be available; I can provide that. But the situation in Winkler's not unlike the situation we're dealing with in many of the areas of the province where traffic volumes have increased fairly significantly. In and around the Capital Region, I can point to numerous examples where that's taking place: Steinbach, another growth community. And, again, we've been working with local communities on different aspects of that. Steinbach, for example, we put a new set of traffic lights on one of the particular congested areas.

So we are, you know, we are working on some kind of various aspects of it, but, again, there are numerous locations in the province where traffic volumes have increased dramatically and our overall

response: increase the capital budget. I just want to stress that when we came into office, it was about \$85 million; it's \$468 million this year. Even if you factor in, you know, the increased cost of materials and other elements, it's increased dramatically. And we have recognized that there are communities that do have urban-related issues, and that's why we put in this ability for those communities to look at cost-sharing.

We also do have the ability for businesses, as well, because that's another issue that we've identified. So, two brand new programs, \$25 million each. We have increased money in the highway capital program again this year; it's up from last year. So that is an option that's available to Winkler and other communities dealing with those issues. And, of course, there is the regular highway capital program.

But I do want to stress, there are continued major pressures from the flood. We're going to be into rebuilding from the 2011 flood for at least the next two, three years, and there are a number of projects where we've had to move. In fact, the member for Portage, yesterday, was talking about the—one project, partly design issues but also other pressures, you know, the Highway 1 and Highway 16. You know, there are a lot of projects in an ideal world you'd like to proceed with, but when you're dealing with the capital program, you know, [inaudible] set the priorities. In this case, we have made a priority for the cost-sharing for urban, you know, urban-related issues, and that option is available, not just to Winkler but to other communities as well.

**Mr. Friesen:** The minister states that the situation in Winkler is not unlike Steinbach, and I agree with him that Steinbach is also experiencing great growth. I would say to the minister that the big difference is this: we're talking about a two-lane roadway in Winkler that accommodates the kind of traffic that is normally seen on a four-lane road. In Steinbach, the major north-south route is Highway 12, and, of course, that is a four-lane roadway. The major east-west route coming off of Highway 52 from the east is a four-lane roadway. In both cases, those are provincial roads. In Winkler, the city has demonstrated complete responsibility for roads like Mountain Street and Pembina, and others that belong within the city and are under its own jurisdiction. But let me remind the minister that Highway 428 from the north, coming from Roland to Winkler and extending through Winkler extends to the US border. That is a provincial roadway.

Now, if the minister says that the \$25-million Urban Highway Fund is the opportunity for Winkler to participate and to enter into a participatory funding model with the Province and you'd be happy to pay half, then I would ask the minister, in fairness, why is it, with the way the Province is proceeding with the City of Brandon and Victoria Avenue, is Brandon also going to be picking up half the tab for Victoria Avenue, because I would suggest to the minister that, fundamentally, these projects are the same: a provincial roadway? And will we be consistent here and will the minister apply the same approach to the Winkler Highway 32 project as he is applying to the City of Brandon with respect to the improvements on Victoria Avenue?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I wouldn't want to get into any arguments between Winkler and Brandon, but I can tell you I—you know, I can tell you that the project in Brandon is no different from a lot of others. And I want to stress again, outside of the city of Winnipeg there are many areas of the province—actually, every other area, every other municipality, where we have direct responsibility for roads that go through urban areas. We have the capital program—it reflects a number of our priorities.

I can tell you with Victoria Avenue, the condition of Victoria Avenue was appalling. I was just on it recently. And, you know, both—I—you know, members from Brandon East and West have been lobbying based on that. It—by any definition, it—you know, I think it was voted as the worst highway in the province by CAA. But I wish they'd also have a new category, because I think after we're done it'll be like 75 through Morris this past year—the most improved. So it met all the criteria of the capital program, and the many other projects that might end up in the capital program eventually—what we brought in place, though, was the recognition that there may be other local priorities that allows municipalities to cost-share. We do have cost-sharing with municipalities currently. This—it's—this adds to it—urban-related issues. And I can tell you I met with, you know, a number of the mayors and Reeves from the growth areas, and that includes not only urban, but from the southwest, I met with the oil industry. And there is a lot of interest both by businesses and a number of municipalities in the cost-share program, because what it does is—it's not that they can't be part of the broader capital program that exists, but if there's, you know, some immediate considerations in that area, they can and will proceed.

I'll mention one municipality without mentioning the name of it. They have—they, for a long time, been wanting to basically upgrade their main street. It's not a priority for the department in terms of its—the overall capital program. But they basically had, you know, consistently said they'd be willing to cost-share, and yet the end result with this program, that option will be there. Not—I can tell the member that it will be a significant uptake from communities that want to cost-share. And it's not that there aren't projects that can and have gone through municipalities that are part of the capital program, the—what we're recognizing though is whether it's businesses or municipalities with urban pressures, there may be projects that don't necessarily fit into the capital program or they might be further out on the capital program where communities feel the support to move ahead, and that option is available.

You know, whether Winkler chooses to follow up or not on that is their choice, but we continue to have the overall highway capital program and we have this new option that's available. And I can guarantee to the member that, once we get the approvals through this committee and other steps, I'm absolutely convinced there'll be a lot of follow up from different municipalities. And, quite frankly, Brandon has other issues as well. There may be some interest there on cost-sharing. We've already received enquiries from Brandon on the program, so I wouldn't even say that Brandon wouldn't be part of a potential future cost-share. We think it's another option and we think it's going to be well received by municipalities.

**Mr. Friesen:** Final question for the minister. I know that the mayor of Winkler wrote to the minister on April the 28th and tried to engage him on—in discussion again on Highway 32 south and the process on that. I know he wrote back to the minister on July the 2nd, and he wrote back wondering why the minister had not responded to him and had not agreed to meet again to discuss this priority project for the city. So I would welcome his response on that. I would also just remind the minister from that same letter, of which I have a copy, the min—the mayor writes: we are trying to be patient, and I believe you would be hard-pressed to find a community who has worked so hard to enhance our economic base with very little dollars from your government.

\* (11:00)

So I think the minister understands that Winkler has done a tremendous amount of heavy lifting on their own with respect to the new fire station, with respect to the new reverse-osmosis plant. This is a very forward-thinking community that has even brought forward some very interesting plans with ingenuity in terms of how to drive down the cost on improvements to 32 south. I understand the most recent suggestions to the department were to see a reduction from a project cost from 28 to 14 million dollars. I would strongly suggest to the minister that this is a win-win situation. He has alluded to the fact that Brandon's Victoria Avenue is rated the worst road. I believe that Highway 32 south was rated Manitoba's second worst road, if I remember the results from that survey correctly. I believe it was reported in our recent media, and if it wasn't second I can guarantee him it ranked way up there.

If he could respond to that, that's great. And also, just as an addendum, one small question, and that is: With respect to 428, just going north from Highway 14 and, of course, the location of the brand new school, Northlands Parkway Collegiate, which'll open this fall, I believe there's been an application in process to reduce the speed zone there, to get the traffic speed down from where it's, I think, currently posted at 90. There's some potential for unsafe conditions here as the kids head in to school in the fall. And can the minister just report where things are at? I know the city has applied, and how quickly could that process be driven forward, just to make sure that we've got safe conditions where kids can get to and from school?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, the—you know—it's still through Motor Transport Board which is arm's-length. I'm not sure about the current status of it, but we can find out. Actually, from my special assistant, we can contact the board and get an update.

You know, I want to stress one thing, by the way: We are significantly engaged in the Morden-Winkler area. The member's mentioned the new school. We made significant investments in schools in our growth communities. We're enhancing schools; we're building new schools, and I want to stress that we have been engaged. In terms of the mayor of Winkler, I have met with the mayor in the past.

I was a little bit disappointed by the letter, by the way, because I want to stress one thing, you know—the mayor was talking about us paving things up north. I can tell you one thing, by the way. When I—

before I became minister, there wasn't a heck of a lot of work being done in my area of the province. Quite frankly, there wasn't anything being done anywhere in the province. We had an \$85-million capital budget. Actually, it was our government that paved the Winkler Main Street. Actually, it was one of the first projects that we announced. We now have \$468-million for—primarily for the existing road network, and includes also the \$75 million for the enhanced road networks, so we've significantly increased the capital.

We raised the gas tax last year. Not an easy decision; still lower than Saskatchewan and Ontario, quite a bit lower than Ontario, by the way. If the member wants to drive out and check out their gas prices, they apply their HST; we don't apply the PST on gas.

So we have significantly increased the capital program, and I just want to say, the mayor of Winkler, I appreciate him advocating on behalf of his community, but it's not one region versus another. You know, south versus north just isn't in the play. You know, the biggest investment we've made in the province in any highway? Highway 75. And, you know, if anybody wants to look at a map, you know, my map includes the entire province. It doesn't have constituencies listed on it. There's no, you know, blue or orange, you know, constituencies. Actually, probably the most significant investment's going right through the Morris constituency over the last number of years with the major upgrade. In fact, last year we completed the major upgrade on Highway 75.

So I, you know—we will be replying—you know, I always do reply to the mayor, and I appreciate him advocating, but I just want to put on the record, it's not north versus south or east versus west. It's also not a question of whether we have significantly increased the capital budget. We do—we have to deal with that. And the \$25 million, you know, if it's not—if it doesn't fit Winkler, that's fine; you know, I appreciate that, and I don't mean that in any confrontational way. It was well intended. Up until now, there was absolutely no way that that municipality could come in and formally request a cost-share. And I'll tell you, there—you know, I've gone across the province in growth areas, things like traffic lights. We have warrants, we have, you know, limited budgets. This will allow them, you know, to look at traffic lights, turning lanes, signs, a lot of the smaller items as well, not just the broader capital.

And I do appreciate Winkler's efforts, by the way, to—you know, the member's quite right. They've gone to the table; they've come back. So I don't think this is over, you know, this discussion, and I certainly appreciate the member advocating on behalf of his constituency. But I do want to stress, that's—you know, I take very seriously and our government does, you know, when we're talking about growth here, you know, it's not about regions and it's not about politics.

I'm really proud of what's happening in Morden-Winkler and Stanley, Steinbach. You know, I must admit it's kind of, you know—I've got the member from Portage here as well, too, we're in this back and forth—which is the third, fourth and fifth largest city now. On a recount, Thompson's moved back into—we're fourth.

**An Honourable Member:** We're catching up.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, well, and you know, one of these days, I think it's going to be the twin cities, you know, Morden-Winkler. Well, it's two cities now. I was going to say the city of Winkler and the town of Morden, well, moving to a—

**An Honourable Member:** New city.

**Mr. Ashton:** —new city, exactly. And I think that, to my mind, the ultimate act of diplomacy was putting the hospital right in the RM, right between Morden and Winkler. Whoever came up with that, I think, you know, should be off in the Middle East trying to broker a peace deal.

**An Honourable Member:** With Don Orchard.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, Don Orchard. Yes, well, he did know the area quite well.

So in all serious, we will get a response. I appreciate the member advocating. I'm sure this discussion's not over yet.

**Mr. Eichler:** Yes, as I had stated earlier, I'd like to move into EMO now. I do have more questions, but we'll just have to do a rapid fire here as we get closer, and—if that's okay. And then we can get it on the record and get it back to me.

On the number of EMO DFA claims, I understand from an update that I had, there was 202 appealed on the private-sector claims. Was there any of those appeals successful? If so, how many?

**Mr. Ashton:** I'm assuming for the summer of 2011?

**Mr. Eichler:** Would you repeat that please?

**An Honourable Member:** 2011.

**An Honourable Member:** Right. That's correct.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, what I'm going to do with a lot of these detailed questions, I'll take it's a specific answer?

**Mr. Eichler:** Yes, that's fine.

Also, in regards to the municipal claim, of course we know, in particular, those municipalities that were impacted in 2011, and I know that I may have to go to the Local Government for that.

But I know a number of the municipalities have had extreme hardship and, of course, the levels of which they've been allowed to rebuild, like, the no-build zones, for example, in twin beaches and Delta Beach's and some of the others.

How are we determining that, and what process do those wanting to rebuild have to go through in order to determine whether or not they're going to be allowed to be rebuilt or not?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, the flood report that came out, you know, had a number of recommendations that deal with that. On an interim basis, we did follow what is the standard, you know, policy, you know, which is essentially, you know, flood record, you know, the—some of we did in '97, which is flood record, you know, in '97 plus two feet.

There are recommendations in the report that involved both the planning side and also the mitigation side. It does point to looking at the potential to going to—projected of upwards of one-in-200 years, which is quite significant. It might not be achievable in all areas, but is something that we're looking at the design right now of the outlet, and also the, you know, the permanent outlet from Lake St. Martin.

I wouldn't underestimate the degree to which the move to a permanent outlet for Lake St. Martin actually will allow us to design that, because, as the member is aware—and I know, having represented a lot of those communities previously—you know, the bottleneck has always been Lake St. Martin. You know, we have the outlet from Fairford. It couldn't previously operate during the winter, you know, at the full-rated capacity. It operated at a full, you know, operating capacity according to the operating rules because of, you know, the potential for ice impacts and flooding in and around Lake St. Martin. And you've got a—Lake Manitoba which is 14 times the size of Lake St. Martin. So you're quantum of

getting water out of Lake Manitoba is compounded than Lake St. Martin.

But, if you are able to design—and that is the goal right now, the two components we've committed to—it may allow us also to operate the outlet from Lake St. Martin in anticipation of floods, and that may not sound like a significant factor, but currently—I'll give you an example of this year. Some of our early forecasts indicates some pretty significant flood risk on Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin. We did position equipment in place to operate the emergency outlet if necessary. But under any definition of emergency, we couldn't go in several months before and drain the lake. That wouldn't meet the criteria of the federal government for, you know, for an emergency outlet.

If we have it—and we have operating rules—we can operate it similar to, say, you know, the Shellmouth in anticipation of a flood and bring down the level of Lake St. Martin, you know, quite significantly. And that will have a significant impact on our ability to, you know, to deal with resettlement in around the lake. So we did have interim guidelines, but we are working now on the sort of final planning issues.

\* (11:10)

One other quick comment—and I'd appreciate the member's patience because it's a kind of fairly complex issue—I think what's interesting is, after the flood there was a lot of pressure for, you know, for buyouts, and this is not unusual. Now we're a couple years away, and people have had the 'chaw'-opportunity to rebuild. There's a lot less interest in buyouts. We were very clear with municipalities all the way through that this was a final, you know, option. Was an option in Red River, you know, in ninety-post-'97, it was an option Red River post-2009, fairly low—you know, narrowly located.

And we're finding a lot of people now have actually rebuilt, and in some cases, the member knows, you know, some of the areas where people have significantly raised the elevation of their cottages and actually, even though there was a lot of concern early on about whether, you know, how feasible that was, we're actually finding people are saying it was actually—it's an enhancement and they—and, you know, just the peace of mind but actually is working for the property as well. So, as we go through the rebuilding process, we're already seeing a significant number of people that have raised, you know, to sort of that high level standard, the interim standard.

And no matter what happens, one thing we are going to do is ensure that the planning reflects flood risk. That's been the No. 1 experience in Manitoba outside of mitigation. You know, obviously, we're all watching what's happening in Alberta and, you know, how many of those properties, you know, really shouldn't have been built where they were built. Well, we have that history here, and we've moved away from that. And that's the intent around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

So interim standards applied. A lot of people built to that, but we're still working on the recommendations that may actually allow us to go to full one-in-200-year protection, which is very, very significant. It would actually give Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin even greater protection than areas in the Red River Valley.

**Mr. Eichler:** I know it's got to be a tough decision, but I do know I've had a number of—as the minister's well aware, because I used to represent the area and I know an awful lot of people there and—been bombarded with request and trying to determine when this decision may be made. A lot of folks there would like to rebuild. Some, of course, you know, as the minister's already stated, does not want to rebuild. You know, they've had that opportunity. So I'd encourage the minister, you know, to try and reach a decision on what all the—whatever that level of elevation may be deemed so those folks can either make their mind up whether or not they're going to build or not build.

And, of course, the economic growth for the municipality has had a significant impact. In fact, I know a number of the municipalities have had to put their capital projects on hold, such things as maintenance equipment, graders and front-end loaders, those types of things, because of the lost revenue from taxation. So it's been a—and I know the department's very much aware of that; I'm not telling them anything they don't know. But it has impacted them significantly, and so whatever we can do to encourage growth there, but in a manner that's going to be sustainable as well. So if the 'minner' would just want to comment on that, that would be fine.

**Mr. Ashton:** I've got to stress that one of the key issues to my mind, quite apart from all the technical and planning issues, is to get, you know, people's confidence back in the flood-impacted areas. And, you know, I'm thinking of Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin—two different situations. The relocations, new housing, et cetera, is key for a lot of



the Lake St. Martin communities. In around Lake Manitoba, though, the mitigation is clay—you know, is clearly a key part of it.

I thought the most telling comment—and it's formerly the member's constituency—is from the reeve of the RM of St. Laurent. And Reeve Zotter, after we announced the \$250-million, you know, commitment, talked about this really providing hope for the future for Lake Manitoba. And his municipality was extremely hard hit.

And that's been our experience in the Red River Valley, by the way, and both south of, you know, post-'97, north of, post-2009, is, you know, over time you can get people's confidence back in the area. And, you know, right now in the Red River Valley, not only is confidence returned—I mean, property values are way higher than they were, you know, even pre-'97. And that comes down to people having, you know, a sense of security in the, not just flood mitigation, but the planning and all the other elements. So that's our goal is to restore confidence in and around the flood-affected areas.

I think we're making significant progress, and when I say we, that's collective; I'm not talking about, you know, just the provincial government.

And I think you're going to see over the next number of years as we are able to get into actual construction of the mitigation, I think the future's pretty bright in around Lake Manitoba and especially if we are able to get the one-in-200-year level benchmark which is recommended in the flood report. That would provide, again, that would provide flood mitigation that's some of the best in the province outside of, like, very concentrated urban areas like Winnipeg where it's only 700 years; Brandon, you know, one in 300, but for a rural area and for a lot of settlement that took place, you know, very close to the lake, a very shallow lake that—very subject, you know, to flooding.

Whoever knows the history, I mean, in the '50s, it was flooded for three years in a row, prior, you know, that's what led to the Fairford outlet; you know, it led to the regulation of the lake.

That regulatory system worked from the '60s through to 2011, didn't work in 2011, and if we come up with a regulatory system that does work in the future, I think you're going to see a lot of recovery in around the lake. You're already starting to see it, and I know the member keeps in touch with some of his former constituents. It's amazing all the, a lot of the

rebuilding is taking place, and there's a very different sense when you talk to anybody from the area.

**Mr. Eichler:** Just in regards to the municipal claims, how many of those are still outstanding, and, if so, how much money is outstanding to the municipalities?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, we have a total of 187 public claims, including First Nations. Now, I'm getting it real specific, \$151,631,606; 168 claims remain open. It's estimated that there's about \$60 million remains to be paid out for municipal claims, about \$25 million for First Nations. This reflects the fact that they're continuing to do the work and it's a multi-year rebuilding. And 10 per cent of it paid and closed and of which there have been no appeals. So, where those claims remain open, it's not that they're necessarily in dispute; it's actually just that the work continues to be done.

**Mr. Eichler:** Again, still on Lake Manitoba and the flood of 2011, the Lake Manitoba Water Stewardship Board was disbanded, is my understanding. Is there any indication that this committee may be reappointed and re-established in order to provide advice to the minister's department?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, I was the minister responsible for water stewardship for appointing it. It actually is with Conservation and Water Stewardship, or it was. Their work was obviously related to one of the quality issues. The focus in this department is quantity, as in too much. We did get the task force report, you know, the overall report but also on the regulatory framework, and that involved a lot of consultation. It's a very good report. I highly recommend it for anybody that wants to—you know, the member understands it—that, you know, anybody that wants to know what the real situation is, it gives a very good description of the challenges and some of the history and that's our focus, you know,

I think the, you know, the stewardship body dealt with a lot of the water-quality issues which are ongoing in Lake Manitoba, but we're, you know, in this department we're still very much focused on water-quantity issues, and that's going to be our top priority for flood mitigation, you know, which is to get the regulatory machine back to a state where it will actually work.

**Mr. Eichler:** Still sticking with the Gypsumville area and the low-lying land there in regards to preparation for Lake St. Martin, I want to come back to—we talked a little bit about that yesterday, and the

two farms that have been bought out. Of course, the relocation of that First Nation community. What levels of government decide what land was going to be bought and how did that consultation process roll out?

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, basically, Housing, in conjunction with the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, our department been the lead on this.

Just in a quick summary, there were efforts made early on to provide interim housing. There were some issues about the location of the—you know, the housing. We made significant progress and I just want to reiterate that the federal government has made it very clear that they want to expedite getting people back home, which basically means expedite getting permanent housing locations.

We always indicated that regardless of, you know, the future responsibility of the federal government for First Nations, that we want to be part of the solution, because these are Manitobans, you know, these are flood-impacted communities, and there's been some very significant progress. I'm anticipating probably even further progress over the next period of time.

And I think it's important to note, in all fairness, that a lot of the issues predate the 2011 flood. A lot of the issues were related to housing that was already problematic. There were problems with the water table, a lot of history with Lake St. Martin. Again, there was never an outlet, like, an artificial outlet. Since the '60s, you've had the Fairford structure, so there's some pretty widespread impacts.

So, I think we're making some real progress and I think the federal government is engaged. So our First Nations—we are—I think you're going to see some very significant movement over the next short period of time.

**Mr. Eichler:** Of course, we don't believe everything that we read, but we do understand there is concerns about the low level of the elevations on the proposed site. Even though the federal government's responsible for the allocation of that land, the Province is responsible for fighting floods and getting the folks out, and, of course, looking after housing for them.

What steps have we taken to ensure that the right information has been provided to the federal department?

**Mr. Ashton:** The—our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson) has met on numerous occasions with the federal minister. There's been staff contact.

I can indicate, by the way, that independent consultants have been retained by the First Nations and have assessed the land and found it suitable for development. You know, there's—there was, you know, recent progress in May on that. Would require some drainage, so, you know, there's been a lot of site-specific work done as well, but we have been in constant contact with the federal government right from day one.

And the real issue, again, is, in many cases, people just didn't have housing to go back to that was—you know, that was in any acceptable condition. And some of that was from the flooding; some of it was pre-dating the flooding. The end result, though—and I've had a number of opportunities to meet with people from impacted communities—we do have the opportunity here to move to a very significantly different scenario in the future—much more, you know, flood protection.

I'm advised, by the way, we have weekly federal-provincial meetings. So, it's at that level of contact with, you know, both ministerial but also departmental.

**Mr. Eichler:** Still staying with flood preparedness, and down the road, I know that recently there was discussions with regard to the Souris River basin, of course, with cost-sharing there. Has the department been approached for compensation or flood mitigation in regards to the Souris River basin?

**Mr. Ashton:** I'm not sure if the member's talking about the 2011 works that were done. We did a lot of mitigation at that time. We've also moved over the last number of years—you know, we have taken temporary dikes and made them permanent in Melita. So, I'm not sure of the specifics, but, you know, I could certainly get detailed information if the member could be a little more specific.

**Mr. Eichler:** My question is in regards to flood mitigation for future floods. And my understanding is, because of the International Joint Commission that oversees cross-border water and the cost for that, my question is in regards to what role the Province is going to play in that and, if so, have they been asked for money and, if so, how much?

**Mr. Ashton:** We are working with the communities, and I want to indicate again, you know, Melita, we did, 2009, put dikes in place that we have moved to

permanent status. It's just important in that community.

Prior to 2009, there were two communities that were not diked. Following the, you know, the work that was done in the Red River Valley. One was Melita; the other was actually the RM of Kelsey, Ralls Island. Ralls Island, as we speak is part of the, you know, work that's taking place in terms of the flooding, but we have a dike that was put in place in that time period, 2011, which is in place right now. So we have made significant progress, and we are in discussion with all three communities on further enhancements.

Obviously, when you're dealing with the Souris River, you have to include the other side of it as well which is, you know, the US side but, dare I say, you know, if we compare our flood preparation to what they are dealing with in the US, it's a very different situation, you know, with, say, Minot and, you know, communities on our side of the border. So we are working with them and currently the cost hasn't been determined. Obviously, at that point, we would be following up with discussions including with the federal government.

We—one of the reasons Melita and Ralls Island were not completed is because they weren't scoped into the post-'97 program. So they were outlying, you know, from that one being the Souris, one being Saskatchewan River, and, again, it gets back to some of the previous discussion on the need for strategic infrastructure, and you know, we certainly believe that after 2011, there has to be a focus on the Souris River. So we're going to get the engineering work finished, get the costs and we'd certainly pursue that with the federal government at that point.

**Mr. Eichler:** Before I let the independent member ask a few questions, I do have one more in regards to Emerson and the Red River. I know we've asked this question the last three years I've been here and that's in regards to the holdback of water on the Red River on the United States side. What talks have taken place there in order to try and hold back some of that water before it gets to Manitoba?

**Mr. Ashton:** In a general sense, I can indicate because I've, you know, as I indicated a couple of months ago, I did meet with the mayor of Fargo, and I obviously do keep in touch with what's happening in the state of North Dakota, especially the Red River Basin Commission, which is an excellent organization. You know, I keep in regular contact

with Lance Yohe and many of the participants on both sides of the border.

I know right now the state of North Dakota has gone—undergone a bit of a transformation, largely due to oil revenue. They've significantly increased their funding for water-related projects, and I know they're looking at a variety of potential projects that could impact, you know, in terms of retention. Now having said that, whatever you do in terms of retention, it all depends on the scale of floods. You know, if you get major flooding, it doesn't necessarily help, but you know, it's no different than what we've gone through here with our report.

In addition to the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin mitigation, we are looking at a whole series of potential infrastructure projects that could involve retention here in Manitoba as well. And, obviously, we have, you know, the success of the Shellmouth Dam, you know, is a good example of how retention can make all the difference. So there are some developments taking place in the States, and we're in close contact with them.

It's interesting really because when I'm down there, you know, I met with the mayor of Fargo as I said. They look to Manitoba as a model. You know, they still don't have the floodway. They're stuck on some land-related issues. By the way, I'm not going to get into debate here but they're going to pay for the floodway through a sales tax. So, well, maybe I did get into it, but anyway—[interjection] Yes, we'll get there soon enough, but they look at—to us as a model, but certainly we are encouraging them in terms of their, you know, their aspect as well, if there's anything they can do.

And that's part of the issue, by the way, you know, and I'll mention this in the context of Saskatchewan because there's also that issue of, you know, illegal drainage in Saskatchewan. We talked to the Saskatchewan minister. There are some issues there, but I also want to, you know, mention the flip side. This year, because of Saskatchewan's management of its water system, they have been able to shave off peak levels by as much as 40 per cent, in terms of the additional flows, you know, the Diefenbaker Dam and there's a number of components they have.

\* (11:30)

You know, in a lot of cases, continuing to develop good neighbour, you know, relations is really important and, you know, I know sometimes

people point fingers at other jurisdictions. You know, we happen to just be in the downstream portion, but we actually have a fairly good relationship. You know, we have some issues like Devils Lake where, you know, we're in conflict with North Dakota, but even with North Dakota we have a fairly good working relationship. And, actually, you know, you look at the Souris River. The Souris River is a unique situation because it, you know, essentially goes through, sort of winds through the international, you know, border, and we're all in it. And, you know, there are ways we can help them, probably, with our expertise. It's—right now we've offered to help Alberta with our expertise. They can help us with things like retention. Yes, there are going to be disputes, but generally speaking, we have a pretty good working relationship with them.

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for that update. I do want to commend the work of the member from La Verendrye and, of course, the member from Gimli with the all-party forum whereby we get together with our neighbours to the south, and, of course, the thing that I've been—and I was on that committee for a bit—and that impressed me so much was the ability to be able to sit down and talk and work with our neighbours. I know that's so important.

There is a concern that I do have and I do want to put it on the record, and that is the fact that we do know, in regards to the climate change, of course, the severities of the climate and what we've seen with floods and tornadoes and so on, we still lack an agreement on the Red River between United States and Canada. And I know that, you know, it's a federal decision, but we can certainly be at the table with those discussions, and I do want that to come to a reality one day soon. I've encouraged my federal counterparts to deal with it. I'll continue to deal with that because we know one day we may be in a drought situation, be wanting the water, not necessarily trying to hold it back. So it goes both ways. We need to be cognizant of the fact that times change.

But I just wanted to put that on the record, and I will turn it over to the member from River Heights so he can ask a few questions as well.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I'd like to start by just a general question on the capital assets, which are on page 143. You've got total capital investment of \$636,530,000, and I—my question to you is, what amount of that is eligible for—to use funds which are

derived from the PST? What amount of that, proportionate of that, would be eligible for PST infrastructure funds?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, we did run through the breakdown yesterday, and just to sort of, you know, recap very briefly, this, you know, reflects some of major projects that we've completed. It's major building projects which we—being completed this year, you know, the UCN campuses, for example, some of the correctional facilities we've seen over the last number of years and the floodway, which is all but, you know, complete, which is, I would say, a very positive development. And what's reflected here is a significant increase on highway infrastructure. We're increasing the capital budget to \$468 million. That includes both existing and new roads, and, you know, essentially, if you look at our overall expenditures—I can only talk right here from the MIT perspective. A number of years ago we brought in The Gas Tax Accountability Act because, certainly prior to 1999, the Province, the government of the day was spending less money than it was taking in in gas taxes. We are now spending considerably more on—than we raise in gas tax even with the increase in the gas tax last year, and I add the qualification, of course, we're still lower than Saskatchewan and Ontario on the gas tax.

But what we also have on the sales tax side, again, is we're investing on a wide range of infrastructure that will include—we'll be able to see over the, you know, the 10-year period that it's in place—and will include investments, yes, in highways, but also very much flood mitigation. We've already committed the \$250 million for Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin. There'll be other projects as the work completes.

So over, you know, over the next 10 years people are going to continue to see record investments. I believe our total this year is \$1.8 billion on overall infrastructure, not all within this department.

So I, you know, can talk more specific from MIT, but, you know, generally speaking again, a very significant investment. And, of course, the member's aware of the specific fund that's being established, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) being responsible for it. And I would just point him to the fact that I think our credibility is there on the gas tax accountability. We've exceeded what we raise every year. It will be there on the PST as well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, the minister's given me a long response but has failed to answer the specific question which I asked, which is: What amount of the money that is listed there, which is \$636 million, would be eligible under the PST revenue generated as an expenditure?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, I think the member's aware, and I'm not sure if he was able to participate in the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) Estimates, because, obviously, the broader fund is under, you know, [*inaudible*] and the specific response would be the Minister of Finance.

What I can talk to here is our actual investments. They're up on the highway side. They're going to continue to be significant over the next number of years. You know, we have a 10-year capital program. We're well into that. We're exceeding it this year. Our expenditures are up over the last number of years. They're considerably up over the last number of years, and we're going to continue to invest in it.

You know, throughout Estimates, we've heard some of the pressures. The member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) raised some issues just a few minutes ago, some of the growth pressures. We're seeing growth pressures in southwest Manitoba with the oil industry. We're still working on flood repairs. We have two major bridges in southwest Manitoba that are in progress. So, you know, again, our record on infrastructure is very clear, and I, you know, I would point to flood mitigation probably being the clearest example.

And I—you know, to put it succinctly, remember the 1960s? We didn't have flood protection and we didn't have a sales tax in this province. We now have flood protection, and, yes, we have a sales tax. And over the next period of time, we're going to have a 1 cent increase in the sales tax and we're going to have more flood protection and a lot more investment in infrastructure. So I think that's the broader issue.

And I appreciate the member may have a different perspective on that. He may disagree with that. I got to tell you right now, if I was to compare where we're at with our friends and neighbours to the west or to the south—I mean, I met with the mayor of Fargo. They're building a floodway. They're bringing in a sales tax to build the floodway. I'm sure in Alberta there's going to be a lot of focus, post-flood, on their situation. To put it in perspective, by the way, the city of Calgary has one-in-25 year flood protection. We have one-in-700.

Again, we, you know, they don't have a sales tax in Alberta. We do. So I think the broader issue, and I, you know, we have the committees right now and we have Bill 20 and, you know, I could get into the broader discussion on that, but certainly from the infrastructure perspective, and certainly as the minister responsible for flood protection and highways, I would put forward the strong argument that, you know, the Manitoba model is what we're following here. And I can assure the member that, just as we've done since we've been in government since '99, there's going to be major investments in infrastructure, particularly flooding—yes, highways as well, and those two issues I can speak to. And the PST—without the PST, there's no way, to my mind, that any government could respond fully to the flood reports that we've received. We spent a billion dollars in the last 10 years. You just simply can't do that without that revenue.

And I appreciate it's kind of one of the—it is the big debate of this session. And I certainly acknowledge, you know, there are a lot of people that don't necessarily like having to increase taxes. But I can assure the member if he looks at what's included in this budget and what this department is involved with, we're going to make sure that we invest heavily in infrastructure. And I'm more than willing to get into some of the specifics.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister's providing information which basically is provided elsewhere. I'd asked a specific question, and it's apparent that the minister doesn't know the answer.

\* (11:40)

So I ask if he would separately provide me that information once he's been able to consult with others as to what specific dollar amount of that \$636 million is eligible under the PST. And I would also ask that if the minister would look at page 17, which is the budget in the budget papers, there is infrastructure listed on that page of about \$1.8 billion, and I would like to know where the \$636 million here is listed, where it shows up on that list on page 17, and if he could provide that information—I suspect it's detailed enough that he doesn't have it here at—for me at some point.

Let me go on to a specific issue which, I think, is a relevant issue—an important one. There's a bridge, which it's my understanding the minister's providing some funding for, across a little creek called Blackbird Creek. This creek was a tiny creek and now it is a large creek because of drainage, drainage,

drainage in the area that this drains. And the flow through that creek now is much, much greater in the spring, particularly when it's a wet spring, than it ever was historically. The problem here is that you can put the—a new bridge up, but until you fix the problem, which is drainage, drainage, drainage downstream, which will require some discussions with people in Saskatchewan, then, you know, you're not going to solve the major issue, which is that that bridge is going to get washed out because of increased water and increased flooding.

And it is a relevant discussion with Saskatchewan, because the route, Blackbird Creek road, goes straight into Boundary Road which is along the line, the border between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It needs to be maintained jointly but is not being maintained jointly, because it's in poor shape at the moment, and so there really needs to be discussion about that region. And I would ask the minister whether he would undertake to have a look at this particular issue and make sure that it's not just a matter of building a bridge, but it's a matter of solving a regional issue. Will he do that?

**Mr. Ashton:** Now, I appreciate the question, and I have identified—we have met with—when I say we, the Minister of Water Stewardship—Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), myself—with Minister Cheveldayoff, our counterpart in Saskatchewan.

I can indicate, by the way, one of the things they're looking at is our experience in Manitoba on both permitting and enforcement related to illegal drainage. They see us as a model. They may be moving this session—or the upcoming session, not the current one—to a very similar model that we've had, because we made significant progress in reducing, eliminating illegal drainage. I know it was criticized at the time, but—I think we were accused of bringing the water Gestapo by my critic. None of the current critics, but—which I thought was a little bit of an overstatement. But I think it's worked well.

The big concern in southwest Manitoba is again with illegal drainage. I want to stress again, in a major flood, it's really not, you know, the major factor. But any kind of illegal drainage, to my mind, has impacts, and it—if it has impacts to Manitoba, we're concerned about it. We've raised that with the Saskatchewan government, and I will follow up in terms of specifics on this. I certainly appreciate the member raising it. He's quite correct, when you're looking at any issues related to flood impacts and

other impacts, you can't just look at, you know, the structure itself. You've got to look at the overall management of water in that area. So, I appreciate the member—I will get a more detailed response on the current status of that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I thank the minister.

I would, first of all, caution the minister in terms of this conclusion that water retention doesn't have much of a role in terms of—and the drainage issues—doesn't have much of a role in terms of major floods. It very much depends on the topography and there are very substantial arguments on the other side of this coin, as well, and so I would suggest to the minister that he not be too out front on advancing that postulate.

The second—again, in the Lake St. Martin situation, one of the things that people have called for, said is needed, in the Haliburda lands—the new area which is being talked about—is LiDAR mapping. Has the minister got LiDAR mapping done for that area?

**Mr. Ashton:** We—yes, we did a lot for the emergency channel. We've actually extended LiDAR mapping pretty significantly throughout the province. We did LiDAR surveying, for example, in the Peguis area as well, over the last number of years, and a lot of that does exist and that's an important component of design, as the member knows. LiDAR surveying, all's you do is get the localized elevations and it can play—you know, it plays a key role in terms of flood mitigation. So we've got a lot of it done already.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Is the—I ask the minister: Is the LiDAR mapping of the area of the new community available publicly, available for community members of Lake St. Martin to see?

**Mr. Ashton:** It's certainly available to their consultants, and they have their—I believe they have access to it now—yes, they do have access to it, yes. I should mention, because this issue did come up earlier, we, you know, the—in terms of Lake St. Martin, the communities have engaged consultants that have been looking at the appropriateness of alternate sites for housing, and obviously LiDAR surveying is one component of it. The key issue, as well, is making sure there's appropriate drainage. Some of the land may have, you know, fairly decent elevation but would require, you know, a different level of drainage, you know, for habitation as compared, you know, to its current agricultural use

or other use. So that information is available to the minister that consults.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Good. The important thing is it's not just available for consultants but for community members in Lake St. Martin who, I understand, are going to be participating in a democratic referendum. Is that right on the site?

**Mr. Ashton:** I'm not sure what is happening internally in the communities, but I do know that what we're at now is basically based on a lot of work by the communities themselves, community leadership, and there has been some, you know, significant shift over time in terms of what is seen as the best option for the community, a lot of discussion internally. So I can't speak for the, you know, the internal process, but, again, I think there's been a lot of progress made, and we're going to see, I think, over the next short period of time, some significant resolution of not just the 2011 scenarios but issues that go back decades.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the comments in the report—the flood reports—I can't remember which one it was—was, clearly, from my on-the-ground observations—not accurate, was the reference to the dike which was put up around the Lake St. Martin community. And the comment was made, as I recall, that it was all due to flooding, water coming in from the upland area, right, behind the dike, that that was the reason there was so much water behind the dike. It was clearly, when I was there, the level between the two was virtually identical. This was May 8th, the day that Lake St. Martin was evacuated.

And there was clearly areas where the water was flowing under the dike through, I presume, culverts that weren't closed, or something like that, and there was a considerable flow that was going from out in the lake in toward the community. And for whatever reason, and I can't, you know, speak to all the engineering issues that might be involved, but that dike clearly wasn't doing what it was supposed to be doing in terms of keeping water out.

And, clearly, if, in the planning for a new community, this aspect of having appropriate dikes, if they're needed, has got to be a very important one. And my impression was that that dike had been put up that spring in a sort of last-minute way without as good planning as it should have had, and, clearly, this is something which needs to be addressed in terms of proper future planning. So I just bring that forward to the minister.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes. Well, without getting into too much detail, the dike was built by AANDC. We did take over the operation later and there were some issues with it. So I think the member's quite correct, and I certainly appreciate the member's knowledge of that area. I know, you know, in various different roles, including his current, he knows the area quite well, so I do take his advice very seriously. On this, I think, he's identified that there were some problems and they were rectified after.

\* (11:50)

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes. Now, there was a letter just in the last day or so from people associated with Lake Manitoba concerned about the flows through the Portage Diversion and that this Lake Manitoba is now, I think, more than a foot above what is the upper boundary of the normal level. What's the flow through the Portage Diversion now, and what's the plans that the minister has for the rest of this year?

**Mr. Ashton:** I did provide some information earlier on the operating roles. This is consistent with the operating roles. I did provide an update yesterday, but the anticipated level we're looking at is 813.1, which is well within the normal range—yes, 0.6 above, but it's below flood level. We have heavy rains that we've been dealing with both, you know, through various river systems coming from further west, but also in Manitoba. It's—this is, again, this is a standard operation and it follows the rules that we've had basically since its inception in the early 1970s. So it has some localized impact, clearly.

And the member for Portage raised some issues, you know, raised on the access, other issues that are also a part of that, but it's part of the normal operation and, again, once those higher levels subside we will discontinue its operation. But, having said that, we are looking operational in the next couple of weeks.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Can the minister provide what's the current flow through the Portage Diversion? I tried to look it up on the website, and all the other river flows were there but the Portage Diversion wasn't being reported.

**Mr. Ashton:** Approximately 5,000 cfs.

**Mr. Gerrard:** You know, we talked earlier on about the LiDAR mapping around Lake St. Martin and right now the minister is involved in consulting along the Assiniboine River, but in my discussions with people who are involved in, for example, the LaSalle Redboine Conservation District, LiDAR

mapping has not been done for a considerable proportion of that section of the Assiniboine River from Portage to Winnipeg. When will that be completed and when will that be available?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes. We have taken down at Baie St. Paul, apparently, and as we proceed we will be continuing that. So it is a priority. You know, if you want to do any kind of a long-term flood mitigation planning you'd need that. That's really state of the art, the LiDAR surveying.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, just—I'd like the minister to provide a little bit of clarity on the goal for that whole section of the river from Portage to Winnipeg, because in—historically, what has happened is that there has been dikes between Portage and Baie St. Paul Bridge just north of Elie and St. Eustache and then, there hasn't—there have been, you know, bits and pieces between there and Winnipeg, but the planning to some extent has been done differently. And is it the minister's plan to have a flow through that Assiniboine River which will have, you know, the whole length will be protected from Portage to Winnipeg, and how will that be accomplished primarily, by dikes or a mix of dikes and an outlet of some sort, or dikes and other options?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, probably the best response is I think the member's question contains within itself the kind of issues that we are going to be looking at. The quick synopsis, really, is that those dikes were built a significant period of time ago. They have been in place for many years. It's been, obviously, some new experience of what the actual flows are through that section of that Assiniboine River. Certainly, our experience 2011 was the flows were, you know, were certainly less than when—or perhaps had been the case historically. That shouldn't come as a surprise though. You know, one of—I think, one of the key elements with any kind of flood mitigation of flood control is it also takes out some of the historic elements that actually clean rivers out, so you have a major flood that can clear channels out, that can clear flows. Unfortunately, if you have settlement around the area, it also has devastating impacts.

So—and we did look, by the way, in the 2011 flood at, you know, in an early sense of whether there was any potential through dredging or other, you know, other activities to increase the flow, and the short answer to that is it's very cost-effective—or ineffective and it's, like, very expensive and very ineffective in terms of, you know, impacts on flows, so we're going to be looking at a lot of things.

It's also important to note the unique nature and the very significant achievement we had in 2011 actually maintaining the integrity of the dikes. I can't understate the degree to which the work that we did pre- the flood, in anticipation of the flood, during the flood, assistance of the military, their, you know, their human power but also some of their high-tech equipment, you know, spotting some of the potential lakes, how that made a huge difference and what the impacts could have been and would have been if there'd been a breakout from those dikes east of Portage into Winnipeg.

And I want to stress, by the way, that the real threat, again—and, you know, there's a bit of a mythology out there—it's not the city of Winnipeg during 2011. It was essentially between Portage and Winnipeg. There's some very different situations once you get into Winnipeg in terms of the Assiniboine. Actually, some of the highest ground in Winnipeg, as the member's probably aware, is actually in the—let's say the west end, not the West End but the western part of the city.

And so we saw that experience. We were 'sucception' in the short run. I would say the—if you were to look at the—sort of the unwritten story of the flood, there were a lot of achievements and this is probably one of them.

So we are looking at all mitigation options from the Assiniboine River, Lake Manitoba and the KGS study that's currently under way. We've already identified the Lake Manitoba outlet and the Lake St. Martin outlet being made permanent, and KGS, though, in the study is looking at any and all options, some of which—actually, most of which we looked at in a preliminary way during the flood, so we have some reference points.

Are there any simple, cheap solutions? The answer is no. But are we ruling out any of the options at this point? No. We're looking at any and all options.

**Mr. Gerrard:** What is the flow level that the—is planned for the section of the Assiniboine River from Portage to Winnipeg? The flow level what was sustainable was about 18,000 cubic feet per second, as I recall, in the 2011 flood, although I think it went up a little over 19,000 cubic feet per second at one point. The historic, you know, agreement, I think, in terms of when the dikes were handed over in '96 was twenty-two five, 22,500 cubic feet per second, and I think that in the 1976 flood it was, I think, about



23,600 or thereabouts. So what is the sort of plan moving forward?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, well, I mean—you know, I mentioned earlier about the member having good knowledge. I know this is an area he has direct personal knowledge of as well as some history. He's quite correct in terms of the flows and certainly that twenty-two—you know, excess of 22,000 cfs was the historic experience. It certainly wasn't the experience in 2011.

I want to stress, though, that short periods of time—you know, you've seen those kind of flows, the unique aspect 2011 where, again, we were able to maintain up to, you know—and I wouldn't even call it sustainable. You know, that 18,000 was maintained through heroic efforts. That's not quite sustainable in a normal sense. It took 24-7 surveillance, it took major effort by our staff, the military, contractors to maintain that 18,000, and it continued for weeks on end.

\*(12:00)

So what the study will look at is this very specific question: what is sustainable, what needs to be done to make it sustainable and, you know, over what time periods that sustainability can be maintained. So that study will be looking exactly—this.

The one thing you learn through any flood—and the member knows this from, you know, from my discussions with him—and I know, you know, it sounds like a simple thing to say but, you know, you learn lessons on any flood. And one of the key lessons we learned out of this flood—and we were prepared, you know, with the Assiniboine dikes prior to the flood, we did start the work—it really was the actual flows. You know, you can do—you can have all the theory you want, but until you actually see it in practice, you know, the theory is not very useful.

We found out exactly what the flows were. Even with the Hoop and Holler, and a lot of the associated issues, we were able to determine a lot of the flows. That is going to help us considerably in both the KGS study and fighting any future floods, because I don't suggest for a moment that we're not going to face these kind of floods down the line. You know, we will. We have much better sense now what the flows are into the La Salle River, on the Assiniboine east, and even some of the very localized situations we saw. You know, LiDAR surveying is, by moving in that area, is helping us, you know, throughout the

entire flood-affected areas. But, even with the LiDAR surveying, until you actually see that flow, I think a lot of our people out in the field will tell you that until you actually see water flow, you don't really know where it's going to go. And after 2011, we sure found out.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just a couple of comments as the member is moving forward. I think that, when there was 18,000 cubic feet per second, the minister is focusing on that area from Portage to Baie St. Paul, in terms of where there were dikes, but the section of the river from Baie St. Paul to Winnipeg, there were several spots in there where there were homes which were within a few inches of being flooded. Now, whether that means having attention to dikes or other matters, but in terms of figuring out what kind of flow you can put through, you need to make sure you're looking at both the section from Portage to Baie St. Paul and the section from Baie St. Paul to Winnipeg, because, although there are areas between Baie St. Paul and Winnipeg which were not a problem, there were certainly some areas where there were homes which were very close to being flooded.

The second point that I would make, in terms of the river, there is discussion, and, of course, the Hoop and Holler cut and so on, if—there's two options, here. One is that if you're going to have overflow areas, or areas that, if you're looking at being able to have an overflow of a thousand feet per second in half a dozen areas, that's a different model from having an overflow of 6,000 cubic feet per second in one area. And the dangers and the risks involved would vary, right? And it—the government, I believe, should look at the option of more than one, potentially, sort of, relief valves, or overflow areas, but in smaller amounts that would be—have less effect locally.

The third point I would make is that the Charles River in Massachusetts, they looked along that river and they made the decision that by preserving certain wetland areas, and ensuring that there were areas where the water could flow into that during a flood time, they were able to spend, I think, in their case, \$10 million. That was—been equivalent to putting a hundred million dollars into dikes. And so the option of using, sort of, wetland reserves and having those reserves, you know, whether they're purchased by the government or whether they're—have specific caveats on the land or what have you, that it is something that could be used in a complementary fashion to, you know, the approach of just putting up dikes. So I would just ask the minister to comment.

**Mr. Ashton:** We're short of time. I think the member's encapsulated a lot of the issues will be dealt with by the KGS report. And we—the dikes he's referring to are basically municipal dikes. We have been involved with the LiDAR surveying. We'll also be working with municipalities—that's scoped in. So, you know, a lot more could be said on this, but in the interest of time, I'll certainly thank the member for his interest in this and appreciate—I think the question sums up really the parameters for the study.

**Mr. Eichler:** I'll try and get through as much as I possibly can here, Mr. Chair.

I still want to come back to flood mitigation, in particular. You want to reference page 123.

My questions are not particularly into that—the amount of money. But I am wanting to ask in regards to the—and I understand, because of the Shoal lakes and the drainage, I believe, still falls under this minister's department. Is that correct?

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, the study's—and if the member will bear with me, I will very quickly read in the answer to some previous questions.

Winter road program—I'll start with '08 going to '09 and 2010, 2011, 2012. So in—you know, in '08, expenditures were approximately \$15,711,000, the cost-share of that is six million, eight hundred and ninety-six; in '09-10—\$9.214 million cost-share—there was a federal cost-share of 4.219; in 2010-11, the operating was \$11 million approximately, and the cost-share was 5.19; 2011-12—9.68, cost-share of 4.4; 2012-13—\$10.9 million was spent on winter roads; cost-share was 5.1.

A issue came back—came up earlier about Victoria Avenue, et cetera. I do want to stress that while Victoria Avenue was done 100 per cent by the department, we are cost-sharing with the City of Brandon—\$1.75 million for MIT and \$1.5 million for the city, for the intersection at the south end of the city—that's Richmond Avenue, which is our PR access road—and 17th Street. So it's an example of the kind of cost-sharing I did refer to in the answer to the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

And the member was asking about the terms at Shoal lakes. One thing that I can indicate on Shoal lakes—I recently met with people in the area. One of the major concerns is that, as the water has receded somewhat, is road access. And we have been—the department's been in engaged in looking at reopening some of the road access, which is a major concern in that area. It's a significant inconvenience.

And I can get him more detail. I'm not sure how much time we have. But we—you know, I think the member knows the roads we're talking about. So we are—we achieved—my SA was out, looked at it directly, and we are looking at focusing in on some of the key roads. We've actually asked people in the area, and I certainly appreciate the member's feedback on which roads—I know he's been engaged, to some degree—which roads we should focus in on, because some of them are to the point where we can't conceivably open them again.

**Mr. Eichler:** Yes, I thank the minister and I thank his SA for that, and I appreciate the update.

I know there is a—significant challenges in regards to shared emergency services, you know, fire protection, highways and services—those types of things.

We still have a number of students that are on the other side of the Shoal lake that normally would go to the Teulon school that are now going to the St. Laurent School. So it impacts families, of course, and business, in particular, as well. I don't need to go into all the details, but certainly we know the department is working on it and we want to encourage the department to continue working on it.

The other thing I have as a concern is that—is on the Shoal lake with no outlet. You know, we know that a number of producers have been bought out. And I want to get into the Crown line—Crown land side of things here in just a few minutes.

But without the outlet, I am very concerned that if we do have a repeat of the Shoal lake, if it comes back to those levels that we had in 2011, and possibly into 2012, without an outlet, we are putting the city of Winnipeg and those communities in the St. Paul's also at risk, and—because of the Sturgeon Creek and, of course, the Sturgeon Creek drain, and then there's another one. But it will have a significant impact if we don't have an outlet of some type of a measure control outlet or a maintained control outlet. I was just wondering if the minister would like to give us an update on that.

\* (12:10)

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, the limited impact potentially in Winnipeg and the likelihood of anything involving Sturgeon Creek is quite remote, but the member has identified some of the potential issues in West St. Paul and that continues to be the real hydraulic problem, you know, including, you know, anything

that—you know, any artificial outlet, you know, has potential impacts downstream.

There's certainly not been a consensus of municipalities in the area, and, you know, we're obviously trying to minimize impacts on Shoal lakes. And it's kind of classic of what we're finding across the province too. I mean, everyone knows the history. It wasn't that long ago we were looking at drought around that area. I think probably people will be wishing to have that back. And, you know, now we're into an extended wet cycle that's having significant impacts.

And I just want to stress again, we are trying to do what we can in the department—in addition to the hydraulic issue, trying to get some of the highway access back. A lot of that highway access was pretty reasonable, and, yes, we did look at the, I think it's Wagon Creek to Lake Manitoba, but it's a very expensive cost relative to benefit. So work has been—you know, a lot of technical work has been done. It's just finding an option that doesn't make it more difficult for other people downstream is very *[inaudible]*

**Mr. Eichler:** Yes, in fact, I'm no engineer and don't pretend to be and don't even pretend to have a lot of knowledge about it, but I do know in the St. Paul's with the low level of flow there, certainly is going to be a challenge for any water coming from that direction, because that just seems to be where it seems to lie there, and I just don't think we can dig deep enough in order to get that flow through. So I leave that to the experts, but I do want to put it on the record.

The other question I have in regards to the flood mitigation, would that be an area where we could use some of those dollars for an outlet either on the Shoal lakes, or also I'd like an update in regard to what drains are planned for being cleaned, you know, in the next year to two years.

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, I can probably follow up in terms of some of the more detailed questions.

What I can indicate, by the way, and I really want to stress this in a—I'm not being confrontational with the member, but we've actually been, you know, working pretty co-operatively with the federal government. During the 2011 flood, I can tell you whenever we needed anything, including the military three times, the federal government was there. We have the ongoing DFA coverage, commitments on 50 per cent of other costs, you know, that the Prime

Minister made. We continue to pursue the need for longer term mitigation investments. Again, we need to make it strategic.

The reason I'm saying that, by the way, is because I was a bit disturbed this morning—I'm sure this is not coming from the member—to read a document that was sent out by the MP for St. Boniface, Shelly Glover, saying that the Manitoba NDP government decided to raise the PST, that we've tried to blame the Government of Canada and we continue to *[inaudible]* that compensation has not been readily available to 2011 flood, and states that this is patently false, talks about a blame game, that the Government of Canada stands ready to assist provinces deal with natural disasters and announced major financial support for mitigation in advance of the 2011 flood.

I'm not sure who wrote this, but I can tell you I want to put on the record that we've had a very good working relationship with the federal government. Yes, we have nine stand-alone provincial programs and certainly would welcome cost-sharing, but we continue to work, you know, co-operatively in fighting the flood. We're continuing to work in the response stage. I was very disturbed to read this because, you know, my suggestion is Shelly Glover might want to phone Vic Toews and find out what's actually happening.

And the reason I state that, by the way, is because quite apart from some of the political debates we have, and, you know, there's a place for that, when it comes to the federal government, I think that people expect us to be working together. That's how we've gotten a lot of the flood mitigation done. We just finished the floodway. We've done a billion dollars' worth of flood projects cost-shared with the federal government, and we fully anticipate that that federal government will be there in the future.

And whether it's this government or some future government—and I want to stress that and I know it's not the member's question, but when I read this this morning, I said to myself I don't know where this is coming from, and I know other MPs have made some similar comments. They should actually just pick up the phone and phone Vic Toews. I'll put on the record that the federal government has worked very co-operatively with us; we've worked very co-operatively with them. Do we want to see more funding? Yes. Would it help in these kinds of situations? Absolutely. You know how we're

continuing to do that, we're taking care of our side, which is to make sure we have the financial resources to back it up. But we're also working co-operatively—the federal government as well.

So there's no blame game here. We're—during the flood we worked co-operatively with the federal government; 2013 we're into flood recovery and working on mitigation. We're working co-operatively with the federal government as well. And we may have our disagreements on some issues at various different points in time, but I want to put on the record that we're aiming to get permanent flood mitigation commitment from the federal government and, certainly, indications have been positive up until now. So there's no blaming. Actually, I would give credit to the federal government, you know, and I want to make that very clear on the record.

**Mr. Eichler:** I'm not going to get into the debate, I have too many things to get through.

But, certainly, under pre—understand where the minister's frustration is at. It's all about relationships and building those relationships and working on those relationships in order to get things done. And we know that no matter who's in power, us as opposition, it's all about working together in order to do what's best for Manitoba. I think what's we're all been elected and responsible to do.

I do want to come back to what I talked about in regards to the Shoal lakes and the Crown land that has been moved into that department from the property that's been bought out through the Shoal lakes. And I've had a number of requests and I brought this up in the Department of Agriculture as well—those impacted around Lake Manitoba. I would encourage the minister and his department to look at some of those operations up around the narrows, in particular, the beef operations. I have lobbied the MAFRI offices to allow them to have first right of refusal on some of that pasture land because of the fact it'll help retain a number of our head of cattle, who the population has declined significantly.

And I know there's been a lot of property that's been disposed of. I believe, according to my estimates, there's only two that are left with residences on them. I would suggest maybe that the department have a review of those. They have not been tendered locally, I think, which is a mistake. They've been advertised in the city of Winnipeg. Most of the high values of those properties and the buildings being moved off would be to update some of those properties locally where those homes would

have been suitable for moving to a new farm site, for an example.

So I don't want to get into a debate on it, because I do have to wrap up today and I do want to put some rapid fire questions on the record. But just—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Ashton:** I'll certainly talk to Conservation and MAFRI on that, and they are looking at it, by the way.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you. And I do appreciate that because our cattle numbers—and I don't need to tell people around this table the impact of agriculture within the province of Manitoba has significant impact. And whatever we can do keep some livestock in particular, that land is made for cattle and we all know if it's been up through there and I can't stress that enough. So, even though there's some land and water, that doesn't take away from the fact that that land's still not usable for agricultural purposes, and I'm going to encourage it to the best of my ability.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I do want to ask a few questions that the minister and his department could get back to me on, if you would just indulge me to get through a few of those and then we'll move into line-by-line before we run out of time here.

So my first concern, of course, that I'd like to get a response on is the rapid transit, and I'd like an update that on—phase 2 here in the city of Winnipeg—and, of course, what portion of that would be funded by the Province? The other one would be how much money has been spent to date in that respect in phase 1, and if there's any outstanding issues there in regards to cleanup of the finances.

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Ashton:** Local Government's—they are the department.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you. Okay, so I'll continue on. The inner city bus service, I know that, you know, we've got some legislation in front of us now. I am still concerned about the—those routes outside the city of Winnipeg. I would like an update on what the department's plans are in order to either deregulate that or bring in more services or what providers we're looking at to try and look after those needs in rural Manitoba.

Also, in regards to the CentrePort, I am very concerned. Of course, I know the department's been working on water for that particular site.

My understanding there's discussions in regards to water coming out of the Assiniboia river, and I would like an update on that and what needs to take place or if we can assist in ensuring that.

I know the department has allowed St. Eustache one of the best water treatments, provides a large number of communities with water. It's just a state of the art, and I had an opportunity to tour it and very proud of it, and Grosse Isle's not very far from CentrePort, and the water goes right into Grosse Isle. It may be another opportunity to look at that source. I've made that recommendation. It's, like, 14 kilometres or something like that. I know it's expensive, but drilling a well or trying to make a settlement with those providers, now, with the city may be a—being a problem for us as well.

Also, in regards to the Motor Carrier Division, it's been rumoured that MCD may be moved over to MPI. I would like to—[interjection] I'm just running out of time here, and I still got a few more to get through.

I'm also wanting to get an update on the harmonized rules of the truck trailer units within the province of western Canada and, of course, the boat tails on the semi-trailers and that, and I know a number of states have went to this, and I'd like an update on that as well. Also, emissions for semis: we've seen a number of changes come about. It seems like—in fact, I know, in California it's been a major impact on the state, on the industry, and I'm very concerned about what might be happening there, if there's any discussions on that.

And my last question before I get run out of time here, is the floodway expansion. There's still a significant amount of money that appears on the capital asset portion of the Estimates books, and I just want to know what portion of that was provincial and what portion was federal.

With that, I'm prepared to go to line by line, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Ashton:** I'll get that response in writing to all those questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Hearing no other questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

I will now call Resolution 15.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$48,873,000 for Infrastructure and

Transportation, Highways and Transportation programs.

Shall the resolution pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Oh, it's not complete. Wait. Okay, I'm reading it again.

Resolution 15.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$48,873,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Highways and Transportation programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 15.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$52,659,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Government Services Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 15.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$181,814,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Infrastructure Works, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 15.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,655,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Emergency Measures Organization, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 15.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$343,649,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 15.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$636,530,000 for Infrastructure and Transportation, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 15.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 15.5—sorry, 15.1. At

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

The floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Eichler:** With greatest respect, Mr. Chair, I move

THAT line 15.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It has been moved the honourable member for Lakeside

THAT line item 15.1.(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$1.08.

The motion is in order. Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Shall the motion pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The motion is accordingly not passed.

In accordance with our rules, during a Friday Supply sitting, the Chair can only accept a vote on a question if it is unanimous. Therefore, the voice vote on this item will be deferred until the next time the Committee of Supply meets.

The hour being 12:28, the committee rise.

#### **ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

\* (10:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Honourable critics, ready?

Good morning, everyone. Will the Committee of Supply please come to some semblance of order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. Wouldn't you know it, the floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Chair, originally, these were—we were set up and allowed three hours, I think, in Advanced Education. And as of last night, I think we were at two hours and 58 minutes, so I'll end my questioning now. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any questions from other members of the opposition? Seeing none, the honourable member for Kirkfield Park.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Yes, well, as the honourable minister might be familiar with my background previous to entering into this job—well, actually, during the '07 election—was teaching within the joint baccalaureate and diploma nursing programs. And one of the things that I found fascinating there during the time that I was in that program over the several years was seeing the partnership between Red River and—Red River College and the U of M, and how that—or how that program was managed, and also the growth in that program, and the needs that it met, in terms of the variety of students that were there.

And so I'll get to the more pointed aspect of the question, but I guess what I'm looking for is, seeing how that program had grown over the years—I know I had some amazing students; I mean, I think back to one woman that I taught there whose experience was so far—in terms of life experience, was this wonderfully diverse experience, but had not really prepared her in many respects for a post-secondary background. And so, what I was really impressed by were the kind of supports that I found that she was able to get, and that how we, as faculty, were actually encouraged and trained to provide those kinds of supports, to draw on additional pedagogical backgrounds. It was what—I mean, what I found interesting was having a high percentage of Aboriginal learners, for example, the ability to adapt to, whether it was people who were more readily auditory learners or visual learners and to see the flexibility within the program, especially in terms of those—like this one particular student—who were not necessarily traditionally prepared for post-secondary learning, and yet, at the same time, possessed what I would consider much more of a natural skill set in that regard.

And so, I just, first of all, really want to thank my colleagues that I had—I'd never had the chance to say thanks to them, and thanks to the minister at the time for the groundwork that they had laid in that area, in terms of being able to do that, that I know that this is something that it's—these kinds of programs don't develop overnight. They don't pop fully formed, you know, from thin air, like Athena from Zeus's skull in mythology. And again, that's mythology.

The reality is, is that this kind of programming, much like the education of anybody going into the medical professions, is something that takes a long period of time; it takes a great deal of investment. It takes investment from both the educators and also

the students themselves. And that's another thing that I was really impressed by, was both the dedication of the faculty members to their students and how they were able to elicit from their students a really high degree of discipline and a really high degree of competency—and again, in confidence, that a lot of these students, that when they first walked in, didn't feel that they actually possessed.

And so I think about that program, and I think of it as really a shining star that maybe in many respects doesn't get the recognition that a lot of us think of when we think of the investments being made in post-secondary education and how that is a spinoff into investments in our larger health-care system, as well as the investments of these as individuals, who, again, in many cases, were coming from circumstances where they really, in some cases, weren't sure that they would be able to do this, didn't have confidence in themselves. So, again, it was investing in people to take them on to a whole new level.

So, to get to the more specific pointed part of the question, was—I wanted to know about what kinds of ongoing investment supports, how that program has evolved and, especially, in this past year or two since my departure from that program. So it would be both the joint baccalaureate and the diploma nursing programs.

**Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** I want to thank the member for her question. I know that this is an area that she is very passionate about, an area that she has a lot of experience and I know continues to have a lot of interest in this area. She is obviously a member who is very dedicated to education, her own education, I might say, but also that of others as well. And I've seen on a number of occasions at various events, when students—former students of this member's will run to her with hugs and tears and obviously made a very lasting impression on some of those students that she touched throughout her teaching career.

I know that the member talked a little bit about Aboriginal students in particular. I know that that was an area where she spent a lot of time through the ACCESS program—of course, is open to many students—but that was an area of population that I know this particular member has had an opportunity to teach a lot. So I did wanted to tell her a little bit about some of what we've been doing there, of course.

One of the things, I think, that is important—and I know that this member knows a lot about the history of Manitoba, et cetera—but we've also added some new mandatory courses on Aboriginal perspective for teachers in training and made sure that the school curriculum includes that, as well as a number of programs around the province beyond just the ACCESS program that is particularly beneficial to all learners, but in the things like UCN and that sort of thing. Of course that is a particular program that is supportive of Aboriginal students.

I know the member has an interest in the ACCESS program, in particular, having worked in it for some time. I always think that perhaps this program doesn't get enough attention for what it does do for students across Manitoba. And even the fact that it's been around for so long—and I'm not sure that enough people are aware of what a fantastic program it is. The ACCESS program actually started in the '70s to provide post-secondary education opportunities for Manitobans who at that time were underrepresented, groups that face either significant academic challenges, social, financial and, quite often, personal barriers.

Now, of course, this program is open to all people who would fit into those categories, but majority we do find are—have an Aboriginal background, quite a few northern residents. We do see people with disabilities, visual minorities, women, single parents, immigrant and refugee students. I get a chance to go to some of the ACCESS program graduations, and it is quite remarkable to see not just the students who have—obviously have overcome a lot of personal barriers and difficulties to get to that day. Graduating is difficult for anyone who graduates from a post-secondary institution. We know that they have had to overcome challenges and work hard to get there. But the group of people that you see at a—at an ACCESS graduation, it really stands out. Quite often women, not always women, but quite a number are women, quite a number are parents or single parents, and the audience joining them for those graduations are usually full of a few generations of family. Quite often, folks graduating from our ACCESS programs are the first one in the family to finish a post-secondary education and, quite often, to finish a high school education. So it is a really proud moment for parents, grandparents and, quite often, children, which I think is lovely when children get to attend a graduation program. I think that that just shows them that this is something they can do, that education

becomes a normal thing in the family, something that the family says, this is what our family does, our family goes to school and gets a post-secondary education, and I think that's an excellent example for children.

\*(10:10)

So the ACCESS program, for members here today who may not be aware of how it works, it does provide additional academic and personal supports to assist students who are completing that course of study. Some of the students may have been away from school for some time. Some of those students may have some challenges academically, so there are extra supports in place to make sure that that person has the support they need to meet the criteria of the academic program.

But, as I said, the people who are admitted into the ACCESS program face other barriers as well. They may be financial, social and, in particular, personal barriers, which is why the program has ways to assist people in the personal barriers that may prevent them from getting a post-secondary education. And it's remarkable upon graduation how many of those students cite one particular staff member, faculty—whether it's a professor or whether it's someone more in a counselling sort of profession that has been the one that kept them going.

And student after student stands up at those graduations and talks about the fact that, I didn't know if I could do it and I wanted to quit and I didn't think I could make it through, but so and so was there for me and, you know, held my hand, figuratively, literally, and made me believe that I could get there. So people have really grown as they go through the program of their own expectations of what they can do. It's really quite remarkable.

We currently, the institutional—we have support grants provided by COPSE to fund the staffing and the operation of these programs. There are currently 12 ACCESS programs, some are for general studies while others are specialized in particular education areas. At UCN we have the health transition certificate program known as the HTCP. We also have the 'kenow'—I'm going to say this wrong, and I—forgive me for that—the 'kenowa'—'kianow' bachelor of education ACCESS program, which is one that I've actually been able to visit at UCN. And really remarkable to see in that case a number of Aboriginal students learning to be teachers that will, of course, go on to be incredible role models in their community. And, as I've been learning from my

deputy, who is a shared deputy between Education and Advanced Education, when he tours our K-to-12 schools in the north, increasingly more and more of our teachers are Aboriginal teachers teaching Aboriginal students, and, of course, providing an incredible role model for young students to see where they can get to.

The University of Manitoba has an engineering ACCESS program, because we know that there are a number of minority groups, visible minority groups and—including women, that are not equally represented yet in engineering. I think we're moving in a better direction, but traditionally there have not been, perhaps, an equal amount of numbers of—particularly of women in engineering. University of Manitoba also has a Inner City Social Work Program, an Aboriginal Child Welfare Initiative, which I think that some of the members in my caucus and some of the folks that I work with here might be a little bit more familiar with. I know that there are a number of people, my colleagues now, that I believe have worked through that program. And, if I'm not mistaken, has not the Premier (Mr. Selinger), perhaps, worked in that program as well at one time. So another person who has seen the benefit and the incredible results of working with people—who may have some barriers, but you work on those particular barriers and you start to bring down some of those financial, social, personal barriers, those walls that were preventing someone from reaching their potential, and suddenly you can see what people can do.

The University of Manitoba also has the Northern Bachelor of Social Work program. It has the University of Manitoba ACCESS program; there's a Health Careers ACCESS program and an Aboriginal nursing cohort program. The University of Winnipeg, they—community-based Aboriginal teaching program is there. There's also the Winnipeg Education Centre education program. And at Red River we see the Business Administration Integrated program and the ACCESS Bachelor of Nursing program.

I do want to just point out, I was speaking a little bit earlier about the UCN Health Transition Certificate Program. It's a little bit newer one, some people may not be familiar. It actually began in September 2009. It replaced the former health education ACCESS program and the pre-nursing program, which was a preparation for people in health careers, people who know that they have an interest in health but perhaps need a little bit of a



transition to get them from whatever education they came in with, and certainly a lot of passion and dedication and a goal of where they want to get to. But, of course, again some of that support that we see in this program in order to let people continue into what it is that their goal is.

The ACCESS also, as I said, it's for people who have financial barriers, which is why there is a bursary program that has been established by a Student Aid regulation in 2003—if I have that correct—provided a set number of funded spots to each post-secondary institution that does have an ACCESS program, because, of course, financial barrier being one of the bigger ones for folks, particularly when you see single parents.

I mean, it's one thing to be able to go to school and work outside. I know many of us who went through when we were perhaps in our early 20s were able to hold down a job and go to university. Gets particularly challenging going to university full time and trying to pick up the kids from daycare and make sure that you're there for them for homework and for that sort of thing.

So, of course, there is a bursary program. As of 2012-13, University of Manitoba had 130 spots. Red River had 59. University of Winnipeg has 50, and—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The—sorry, the—for the interruption, but the minister's 10-minute time limit has been reached.

**Ms. Blady:** Just a supplemental to that. You had mentioned, for example, the Inner City Social Work Program and, again, that's one that I had the benefit of teaching in. And one of the things that in my time in the Inner City Social Work Program, we had moved from the rather—well, I will say rustic home of Sir Sam Steele out on Nairn and then investments were made into the William Norrie Centre on Selkirk. And one of the things that I have to say is, first of all, I was—again, as someone that was teaching and had no clue that I would be going down this particular left turn in career, really appreciated the kinds of investments that were there, because the movement to that campus location did so many things for the students.

I mean, first of all, it took us and put us in a much better physical environment. It's very hard to teach in an elementary—what was originally an elementary school with very tiny little toilets and tenny—tiny little, you know, water fountains, et cetera, and rather decrepit and it had mice in it and

whatnot. It was an interesting location, but it was the only place that was there.

So what happened was we had the investments made into the William Norrie Centre, and the one thing that I was really impressed by with the William Norrie Centre—and I'm sure other members would be interested in listening to this—would be the investments made in both the physical space, but not just the physical space but what that physical space represented, so the architectural style, the consultation with the community, that central teepee design. It might seem like it's superfluous or a merely aesthetic choice, but what it really did was it created a wonderful space. And that, coupled with the classes—and I've had the privilege of going back there and I've been able to both guest lecture at the Inner City Social Work Program and I'm a guest lecturer now on a regular basis at least once a term to the—in social work speaking on Aboriginal social welfare policy with a friend of mine, Kendra Nixon, to her introductory classes and her pre-master's qualifying classes. And so what was really important and something that I tried to in—you know, mention in my own teaching was the importance of spaces.

And so what—I have to say that that physical—what the William Norrie location did for us was not just create a space that was in many cases more geographically appropriate for some of the folks there—it saved them a lot of travel time—it was a space that in many respects students found—we literally did have sacred spaces in there, and we did have classes that were conducted on occasion with smudging to start them off.

And so that emphasis on having—while the program was a larger Inner City Social Work Program and then I was also involved in the Aboriginal Child Welfare Initiative, that sensitivity to a very multicultural background but with a specific reference to the fact that we were on Treaty 1 land, the specific fact that we were—had a highly diverse population that included a large amount of indigenous students and that that be recognized as part of the teaching. And what was really interesting was that building fostered, coupled with the larger pedagogical approach, a real environment of not just education and support but one of decolonization, and I think that notion was really important.

And so I was just wondering if the minister would be able to discuss a little bit more about the path that the William Norrie Centre is currently on, a little bit more about the Inner City Social Work.

And, yes, you are correct there are a number of us that have taught there. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) is actually one of the people that was—that founded the program, so he's one of the original people tied into that, and that goes back to his pre-political days as well when he was a social welfare and social justice advocate and activist. I believe he might have even had a ponytail back in those days, so it's not just the member from Wolseley that sported a ponytail in his day.

\* (10:20)

But, so, yes, just more about that program and also the role that if—I don't know if this would be within your purview or not—but the role that the recently opened Makoonsag daycare further just down the street, that's right next to the urban training circle and the role that that plays, coupled with the fact that the Merchants Hotel has been closed and where that—where the—I guess where the William Norrie Centre fits into not just an educational perspective but the larger transformation of that part of Selkirk Avenue.

**Ms. Selby:** The—I know the member was talking about some of the campuses and buildings that she worked in around the province, but definitely we did see, not been the same degree of investment in the '90s, which did mean that some of our campuses were looking a little less than prime at that time. But we've invested a billion dollars in capital projects at colleges and universities around the province since being in office.

I know the member was speaking specifically about the area and program that she was working in, and I wonder—I've got some stats of showing the—I wonder if she's sort of hit on something there, talking about how, yes, you can still have absolutely good teachers in maybe not ideal rooms.

But, if you look at the numbers in terms of graduations and how many more people have graduated, there does seem to be some kind of correlation between, I don't know, maybe it's a sense of pride when people go to a building that has been refurbished or a building that is there to suit their needs, it does seem to have an effect on people.

And I'm looking at the graduations from the program that she's referring to: 2003 there were 17 grads; 2004 there were 14 grads; 2005, 18 grads; 2006 there were 32 graduates; 2007, 26; 2008, 25 graduates; 2009, 36 graduates; 2010, 32 graduates and the list goes on.

So it's quite interesting to see that, you know, it certainly can't just put that factor down to one thing. But perhaps there is a correlation between feeling good about where you're going every day, feeling welcomed every day and making it a place you want to go to. There may be some connection to that.

Certainly, I know the member was talking about the fact that the new building was on Treaty 1 land and I don't know if members have noticed that when you go to, particularly at University of Manitoba I've noticed very sensitive to the fact that there isn't one announcement, there isn't one event, there isn't a graduation—any time there's someone at a podium at the University of Manitoba, that's one of the first things they say is to acknowledge that they're at Treaty 1 land.

I think that is a significant thing and probably not surprising that University of Manitoba is now going to be the archival spot where they'll be archiving the shameful history of residential schools. But a good way to begin the healing process is to acknowledge that this has happened and that we know that we are on Treaty 1 land.

The member was talking a lot about some of the daycares and how that sort of feeds into post-secondary and, of course, adult literacy and learning as well. And, although not directly under the parameters of this particular department, we know the benefit of having daycare on campuses and near programs. Certainly, when you go to our colleges and universities, the kids in the daycare are sometimes the staff, the professors' kids, but they're also the students' kids, and I think that is just one more way to ensure that we have accessibility for people to come to our universities and colleges.

I've had a chance when visiting some of our adult learning and literacy programs at Urban Circle, for instance—daycare is right next to Urban Circle, which is a phenomenal daycare just in terms of the space. The member was talking about what a space can do to people, and Urban Circle daycare, it's built on sort of some traditional designs and really encompassing culture and best practices for the children there and really remarkable. And I've met some really fantastic people running—both running the daycare but also some very brave parents who are going back to school and, you know, whatever challenges they have faced, are doing it with the support of some fantastic faculty and staff.

I've also had a chance to visit a similar thing at Lord Selkirk Park, where I believe Lord Selkirk Park

was the first daycare—we do have adult literacy training at Lord Selkirk Park, but I think the daycare there was actually the first Carousel daycare program in the province. And Carousel daycares are phenomenal. One thing interesting when we were speaking with folks at the literacy program there at the daycare, that there—we noticed that there was no graffiti in the area, which, if you go just a few blocks outside of the area, unfortunately, you do see it. But in the area around Lord Selkirk Park and around the daycare there, the Carousel program and also, I believe, it's the Turtle Mountain community centre which is quite close to the area, right by the clinic there—and I'm blanking out but I know the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) is here and is probably more familiar with the neighbourhood than I am—the Mount Carmel Clinic, I believe it is there.

We notice that it's—that there is a several-block area without graffiti, and some of the folks were telling us that because that area is so important to people that even the gang members have made that neutral ground and have said that they will not get into any kind of disagreements, combative disagreements, in this sort of radius around the area, so it's sort of a safe zone, and I think, well, that of course only leads to make it easier for people to access the program.

So, you know, it would be wonderful to see that extend those borders indefinitely but even the local community has obviously noted the importance of making sure that people can get education, that they can get literacy training, that children can get a good start by going to some of the daycares while their parents are training to meet their own potential. It was really quite remarkable to see that there has—is agreement, from what the staff were telling us, agreement amongst gang members to consider that neutral ground, and nothing is done in that area. It's considered a sacred place for the community. Really remarkable.

I met some—I have to say just—such characters when I was at Lord Selkirk Park. If you could cash in on charisma, Lord Selkirk Park would be the wealthiest place in the city, I suspect, because, boy, there were some fun people and really interesting people, and I'm so glad that we're going to see through—help, through literacy and adult learning, that these folks will have a chance to share some of their gifts, perhaps with a wider community.

Another member was talking a little bit about that particular capital project, and I had referred to

the fact that we've invested a billion dollars in capital projects at colleges and universities across the province, and I thought it might be worth sort of breaking that down. I know my critic is usually interested in hearing us break down some particular numbers so this would probably be of interest to him as well.

So, at the University of Manitoba, we've invested over \$433 million in capital projects since 1999. If you walk around that campus, for anybody who attended it 20 years ago, you'd probably get lost. It's incredibly changed. The face of it is beautiful and there is ongoing construction. We are part way through the Domino project but not entirely finished. I know that some of our members went to the closing—is it the Taché Hall that is being refurbished to become a different—to be used in a different way?—Taché Hall, where I believe a number of our members actually went—lived in when they were at university, and, if I'm not mistaken, I think it's the Minister for Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh) who had been a Taché Hall resident and went to the party of the closing and, I'm sure, has many, many stories to tell about what those walls could tell, if they could speak, about Taché Hall.

\* (10:30)

But there are some projects not completed yet: the Fitzgerald Building, the music building, the active living centre and the Black Hole Theatre are still on that list at University of Manitoba. But completed are the art lab, Aboriginal house, engineering building, Richardson Centre for foods, Apotex Centre, Smartpark in drive indoor soccer complex—which I must say, I spent pretty much my entire winter at that indoor soccer complex, was quite grateful for the fact that it was a comfortable place to watch soccer—the Welcome Centre, Pembina Hall Residence, Elizabeth Dafoe Library—which I will just say right now, I was so shocked the first time I went to the opening of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library and found there's a Starbucks right in the library.

Things have changed on campus. There was a time when you couldn't bring a water bottle in, but now there's actually a Starbucks in the library. So it's amazing to see how things have changed both in the physical structure, but also in how society works, I suppose. There's underground service building, environmental safety building, infrastructure, health and safety, the William Norrie Centre—which, of course, the member was referring to—the Bannatyne

campus parkade, the biology science building, the concert hall, architect and fine arts library.

At USB, Université Saint-Boniface, there's been \$15,617,000 of capital investments since 1999 and, of course, we have seen recently that université has become a université. We had to get used to saying université instead of collège. For some of us, it was an old habit that we had to break, but it's exciting to see that. Of course, that is our oldest post-secondary campus in Manitoba, so fitting that it has taken on new life and continues to grow. Those capital investments—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. Order. The minister's 10-minute time limit has been reached. I'll recognize the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Chair, and since our critic for Advanced Education and Literacy has said that he has no further questions and that the government's side—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry to interrupt the honourable member. Minister and I both actually wear hearing aids. Can you either speak a little bit louder or maybe move closer to the front of the table—whatever's convenient for you? Do you want to just try again?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Okay, yes. So, hopefully, everybody in the room can hear me. That's right, I guess I have to speak a little bit louder.

But since our critic for Advanced Education and Literacy has already commented that he has no further questions right now for the Estimates process, but we are going to be moving into concurrence and that the members from the government side want to ask questions and have the staff join us for the rest of the morning today on a nice Friday morning with the nice weather, I figure I might as well ask some questions.

In regards to what the minister had mentioned earlier in regards to UCN and some of our teacher training throughout the province, I would like to know—she made mention and reference to the amount of Aboriginal teachers that have joined the ranks of us educators, and I'd just like to know if she knows what the percentage is of educators in the province that are currently working that are Aboriginal.

**Ms. Selby:** Well, Mr. Chair, I'm kind of surprised that my former critic isn't aware that that would fall under the Department of Education and not be specifically under our department. Of course, we do share a deputy, and I mentioned in passing, that

Dr. Farthing, who is the deputy of both departments, has mentioned to me that he does see a number of northern teachers are Aboriginal but, of course, that wouldn't be a statistic that would fall under this department. But I can tell the member about some of our teacher training and how that plays out across the province. We know that—he mentioned UCN, which I think is one of the jewels of our post-secondary institutions. I think we do great work at all of our post-secondary institutions, but I am particularly 'ploud' of UCN.

I think that UCN is—it only makes sense, is what I usually say about UCN, that obviously that we have vast resources in the north, and if I may say, I think that the resources that are the most important in the north are the people of the north. And to expect people to train hundreds of miles away from home and then return is—it does happen, of course, but I think that it only makes sense to train people closer to home. We know that that is the best way to guarantee that people stay and keep—we don't want to see that—the brain drain that we saw in the '90s, of course, when people were leaving this province in truckloads, I suspect, by the sound of the numbers of people that were leaving. So we definitely want to make sure that northern students are trained close to home. We know that we've invested over a hundred million dollars in infrastructure at the university of college of the north.

When we talk about the fact of teacher training, looking at some of the numbers of that, because we do have some of the numbers available of how many of our teachers are hired. Now, one of the things we have is we still do have schools in the north that are looking for teachers outside of the province. And, as I said, by bringing the education, the teacher training, to UCN, we see that—we hope to see that more and more students from the north and teachers trained in the north will be ready to take those jobs. But, at this point, although we are training students around the province, we do still find that we have to bring in some students from outside the province to teach and to fill the vacancies in northern schools. So if you look at the—where we're going, and 2010-2011, 34 of the new—67 new teachers hired were from Manitoba; 2011-2012, 19 of those were—of 47 new teachers were from Manitoba; 2012-2013, 18 of the 57 were from Manitoba; and in 2013-2014, 19 of the 38 new teachers, so far—I guess they're still looking at maybe some of those positions as well—are from Manitoba.

Talking a little bit more about the—what was known as the BUNTEP program originally. It started

at Brandon University, but it has transitioned to UCN, which I think makes sense. So we know that that is the area in northern Manitoba where we do see that we're still bringing in some students—or some teachers, rather—from outside the province in order to fill some of those vacancies. And I think the best way to address that and to make sure that we're providing potential—providing opportunity, rather—for our northern students, is to be training them in the north, to stay in the north, to give back to community and who better a role model than somebody that's from your community, and you see what they were able to do.

So the northern teaching training program, I think, is just an excellent fit for UCN. The Brandon program was a great program. I know it was a very successful program, but it does make sense, in my opinion, for UCN to take it over, just because that is where we see we want the students to be the training and when we see those vacancies are not always being met with Manitoba-trained teachers. So it certainly makes sense to train people closer to home.

These programs, the teacher training programs, are run out of a variety communities where students from northern communities can earn their education degree. I think sometimes people are aware of UCN, but perhaps only think of the two bigger campuses, in Thompson and The Pas, but there's actually a number of satellite campuses as well. When we talk about making education accessible, part of that is bringing education to people. We know that quite often some of our—a number of our northern learners, in particular, have families and makes it challenging to even leave, perhaps, your home reserve to go to Thompson or The Pas when you've got children and when you've got a better network at home of grandparents and aunts and uncles who can look after the kids while you're in school, of course, that makes it a little easier.

\*(10:40)

So some of the programs running in various communities—of course, I mentioned The Pas and Thompson, but we also have teacher training programs at Norway House and Oxford House and Chemawawin, Pegasus—Peguis, St. Theresa Point, and the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, OCN, of course.

So, in 2012-2013, we had nearly 200 students involved in the northern teacher training program, which I'm going to fumble the name of it again, the 'kee-now'—Kenanow education program is what's it's now called, of course, fittingly using a local

language as well for the title, which I will have to work on my pronunciation—but 200 individual students.

Now, we know also that an education degree—well, of course, many of the people going into education are looking at becoming teachers. There are a number of things you can do with an education degree as well. And in my opinion, and perhaps a bit biased being a Minister of Advanced Education, I never see any education or learning as a waste of time; it's always an important thing to do.

It is anticipated that a significant proportion of the graduates, to speaking to the member for Lac du Bonnet's question, we are anticipating that a number of the graduates of 2013-2014 will be meeting the needs for teaching in the north. But specific numbers of percentages—well, for one thing, it is self-identifying. So we have to take into mind that some people prefer not to self-identify in a particular manner, but it is certainly something that Education will have some more statistics on.

I think it's important to support both UCN and this particular program. We know the difference that it has made. We are seeing that students in that program have been particularly successful. I had a chance to visit the program. I believe it was in The Pas that I visited it. Got to actually sit in on class which was kind of fun. It was fantastic to see. It was a fairly small classroom, just a handful of students, which I think is a great way to learn—a great way for people to be able to take the time. There was some group work going on. And quite a variety in the students that—some that looked like probably had followed a more traditional learning path; had maybe graduated high school and were moving on to post-secondary, but definitely students who have had, perhaps, another career, perhaps have just started education a little bit later in life. A real variety of learners in the room.

And I just was excited to think about the fact that these folks are going to be in front of a classroom of eager kids sometime in the next little while. I'm not sure exactly what level those students were at when I visited. I'm not sure what point they were at in their degree. But it was kind of fun to sit in a classroom and see how they're learning.

And a lot of group work, which was true in the particular degree that I did as well, although, I think, in some programs, perhaps, I don't know, maybe a little less of that. But lots of group work and making sense that, you know, working in front of a

classroom, it's the best way for students who are going to be teachers someday, to start to learn how to control a group of people within a classroom as well.

So, I think, as the member was saying, he was looking for specific numbers. I don't have them, being that that's not something this department tracks. But, certainly, from what my deputy has told me, who is the deputy for both departments, he just sees it, visiting the north, that there are more and more Aboriginal students standing in front of a classroom—or Aboriginal teachers standing in front of an Aboriginal classroom. And I think that is—probably can't overestimate how important that is for people to be role models within the classroom like that.

Certainly, that is probably one of our more exciting programs that we see in the north, and I'm looking forward to seeing the difference that it makes over the next little while. But really shows you that education can really change a community—can change a person—can change a community. And, as I said, I think UCN is probably one of the most important things that we do as a government to—is to believe in the fact that there are obviously vast resources in the north, but the most important resource we have in the north are its people.

And whether we're training them to be teachers, whether we're training them at the mining academy, what better way to tap into that valuable resource than to make sure we have an education available to people where they live, close to home, and so that we aren't bringing in people from out of province to fill vacancies, so that we're connecting people with jobs that we know there are good, well-paying, interesting careers available to people in the north, and to make sure we're training them to be prepared for those.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Madam Minister, for that answer.

In regards to, you know, training close to home and keeping more well-educated teachers, indigenous background or others, is very, very important, and I know that the spots or the placements for teachers are very highly regarded and we need to get those home-grown people into those locations as well.

The minister had mentioned 200 new registrants for the education field. I'd like to also know, in the past few—does that include just this past year, or is that over the last few years? And when we're talking UCN, can we also talk about Brandon University,

University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba? How many teachers or prospective teachers are signing up to take the training, and also the graduation rates?

And since the minister mentioned earlier on about, for lack of a better word, reading from a news release in regards to some of the good news, I'm sort of hoping that maybe she's got some more specifics as far as what are the percentages of the new teachers registering? And I do know that it's voluntary information, but, you know, I—from a lot of the people that I've met throughout my teaching years, they feel that it's something to absolutely celebrate. So even the ones that they do have, I'd like to know what those percentages are of indigenous teachers that are graduating and what are the rates from starting, you know, 2009 or 2008, teachers who have come into the post-secondary field, because I'm pretty sure advanced education is the post-secondary field so I would be certain that the minister would have some of these answers.

So you know what? I'll leave it at that, and I'd like to know what are the registration numbers? What are the graduation rates and, also, what are the percentages of the demographics of those teachers as well?

\* (10:50)

**Ms. Selby:** I think—and just before I answer the member for Lac du Bonnet's question, my critic had a question yesterday that I told him I would get some numbers back to him and I have those now. He was interested yesterday in the total international students that became permanent residents of Manitoba. I can tell him that in 2009, there were 4,165 international students. Out of that, 213 became permanent residents, which is about 5.1 per cent.

In 2010, there 4,410 international students, 295 of those became permanent residents of Manitoba at a 6.7 per cent rate.

In 2011, there were 4,755 students, international students, studying in Manitoba. Out of that there were 429 that became permanent residents of Manitoba, which is a 9 per cent increase.

We don't that number for 2012 yet. We do know that, by the looks of it, we've got—almost 400 have become permanent residents, but we're just conferring to make sure that we have the right number for—as I said to the member yesterday, we'll know this summer—we'll have the numbers of how many international students we actually had.

So, as the member can see, that we have had that number going up of how many do choose to stay in Manitoba from—in nine—in 2009, 5.1 per cent up to our last number of 2011 is 9 per cent. As I've said, we're not sure what's going to happen right now with the federal law not allowing us to talk about that anymore as an option for students, but we'll see if that affects the degree of students that become aware of the fact that they can stay here. It hasn't—so far from what we can see, it hasn't stopped students from wanting to come and study here, but whether that means less choose to stay in Manitoba, perhaps unaware of the fact that that's an option, I'm not sure; we'll have to see that.

The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) was asking some very specific questions about Aboriginal students and who entered and who graduated. We will do our best to try to get the details on those answers. We don't have that right here, right now, and some of it may probably be more fitting to fall under Education.

But I can tell him that we've got data going back to 2007 on bachelor of education graduates that show that well over 80 per cent are employed in a position related to their training. It is actually quite a successful number if you look at that.

And as I said, there are still some hirings in the north that are coming from out of province, so perhaps some students might want to consider that there are opportunities in the north. And 80 per cent already being employed in a position relating to their training sounds like quite good numbers and—but for those who have not, perhaps, been able to find something in the south that they were looking for, there are vacancies in the north that are being filled with out-of-province teachers. So there is certainly opportunity there.

Also, the total number of graduates that have graduated from bachelor of education programs has increased by over 31 per cent over the last 10 years. Some of that is because we've had retirements and we know that we've seen teachers retiring and we've been trying to prepare for that now.

I can tell the member, at the various universities the number of graduates from the bachelor of education program over the years, if we just look at 2012—let's maybe go back and do a comparison—if we look at 2006, the University of Manitoba graduated 305; Université de Saint-Boniface—53; University of Winnipeg—230; Brandon University—203. And, of course, at that point UCN was not yet

offering the teacher program. So perhaps I should skip ahead to when UCN does actually start to offer so we can compare those numbers a bit better.

So, by 2009, University of Manitoba was graduating 238 students from the bachelor of education; USB—40 students; U of W—286—oh, I'm sorry, I've messed those—I've missed those numbers, I was trying to read 2009 and I've gone into the wrong column there.

So 2009, at University of Manitoba is 238, USB is 40, U of W is 286, Brandon University was 180 and UCN is 15.

Now, if we jump ahead to 2012 we can see that there are some lowers numbers of the number of teachers that are graduating from bachelor of education programs. That is because we know that we do have the number of retirements going down so we will probably have less vacancies in the upcoming years as we have sort of turned over a number of those teachers who were ready to retire already.

So 2012: University of Manitoba, 236; Université Saint-Boniface, 27; University of Winnipeg, 253; Brandon University, 181. And we are still collecting the data, it looks like, at UCN, from the notes that I have, here.

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** Thank you to the minister and the staff for being here—really appreciate that.

Long-distance education is where I'm going to go with this, and I want to tell you, sort of, why. I—education, it's just been huge in so many areas of my life, and I sort of missed going to university. I meant to come out of high school and go to university, and my life got kind of distorted and mixed up and I somehow missed that. And I ended up, actually, in a business college. And it, interestingly enough, it was the first place I met the man on the wall over there, because he and his wife ran that back then. And so I've been to business college and I've been to a program in corporate real estate that worked with the University of Manitoba and with the—with away courses as well. I was kind of interested at some point in trying to find out if that still even exists because it was a fabulous program.

So I did that and then I ended up in a completely different field and ended up at Red River Community College. And I went to that as a single parent. So it took me—and I worked full-time. So I worked full-time and I took care of my daughter, I

ran her to daycares. I worked shift work 'til 11 o'clock at night and challenged a lot—I was able, under that program, to challenge a lot of courses and do it at home. And then I decided that I was not going to give up on university and I went back to the university. Oh, in between there I also went to the University of Winnipeg doing theatre.

So, in the end, I ended up going back to the U of M as a single parent working full-time. So—and I tried to do some of my—use some of my courses from Red River at the U of M; that was impossible. So everything I had done there, I couldn't transfer any credits. So I do want to get to that as a—as to what we're doing. I think we might be doing something in that area, so I would like to get back to that question. And then I—but I did everything through long-distance education. So it was all sent through the long-distance education. I only went to the university in order to write the exams. So all my work, actually, I did after 8 o'clock at night, usually, or—and I used all my holidays to be able to do that work. And, but I mean, it was excellent. But I did find back then—that would have been in the 2000s—I actually ended up graduating in 2006—that, you know, there was still a lot of courses I would like to have taken through the long-distance education program that just simply weren't being offered yet. And I know at the time that I was taking it that a number of those—they were talking about adding more to those courses. So people who did, like me and many people I know in my constituency who are also looking at that kind of thing because they're new immigrants—and the one—new immigrants that have come here. They are maybe working in a field that's not, you know, their most desired field. They've gotten a house now. They have to still keep that job and support their children, but they would like to also have a chance to go back to university or to Red River, or wherever, to get working in the field they truly love again.

So long-distance education and what we're doing in that field is really important to me, and one of the things I'd kind of like to know, if we've improved it, if we've expanded it.

And, interestingly, my daughter did attend my graduation in 2006. When I graduated from university, she was there, and so was a young man that I had worked with in a high-risk program. Those teens don't normally end up graduating from university, so graduating at the same time as one of the kids I had worked with in that program was pretty miraculous. So my daughter came and this

young man was also graduating with me at the same time. So I'm really grateful for the programs and the work that we do in that area.

\* (11:00)

But the one question—I have a whole number of questions I'd like to get to—but the one I'm asking, I guess, right now, is what if—are we doing to help increase, sort of, the long-distance education, the online programs? I know we have online programs. I didn't take those myself. I did it all through long-distance ed and just sort of reading all the stuff myself because that's an area I'm kind of good at. So it was okay for me. It doesn't work for everybody. So some people need to have more of that instructor interaction but can't because they're, like me, a single parent and working full time and that sort of thing. So anything you can tell us, I guess, right now with regard to that, I would be really grateful.

**Ms. Selby:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for sharing her story, and by the sound of it, she perhaps may know our various campuses better than I can say I do myself, by the sound of it. Although I get a chance to tour and visit them, I think she may be an alumni of most of the campuses and post-secondary institutions in this province. So, well done. I love to hear that and I love to hear about lifelong learners because I think that's particularly—currently in our current situation, that's a really important thing to do.

And I will share with the member that I didn't have a linear path either. I didn't go straight from high school into post-secondary education. I took some time off in between—categorize it as finding myself, perhaps. But I did enjoy some other careers in between. But at 25 I decided that I had explored everything that I could and was ready to get some more education and that's when I, at the time, was living in Montréal and went to Concordia University, and was the first person in my family to graduate from a post-secondary institution and the first person in my family to graduate from high school, actually, which I think now would be a very difficult thing to do.

My father had a fantastic career with grade 11 from Sisler High School so, apparently—we heard yesterday that Sisler prepares people for the world and apparently it does. Although my father would be the first to admit that he couldn't have gotten to his level of—in his career now as he could back when he graduated from grade 11, and by the time he retired he told me he wasn't hiring anyone to work for him who didn't have a master's degree, even though he



didn't actually have high school yet. So times have changed, and I certainly know that a lot more doors opened for me in a variety of areas once I had my post-secondary education as well. But I think that more and more people are not finding—following a linear path and that's why we need to find ways to do it.

The member, I think, actually was probably asking me three different questions, and if I can maybe break those down for her. It seems to me that the things that she was talking about were Campus Manitoba, and I will go on to talk about that, first of all, but I think also it sounded to me like she has some questions on articulation that maybe we could get to as well, and perhaps she might want to ask me a little bit more about the bridging program because I think that's actually the areas that she's kind of talking about.

But let me first talk a little bit about Campus Manitoba. So Campus Manitoba was a way to ensure that northern—in particular, rural and northern Manitoba were able to reach their potential and improve their lives through education. Definitely, an important program when it started out and I suspect when Campus Manitoba began, it was probably quite innovative of its time.

For those who haven't visited what Campus Manitoba did look like, Campus Manitoba was various satellite offices that students could come and sit in a physical classroom and then they would actually look at a screen of a teacher live, for the most part, in one of our other universities, perhaps the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba. But we have found, of course, that that technology, while very new for its time, and I don't doubt that it benefited a lot of students, we are looking at other ways to better provide education now to students. As when it first established, I've no—absolutely Campus Manitoba was a good program, worked very, very well.

But we have found that over the years rural Manitobans have been abandoning it for modern online university options. Enrolment numbers have been steadily decreasing as ability to access Internet and online courses has been increasing. And it doesn't take much to notice that if you drive around anywhere—even in Winnipeg you see it—that a lot of universities and colleges from outside of our borders are advertising to our students because they saw that there was a need there, that we were perhaps falling a little bit behind in terms of our offering online courses. And as students were starting to access

those at other institutions, less and less were using the actual physical space of Campus Manitoba.

So we have seen declining enrolments at Campus Manitoba, and I do need to emphasize, at no fault of the folks working at Campus Manitoba. We've got fantastic people and really dedicated staff, but it was undeniable that the technology we were using is—was becoming outdated quite quickly and becoming increasingly difficult for Campus Manitoba to compete with the online degrees offered from universities in the province, because we are doing more and more of that at universities and colleges, but particularly outside of Manitoba, it was getting harder to do.

So we have been examining, how can we better provide service to students in rural and northern Manitoba? What can we do to provide more opportunity, to better serve the population? And knowing that, although, of course, people of all ages, lifelong learners, are online, rural students—traditional students, of course, the ones who follow that more linear path, are very comfortable with technology. But I—you know, I'll say—and I guess I'm saying it on the record—but my father in his 70s is incredibly good with technology now too, which I think is an indication that the world is managing to come up to speed on some of those things and it's becoming less necessary for someone to sit in a classroom and look at a screen when we're all much more used to sitting in our home and looking at our computers.

So we have been looking at more efficient ways but also more cost-effective ways to offer education for people around the province, and I think that by transferring more and more of it online we can offer—we can certainly find efficiencies, but I think we offer more as well, and we're making sure that we are still able to do that.

The new structure of Campus Manitoba frees people from having to come to a classroom, which, as the member was saying, in her case being a single mom who was also working, even just coming to that satellite classroom is probably not as convenient as finding time of—the kids are in bed, it's 8 o'clock, I've got an hour, I'm going to work on my school now. That's one huge advantage of online training, of course, is that the training happens when you have time, and I know for parents that's often getting up before the kids get ready for school, that's when they're napping, that's when they're in bed, that's weekends and that's probably, in the case of parents, grabbing 10, 15 minutes an hour when you can

instead of having to find a babysitter and leaving the actual house in order to do that.

So the new structure frees people up from having to be actually in the classroom. This gives us the opportunity to modernize the services that we're providing to students and, actually more importantly, to develop an online hub for students wanting to transfer credits and credit programs between the institutions, and I will give a little bit more detail. I know I'm not going to have enough time to do that now.

But I do want to mention that, of course, in Advanced Education, to us the most important thing is finding accessibility, affordability and quality education for our students. But certainly at times like these when we're trying to make priorities of a government, finding efficiencies does help as well. By moving Campus Manitoba online, we are already looking at about—finding taxpayers savings of about \$300,000—I believe that's for one year, but my staff can—every year. For every year that we are moving towards online, we are saving \$300,000 that can go back into making sure we do have accessible and affordable as well.

Now, I think, also, we talked a little bit about trying to learn when you can. I think that by moving online, and we know—and we made sure to discuss with our local MLAs to give us a sense of, okay, people aren't going to the physical structure anymore; the numbers are declining and we could see that. Are they still learning? And, indeed, it appears they are. They're learning online at home.

So under the 'nold' Campus Manitoba satellite structure, it did mean that students had to leave their home and drive to one of the satellite centres. There were a number around the province, but, again, it still means a little inconvenience of having to get to the centre, whereas—and driving to the centre to watch—sometimes to watch a video, to watch an online lecture, which now you can do from your home, which provides just more opportunity and, I would hope, actually means that people can perhaps get through those courses quicker. If they're setting the own time and doing it in the time they have, they perhaps can do that.

\* (11:10)

So that's the way we're going with Campus Manitoba. It will lead to more—we believe, more students being able to take advantage of getting an

education, and I think will increasingly help students bring education closer to home as well.

And I should mention that the new model for Campus Manitoba also includes a virtual help desk. So, for those students who maybe aren't proficient in how Internet works, but even if you are, it can be a little overwhelming of, goodness, where do I start? I want to be this at the end. What courses do I need to take? So the Campus Manitoba has a virtual help desk now so that students can call up and have someone advise them on exactly how to get through the system, how to work the online system, if that's maybe something outside of their experience, but also to perhaps if someone says, you know, I would like to be an engineer, can I start this online? How long can I go online? Can—and, you know, talking about which degrees you can complete online and which degrees you can get started at least and work towards your goal, because, certainly, sometimes we have an idea in mind of what we want to be when we grow up, but how the path is to get there can be a little bit confusing. So that's a little information for the member on what we're doing and how we're modernizing and, I would say, improving delivery of Campus Manitoba.

**Ms. Wight:** Just—I know you didn't have time in there, so one of the other things that I was really interested in is that transfer of credits and how it might work in a couple of different ways. One is, you know, the difficulty in moving them from institution to institution and having that all happen. It's really—can be very complex and in some cases before, certainly, it wasn't even possible.

So, you know, I did tons of courses that, in my opinion, were just as valuable as the ones offered at the university and I certainly did as much work and I got nothing for that. But the other piece of that is I've also run into people that have come to me to ask about maybe being in a field of working in the fine arts, so working as an actor, a director, a film producer, all sorts of things that they might have a resumé that's, you know, 25 years of working in every possible area of fine arts, actually doing the work, like really going out there and being on the stage and directing the productions and teaching, often teaching students in courses that maybe aren't in a school, because they can't get hired often in a school because they don't have that university degree, but they have 25 years of really doing the work and are some of the absolutely best people you could get if you were wanting to be a school that really excelled in the fine arts and in theatre and in

all of those areas, and can't get the work in a university because somebody who's never done any of those things in real life took the course.

So I guess I'd like to know and see if there's, you know, any work being done so people like that can go to somebody and—they have usually very little money in that field. You've worked for years for nothing, so they truly are the people who have lived in attics. So there's not a lot of money, but they could teach the courses that they would have to be taking in order to get the degree, which seems a little bit, you know, silly, because they could have been that instructor and probably know a hundred times more than the instructor knows trying to teach it.

So I guess that's another piece where I'd really like to see if there's any, you know, flexibility. I know that the, sort of, the world of the university was not the most flexible before. I believe we're seeing some change in that where they're starting to recognize that, my goodness, people actually do this, might be the best people to hire. I think it's also true in things like writing. So if the person's a writer, so would you rather hire someone who's published five plays to teach you playwriting or somebody who took the course in university but—and has the degree but never wrote anything that was published? I think they often do get published, though, in order to be there, but I'm just saying.

Sort of looking at that kind of thing, is there also—not that we don't want the people with the university degrees, I'm not suggesting that. I'm just saying that, is there also a path to that degree where somehow you could go and present all of the things that you've done and maybe the published work that you've done and the productions that you've directed, and the theatre that you've acted in and the film you've acted in and somehow work that into credit courses? So, I'm really interested, I guess, in seeing about the flexibility of our learning institutions and whether or not there isn't a little bit more they can do to be flexible in that area, because I think our students are losing out because of that, because a school, a university will hire more based on whether or not that person has the degree as opposed to whether or not they can actually teach it and whether or not they have the, you know, street creds, really, in all of those things, to really be an excellent teacher. So I'd like to know, I guess, a little bit about that.

And maybe that's the bridging program that you mentioned, I'm not sure. The—we introduced so many

good things that, quite honestly, I can't—I haven't learnt them all yet. And I did just want to comment with regard to Aboriginal teachers, because I—it—I just think's it—with the kids I worked with—and I know Kevin Chief has certainly talked about this—and we all know if you can't see that person in your own—who's like yourself, succeeding, the likelihood of you succeeding is going to be less. And when I worked with kids in that field and—the Aboriginal kids—I would always try and find videos of, you know, Eric Robinson or Elijah Harper doing something, you know, great, so that the kids could see, here's somebody, you know, from my world—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. Sorry for the interruption. We are in committee, as in the House, supposed to refer to people by their titles as opposed to their actual names. So ministers, MLAs—we don't have to wear suit jackets, we just still have to follow titles, so.

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, okay. Sorry about that. Which one was it I referred to?

**Mr. Chairperson:** It would be the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and the Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief).

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, sorry. Do I have to go back?

**Mr. Chairperson:** You do not. No. It's just on a go-forward basis.

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, okay, good. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Please continue.

**Ms. Wight:** I may not know what those actually are.

**Mr. Chairperson:** You've got about four minutes left, should you choose to use them.

**Ms. Wight:** Oh, okay. Great.

So I guess I am—I'm also interested—I was really interested in the number of things that you listed that we are doing in all of those locations. I didn't realize that we had as many as we have in places like Norway House and Oxford and OCN and The Pas, and I guess you were kind of talking about numbers, but what's been done over—like, what was it like back in 1999, for example? What kind of numbers did we have in Aboriginal teachers then as compared to, you know, the road and path that we're on now? I know it's a long haul, it's not easy because people are living in places where it's really difficult to kind of get that

sort of education. But I would like to see sort of the comparison so I know are we really progressing, like, how far have we come in that area.

So those are the things I'm kind of looking at there. And just with new Canadians and new folks coming in, sometimes I'm a little bit confused how that all works for teaching, for example. Teachers are a good example, and that may not be your field, really, because I don't know who does that but maybe the Teachers' Society is sort of involved in that. But what kind of things do they go—have to go through to become—for example, if you taught somewhere else, how transferrable are those credits and is that in the hands of the Teachers' Society, or whose hands are those in, I guess, is what I'd like to know, because, certainly, we want to see teaching—teachers—I've been in a lot of the schools lately at graduations, the students are from, of course, all over the world, and I know we certainly also want to increase our numbers of teachers, you know, from other parts of the world, as well, so those kids, too, are seeing themselves as people who would be teaching. And so, thanks.

\* (11:20)

**Ms. Selby:** Mr. Chair, and our member has—as I was talking about lifelong learning, she's got so much interest in this area, I don't know that I'm going to be able to fit it all in.

So I'm going to start with some of her questions on articulation and a little bit about prior learning and experiences. Well, I'd—I was saying earlier that I understand what she's saying, the frustration of somebody who may have 25 years of experience in a field or maybe not even in that exact field, but stuff that can certainly apply. And when we say to a learner when they—particularly a mature student coming back who, for whatever reason, is looking to upgrade their education, and we tell them none of that counts. What a way to turn off a learner from wanting to go forward, and I really hate to hear that.

And I have to say, it's a bit of personal pet peeve for me. As I said, I started university at 25 and—as a mature student. At that time, I had worked internationally, but when I went to register at Concordia in Montréal I was told that I needed to do an extra year to make up for the fact that I'd been out of school for a long time. And I found that kind of strange in that in the classroom with me were 18-year-old students who had never lived away from home before, had never paid rent, most had probably never had—well, they certainly hadn't had a full-time

job—but hadn't had a career, and yet I had to do an extra year being that I'd been on my own for the past—at that point I'd been living on my own for six years. I had, as I said, I'd had an international career with quite a lot of experience at that point, and yet it was not recognized and I did an extra year of university. Now, in the end, I don't regret it. It was still a good experience for me, but I think in some cases that could be enough to be a barrier for someone to decide, well, you know what? Never mind.

And I had a similar experience as the member was explaining it. I had a lot of experience at the time when I went to university for a degree in communications, had a lot of experience in photography and had worked in it a lot more than my professors had. And they had some very technical knowledge, but I also had brought some real-world experience that I thought it's kind of ironic that my prior learning hadn't been recognized.

So I have to say that I came into this portfolio with a clear understanding of how that can be a barrier to education and can actually be a barrier to the lifelong learning that we all want people to see.

So it—I know the member was talking a little bit about hiring people who may not have a degree, but have the experience and, as she may not be aware of, I can't comment on hiring practices at universities or colleges. It's not something that this department gets involved in, and nor should you. Government and politicians should not be the ones determining who should be hired or fired at a university or a college because, of course, we need the experts to decide who are the best folks for that.

So—but, certainly, in terms of recognizing whether it's prior learning or prior experience, I am passionate about making sure that we're not putting up what I would consider to be false barriers. We have been looking at credit transfer and articulation—which is what the member was talking about, that she took courses at, by the sound of it, every post-secondary institution in the province—and it is frustrating to realize that perhaps you took a history course early on at the University of Manitoba and you switched to University of Winnipeg and it not be recognized. I'm using that as an example.

I don't want to say that that's one of the courses that wouldn't articulate. But it is frustrating. It makes education unnecessarily more expensive for a student if they have to retake a course, and there may be valid reasons in some cases. If, perhaps, you haven't

taken it for 10 or 15 years, perhaps the knowledge has changed significantly of what's being taught. But I think in some cases it's just been, perhaps, not a priority of institutions to do this.

So in June of 2011, our government signed an MOU with all the seven of the publicly funded institutions to make sure that we do improve our articulation and credit transfer. At the time when we—at the time—I guess now, actually—I'm just looking at some of the numbers—since the time that we signed that, the—part of the agreement was to double the number of agreements in order to transfer program and articulation. And we've gone from 38 agreements to 50 agreements and we are on track to double it. We're doing quite well on that actually.

I don't think it was a question of not having the will; it was just perhaps not a priority of everyone. And I—but I think, increasingly, we're recognizing that students don't learn the way they used to. There was a time when somebody would start at University of Manitoba and they'd finish there. We see, increasingly, people are moving back and forth between institutions.

And we are seeing another interesting trend. There was a time when we saw people starting at a college perhaps thinking I'm not sure if I can do university. So they'd start at a college, do a little bit there, and then move to university. Increasingly seeing the other way now. We're seeing people start at university and move to a college so that they have that theoretical base but also have some sort of more tangible, concrete skills that colleges are really good at.

So February of 2012, we had a report submitted from the group that was made up of our public institutions to look at the opportunities and the key elements of moving student mobility along, along with their recommendations for what we should do. So they're continuing to work together to make sure that we have credit transfer and articulation among institutions.

One of the things we discovered when we started this process was that there were already in place a number of programs that were either two-by-two or they did articulate, but people weren't aware of them.

So, unless you had a professor who maybe actually pointed it out to you or maybe you had a friend who had gone through that program and could say, hey, I did that, but then I went here, you may not have been aware of it. And that's part of what we're

doing with the online hub so that it won't be sort of a, you know, needle in the haystack trying to figure out where it goes, so that it's clear that this program has already been there.

So the institutions have been formalizing their existing agreements—as I said there were some in place—and working on agreements in additional areas, particularly key priority areas that they recognized as ones that we should be focusing on. We are right now already having thousands of credit hours being transferred between the post-secondary system. It certainly makes it a lot more accessible for students.

And I did want to just talk about, quickly just name some of the newer programs that have become into the agreement that weren't there before we began this MOU. So at ACC the police studies goes into the Brandon University's arts, sociology, crime and community. ACC's practical nursing goes into Brandon University's nursing.

I would like to just draw attention for the moment that ACC and Brandon University have been fantastic partners together. They have actually had very strong agreements in place for some time, and in some ways might be folks that we could look to of how co-operative learning can work together.

ACC's got an agribusiness that goes into the University of Manitoba's science of agribusiness. Red River College has a culinary arts program that transfers equally in—it transfers into the University of Manitoba's human ecology, human nutritional sciences. Red River College's community development, economic development goes into U of W's urban and inner-city study. Red River's disability and community support goes into University of Winnipeg's disability studies.

These are all the new ones. There are a number here, and I won't read the whole list in of ones that were existing but the new ones that have just been brought in since signing the MOU—Red River disability and community support goes into University of Winnipeg's disability report. And Red River College's geographic information technology system goes into University of Winnipeg's geography degree and—just a couple more.

These ones I saw a lot at graduation this summer that the Red River College business administration feeds into Brandon University's business administration college. Also UCN's natural resource management diploma goes into University of

Manitoba's environment, earth and resources. University College of the North's business administration goes into Brandon University's business administration. And we also see some radiation therapy diploma moving into radiation therapy degrees.

\* (11:30)

So we're certainly moving along in the right place, and I know I'm going to run out of time. The member wanted to talk a little bit about the bridging program. And I know that she asked also a few more questions about Aboriginal students and their progress, but I really think it's probably something the member should talk to when Education is up, because they track those numbers differently than we do and have a little bit more of that. But I will—if the member wants, I can continue to discuss in—a little bit more on our bridging program, if that's something—and the prior learning assessment as well, if that's something she's interested in.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I'm asking a question with regard to post-secondary training satellites or—in regions of rural Manitoba. I've talked to a number of community stakeholders, whether they be school divisions, employment resource centres, you know, municipal councillors themselves. And they've indicated that they would really like to see more offerings of post-secondary training in their region, more specifically through the college level programming, like trades, hospitality and tourism, health-care fields.

So I'm wanting to know if the minister can respond with what her government's strategies are to address this need. Funding for the programs outside of the college campus, I'm not sure if she's aware, is very difficult to come by. There is a need to respond, obviously, to the labour market needs in many of the communities, and there just seems to be a disconnect. And I'm just wanting to know if the minister has got some information that she can share with regard to strategies and how she's planning to address this, because it's a serious issue with regard to labour market training needs in a lot of the rural communities.

**Ms. Selby:** I would just make a request, if the member could speak a bit louder next time; I have a bit of a difficulty hearing her from there.

But I appreciate her interest in rural training. That is what we were talking a little bit earlier—I'm not sure if the member was in the room—about

Campus Manitoba modernizing, and that is one way that we're looking at offering more training for rural Manitoba in particular. And I think that, by the sound of it, the member agrees with us that bringing training to people is the answer. It certainly—we know that when people are trained closer to home, they stay closer to home. So I just want to make sure she's aware of some of the training, the existing training programs that—locations that are there. Red River College has satellite campuses in Steinbach, Morden-Winkler, Selkirk and Portage. ACC has satellite campuses in Russell, Dauphin and Swan River, and UCN has satellite campuses in 12 communities that we listed a little bit earlier,

**Mrs. Rowat:** I don't think she quite understood the question. We realize that those satellite offices are in those communities. What is happening is those communities have been trying to get—ACC college, for example—to offer programs that are specific to trades and hospitality, tourism and health-care fields. They're having some difficulty getting the college to agree to offer those programs in those satellite offices. So it's great to have an office there. The people that work in those offices know what the labour market needs are in that region, but they're having some difficulty getting the communication to—or that information to the people at the college to ensure that those programs are being offered. So there's a disconnect, and there's some very serious concerns with regard to how these programs are going to be moving forward.

So I'm wanting to know if the minister has a strategy. I know those sites; I've visited several of them. I want to know what she's planning to do to ensure that programs are being offered in those communities, as the communities have been asking for them, because there is a labour market shortage in so many of these communities and there seems to be a disconnect there.

**Ms. Selby:** Certainly, I have municipalities, communities, from time to time, that come to speak about particular areas of interest for their community or perhaps a need for the community. One in particular is more LPN training, was one that came to my office. A couple of communities had expressed that that is something that they were looking for and we'd been working with their regional health authority. We're anticipating that—perhaps a need in that area, which is why we did add three new nurse-rotating nurse training sites just recently, which brings us to an eight of those total.

\* (11:40)

We're always open to that kind of conversation with communities and want to hear their ideas and want to talk with communities and with institutions, as well, as to ways to better train. But do know that we need to look at the—some of that work is looking at the infrastructure in order to provide that particular training as well. Red River College has some mobile training labs that can be brought into an area that maybe doesn't have the infrastructure in place to properly train someone. We have mobile labs that can be brought in. It's something that—always open at looking at.

There is, sometimes, a disconnect between the training that people may want and what is actually possible in the particular area. When it's something that works, it is something that we're doing and trying to grow on, and, as I said, are open to those ideas, but we do have to make sure it's feasible. In some cases it may be actual infrastructure that would be a barrier. In some areas, we have particular regions or communities that are asking for a permanent college site where the labour market demand does not actually show that that would be feasible, and then in that case, we need to talk about a rotating or a mobile lab.

But I would encourage people to keep bringing those ideas forward. Certainly, the reason why we've added the three new rotating nurse training sites is because I was hearing from some communities that they felt they had the capacity in terms of students to fill it, but also—but the region also was looking at vacancies or retirements in the future—that way going to ensure that those people would find jobs, and they had the experience or the clinical experience available necessary for people to get their full training.

**Mrs. Rowat:** I've always identified colleges as meeting the needs of the community on demand. As labour markets change or as they—as something should come along, I always found that colleges should and could be quick at responding to those needs, and ensuring that communities receive those supports.

What we're seeing, as this community that is raising this concern does have a satellite office, but they continually have challenges of getting funding for programs outside of the college. So—and I also know, in Minnedosa we've seen a closure of programming and moved to another community.

So I'm just very concerned that there doesn't appear to be a stronger strategy. And, again, the minister hasn't provided that strategy for me to share with my community. So I'm looking for her thoughts and how she's going to be addressing these labour-market challenges in the communities. Obviously, trades are a huge issue. Hospitality and tourism is huge.

We're finding that a lot of people are leaving the communities, you know, now with the PST and other issues. So we're looking at trying to ensure that we can train locally, because people that are trained locally will stay local, more often than not. We've—we all know that; we've seen that.

And also, with regard to the health-care fields, I realize there's been some improvements, but really, there's so much need out there, that I don't feel that there is any type of a real strategy by this government on how they're planning to address all of these needs, especially in the Westman area with regard to oil, and a lot of a people that live in the communities along the Saskatchewan border work at the mines. There's ways that we could be ensuring that those young people who want to work at those jobs, will stay in the region or in the province, and—so I'm really wanting to hear from the minister, you know, how she's going to be addressing this, with regard to community stakeholders who are very concerned that there seems to be a disconnect—no strategy—close the offices.

**Ms. Selby:** I appreciate that the member is so passionate about her community and about learning. But I do want to say that colleges, you know, they are limited, at some point, of what they can do. They have significantly expanded over the decade, but it seems that the member maybe has a specific place, and I wonder if she could maybe give me a little more detail on what specific community that she's talking about. She sort of mentioned a number of areas, health care, tourism, mining, oil patch. I don't know if that's all for one area, or if there's a specific one.

ACC, the member may not realize, does work very closely with industry and oil patches. The—in terms of mining, UCN has a mining academy that works directly with industry there. But I wonder if the member could tell me if it's a specific place that she's referring to, a specific community. That would be probably more helpful for us.

**Mrs. Rowat:** My question is with regard to the Riding Mountain constituency. There are several

communities along the Saskatchewan border that are very concerned with regard to ACC not being able to accommodate their labour market shortages. They've been in discussions with the college. They've been in discussions, I'm sure, with the minister. I've received some correspondence from several of the communities indicating their concerns, and then if there has been a program offered, they congratulate the government on it, but not to stop there. It's something that needs to be addressed.

So I don't think she needs to have a specific community, but, you know, I know for a fact the Asessippi area has tourism and hospitality hot spots that they need addressed. That's a—that should be a no-brainer for the government. With regard to trades, it would be along the Saskatchewan border, there would be mining and oil. With regard to health-care fields, we have a number of ERs that are closed in our communities. We have a number of hospitals that are working double, triple shift. We've got lab and X-ray facilities being closed in communities like Rosburn and others. We've got personal care homes that are beyond capacity with people, and also hospitals that are full in acute care, waiting for placement into personal care homes.

So I think that sort of gives you a feel of what I passionately, as the minister has indicated, feel are weaknesses in this government not responding to a strategy and trying to help communities address these situations that have now become a crisis in a lot of these communities.

\* (11:50)

**Ms. Selby:** I should let the member know that ACC does offer oil field service technician by contract to industries in the oil industry. I mentioned earlier the eight rotating nursing sites that are—that rotate around various communities in rural Manitoba and, of course, I also mentioned the UCN Mining Academy.

We've also just recently announced the implementation of 22 new residencies as part of election commitments from 2011. Now, 16 of those 22 seats for medical residents will be delivered in rural Manitoba because, of course, we believe that training people closer to home, more likely that they're going to stay at home.

Certainly agree with the member that more capacity is needed. That's why we've been adding—I should point out it's interesting that she's looking at adding capacity. Now, I know when the particular member worked for the regional minister they were

cutting supports to that sort of thing. I see that the member didn't support our funding of—increase of 2.5 per cent increases in our operation to our universities. That's something she's voted against. It's the best funding in the country and it does allow us to continue looking at capacity and to grow our universities and colleges as needed. Certainly wonder if the member realizes that the difference—when her former leader was in government, he was certainly not increasing capacity or opportunity for learners. He was cutting or freezing funding to universities for five years straight, which I can tell you we've taken some time to try to dig out of that.

I also know that recently her leader has announced that he would cut 1 per cent right across the board, which would be \$70 million approximately in advanced education, probably wouldn't help in training more people in rural Manitoba. It certainly wouldn't help in capacity, and I can tell you that those three rotating nursing sites certainly wouldn't—that we just added—wouldn't come if we were cutting \$70 million as this member's leader has suggested that should be done.

I think, when you want to grow an economy, the best way to do it is to make sure you have people trained. We've been meeting with various sector councils and the institutions have been meeting, getting together at things like the recent Skills Summit to address the fact that we know we've got 75,000 more skilled labour that we're looking to add to our market. I have had the opportunity to speak with some folks in industry in rural Manitoba who have fantastic jobs and we're trying to find the people to train them. But I can tell you that by cutting 1 per cent across the board, cuts with no discretion and no thought to them, just reckless cuts of what would be about \$70 million in advanced education, we certainly won't be training more skilled workers under her leader's plans for advanced education.

Yes, I would like to see more people being trained and that's why we've made funding universities and colleges a priority in our budget, and I'm sorry that the member was unable to support that.

**Mrs. Rowat:** I obviously hit a nerve.

I really would like a strategy from this minister. All I've asked for is a strategy in how she's going to be addressing the concerns that have been raised by these communities to the minister and to her staff. She's talking about \$70 million. Well, we're not asking for her to build her empire. We're asking her to ensure that students receive an education and to



have trained staff there to address those needs. You know, it's a simple question: What type of strategy does she have in addressing the labour market needs of these communities? We know that the colleges have indicated that, because of her, you know, reduction in budget to post-secondary education, she is now looking at regressing instead of supporting communities who have asked for support.

We know that there are—communities have asked for a strategy from this government with regard to trade training, and there—they've been, you know, up against a brick wall. The—you know, if they have something to work with, then they will get it done. Communities can build what they need with regard to a talent pool or a market—labour market pool, but they have to have a partner and they have to have some type of a guideline from this government of some type of a strategy so that they can make sure that their time and their effort works.

So, you know, I'm disappointed that this government doesn't appear to have a strategy with regard to labour market needs in rural and northern Manitoba, and I'm very, very concerned that we're going to see more young Manitobans leave the province to get skills elsewhere and not return to the province.

Thank you.

**Ms. Selby:** I'm thinking that the member must have been looking at Alberta's budget when she was thinking about post-secondary, because they actually cut 7 per cent from post-secondary. There has been no reduction of funding in Manitoba. We have an increase of 2.5 per cent in net and colleges at 2 per cent. I'm not sure when an increase to the positive is considered a reduction.

Certainly that is part—a big, significant part of our strategy, and I would try to explain to the member that by funding education, by ensuring that more people have access to education, by ensuring that we have a quality education—I think the main base that you need to have a strategy is to properly fund your education system, which is why, at the best funding across the country—a 2.5 per cent increase in funding is the best funding in the country right now—that's a strong indication of our strategy is that we will continue to grow and improve on our system, because we are funding it.

We certainly know that there are more students receiving education. Enrolment numbers have been steadily going up at universities and colleges. More

people are attending university. More people are graduating from high school. That's part of our strategy as well. We have not seen a reduction in post-secondary education since we've been in office.

And I guess the member tells me she's familiar with the regional satellite offices, but that is exactly the strategy: bring—fund universities and colleges at, well, the best levels in the country, that's part of the strategy, but also to bring school closer to home by bringing in the regional network. We've got 18 regional campuses. We have eight mobile nursing training sites. We have two mobile labs and the funding to keep them running and a strong college engagement with industry. That is a really important thing that we have going on. And the mining academy, which I mentioned before, but, again, is a really important training for the north and rural Manitoba.

So, if the member is curious of our strategy, I think the No. 1 is to fund education, and when you don't fund it, when you cut or freeze funding for five years straight, that strategy to me says that you don't plan to grow, that you don't plan to add 18 regional campuses, eight mobile nursing training sites, two mobile labs with the funding to have them.

And to indicate that the colleges aren't working with industry, I think that's really not true, Mr. Chair. The colleges have a strong engagement with industry, and I know that—speak with them regularly. And I will agree with the member that they are quick and responsive to industry needs and are very good at bringing in short-term or contract courses in order to facilitate what industry needs. I know they do that on a regular basis, and I think they should actually be applauded for the work that they do.

I mentioned a little earlier that we recently had a skilled trades summit. That brought together sector councils, industry, labour. We had representation from all over the province as people talked about how are we going to meet our skilled trade need, how are we going to meet the needs of 75,000 new skilled trade workers over the next few years. And I think we got some really interesting discussion and look forward to seeing the recommendations that come out of that. And that, I guess, the member will be excited to see when that strategy comes forward and we can share that with her.

But I think I will say again the most important strategy a government can do when they want to educate their people is fund education. And, as we can see, funding education has been working by

increasing enrolments and a significant increase in high school graduates, which means people are more ready for post-secondary education.

**Ms. Wight:** I was really afraid I wasn't going to get back to this. So you didn't have time to come to this one, but I really wanted to get back to what you were mentioning with regard to the prior learning assessments and anything that we might be doing sort of in that world to kind of make those possible within the various universities and Red River. I know we can't tell universities who to hire, of course; I understand that completely.

\* (12:00)

But I was just wondering, yes, what's kind of happening with the making use of people's experience and being able to use that towards—not that they wouldn't have to take any courses in order to get, you know, whatever the degree might be. Maybe they're—they'd take some but they would take into consideration all of the work that the people have done in whatever that area might be. And in this case, it really does work particularly well in the world of fine arts, in theatre, in dance, in painting, in all of those areas. If you have 25 years of experience in those fields of actually doing the work, I'd like to—love to see people sort of getting some kind of an assessment and credit towards a fine arts degree.

Agriculture would be another—thank you, the member from Riding Mountain just mentioned—but another excellent example is agriculture. I know my brother was an ag rep. That was the first thing that he took in university and actually went—well, he lived in a farm, but then he went on to farm after he worked for a number of years as an ag rep, so it was a bit reversed. But, had it been the other way around, one would like to see exactly—like something in that field where, you know, the hands-on work on a farm and all the things that you learn around, you know, whatever—fertilizers and crop rotation and so many things—business. The business aspect around farming, you know, is tremendous as well.

So, yes, that is another great example of somewhere where prior learning assessments could really come in and be effective and useful, I think, for people and might get them to take those sort of added courses where it's not so overwhelming to think, you know, I spent 20 years doing this and I have—and it doesn't count for anything. I have to now take four years of university to do things that I really already know how to do in order to maybe be able to

go on and do some of those things like teach or, you know, that sort of thing. So, yes.

I know, you know, we don't want doctors just learning on the side, but in some of these hands-on things where you're actually—the practice of them is what matters, I think, there's definitely room for that, so.

**Ms. Selby:** Mr. Chair, and we were discussing earlier, this is also an area of a lot of interest for myself as well.

In terms of the prior learning, each of our institutions has someone whose position is to assess prior learning of a student so they can actually try—talk about that. And prior learning would also—I believe, would also include prior experience of the student as well. Each of our institutions had that. That's funded by COPSE.

What's really interesting is that we are the only province in the country to offer this sort of a program where we have a person at each institution doing this. The OECD has actually come in and studied our system, with the idea that, I guess, there are other areas who are interested in seeing how we're doing it.

And—but I do want to talk a little bit more about some of the bridging, because that's a little bit about what the member was asking as well. We certainly know that we have people coming into Manitoba that have had their training and experience outside of Manitoba, and we want them to be able to work in their field, but, of course, sometimes our standards may be a little different or our expectations may be a little different, and that's why we have bridging programs for internationally educated graduates.

I should probably point out that international educated graduates, upon graduation, if they do choose to put roots down in Manitoba, they, too, are eligible for our 60 per cent tuition rebate, which is a fantastic way to encourage folks to bring their brains to Manitoba.

What we do right now, COPSE is involved in delivering three of our current bridge initiatives. One is the bridging program for internationally educated nurses. It's got three main components: it's got a language 'profissen'—proficiency—ironic that I would trip over that word—assessment and educational courses that are offered over a year. We have two 20-seat cohorts, which is basically 40 students per year who can come through that program. And the tuition is covered by the nursing recruitment and retention fund, with the exception of some of the

language courses which are expected for the student to be able to cover.

So I have to tell you, when you look at the graduation rate of our bridging programs, I mean, obviously, these are people who have come to Canada with the intent to work in their particular field, so it's probably not surprising. Since 2009, the particular bridging program for nursing students has been offered nine times. Some of the more recent results for that: In January 2012, we had 22 students enrolled, 22 of them finished the program; in August of 2012 we had 22 students enrolled, 18 have completed, four are still in progress; and in January we—as of January this year, we've got 23 students enrolled.

The August 2013 intake is full already. So we do know that there are more and more people choosing Manitoba as their home, and, of course, we count new Canadians amongst those numbers of people choosing Manitoba as their home.

The next time we're looking at registration will be in January, but we do allow for some people to take some online courses if they're waiting for that one-on-one instruction part so they can sort of start to get ahead.

Another program that COPSE is involved in the delivery of is the Internationally Educated Engineers Qualification. In 2003, University of Manitoba introduced a 40-seat program for internationally educated engineers. We are funding that program and helping maintain that program and working with them now.

That program has been offered 11 times and some of the numbers of that are we have had in 2011-2012—30 students enrolled, 10 completed and 17 are still in progress. And as for this year, 2012-2013—27 students enrolled—they are all still in progress, but they're still working at it.

And the third one—I believe there's three—yes—that COPSE is involved in, is the qualification recognition supports and post-secondary education bridge programming for international educated professionals and tradespeople, which is, of course, another way to grow our 75,000 potential trades workers that we're going to see.

So we're looking on that and focusing on making sure that we have a client capacity to make sure that we have those qualifications that people have recognized, as well.

There was a predecessor program, what was partnerships for labour market driven bridge programs, at our institutions. It's—there's a very—there's a few that are within that, as well, that have been established. Asper School of Business for professional accounting program, financial services bridging program, trades bridge program which is an electrical one offered at Red River College. And another—a few other bridging programs, as well.

So I think that we're moving forward with that and it's a great way to make sure that we are getting a—reaching the potential not just of people in Manitoba, but those who choose to make Manitoba their home, as well.

**Ms. Blady:** Yes, well, again, just thinking back, I guess the question that I have next comes from a variety of perspectives, and seeing again where some of the previous questions have gone, what they've covered.

I—at one of the things that I have to say that I'm really happy to hear about was—I guess I had taken our previous learning assessment for granted, so to know that it was, actually, we're the only ones and it's not the norm. It's something again—it's like so many other things that I don't think a lot of people in province recognize because they—you don't realize you've got something special because you're so used to it, it's the norm. And it really does make a huge difference.

And I'm also happy to see how things have evolved in terms of transferring credits, and I know that when I first started at U of M in 1986, I started off in the faculty of architecture and I did three quarters of an interior design degree. And while I had a strong interest in architectural space and could come up with designs that would easily work, this and that, my rendering skills and two dimensions were not what they needed to be; they were much stronger in three, but it's harder to make models for absolutely everything, it's a little bit more labour intensive and it's not a—really a good professional choice. And this was previous to AutoCAD. In fact, I believe I was there the very first year they brought in computers to the labs and it was—they're nothing like what we now have. So, again, it's nice to see those investments and seeing what the contemporary students are doing in that.

But what was really wonderful—and again, I realize was much harder to do back then—was that when I made the move to switch over to anthropology and art history, I had a wonderful

course adviser, curriculum adviser, the faculty of arts, that was able to work very well. I must—I also have to not just thank her, not just thank Allison, but also thank the dean of arts and the dean of fine arts at that time, that went out of their way to take a—see how many of my credits, especially those ones that were related to art, art history, rendering—as they related to my architecture degree—and were able to transfer those into the BFA.

\*(12:10)

And I came out with, in a sense, degrees that don't quite exist in practice, in that my—I officially have a BA in cultural anthropology, and if you look at my transcripts, it also indicates that I have a BFA in art history. And that was something that, again, was very much accommodating by the university, but I know that had they had the tools that were available now, it might not have been quite the process that Allison had to go through for me.

But what was interesting, and the Chair would be familiar with this because, well, he and I share an educational background and we—I think we both have the likes of a Rod Burchard and Hymie Rubenstein to thank as professors for shaping our careers and the path that we went down, but—and for providing us—I would say, especially in the case of Dr. Rod Burchard, critical thinking skills and that ability to see the larger picture. But that—taking that anthropology and art history background and the critical thinking skills, especially critical thinking skills as it related to media analysis, political analysis, we also found ourselves in interesting times because both the member from Wolseley and I were, again—we began our university careers under an NDP government, and then midway through our degrees, for lack of a better way of putting it, watched the bottom fall out.

And I know my own roots as a political activist, while they were grounded in social justice as it related to indigenous people and in environmental work as it was, again, seen within my own academic work, but we suddenly had a political interest that, let's just say, hit a little closer to home. And so what was interesting was that I found myself, after watching tuition rates skyrocket, protesting in the doorstep of this building as my tuition went through the roof, having to flee this province because what I saw was the programs that I wanted to go into being undermined. I was not able to pursue a master's degree here, as I would have liked to. I ended up having to go off to UVic because there was no place

in this province for me to study what I wanted to do as it related to Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal traditional knowledge, and as that related to everything from decolonization, cultural appropriation and artistic practice in the transgenerational transmission of cultural knowledge through the medium of artistic practice.

And so it forced me to go to UVic, and I had a wonderful time at UVic. I had some phenomenal professors. I also have to say that I really appreciate the partnership that occurred with UVic in allowing me to then work with a local professor here as my external adjunct on my defence committee so that I had someone back here, Dr. Jill Oakes, to work with, and she and Dr. Rick Riewe were very instrumental as the local connection to allow me to finish my master's degree. But, yet, again, when I came back here to do my research and to finalize my dissertation, I again found that it was very difficult for me to do the doctoral work that I wanted to do, and while I had tried to work both with Dr. Oakes as well as Dr. Jennifer Brown at U of W, and, again, we were trying to formulate a way.

Unfortunately, the financial supports in the '90s were still not there that—to facilitate the development of both the interdisciplinary program as it related to the native studies program at the time that we did try to do it. And academically and intellectually, these people were very much willing to do the work, but we found that the campus, as a whole, and the—there weren't the supports there in the '90s. And, as a result, sadly, I went from frying pan to fire because when I had first checked out York University, it was not under the Harris government that I ended up arriving there on.

And so I got to Ontario to start a doctoral program at what is generally conceived to be a very progressive university, York University, and then encountered what I could only conceive of and describe as one of the most harsh academic environments in terms of the lack of political will to support education at a post-secondary level in funding, saw decimations and had to deal with two of the longest academic strikes in Canadian history at that time. In fact, I was on the picket lines because of the lack of funding that was being provided.

And so what I found really interesting was that in having got to a particular stage in my doctoral work, having taught at York University, as well, and then coming back here, was, first of all, the change that had occurred. I had left, like I said, under the

Filmon government and came back here to find that I had—well, I had gone from frying pan to fire, had now moved back into an environment where I was watching investments, and I'd seen the transformation in the very programs that I'd come from before. I'd also seen the—and I wish my own time as—had been able to be counted under the tuition rebates, but it's nice to see that my own kids'll have that.

So I guess what I wanted to ask the minister was about the ongoing nature of commitment and especially those investments that have allowed students to pursue very diverse degrees, to it—the fact that there's going to have to be a—there was recovery investment that was in there and that the ongoing supports, especially as it relates to tuition and supports there because, again, I came back to end up teaching at the U of M and finding that students now had supports that had not been available to me because of the lack of funding that had been there during my time.

So I was just wondering if the minister could speak more to the recovery of investment as well as the additional things that have gone in there to rebuild the education environment and again, expand it in new ways to ensure that we've got a very well-rounded and very well-supported educational environment for all of our post-secondary students, especially those of us that choose to go on to graduate and post-graduate work and then eventually end up teaching.

**Ms. Selby:** I thank the member for her question and her story, and I agree with her. It's great when we can—when Manitoba can be a leader, as we are, in the recognition of prior learning and proud of our record of making sure that Manitoba's post-secondary institution is affordable, accessible and quality education for people in Manitoba and those who choose to study here.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I move that this section of the committee adjourn. Committee rise.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Steinbach that this section of the Committee of Supply adjourn for the day.

The motion's in order. All in favour of the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed? No?

**Some Honourable Members:** Opposed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry. Let's just do that again.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those in favour of the motion, say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Goertzen:** Recorded vote.

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Chairperson:** As I—as I met—order. *[interjection]*

If we're all finished—as we may or may not know, but for the sake for those members or the thousands of people listening to this process, the rules of the House are that for Friday sittings of Estimates, any votes or requests for a recorded vote are, of course, deferred until the next sitting, and so it's not that we ignore the request for a recorded vote, it is duly noted and that will be the first thing that this section of the Committee of Supply deals with whenever we next sit.

But, also under the rules, once that has been noted, we revert to standard questioning of Estimates until the time allotted has expired. So, if honourable members of the opposition have questions for the minister, I'd be happy to recognize that. If they don't and if there are other members sitting around the table who want to ask a question, then I'll recognize them. But we're here 'til 12:30.

**Ms. Blady:** Yes, just sort of a follow-up to a previous question regarding, again, the supports for Aboriginal students and the developments that have been made on campus, especially in terms of creating spaces and supports that both foster education with a respect to traditional knowledge and traditional learning practices, as well as just, for lack of a better way of putting it, physical spaces that are welcoming, especially in light of the fact that something as large as a U of M or U of W campus can be an intimidating place for someone that comes from a non-urban environment. I was just wondering if you could share a little bit more with us on those developments and where some of the current projects as they relate to Project Domino might fit in there.

**Ms. Selby:** I know that this is of a particular interest to the member and I realize that she has some experience in this area, as well, and probably interested to know what we've been doing in the last while since she's moved on to this career from her former one.

We agree with the member that education, of course, being the best way to break cycles of poverty, to break cycles of—other cycles that may be barriers that particular students may or may not have faced. And we know that education is probably the best indicator that a person will be able to—or the best hope for someone to go on to a successful career. And we also know that our Aboriginal population of young people is the fastest growing population, and so to not tap into that resource would really be not just a waste for Manitoba, but would be a poor decision economically not to tap into our fastest growing research—resource of young minds.

The member talked a little bit about what we're doing in order to make Aboriginal students feel welcome in the classroom, because we know, unfortunately, we have a history in this country of education and Aboriginal people have not felt welcomed at times. One of the things we're doing, just at the K-to-12 level is making sure that there are mandatory courses on Aboriginal perspective. Our teachers who are training in our universities to become teachers, that is one of the things that is included.

It's interesting, we were talking a little bit earlier—I'm going off a little bit on that, but we were talking about bridging programs for internationally trained people. But certainly my understanding, if you were trained out—in Canada outside as a teacher and then moved to Manitoba that's one of the courses that we expect teachers who've been trained outside of Manitoba to do, is to—they have to take our mandatory courses on Aboriginal perspective if they haven't had that to ensure that our curriculum here in Manitoba includes Aboriginal history, not as written by the white man but Aboriginal history that includes residential schools. An important part of Aboriginal education, true of rural and northern students, Aboriginal or not, is bringing training closer to home.

I think I've—forgive me, but I think I've bragged a little bit about the University College of the North. It's a place I'm particularly proud of and excited of and know that it brings training close to people, excels in cultural sensitivity. There are elders. I

believe that all of our publicly funded institutions have elders on staff now to provide a—cultural training and sensitivity. Certainly know that when I was most recently at UCN they were showing me the new sweat lodge at UCN. Very interesting that we're making sure that these culturally appropriate things are on campus for students, whether it's in terms of support and counselling or in terms of actual infrastructure, as the member was talking about.

I think—I know that the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) earlier was not really understanding the importance of the connection between funding education and providing good education. But I think the fact that we've increased funding to the north for post-secondary education 170 per cent since 1999, I think that's a pretty good strategy for making sure people of the north get an education by funding education.

I've talked a lot about the 12 regional centres opened up of UCN and I regret that I have not visited all 12 centres. But I have been able to visit a few. And I think it was really important to see the physical challenges in the north of getting an education. I had the chance to drive from our Thompson site to our mining academy in Flin Flon, and it's unbelievable, the distance that people have to travel. And I say, I think I showed myself for being a bit of a city mouse instead of a country mouse when I left Thompson, drove for 40 minutes and realized I didn't fill up the gas tank before I left. And people, of course, in the north and—are much better prepared about these things than me who spends more time in a city. I admit it, and, actually, I will admit, even on the record, had to turn around and go back to Thompson, because one does not want to be travelling those kinds of distances and find themselves out of gas.

So I just—I think it's important to recognize that bringing 12 regional centres, while it does bring education to people, the distances in the north are vast, and still means a lot of travel for people. And the more we can do to increase those online capabilities and capacity for people to learn, that just means a little less driving to get to whatever the regional centre is.

We did talk about, of course, the importance of the Aboriginal teacher training program in the north—and I'm sorry, I'm misspeaking, the teacher training program at UCN. We do expect that the teachers training right now will be able to meet the demand for northern teachers in years to come. We are still,

although we are training enough students across the province to fill those, unfortunately, we're still not seeing some students in the south wanting to take some of those vacancies in the north. So we are bringing in trained teachers from outside of the province. But, by training teachers in the north, we're quite confident that we will be able to rely on homegrown teachers in order to fill those vacancies.

One of the things we're doing to recognize cultural importance of training people with cultural sensitivities—and whether that be space, as a member was speaking up, or just in terms of having the right culture on campus to facilitate learning—in 2010, we brought—the circle of Aboriginal educators was created to provide instructors and adult learning programs at adult learning centres to be able to access networks, opportunities to talk about those strategies and program models that have been successful, particularly when we're looking at Aboriginal literacy strategy, because, of course, if you can't read, you can't make your full potential in terms of your education opportunities and in terms of your career potential, as well, which is why we have so many opportunities for adult literacy and learning around the province, whether we're talking rural, northern, urban centres.

We're also supporting Aboriginal learners in terms of our bursary program. That's an important one to make sure that the barriers aren't financial. The Aboriginal Medical Student Scholarship has 24 Aboriginal medical students being supported. We also support and fund—we talked a little bit earlier about the ACCESS bursaries, but 261 ACCESS bursaries are supported. Those programs are directly—not specifically Aboriginal students, but they do have a high number of Aboriginal students in them. But, of course, it's for anyone who has particular needs that may or may not—particular barriers they may be facing. And I know I spoke earlier about how fantastic it is to see people who go through those particular programs. So I thank the member for her interest in this area.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Any further questions?

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** It's a pleasure to raise some questions with the minister in terms of advanced education.

We know that the members opposite, if they were to ever form government, they've made a commitment to reduce their revenues, their expenditures, by close to \$550 million. They've—which is far above the 1 per cent reduction which

their leader has publicly stated, but the reality is it's far, far greater. It's closer to 5 per cent. They promised to reduce the size of the expenditures of government by the equivalent of the revenue raised by the PST, the 1 cent increase. As well, they've promised to forgo that level of revenue growth for the Department of Finance.

So my question would be to the minister. So the number is much, much higher. It's close to 5 per cent. I know we've increased funding to universities and post-secondary education to 2.5 per cent, so, in fact, it would be a 7 and a half per cent reduction—

**Mr. Chairperson:** With all due respect, we have reached 12:30 in the afternoon, committee rise.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

\*(10:00)

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

Would the minister's staff and opposition staff please enter the Chamber.

We're on page 148 of the main Estimates book. As previously agreed, questioning for this department would—will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Good morning, Mr. Chairperson.

I have some questions for the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) on this Friday morning following the weeks of committees that we've had. And the minister knows that in relation to other bills in this Legislature, there's been considerable debate, both publicly and in this Chamber, about how bills are brought into force. Of course, talking in particular about Bill 20 where the PST increase has already happened and the bill hasn't actually passed the Legislature, and I know the minister had some comments about Manitobans who were coming to present.

But more specifically, I wonder if the minister can indicate on Bill 33, whether he has contemplated what he's going to do with the timelines that exist in that bill if the bill has not passed the Legislature when those timelines come up. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable Minister of Local Government.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government):** Oh, sorry, Mr. Chairperson. Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone.

Let me go back to yesterday, I believe it was yesterday's question period, when I made comments. I didn't have an opportunity to complete my statements by making the comments about howling coyotes, which was referred to the opposition, not to the great Manitobans that have a right to speak out and make comments and—on any of our bills which we respect very much and including the consultations that we've done throughout Manitoba with Manitobans for a number of years and especially with regard to amalgamations.

The question that was just asked was: What are we contemplating? Well, I'm contemplating Bill 33 passing, and that bill is modernization of municipalities. And let me go back even a couple more steps, is that when we introduced the legislation, we had received a report from RDI, Rural Development Institute in Brandon. They stated that they felt that a population of 3,000 people would be the sustainable amount with a \$130-million tax base to be a sustainable municipality going forward.

As a government, we had that information. We decided, as a government, based on the timelines, that we told municipalities it was based on the 1,000 threshold. So, for us, the 1,000 threshold would be not a problem to meet if municipalities started to talk to each other and their neighbours in a sincere way about looking at regionalization.

We've been talking about regionalization for 14 years—13 years. And so, I guess my answer is, based on the timelines, the last municipal consultation meetings that we did in the regional meetings, I stated to people whether it was one week or one day, one week, one month, that the legislation will be coming into force and that people should understand that the government is committed to modernizing municipalities, and we would work with them to make that happen.

We have 15 to 16 field consultants that work with them. We have a template that shows people, essentially a checklist on how you do a—or can complete an amalgamation with your neighbours. So we have a lot of people that are engaged now in municipalities, talking to each other. That doesn't mean that they're necessarily in favour or they're jumping up and celebrating that they want to necessarily amalgamate, but they're talking to each other—maybe the first time in a long time in

Manitoba that that's ever happened. And so—well, certainly since 1997-98 when Len Derkach and the government of the day did about a year's consultations, talking to municipalities about amalgamations.

So, having said that, the timelines are in place; the timelines are reasonable; the timelines are achievable. I see nothing different; nothing's changed. Thank you.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I won't take the bait too much on the initial comments from the minister. I think the plain language and the plain reading of his comments yesterday in the House for all Manitobans to see—and we'll make sure Manitobans see them—will be obvious in terms of what he meant. All he's acknowledging today is that he may have used unparliamentary language in the Legislature. Here I suppose he's decided to choose which is the least harmful to him, but I think we know what he meant and it was clear in what he said, and it's unfortunate.

I—what are—within Bill 33—I'm sorry, I don't have the bill with me this morning—what are the earliest benchmarks for a municipality to fall under the 1,000 population that they have to meet in terms of reporting to the minister?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, really the date that municipalities need to be aware of is the December 1st date. We've asked, by December 1st, that municipalities under the population of a thousand submit their plan with their neighbours to my department. It could be two, three, four, five municipalities, but the December 1st date is the date that they have to submit that plan to the department.

**Mr. Goertzen:** What happens if Bill 33 hasn't passed by December 1st?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Yes, well, I'm not going to speculate whether it's passed or not. I'm anticipating it's going to be passed, but whether it's passed or not, I believe municipalities understand that this government is committed to amalgamations, and we've made it very, very clear to municipalities that they should be submitting their plans by December the 1st.

So, when the members of the opposition were creating mischief and running around the province and telling people, oh, just dig your feet in, and the minister will crack a U-turn in the middle of the road the moment he sees that, you know, there's some opposition or that you're not happy, I was really clear in no uncertain terms as to where the government was headed.



\* (10:10)

And most municipalities—and I know they're very intelligent individuals, they're very smart, they've been in politics a long time, and, when a minister tells them, we are going to do something and repeats it at least 3,462 times, that there's an expectation on them, we are going to do something, and repeats it at least 3,462 times, that there's an expectation on them, under the population of a thousand, to talk to your neighbours and to get a plan submitted to the government—I think they understand it's fairly clear that there's an onus on them to submit that plan.

And I have to say that the municipalities have been—well, they've been very forthcoming in a very positive way. They've been saying, okay, we understand what the rules are going to be. We understand what the law is going to be. We get it. We understand that whether it's passed tomorrow or in two months or six months or eight months, the law is going to be in place to amalgamate. So they get it. I mean, that's—those terms were exactly used, just as I stated them, were passed on to me at the last municipal meeting. They said, okay, we understand. You made a decision. We may not totally agree with it. We understand what your—and the rationale behind it, so we understand where you're going. So we understand that you want to have us submit a plan to you.

Now, submitting a plan, as I mentioned to many municipalities is not a matter of just writing something on a napkin and then turning it in to me or to the department, saying, oh, here's our plan. Our department and our field consultants have worked through a number of different steps that—what is contained within their plan and have expressed that to them. So the idea of just submitting something on a piece of paper and saying, oh, well, we've done it. And somehow they're below the thousand population and they're saying, well two of us got together but we—now our population with the two of us together will be 500. Well, no, that's not acceptable. The benchmark is a thousand. So, if you're talking to your neighbours, your population has to be at least 1,000 or 1,001 in order to submit your plan.

So we've made it very, very clear. We've been talking about this since, certainly, last fall in a more formal way when we brought it in the Speech from the Throne and then at AMM. So municipalities are absolutely crystal clear on where and what the goal

of the government is, and they understand it. And, essentially, that's—I think that's the bottom line.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The minister has indicated that he's told municipalities many times—according—the exact number he threw out—that they're expected to adhere to the deadline even if it's not the law. With all due respect to the minister, his word is not the law. The law is the law, and him stating something or him saying something doesn't make it legal; it doesn't make it the law. He can try to bully his way with municipalities or those sort of things, but I assume he brought in legislation for a reason. He brought in legislation because he knows he needs the rule of law, he needs the force of law to make some of these things happen; otherwise, he would have just gone out and make the proclamations that he's said he's made hundreds of times before. But he brought in the law for a particular reason.

Would he be punishing municipalities who didn't bring forward a plan by the end of this year for amalgamation if the law hasn't passed?

**Mr. Lemieux:** The word punishment is not in my vocabulary and it's never been in the vocabulary of this government in 14 years.

We pride ourselves in consultation. We pride ourselves in working with communities. We don't always agree. I mean, AMM, for example, and myself, over the years that I've been—whether it was Infrastructure and Transportation Minister or whether it was Local Government Minister, we've always tried to work through a number of issues. And I believe, even though we have firm and very forthright and honest discussions, we don't always agree. But they've always been done respectfully.

And, yes, I have been very firm on deadlines. I've been very firm on our objective as a government and why we feel it's important. But punishment and terminology like that has never been in our vocabulary as a government, never—never. We've always tried to work with municipalities. We've always tried to work with other stakeholder groups, whether it's the Department of Health or Justice or Education, and we pride ourselves on that. And I believe what I'm saying is not just rhetoric. I firmly believe that municipalities and others know this. I mean, they know me personally and they know many of our ministers here, though, that that terminology has never entered into our discussions. We don't—that—it's not part of our vocabulary at all.

And I have to tell the member from Steinbach that, in a number of a meetings early on with regard to amalgamation, some mayors and reeves raised the issue about—well, you know, we don't vote for you. We'll never vote for you. Hell will freeze over before we ever vote for you. So if we're—if we object to this, are you going to penalize us by using the Building Canada Fund and holding that over our head and because we're not playing ball with you you're going to penalize us in some way?

And I was absolutely—at the moment that was raised, I put that, I think, in a very clear way, that in no uncertain terms would that ever happen. People have a right to object, people have a right to have a difference of opinion and no one would be penalized or punished in any way, shape or form.

We try to do the best we can to provide service in every corner of the province. We have MLAs in every corner of the province—the only party that can say that—and we try to do the best we can.

So I'm sorry for the long-winded answer with regard to the use of the word of punishment, because, yes, my blood pressure did jump up a couple of notches because that is not part of our vocabulary and never has been.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Now, I appreciate the minister taking his time to explain that. I found it actually very helpful because it'll be helpful for me when I talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) who said he's going to punish businesses who aren't going to collect the PST, even though the bill hasn't passed. So I actually was very thankful for that answer because I can now go to the Minister of Finance on Monday when I see him and say, your Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) said the word punish isn't even in your vocabulary and yet you said you were going to punish through fines those businesses who didn't collect the PST, even though the bill hasn't passed. So I was very thankful for the Minister of Local Government's answer. I very much appreciate that, and I look forward to now taking those comments to the Minister of Finance and saying, your own government, your own minister says it's not even in your vocabulary. So thank you. That was an excellent answer.

So I can assume, then, that at the—when this bill hasn't passed in December that municipalities won't have any punishment, because that's not in your vocabulary and I guess not in the vocabulary of the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, there's different definitions to the word punishment, I guess, that people can use. But—and—well, and you know, I can't speak for either the—what the Minister of Finance or any other minister said, because I hadn't heard that.

But I think, you know, the member from Steinbach's legally trained and he understands that there are penalties in law and there are penalties that people have to pay for breaking the law or not abiding by certain rules. I mean, you know. So, if he's using the word penalties and kind of interplay—interjecting the word punishment where penalties are concerned, I mean, that's totally different. We're in—that's in a different discussion.

But I can't speak for what other ministers have said; I wasn't present. And I know my colleague from Dauphin, a rural MLA since about 1995, I can say that the word punishment is, I don't believe, has ever been in his vocabulary either. And so I've never, ever heard him say any kind of derogatory comments about any stakeholder groups or any organizations or Manitobans ever in my life as long as I've known him.

So, as far as the amalgamations go, you know, I believe most municipalities, and not only those under a thousand population, realize this is the right way to go. You know, we have Garry Wasylofski from the Interlake that says 5,000 should be the population, that should be the benchmark, and why is the government looking at a thousand? Then you get the Rural Development Institute saying 3,000 should be the population mark. Duff Roblin in the early '60s, it was around 5,000 to 6,000 population per municipality. So there is varying opinions on what that number should be. It's not a race to the number, but I think people realize that when they're trying to tap into different government programs, whether it's the Building Canada Fund or others, it's very, very difficult for smaller municipalities to access those programs.

In fact, many municipalities have agreements with others, their neighbours, on doing roads, municipal roads, whether it's water treatment, taking a look at landfill sites or garbage dumps—we'll use a different term. So all of that is happening and I see this as a natural progression for many of those to come together and to really formalize an arrangement where amalgamation really makes sense. And, obviously, we want them to determine their own destiny, pick their own trading partners,

pick their own municipalities that they feel they work best with.

\* (10:20)

In fact, we, as a government, have even been flexible to the point saying some municipalities actually may be split in half. The whole municipality—for example, the south end of a municipality may get along with all the communities to the south of them, have a better working relationship than they do with the communities to the north side of their municipality, and, indeed, we've allowed them to take a look at actually splitting a municipality, or a number of them splitting to become a new entity. So we've been very, very flexible working with many municipalities to make it work.

And I know the department has the field consultants out there that are getting good feedback from them as to where the—where could there be roadblocks in working together to form amalgamations.

So I'm very pleased at this point in the progression that has been made. There's still a ways to go for a number of them because they're just starting that process, because they understand that the deadline of December 1st is not that far away, so they're working towards that. And I'm just pleased that the majority of the municipalities are engaged in talking about amalgamations.

**Mr. Goertzen:** We're prepared to consider the Estimates, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Chairperson.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$31,379,000 for Local Government, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

Shall the resolution pass?

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Sure—I do have a number of questions for the minister on a global basis. As we know there's a debate going on in this Chamber about the issue of taxes and revenue and expenditure. And we know that the members opposite, if were—if they were ever to form government, they made a commitment to reduce the size of government by over \$550 million. They said that they would cut out of the provincial budget a amount equal to the revenues, which would be raised

by the additional 1 cent on the PST, which we know is around approximately \$275 million.

They also said, Mr. Chair, that they would forgo the revenue that would be raised by that PST if they were ever to form government, which would be—when you add those two together, would be \$550 million at 2013 levels. The next election, we know, is not 'til 2016. So, in fact, that could be closer to \$600 million that we would lose as a provincial government in terms of funding all the necessary programs.

And we know that members opposite continuously demand more and more and more from our government when it comes to funding every level of departments that is offered through our budgetary process. They are, in fact, I would argue, Mr. Chair, the biggest cost-drivers on the Treasury of this Province, is members opposite. We know day in, day out, they bring in petitions and they demand this road and that road be paved and this bridge be paved. And it's a never-ending saga when it comes to the members opposite, as they continuously put additional pressures on the provincial Treasury.

Well, my question is to the minister, how—and we know that for this year we've increased municipal support by 8.5 per cent, which, I think, is one the most generous ones in the nation.

And my question to the minister is, how would municipal governments survive or how would they deal with a—like, a 5 per cent cut—or it would be more? Would it be 13 per cent because [*inaudible*] with the 8 per cent that we gave them this year and the 5 per cent cut that the Conservatives would give them, how would they survive with 13 per cent less revenues per year?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, I thank the MLA for Selkirk for that question, because this really hits at the heart of the issue.

As a government—and the members opposite, of course, voted against this and continually vote against support for municipalities and the funding we've provided. Between 2005 and 2013, annual provincial funding for municipalities have almost doubled, increasing by \$200 million, from \$215 million in 2005 to \$415 million in 2013.

So, Mr. Chairperson, the MLA from Selkirk raises a very important point. If you're going to have across-the-board cuts of, approximately this year, of \$550 million, thereabouts, that is going to hurt, you know, teachers, health-care workers, but also

municipalities, which—this has been lost in a lot of the discussion—if you're—we're going to be giving an 8.5 per cent increase to municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg. The mayor of Winnipeg has not addressed this in any way, shape or form, thinking what is going to happen to their funding. And every day we hear from the mayor and other municipal leaders about how—just give us a blank cheque, we'll take the 1 per cent PST.

How would they feel by getting cut by that much, across-the-board cuts, and what would that do to their infrastructure? And how is that going to help to reduce the infrastructure deficit that we have in this province?

So the question is truly important because a one seventh of PST is spent on municipal infrastructure through the Building Manitoba Fund, and it'll increase by about, let's say, approximately \$30 million this year. So across-the-board cuts just don't work. I mean, across-the-board cuts is, I think, you know, is a knee-jerk reaction that is part of the opposition's DNA. It's—it almost comes naturally to them. And, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition, you know, one of the first things, of course, that he had to say when he heard about the PST, oh, we'll find more efficiencies.

I have to tell you, the teachers that I worked with in the 1990s who got—who were laid off in the 1990s because school divisions didn't have the funding that they—now we fund it to the rate of economic growth, the funding is provided; we made a commitment to all school divisions. In the 1990s, that wasn't there. School divisions had to lay off teachers. My friends were laid off when I taught at that time before I got involved in politics. So people forget. My own children say, well, who's Gary Filmon? You know, who is the MLA for Fort Whyte, the Leader of the Opposition? You know, who's Jon Gerrard? They don't know any of these people, and they—*[interjection]* Sorry, the MLA for—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. Members of the Legislature are to be referred to by their constituencies and ministers by their titles. I just remind the honourable minister of that.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Yes, my daughter and their friends and my children don't know who the Leader of the Liberal Party is or the Leader of the Conservative Party and—or—in the 1990s or now. So, when we often refer to the mean, lean, nasty Tories of the 1990s, my children say, well, what's that? Who were they? And the only recollection my children have of

the 1990s was Gary Filmon at the time, the leader of the Conservatives, standing on Grande—near Grande Pointe making a comment about, those people shouldn't have lived on the flood plain. You know, no wonder you're flooded out; you shouldn't live there.

They remember that because their friends, who I assisted moving furniture out of their living rooms at Grande Pointe, trying to avoid a flood—that, my children remember because their friends, they were there, and they saw their parents hauling furniture out of their houses. They were young then, but they remember that.

But the connection to Gary Filmon, the connection to the Leader of the—current Leader of the Opposition, they don't really have that connection. And maybe it's incumbent on us as a government to remind them that he sat right, you know, shoulder to shoulder with the leader at the time and said that was one of the greatest governments, greatest premiers ever in—and I don't know Premier Filmon at all, but I just know what it was like for my current constituents after the flood of '97 and the hurt they feel even today. It doesn't take them long to recollect, the adults, that is, and the older parents that lost their homes because of the flood.

\* (10:30)

And we invested over a billion dollars over the last decade south of Winnipeg to protect a lot of those communities. In fact, many people south of Winnipeg fear the 2000—and flood of '11 and even '06, '09, it was a yawner. They say, what flood?

Well, that just didn't happen. The floodway was expanded, almost \$700 million put into the floodway, and guess who made a comment about the floodway? You would think that he would've learned his lesson from his previous leader in the '90s, making comments about people are to blame where they lived on the flood plain. Oh, no, when he was in Ottawa, he made comments like, we should put the brakes on expanding that floodway; what a waste of money. And he's on record of commenting, stop it right now; let's put the brakes on that project. Can you imagine? I mean, look what's happened in Calgary. If we hadn't done that and moved when we did, look at the kind of water that we've received over the last decade in Manitoba. No one really expected it. No one could have predicted it. And Mother Nature does, you know, what she does, and we try to react; we try to do the best we can. And we tried to, in a proactive way, expand that floodway.

And you know, thanks to Premier Doer, but also thanks to the minister of Finance at that time, who understood it, through Treasury Board, and as the minister of Finance knew that that investment was important. Who is that? The current leader of the New Democratic Party, the current Premier (Mr. Selinger), the current MLA for St. Boniface, recognized that. So, it wasn't only Premier Doer. It's the—his No. 1 minister, the minister of Finance at that time, took the lead to do something about it. Now, that is leadership. That's vision. That's looking ahead, to be proactive about weather and the challenges that it provides or can—and what that can be like.

We don't have to look very far to the west of us and what happened in Calgary. We have a lot of friends in Alberta and to address the question from the MLA from Selkirk about funding the cuts, you know, Alberta now is going to be scrambling. And congratulations to them; they've got the Calgary Stampede. Those of you that like the Stampede, whether it's in the beautiful community of Morris or whether it's in Calgary—congratulations to the mayor of Calgary, congratulations to the Premier of Alberta. They were able to have the Calgary Stampede, and I know—speaking of my children, they are heading to the Calgary Stampede and they're going to enjoy the Stampede. But it's a—it's almost a miracle that they're able to have that Calgary Stampede, if anyone saw the visuals as to what happened with flood water.

But it just shows you what investment can do. Alberta's going to have to spend billions of dollars, billions of dollars, trying to address this. You can't have a large city like Calgary or a large city like Edmonton in Alberta suffering flooding. You just can't. And you can't have a beautiful city and the capital city of Winnipeg enduring that. It's estimated that we've saved approximately 13 to 15 billion dollars, a result investing money in the floodway. That is important. I mean, that's leadership. But having the Leader of the Opposition say, put the brakes on the floodway—just like he says, put the brakes on the hydro dam; put the brakes on everything; bring everything to a screeching halt—that's not leadership. That's just knee-jerk reaction and across-the-board cuts. I mean, that's a most simplistic way of addressing problems; just say, oh, we'll find efficiencies; we'll just cut everything.

So, I'd just like to conclude my answer to the member from Selkirk, just to say that your question is really important, that the opposition has not raised this issue. But what happens when you cut? That means funding to municipalities would be cut as

well, as well as health care and education and other departments.

**Mr. Dewar:** I want to thank the minister for those very thoughtful, insightful comments, and I agree with him that, clearly, the opposition, they haven't thought this through. You know, when you're in opposition, you tend to be all things—or you want to be all things to all people. So, one side you're promising massive tax cuts, and then on the next day you're promising massive spending increases, and then third time, next, following day, you're promising to eliminate the deficit, you know.

And we see here in Manitoba, where—what—we've taken an approach, and it, obviously, it has created some controversy. But we decided to increase the PST. And the Harper government, for example, they have, to their credit, they have lowered their goods and services tax, but they've taken a different approach when it comes to the issue of debt and deficit. We here have a debt—a deficit-to-GDP ratio of 0.8 per cent—0.8 per cent. The Harper government was running at 3 per cent. So, their deficit to their growth domestic product was 3 per cent. And, you know, they reduced it somewhat; now it's down to, I think, 2.4 per cent, but still three times as high as our ratio between the—our deficit to our GDP, which is a growth—which is the—an indicator of the strength of our economy. And this is what you see often when you look at different jurisdictions and how they manage financial downturns. Some will increase taxes. Some will make massive cuts, and others will rely upon deficit financing, and we see this with the Harper government and that is what they've done. They've decided to rely upon deficits. They decided to borrow money, to borrow money against the future generations of this country. They decided rather than to take a more responsible approach to live within their means, they decided rather than to look at revenue—well, they are making cuts. I'll have to give them—they are—I'll acknowledge that. They are laying off several thousand civil servants. But, as well, they decided to go into massive deficits, to borrow against the future of Canadians, you know, and I find that to be—I'm disappointed—disappointing with that.

I'm disappointed with the members opposite who, you know, they run out there and they hammer in their signs for them. They campaign for Vic Toews. You know, they campaign for Shelly Glover. They campaign for James Bezan. They go out there, and what are they doing? They're running up massive deficits. They're running up math—massive deficits as

a way to fund their operations, which I find—again, it's short-sighted. And I'm really disappointed in the members opposite that that is the way they decide to support a federal government that, rather than deal with things in a responsible way, they decide instead to borrow money against future generations here in this country.

But the minister said that we know and we're proud of the fact that even though we're faced with difficult economic times, global recession, massive flooding that we had to pay for, but, nevertheless, even though we're faced with these challenges we were able to find 8 and a half per cent more money for municipal government.

But I'm wondering if the—I know the minister, he's had a chance to visit and contact other municipal leaders across the—this great country, and maybe he can give us an—update us and update the House as to how other jurisdictions across this country are dealing with the similar situation. Like, what levels of support are they providing to their municipal governments and other jurisdictions across Canada?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Thank the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) for that, because we would never hear a question like that coming necessarily from the opposition because they know what's happening across the country compared to Manitoba. I won't say we're the only province to sub—provide a substantial amount of investment to municipalities. There are others, but very few. There may be one or may be two other provinces that have actually increased the amount of money.

It's important to note, because you have across the country—and I'm not going to point fingers at specific provinces because I think that's unfair. Every government has the right to deal with their own challenges in their way and they know—and the public will pass judgment on them as they do all governments every four years as a report card. And people will determine on a number of different fronts on whether or not they—their life is better at that particular time than it was four years prior. So I'm not going to—and maybe it would be an easy thing for me to do, quite frankly, because there's so many examples of cuts that we know, my department knows what—and we've done the research to know what other provinces have done as far as cuts. I just want to say, though, that most provinces have either—their budgets are either flat on funding to municipalities, meaning no increases, same as last year; and a lot of those municipalities find

themselves lucky because many provinces have actually decreased or cut their budgets. This is not necessarily a good thing, as I see it, but they had to make their tough decisions. You know, other provinces are in deficit position. They have deficits that they're trying to address and they're doing it in their own way. They made their own decisions and that's what governments do. Governments make those decisions. They've been elected to make those decisions not by referendum, not by costly expensive referendums, but you have to lead and that's why you've been elected.

And even Gary Filmon in the 1990s when the Winnipeg Jets were ready to head out of town and he wanted to build a new arena, and people said, well, let's have a referendum on this. And what did Gary Filmon say in an eloquent way? Oh, no, governments can't have referendums every time a difficult issue comes up because we've been elected to lead. We've been elected to be the government and try to use our best judgment on the issues of the day. So even Gary Filmon, the leader of the Conservative Party and premier, said that referendums aren't any good. You know, and so we're not talking about an institution like Hydro, you know, when we're talking about referendums. Like MTS—we saw what happened to MTS. But I digress slightly, Mr. Chair, and I'll try to focus my comments again on the kind of decrease in funding that's happened across the country.

\* (10:40)

But, you know, it's—they often, you know, the people who often like to wear green Saskatchewan Roughriders jerseys across the less—the Legislature every day, you know, put a watermelon on their head and cheer for Saskatchewan Roughriders. You know, that's fine, they can go ahead and do that. But I can tell you, we are funding our municipalities to the approximate tune of about \$50 million more to our municipalities than Saskatchewan is. So that's the kind of commitment we've made just on one department, and yet you don't hear that from members opposite about, oh, wow, you're funding—that's great you're funding your—our municipalities by 50—the tune of \$50 million more than what Saskatchewan is.

Now, to Saskatchewan's credit, Saskatchewan is catching up. Over the last couple of years, they've recognized that their municipalities need assistance and infrastructure is falling apart in Saskatchewan, so they have to ramp it up. So that's a—they deserve a lot of credit, and Premier Wall deserves credit, quite

frankly, for recognizing it, but he also deserves credit for wanting to abolish the Senate and get rid of it. So he has seen the light on the Senate and he's also seen the light with regard to funding municipalities and trying to improve that. So, thank you, and congratulations to Saskatchewan. You know, you're addressing, you know, your challenges in your own way.

But the question raised about how are you going to do—and how are you going to provide funding to municipalities if you have across-the-board cuts? This just doesn't 'jithe'. Most Manitobans, you know, they understand and they realize that if you're going to cut every department, someone is going to pay. Whether you're laying off 700 teachers or 600 teachers or a thousand nurses, it has to come from someplace. And to hear members opposite talk about, oh, efficiencies and, you know, there's ways to address these efficiencies and, oh, all this fat that's in government. You know, all we have to do in—get rid of a lot of these managers and get rid a lot of these department heads and cut those departments down.

Manitobans understand when you do that, your services are going to decrease. Manitobans aren't stupid, they get it; opposition don't get it. I mean, you know, we have many discussions with the opposition formally and informally all the time about, you know, their views on the fiscal situation in Manitoba. And we try to work with them and we try to explain to them, and, quite frankly, if I might just touch on that about explaining and—I think Manitobans—at this point, at least I can speak to my own constituents.

When I have an opportunity to speak to my constituents and I explain to them about how difficult it was—a difficult decision for us. There are only so many that you could—there's no money tree. There's only so many decisions that you can make with regard to the financial situation of a province, and how do you increase revenue and what do you do to address that. You can either cut, cut, cut every department, all the services, lay people off, or you can do other things. And the other thing, the difficult decision we made—and this was not an easy thing to do. We had a fulsome discussion, a robust discussion amongst all MLAs on the side of the government as to how do you address the challenges.

We've got infrastructure, hospitals, schools, daycares, personal care homes, roads, bridges, all infrastructure. How do you address this? Difficult decision was made to raise the PST by 1 cent on the dollar. So—and 1 per cent of PST from 7 to 8. This

was not an easy thing to do, but when I have a chance to talk to my constituents and explain to them where that money is going and the necessity for it, do you prefer that or do you prefer your services being cut and teachers laid off or nurses laid off or people in personal care homes laid off. Overwhelmingly, the people say, well, you know, we understand. We don't like it, but we get it. We understand what you had to do, you know, and there was no easy choices to be made.

Whereas the federal government, they made a decision to lay people off, lay, you know, thousands of civil servants off, federal civil servants, to try to balance their books. It's a decision—we just disagree with that and we decided to go a different way. You know, Prime Minister Harper has a lot of challenges, and his ministers, Minister Flaherty, you know, and—we understand that.

But they should be congratulated on the Building Canada Fund. That is something that all infrastructure across Canada needs—an infusion of money. And they made a—over a \$50-billion commitment to Canada and to the provinces and to municipalities. And we were really pleased with that, and it's going to start April 1st, 2014. And Minister Flaherty, the Prime Minister and Minister Lebel and, locally, Minister Fletcher, should be thanked for that because even though they were cutting jobs and trying to balance their books, they did put in a good program. I believe that'll—that history will show that that was important, to create jobs.

You're talking hundreds of thousands of jobs. In Manitoba, the last Building Canada Fund monies we're currently in now but nearing the end of it. I think, it's estimated about 30,000 jobs have been created throughout construction industry and other jobs as a result of that money that Manitoba's invested. So, thank you to the member for Selkirk for a very important question on the kind of monies other provinces and the kind of decisions other provinces made. We decided to put money in 8.5 per cent increase into municipalities and approximately \$30 million more than last year.

**Mr. Dewar:** Well, thank you, and I do appreciate the answer from the minister. As I said, we're proud of our government's commitment to municipal government. I know that the municipal leaders that I deal with in my home constituency are pleased. The mayor from Selkirk and the mayor from St. Clements who, I might add, was on record yesterday as supporting the increase in the provincial sales tax.

Mayor Steve Strang from the RM of St. Clements who was at an announcement with the—attended an announcement here in the Legislature where our government announced an additional \$4 million to enhance the beautiful Grand Beach Provincial Park which demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that these natural spaces are enhanced. There's over 430,000 visitors per year to Grand Beach Provincial Park and the number is increasing and I'm very proud of that. It's been part of my constituency. I know, all members here who have these beautiful natural assets as part of their constituencies are very proud of that fact.

So as I said, you know, I have a good relationship with municipal leaders in my community and we don't always get along, obviously, you know, but I think I know that they're satisfied, certainly, with the level of funding. They would prefer, I would argue sometimes, to see more and, you know, I mean, who doesn't, I think. But I know they'd be very disappointed and they'd be very upset if they had to endure the 5 per cent cut that is being advocated by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) and his colleagues across the way. When you cut five hundred, six hundred million dollars out of the budget in one year, which they promised to do. And I said, you know, when you're in opposition you promise everything to all people. You try to be everything to all people and it's going to catch up to you. And it's clearly catching up to them now.

I had a chance to attend the public hearings here the other night, for a number of them—I've been to all of them—and, you know, you hear the members opposite there. Today they're on the side of the taxpayer, yet when they were in government, when they were in government, they never cut a single tax. They have absolutely no record, no credibility at all, when it comes to the reduction of taxes in this province. You know, some of the members and some of the members were talking about municipal government, I would argue, you know, the—some of them were part of municipal government, across the way and I'm, you know, I would almost guarantee, that when they were, you know, held positions of power in municipal government, whether they were reeves or councillors, that they never cut a tax. And if they did, they can prove me wrong. I'll apologize to them.

The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) who was on a school trustee and up there I think in the Transcona, I believe, Springfield area for many years; he was a school trustee in the '90s when the

Gary Filmon government was cutting their funding, cutting their funding. You know, there was like a zero-zero increase, and it—well, you call that an increase. And then right before the election you see it go up to 2 per cent and then it would drop down, zero, then many years there were cuts. I would argue the member for St. Paul, when he was a school trustee, when he had the opportunity to make a tax cut, what did he do? Well, he did not, he did nothing. He did nothing. Quite the opposite, he increased taxes.

The member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) who was a member of the Filmon government and the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and, of course, the member for Fort Whyte, all of them were members of the Filmon government. They never cut a single tax, never cut a single tax, increased taxes. So for now, now they are going to these committee hearings and they're pretending they're on the side of the taxpayer, you know, and it's difficult to sit there and see them do that when they have absolutely no credibility, no history of tax cutters, but now they pretend that they're, you know, the friend of the tax cutter—tax cutting, Mr. Chair.

\* (10:50)

And I know it's kind of hard to take, to sit there and listen to them do that, but as I said, you know, they're going to cut taxes. They're going to cut—they're going to increase revenue—or, excuse me, they're going to increase program spending because they have to—they have to.

I mean, I haven't heard a single Conservative MLA enter this House and say, please, don't pave that road that runs through my constituency. Quite the opposite—quite the opposite. I don't hear them say, please, please shut down that hospital. Wait, wait, wait—quite the opposite every single day to the—and I've been here for a number of years—every single day.

And in fact, if you walk through this building now, you'd walk into other rooms and there are other Estimates being held, which we know is a chance for members to raise issues about the expenditures in the department. But it's also the opportunity—and I see this often is the case—for Conservative MLAs to ask for more money. And I was in highway Estimates the other day and every single member lined up outside the row—outside the room, and one after another came in—one after another came in and got in front of the mike and said, please spend more money in my constituency. Please give me more money in my



constituency. And they—well, they didn't care about the fact that they were advocating to cut the PST, you know, and they didn't care about the fact that they're running this—you know, they're—all of a sudden have a—feign an interest in the deficit. No, they want more, more, more, more. Mr. Chair, so that is the policy, that is the belief of the members opposite.

I want to get back to the issue of funding for the municipalities here in Manitoba. As I said, very proud of the fact that even though we're faced with these difficult times, that we still feel that funding municipal government is a priority of our government. And I know the member said—the minister said that we gave a direct increase in grant—I believe it was 8 and a half per cent—but what other levels of funding do we provide to municipal governments besides, like, a direct transfer of money?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, and the MLA for Selkirk, as he usually is, as always is, he's very articulate with regard to making his point. And I know the people of his constituency speak very highly of him, because he is an advocate for them—yes, part of the government, but a strong advocate.

I can just point to Highway 59, for example, and the paving that's happened on Highway 59. Quite frankly, you need strong advocates like the MLA for Selkirk pushing for Highway 59 reconstruction. But the MLA for Selkirk doesn't say, we need to address this infrastructure and then the next day saying, oh, let's get rid of all kinds of programs. Let's cut right across the board. There's the difference. You can't do it. It just doesn't add up. I mean, as the government, our NDP vision of building our province for the future is one that we've articulated over and over and over.

The PC vision of deep cuts to services Manitoba families rely on and the bottom line, the leader has no solutions, a long record of cuts and privatization, and it's too extreme for Manitoba families. And I don't use that term lightly, being extreme. Now, I know the MLA for Steinbach is not that extreme. I know he's more of a moderate. Many, many in the southeast call him a Liberal, but, you know—but—you know—maybe they don't. But I know that he is respected and I've never heard him agree with the Leader of the Opposition, the MLA for Fort Whyte, about cut, cut, cut, cut. I mean, I—to be fair, I don't think he's ever—I don't think I've ever heard him say that, but—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) is partially correct. I've never said that I agreed with it because the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) has actually never said it. So why would I agree with something that he's actually never said.

He's knows that he's misrepresenting the position of our party and the Leader of the Official Opposition. I'm sure that you'll rule this is a dispute over the facts, but the fact is that none of the things that the member for Dawson Trail is alleging has been said.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I thank the honourable member for Steinbach. With respect, I have to rule that he does not have a point of order, but we thank him for his clarification.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Lemieux:** Yes—no, no, I would never want to ever put words into the MLA for Steinbach's—you know, to ever do that.

So—but the point is that when the Leader of the Opposition talks about getting rid of the PST increase, you know, talking about—and it's not just that one point. It's others—other dollars would be affected as well.

But the—just to address the question directly so I don't digress too far from the question, what other kind of funding has been given to the municipalities in Manitoba aside from that 8.5 per cent—you know, the 8.5 per cent increase and also that \$30 million extra to municipalities—people call it extra; we call it a good investment.

But I have to tell you that recently we made an announcement with regard to a municipal water infrastructure. It was a \$12-million announcement, and the Manitoba government was pleased to partner with the Town of Neepawa to help provide a community with long-term reliable source of clean water. And these are the kinds of shared investments that are really needed in communities and community infrastructure to create jobs and make life better for their families and their citizens.

The Municipal Water Infrastructure Fund is a three-year, \$12-million initiative for water and waste water projects in the community around Manitoba as part of the Manitoba Building and Renewal Plan, and the new fund will support up to 50 per cent cost-sharing for water and waste water projects. The priority will be given to the design and engineering work required to allow municipalities to make application for capital support through the federal government's new Building Canada plan.

What is behind this is that when we entered the Building Canada Fund last time, the federal government came forward with this program but many municipalities were caught off guard. It took them a year to gear up to get their engineering plans done, to do—sometimes environmental studies done. So what this investment, this pot of money, is meant to do is to assist municipalities on the 50-50 basis to try to get their engineering done, if they're looking at waste water treatment plant, if they're looking at water treatment, that this will get them ready for the new Building Canada Fund. So, when the application process starts as of, let's say, early next summer—the program starts April 1st, 2014—they will be ready with their engineering plans, whatever studies they may need, and this will assist them to do that.

And I know that this kind of dedicated funding for municipal infrastructure projects is being increased by more than \$30 million in Budget 2014, and it shouldn't be lost on the public that the opposition is against this, have voted against this. And every day we hear petitions, whether it's the MLA for Agassiz—I believe is what it's called now—but the former MLA for Ste. Rose gets up every day talking about how he wants this road going around the community of Ste. Rose and using a dike road and, yes, he says, well, it's only a million bucks, what's the big deal? Well, that cut, what's a million? You know, I can hear now the requests and the people lined up in the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation's (Mr. Ashton) Estimates asking for all these pro—like, how do they think this is going to work? Asking for all these projects and yet they want to cut across the board. I mean, Manitobans understand this just does not work. And maybe they have their own vision of how they're going to raise revenue and so—well, we haven't heard it, because all we hear is cut, cut, cut all the time, and we're talking about building Manitoba and not cutting.

So I know it's easy for a minister to get on their soapbox, and I'll try to be more specific with regard to programs that we're doing and I'll try to stay away

from the political soapbox and I'll try to give concrete, accurate information on the record of the things that we are doing, the real things that we're doing, and that \$12-million investment for municipal water infrastructure is real.

You have the mayor of Neepawa, who has been a long-time Conservative candidate, long-time Conservative member, who, in his own words, was truly appreciative of the investment. He said, you're on the right track. He ran against—I'm try—I can't remember the constituency he ran in, but he said, you know, this is real, these are the kinds of things that municipalities need and this is something that your government recognizes. And his comments were something to this effect, that the Town of Neepawa has had this project in mind for a long time, tapping into the aquifer and upgrading our water treatment plant has been discussed for many years, that kind of terminology. To be able to partner with the Province on this project is great for the area and gratifying response for the councillors and mayors that were present at the event.

\* (11:00)

And so they have an appreciation on the ground in rural Manitoba, aside what from all the members of the opposition that come from rural Manitoba strutting to the coffee shops every day, saying, big, bad government, you know, don't vote for them, they're terrible.

But you have a Conservative candidate, Conservative card-carrying member for many, many years saying this government's on the right track; this is the way to spend money; this is the way to invest money, real things. Not just the chatter, the rhetoric that members opposite go around to the rural coffee shops and a kind of nonsense that's being spread. Because here you have Mr. Waddell, who's a strong leader in his own community saying that he is very supportive of the kind of programs that we have. That is fact and that is accurate.

And those are the kinds of things maybe Manitobans aren't hearing, the kind of 1 per cent of PST, that's what this does, not cutting departments, not cutting Water Services branch.

But, so I'll try to be as specific as I can with regard to not only sewer and water but also there's many road projects in the city of Winnipeg. So, we were looking at the city of Winnipeg and we're also looking at rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba. And we have made a commitment to Manitobans

that they know our vision; they know what we're looking at; they know what we're doing.

I think, though, to be critical of ourselves a little bit, we have to do a better job of getting the message to Manitobans, to give them the message on what is really happening in concrete terms and what we're doing with the 1 per cent PST and how it affects their communities directly. Clean water: you don't have clean water? Your town, your community's going nowhere.

And so we just—I just finished commenting on the kind of program that we're bringing forward that will help municipalities tap into the Building Canada Fund. We're proud of it and we're very pleased to try to tell people as much as we can.

Even though in the Legislature it's hard at times, we have to do it in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba and throughout the city of Winnipeg on what it—we're really doing, not the kind of nonsense that's being spread out there by members opposite and trying to justify in their own way of what cuts are going to do. Now, how is that going to make Manitoba any better?

Thank you.

**Mr. Dewar:** Thank you. I do agree with the minister, of course, that the 5 per cent cut across the board advocated by the members opposite would mean devastating—have a devastating result for municipal governments and Manitobans as a whole when you cut out close to \$600 million in one year, as the members opposite are advocating for.

We know that will mean less doctors, less nurses, less teachers, less important civil servants, less staff to do issues that are important to Manitobans, less money for roads, less money for critical infrastructure. We know that obviously it'll hurt municipal governments in a very dramatic way seeing less. Well, 5 per cent cut in their budget wouldn't hardly, certainly wouldn't help their situation as they provide services to their constituents as we do trying to provide services to the constituents of Manitoba.

I know one of the things that we do, and it was brought in by the Filmon government, and that was, of course, was the revenue sharing with the, with VLTs. And I remember in the 1990s when the VLTs were introduced and this was introduced by the Gary Filmon government, in fact the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was the gaming minister at the time. And at that time, no one ever heard of a

video lottery terminal; it was an unknown thing in across Manitoba, across Canada.

And the Filmon government decided to introduce VLTs to Manitoba. And he brought in several thousand of them at the time. And initially the—all the profits from the—first of all, they were introduced to rural Manitoba. All the profits they promised, all the profits from VLTs, were to return back to municipal governments.

Well, they discovered that VLTs were very popular, and the revenue was, in fact, quite a bit more than they had initially anticipated. And they discovered that municipal governments were going to receive this windfall in revenue. Well, they backtracked on that. They backtracked on that and they decided, well, we can't do that. So they cut back the amount of revenue they were going to provide to municipal governments from the profits from video lottery terminals, which were only at that time in rural Manitoba.

Well, then they decided, well, this isn't enough. This isn't enough gambling in the province. Let's introduce more gambling. So what did they do?

*Mr. Dave Gaudreau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

Well, members will recall there used to be a casino here in Manitoba at the top of the hotel Fort Garry called the Crystal Casino, and that money, the revenues from that were to be used for health research. Well, the Filmon government decided Manitobans don't have enough gaming opportunities; let's expand that—let's expand that. So they decided to build two new casinos, the McPhillips Street Station and the one on Regent Avenue, which, I might add, were built—they had a cost of construction of a certain amount, and when the bill came in, it was doubled—the bill came in and it was doubled. They spent twice as much building these casinos as they initially promised Manitobans it would cost.

So here we have the members opposite, first of all, introduce all the VLTs into Manitoba. We have the members opposite introduce two of the major casinos in—or build the two of the big casinos in Manitoba, and now we have the members opposite criticize the government for using gaming revenue as a source of income for the government, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, again, hypocrisy from the members opposite know no bounds—no bounds at all. And which is, again, you know, people need to know—appreciate the history of gaming in this province.

Members opposite pretend that, you know, VLTs were something that happened when we formed government—but no—no. They were brought in in the '90s by the Gary Filmon government. The minister for—member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was the minister at the time. I was a gaming critic, and this is how I remembered this. But revenues from the VLTs we promised to—and we promised on with the tradition of providing revenues from VLTs to municipal governments. I know that they've come to rely upon those revenues. I think in the City of Selkirk, for example, it's close to the hundred thousand mark that they receive and, I believe, it's an unconditional grant.

So my question to the minister is: What is his position when it comes to the revenues that is—that we provide to municipal government? Is it the policy of the government to continue with this level of support to municipal governments in the province?

**Mr. Lemieux:** A very good question because—and I'll try to get to the question in a roundabout way, but every day in the Legislature we hear the—well, at one time, we started hearing unparliamentary comments being made by members opposite with regard to the leader and what was said or not said during the previous election campaign.

And what was very—in a very articulate way, last night at committee, there were a number of people who stated, and I believe most Manitobans would agree with this: You can make a decision at a point in time in history based on the information you have and the kind of information of what you're trying to foresee into the future. But nobody knows—no one can expect a billion-dollar flood. No one knows what is going to happen in years to come.

The Premier of the Province, the leader of the NDP at the time, in my humble opinion, based all his decisions on the information he had at the time and—as we all do. So you make those decisions and sometimes you have to change because times change.

Just like amalgamation of municipalities, times change, you have to move ahead, you have to look for different strategies, and that is what we're faced with.

This was not an easy decision for our government to raise the PST by 1 per cent. This isn't—it's not. We've acknowledged that. We've said how difficult a decision it was. Our House leader has said it repeatedly. Our Minister of Finance

(Mr. Struthers) has said it repeatedly; this was not an easy decision for us to make, and I will repeat it; it was not an easy decision to make.

But in government, and history has shown, that leaders, the ones that really want to lead, have a vision, they have a plan and they move on it. And in my humble opinion, the current Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba, is not just talking about let's cut, cut, cut, and looking for easy solutions. It was a difficult decision for him, ultimately, as a Premier to make, in concert, and in, of course, discussion with his team, members of Cabinet and his caucus, made the decision to raise the PST by 1 per cent.

Now that money is going to municipalities. They increased the municipalities by \$32 million, an increase over what we—what was in 2012, by a \$415 million—almost a half-a-billion-dollar investment into municipalities.

\* (11:10)

That investment, from municipal leaders, all municipal leaders I've talked to, are truly grateful for it, because they know what's going on across the country and the kind of cuts that are happening, the kind of philosophy that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition believes in, and that's part of his DNA. And he believes in cuts, and he thinks that's the solution. Well, I mean, Manitobans will decide, and they'll have a number of years in a number of—in three years or so they'll have an opportunity to decide if that's the kind of vision they want. Or do they want a building-Manitoba vision, building hydro, building roads, building sewage treatment plants, building water treatment plants? You know, is that what they want? And just like the mayor of Steinbach wants a new multiplex facility in the community of Steinbach. You know, I, personally, think that a regional complex like that may be a good idea, but, you know, the mayor of Steinbach would like to go and tap into the Building Canada Fund, would like to get provincial dollars and would like to get federal dollars to go one third, one third, one third into a large multiplex for the beautiful community of Steinbach, which is growing, one of the fastest growing communities in all of Manitoba.

You can't do it by cutting. You can't. And I believe citizens of Steinbach understand this, citizens of Manitoba understand you can't do it by cutting.

And so, I guess, to my point is that it's a different vision, I grant it. I mean, people will decide on what kind of a vision that they want for their province, and I just happen to agree that sometimes you have to make difficult decisions when you're government and you have to show leadership and you have to sometimes make tough decisions. And the kind of tough decisions I'm talking about is not the kind of tough decisions that said, you know, I think it's time for a little tough love, which, that is on the record, absolutely on the record, from the member opposite—*[interjection]*—you're on your own, you know, pull yourself up by the bootstraps and, you know, I'm sure you'll manage somehow.

And so when you're talking about \$550-million across-the-board cuts, that would mean less for municipalities, less for Winnipeg and less for all Manitobans. And so that is difficult. It's difficult, but I don't believe Manitobans right now know the true picture of what's going on and what the opposition is saying. I think it's 'oncumbent'—incumbent on as a government and as MLAs on the government side to get the message out to Manitobans, to go into those coffee shops and to talk to people and explain what our vision is and also the other side of the picture, where the opposition stands as well.

And to be quite frank, what we hear, and often in petitions, is that they want roads, they want bridges, they want all kinds of things, they want—*[interjection]*—you know, well, you've got the MLA for La Verendrye's here, and, you know, he's—I believe he's a very sincere person, and he is, and he works hard—and he works hard—on behalf of his citizens. And, you know—but, you know, but what does he say, though, in a petition? He wants more to happen in Vita. You know, I mean, you know, he's heard from some of his citizens, how are you going to improve health care in Vita, and how are you going to do this if you're going to cut? Cut, cut, cut, but then, if you want doctors, if you want nurses, if you want people at Vita, how are you going to do that by cutting \$550 million and getting rid of the PST and trying to lower the PST to Saskatchewan's.

You know? I know he's a new MLA, but he's been in business. He understands that, you know, that that just doesn't jive.

**An Honourable Member:** You have to learn how to spend your money better.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Learn how to spend better. Oh, well, we saw that in the 1990s: lay off teachers, lay off doctors; that's spending better.

**An Honourable Member:** On a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** On a point of order, member for Steinbach.

**Mr. Goertzen:** A point of clarification. I think I heard the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) promise the good people of Vita that if there was a PST increase that their ER would open, there'd be doctors there. We've now had the PST increase in place for four days. Can he tell the good people of Vita when that promise will be fulfilled that he's made? When are those doctors coming, and when is the ER going to open, because the PST's already being collected? He said it's going to happen, so I'd just like to know the answer.

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Sorry, there's—oh, the honourable House leader?

There's actually—actually, there is no point of order on this, and you can't ask a question on a point of order.

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**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** The honourable Minister for Local Government.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Well, thank you very much. Let me just conclude by—maybe my answer with regard to the question came—coming from the member from Selkirk is that, you know, and I know the member from Steinbach wouldn't want to put words into my mouth and I wouldn't want to do that for him either. And that is not what I said with regard to Vita. I was just saying that the member that represents that community wants to see all kinds of things happen to his constituency. So, how is that going to happen with all kinds of cuts? I mean, that's the challenge. I mean, that's the challenge that I pose to him. You know, every day, he comes in with petitions, wanting to do things better for his community. That's not going to happen with a \$550-million cut. So, that was the point I was making. Sincere as he is, you know, hard-working as he is, but just has a wrong vision, you know, he just has a wrong vision—and it's not the vision that we have—of cut, cut, cut.

So, you know, but, you know, Mr. Chairperson, you know, just wanting to address what the member from Selkirk raised, was, you know, he talked about how the MLA for River East let the genie out of the bottle in the early 1990s, let the toothpaste out of the toothpaste container, and once the toothpaste is out, and once the genie's out of the bottle, you know, it's—you know, you can't put the genie back in the bottle

and you can't put the toothpaste back in. But you know, that's a decision they brought in just like they brought in the Hells Angels into Manitoba. It's not something that—you know, that—but we have to deal with it. It's like all the cuts in health care; it took us 10 years to clean up the mess, and we're still trying to work at it.

So, if I could just address the question raised by the MLA for Selkirk, which is a very good one, about, surely, there's other things you can do with the 1 per cent PST, other than just cutting. And I agree. We've got recreation community facilities that have been announced in Manitoba. You have roads in the city of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba that have been announced. And I know the minister from MIT is in his Estimates, and I'm sure he's letting members opposite know his capital plan and where these roads are happening. But in Budget 2013, building Manitoba roads and highways and bridges was really an important piece of it.

And yet we have people every day raising petitions about how they want their road done, and yet, on the other side of the coin, they want us to cut. You know, so—and our government, I think, record probably shows that more than 50 per cent of the roadwork that's being done are actually done in Conservative constituencies. And so the key is that we are spreading the wealth throughout the whole province of Manitoba. We represent every corner of the province of Manitoba, and we're proud of that, and we are concerned about every corner of the province of Manitoba, and we'll continue to do so.

**Mr. Dewar:** Again, I enjoyed the minister's comments, Mr. Chairperson, very thoughtful, insightful observations about the members opposite and their trying-to-be-all-things-to-all-people philosophy. You know, they're trying to cut 550 to 600 million dollars out of the budget. They promise that. They promise that. It's, you know, and it's—there's no denying that, how they're going to do that, and then, try to deal with their insatiable appetite for more money. Every member opposite demands more money of this government, as I said, through petitions, through questions, through Estimates. None of them, probably—like they say, they don't go back to their riding and say, you know, I went to the Legislature and I demanded that we do not build that road. No, they don't do that.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

I mean, I had a chance to read other newspapers, and you know, I'm reading the newspapers from the

Lac du Bonnet area, and the—you know, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) is a fine member, and—but, you know, he doesn't say, don't build that nursing home in Lac du Bonnet. Oh no, no. He could be, if he really cared about the debt, if he really cared about, you know, taxes, he could say, no, stop that. He could have, you know, put his hand up in front of the bulldozer and said, don't; don't build this nursing home; don't build this personal care home in Lac du Bonnet; no, no, put the money against the deficit; put the money against—use it for tax relief. No, he did not.

The member for—represents Morden-Winkler, we're building a nursing home there—personal care home there. If he really cared about the deficit, which he claims to do—I've hear him—I hear him talk. If he really cares about taxes, he could have said, no, no, no; don't build that nursing home—or, that personal care home in my constituency; please put a stop to it; take that money—take that money from that personal care home and apply it against the deficit or use it for tax relief for Manitobans. But he did not.

\* (11:20)

And the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who has received the—you know, I think we've built two or three schools in his community—not once has he ever said, don't do that. He demands more—he demands more. He demands more schools; he demands more roads. If he really cared—if he really cared about the deficit, if he really cared about tax relief, he could have said don't build that, don't do those things in my community, apply that money towards the deficit, apply that money towards tax relief for Manitobans. But they do not, they never ever do—never, Mr. Chair.

And I know that—I know the member for Steinbach will be leaving us soon and that's too bad, but I'm not sure, you know, I'm actually advocating for the member for La Verendrye to challenge the member for Steinbach—

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The honourable member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** We're not supposed to refer to the attendance or non-attendance or the departures of members, but the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is actually correct. I will be leaving you in an hour and 10 minutes.

**An Honourable Member:** Does that mean you're announcing you're running for the nomination?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm leaving in an hour and 10 minutes—hour and 10 minutes, I'm leaving you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, after—[*interjection*] Order, please.

The member for Steinbach does indeed have a point of order. We are not to make reference to the presence or absence of members within the Chamber.

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**Mr. Chairperson:** I return to the member for Selkirk to put his question.

**Mr. Dewar:** I do apologize to the member.

I meant that he's going to be leaving provincial politics to run for federal politics, and that's what I meant when I said he's leaving us, Mr. Chair. But I thought maybe he was going to—when he interrupted, I thought he was going to say that he's prepared to forego those capital expenditures that we're building in his community and put that money against the deficit or put that money against a tax relief.

But my—I do have a question to the minister. It deals with the issue of amalgamation, which is a ongoing debate in this Chamber. And I remember in 1999, when the Gary Filmon government—which the members opposite said is the best government in the history of the province—one of the things Filmon—Premier Filmon promised was a 10 per cent cut in all government services. A 10 per cent cut across the board was one of his promises, and he also said that, well, that'll apply to us as MLAs. So we were going to be 10 per cent less MLAs, so presumably six less MLAs.

Now, I—what I—my question is to the minister who deals with the issue of amalgamations. Why—you know, one thing you—there's a couple of things you can believe about conservatism and conservatives, is that they believe they have a blind faith in the free-enterprise system to solve all problems. You know, if there's poverty, you know, the marketplace will decide. If there's people that are too rich, well, the marketplace will decide. You know, if there's flooding, well, the marketplace will decide.

Another thing is the belief of the rights of the individual over the collective and the—

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The honourable member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Because I respect your authority, Mr. Chairperson, I respect the rules of this House, you asked the member to put his question and he seems to have gone back into a diatribe. I know it's difficult for him to be focused, but if you could ask him to be focused and ask his question again.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, the member for Steinbach on a point of order, but the member for Selkirk does have a maximum time limit of 10 minutes to put his question. And in respect for the rules, we will call upon the member for Selkirk in the 10-minute period that he's been allotted to put his question. So the—so I again recognize the member for Selkirk to put a question.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Dewar:** I was saying, Mr. Chair, the—you believe—the Conservatives believe in certain things, and one they would believe—and I would argue—is smaller government. And so not only are we providing smaller government through amalgamation, we're providing less government.

So I guess my question to the minister would be, if smaller government was good for Gary Filmon, why isn't it good enough for the members opposite?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable—order, please. Order, please. The honourable Minister of Local Government.

**Mr. Lemieux:** And it's a very important question, because last night at—you know, we heard last night that the current government has given—I think it was a billion point two million dollars in cuts—in tax cuts over the past decade or so, which is something you don't hear very much from members opposite. Like—you know, and there are some people, to their credit, came forward and said they didn't like that. They really didn't like it because they thought, you know, if you cut over a billion dollars in taxes, you know, that was the equivalent of the cost of the recent flood in 2011. If you had not cut a billion point two in taxes, that money would've been applied to a huge flood in 2011.

So the member opposite from Selkirk raises all kinds of points of order. I wish he would raise a question actually to me as the Minister of Local Government, as opposed to points of order. And I'd like to hear from the opposition and hear some of

their questions they have with regard to what's going on in infrastructure across the province and the kind of investment this Province has made, because I know they don't want to hear it, because we do have fact and facts to point to all the investments that we've made across Manitoba and where that PST is going. And as a government, we said that we would be accountable.

And I can—I'll give you three points that the mayor of Winnipeg has raised. He said, you know, make spending, for example, from the new PST point entirely transparent. Well, we made a commitment to being fully accountable for the infrastructure investments that we're going to make with regard to PST increase. You know, critical infrastructure's important. I know the mayor of Winnipeg says, well, streets and, you know, roads—that's important and curbs, yes. But I believe also, health care, personal care homes, daycares, schools are also important in the City of Winnipeg and those are a responsibility of the Province of Manitoba. And to us, that is also critical infrastructure.

I know the mayor has also raised the idea of, you know, exempt all municipalities—Manitoba municipalities—from paying the PST. Well, as mandated by legislation, the Province, for example, pays Winnipeg's grant in lieu of property tax this year, and it's about \$6.7 million, and that's just in—an additional investment that we've made to the City of Winnipeg. And, I mean, we're pleased to do it, but often a lot of this and the monies that the Province give by virtue of what we're raising in taxes or other means, is we're providing investments to the City of Winnipeg, but also all of Manitoba.

And I know that the mayor says, well, you know, work with all the mayors and reeves on a long-term infrastructure funding plan. Well, more than one-seventh of PST is spent on municipal infrastructure through the Building Manitoba Fund now, and that's \$30 million this year more than last year. And between 2005 and '13, there's been about a \$200-million increase in funding or investments in Manitoba municipalities, and the—in this year's budget, \$415 million is for municipalities.

So I find it very difficult to listen to the members opposite every day wanting a new road, a new hospital, a new daycare, a new personal care home and yet, on the other side of the coin, they say they want cuts everywhere. You have to spend better, be more efficient, lay off civil servants—you know, lay off guards at—in jails. You know, we've seen that

movie, in the 1990s; it didn't work. It's a failed fiscal policy or vision, and I thought members opposite would have seen that and known it. Well, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition was there, and he was part of the Cabinet at the time and you would think he would've learned a lesson, that that's not the vision Manitobans want.

Manitobans want a building government. They want a government that is working with the people, working with municipalities, working with different stakeholders in the province to make the province a better place. Build hydro dams, build for the future—not put the brakes on. Stop building the floodway, stop hydro dams, stop everything, you know.

And then, where's that going to get us? In order to—it takes 10 years to build a hydro dam, from start to finish. You know, you can't just add water and stir and you have a hydro dam. I mean it—or add water and stir and you've got new doctors and nurses. When you lay off a thousand nurses, it takes 10 years to get that all back. When you lay off 700 teachers, you don't just add water and stir and magically they show up. So, you know, Manitobans, I believe, understand this.

\*(11:30)

There are many Manitobans that are upset with the 1 per cent PST increase—granted, I understand it. But, you know, in time, when they see the results of the infrastructure investments that we're making, when they see new doctors coming to the province, when they see more nurses, when they see people coming to this province, when they see the investments that are made in roads and bridges and the kind of infrastructure we're talking about, when they see that Manitoba's able to contribute to the new Building Canada Fund and be able to match the federal dollars and we're not just leaving dollars on the table, when they see all of this happen they will understand and make a connection, though—even though as difficult as it was to raise the PST, they will see that this was a difficult decision, but the right decision. It's either that or you have the equivalent of that 1 per cent and greater that they want to cut.

You know, I get it. It's a different vision and they're entitled to their vision, but I would like to see them go out to rural Manitoba and tell rural Manitobans that—what they're going to cut. Like, what exactly are they going to cut? Are they going to cut the highways budget? Are they going to cut the health-care budget? Are they going to cut the



education budget? I mean, what are they going to cut, you know? And so it's very difficult because, as the member from Selkirk rightly pointed out, and as members from—others on our side, opposition—I have not—I've never been in opposition government. I was fortunate to be elected in 1999 and become a Cabinet minister then, and I had never been in opposition, but I know members on this side that were. I said, you know, members that are in opposition say everything, do everything, want to be everything to everybody, but to be a government and to show true leadership, you have to make difficult decisions. It's not always easy. It's not, and we understand that and I believe in the long term Manitobans will understand that, that it's not an easy thing to do. And if they take a look and reflect and see what's going on across the country, the different approaches that have been taken, whether it's in other countries or across in other provinces in this country, we have taken a different approach.

We believe that stimulus investment and being approach—approaching the economy in that way will create jobs, will be better for the future of our province, and it is a different vision, granted. And Manitobans, of course, will eventually make that decision on—is their life—will their life be better in three years than it is today? I would argue, yes, and when they take a look at everything considered, I think they'll make a decision that this government made tough decisions, but the right decisions. Not easy, that's for sure.

But, having said that, Manitobans are thoughtful, reasonable caring people and care about their neighbours. They care about their communities and they want—in the long term, they really want and they understand that governments will try to work with them. And when you make a decision today, things change and you have to address them.

No one can anticipate a 2011 flood. So when we raise the PST, as difficult as it is, when you're going to provide flood protection for western Manitoba and Brandon to a one-in-300-year flood, and you hear the member from Brandon West say, put the brakes on. Stop. You know, well, the citizens of Brandon West, are they going to be very happy if Brandon's not protected to a one-in-300-year flood protection where that one point of PST will be going to protect the beautiful city, second largest city in the province? I mean, I think citizens of Brandon will want that protection. They'll want that flood protection just as was provided in the last decade to communities south of Winnipeg.

So many investments are happening, but those investments can't happen when you're cutting. Cut, cut, cut, slash, hack, slice, dice, whack budgets is not the way to go.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** I'm delighted to be able to participate in these Estimates session, especially in Local Government. Members of the House will know that I came to Winnipeg in the mid-1990s to work for the City of Winnipeg, and it's been a great move for myself and my family. And I was honoured to be able to work there, first, in the city archives, a beautiful former Carnegie Library on William Avenue. Members will, I'm sure, want to know that we have one of the finest municipal archival collections in Canada, something to be extraordinarily proud of in Winnipeg. And so it was an honour for me to come from Kingston and come from Queen's and come to work for the City of Winnipeg in the archives, and then I went on to work in the CAO's office for the City of Winnipeg for almost, a little more than a decade, and I had the honour to serve with six CAOs at the time throughout my career.

I began all that long time ago when Gail Stevens was the first CAO for the City, and then Annitta Stenning was the next CAO and after Annitta left, Alex Robinson filled in temporarily as acting, and then Glen Laubenstein came—he's gone off to Fort McMurray now. He was the former CAO in Brandon. And then following that I had the opportunity to—Mike Ruta, who's the chief financial officer took over as acting for a while, and then, most recently, Phil Sheegl was appointed as the CAO for the City of Winnipeg. And Mr. Sheegl was particularly interesting because he went from being in the real estate business, I understand, to being the director of planning, property and development, then to being the CAO for the City, and I'd never seen that kind of rapid rise through the ranks of the city during my 15 years there. It was almost like he knew somebody and I—anyways, I want to say that things close to the City of Winnipeg are obviously very special to me. And, so that's, Mr. Chair, where I want to focus a number of my questions to the minister about our relationship with the City of Winnipeg.

I know that when I moved here in the mid-1990s, the relationship between the City and the Filmon government was in very poor condition. The lines of communications were, frankly, quite closed, and it interests me, Mr. Chair, to listen to the members of the opposition most days talking about

defending the rights of municipal governments as a result of Bill 33, the amalgamation bill, but in fact, historically, the opposition has a very poor relationship with municipalities. They certainly had a very poor relationship with the City of Winnipeg. And I know that Winnipeg itself was in a deplorable condition when I arrived here. There simply was no investments in the infrastructure of the city at that time.

In those days, interestingly enough, Mr. Chair, the Filmon government referred to that as deferred maintenance. We'll get to that someday, but for now we can't afford it so we're going to defer maintenance. And then, over time, that resulted grew into a huge infrastructure deficit that our government was forced to address when we were elected in 1999, and that's precisely what we've done. We changed the relationship with the City of Winnipeg. In fact, we changed the city charter. When I got here, The City of Winnipeg Act was a huge mother of a beast with all kinds of rules and regulations that didn't provide the City with the kind of latitude, the kind of flexibility that it required in order to do the kinds of things we hope and want municipal governments to do. And so we worked with them and created the charter for the City of Winnipeg, for, I think that was in early part of the 2000s. And so, a charter for the 21st century that really set the relationship between the City and the Province on a brand new trajectory, and one that I think, if we look around, we can see the results of.

And so, you know, when I think about what Main Street and Portage Avenue looked like when I arrived here, and now I see the difference. You see, you know, you see the WRHA building on Main Street—now you didn't see that before. The former Premier Doer said we reintroduced the extinct animal known as the building crane back into the downtown of Winnipeg, precisely because it had gone missing during the Filmon years, and quite likely it would go missing again were the Tories ever able to get the keys to government.

But then beside the WRHA building on Main Street, you see the United Way, also investing—a fantastic building there. And then go a little bit further and you'll find the Bell Hotel, which is one of the most astonishing housing, community redevelopment projects you're likely to find, wrap-around services for those folks facing difficult circumstances of addictions and mental health issues. And so you've got the Bell Hotel, and then you come up to Portage and Main and you make the—you start

moving west on Portage and you've got the—of course the MTS Centre, and all of us are extraordinarily proud of the MTS Centre which, I think, and I stand to be corrected on this, that the opposition actually didn't want to turn into an arena, even though I understand that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has season tickets way up in the—way up in the upper echelon—he's let us know on several occasions. And then beside the MTS Centre you have the incredible Manitoba Hydro building. And, of course, if you'd stuck with the Tory vision of what Hydro should be, you wouldn't have moved from Taylor to downtown. You wouldn't have built an extraordinary building, one of the most effective, one of the most incredible energy-efficient buildings and also architecturally outstanding as well.

\* (11:40)

And then you keep moving up Portage Avenue and you get to the University of Winnipeg and you see the dramatic transformation of that campus that's happened. The bus station, of course, has moved out to the airport, the—all kinds of incredible things were happening around the University of Winnipeg.

And then contrast that with the 1990s when the University of Winnipeg was really deteriorating at an astonishing rate. Tuition rates were going through the roof. Students were abandoning the University of Winnipeg by the boatload.

It was in a real difficult position, but, as a result of the partnership that we've had—and I know the Minister of Local Government has a great relationship with the president of the University of Winnipeg; the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) also has a great relationship. My predecessor, the former member for Lord Roberts, an outstanding record on advanced education, University of Winnipeg, Red River College—I didn't even mention Red River College and the union tower. I happened to be of the chair of COPSE when that was approved and that was a outstanding—outstanding project that brought back to life a building that had—was deteriorating at an astonishing rate, had cobwebs over it—all over it and we never would have seen that kind of dramatic transformation throughout the 1990s.

When the Filmon government was here, the notion that you can tax on the one hand—or you can build on the one hand and cut taxes on the other hand is, of course, a fiction, one that really has no basis in

reality. And it disappoints me greatly, because had the Conservatives stayed in power none of the things that I just mentioned, seven or eight things, and I want to add the Convention Centre in there as well, because, again, another fantastic announcement just this week about the dramatic transformation of Winnipeg's downtown.

So I wonder, in saying all of this, if I could ask the minister, Mr. Chair, just to describe, if he could, in a very general sense, of where you think we've been with the city of Winnipeg, where do you think we are now and where do you think we're going in the future? And I leave you the latitude to be able to explore those important questions for the citizens of Winnipeg and the people of Manitoba at your discretion.

**Mr. Lemieux:** I really want to thank that MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview for the very, very articulate points he was making with regard to the investment that has been made in the city of Winnipeg. And to his predecessor, Diane McGifford.

Diane McGifford was a true leader in post-secondary education and literacy. I want to stress literacy. She had a passion knowing that, you know, if you're going to get ahead in any way shape of form and change the life you have or your children are going to change the life you have, literacy is truly important but education and the role education plays in how it will truly make a difference in your family, yourself, in everyone's life around you; education and post-secondary—whether it was community college, or Red River College, or whether it's university, she was the one who stood up and said, we are treating Assiniboine Community College, Keewatin Community College, Red River College identically, the same, equally as our universities.

I don't know if a minister ever in this Chamber, ever said that. Because, at one time, if you went to a college, if you went to Red River, somehow you were a second-class citizen somehow by going to become an electrician or a plumber or a tradesperson or a carpenter.

And Diane McGifford, even though she's an outstanding academic in her own right, stood up and said, everyone deserves a chance and everyone deserves a chance for an education.

And, you know, I'll never forget in many of her speeches that she stressed and stressed the fact that we have to look at education and post-secondary

education in a different way. So, to this day, I will thank Diane for saying that and being a leader in her own right to be able to say—which people across the country recognized what that meant.

What that meant was, it meant funding for colleges, it just didn't—it wasn't just something just to be said. It meant that we are going to support you like University College of the North. It meant that we're going to be putting money where our mouth is, to be supportive of it. It wasn't just to say we are equal in all our institutions, but to be able to support it financially. So I digress, slightly, but I just wanted to make a comment on the record of the previous MLA to the current MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview, because she was a true leader in her own right and had a real passion for post-secondary education of all kinds.

So just to address the—if I could, the working relationship between the City of Winnipeg, a—our largest municipality—we have our differences, no doubt about it. The mayor, council—we have our differences with regard to application, where dollars should be spent, for example, on infrastructure, but this is where the difference might end. We all believe that the city of Winnipeg's infrastructure needs to be enhanced, it needs to be fixed, it needs to be added to, needs to be totally changed in some cases, and that is where we are really on the same page. We believe that the investment is necessary, and, again, to use the terminology of putting money where your mouth is, you know, we've indicated to the City of Winnipeg the support for the—in the 2013 provincial budget will benefit the city of Winnipeg by \$287 million, provincial funding, an increase of \$22 million—over \$22 million or 8.5 per cent from 2012. Second year in a row that Winnipeg has seen such an increase.

And the Province committed to investing in programs, initiatives that are important to the citizens of Winnipeg. We included public transit, roads, recreational facilities, protection of the environment—all part and parcel of that investment. And through the Building Manitoba Fund, Winnipeg will benefit from an investment of over \$194 million in infrastructure and transit priorities, an increase of \$21.5 million or 12 per cent—over 12 per cent from the 2012 level. So, as a Province, in 2013, we're going to double its contribution to local street renewals from \$7 million to \$14 million—double—and you can't do that by cutting the budget. You can't do it by hacking and slashing budgets and reducing it by 1 per cent of the PST, and—that just is not going to

work. It just doesn't add up. So combine this with the City's additional investment of \$14 million, as we mentioned, in local street renewal reserve, this will result in the total incremental investment of \$21 million in local street renewals for 2013—that's this summer.

Now, I want to apologize ahead of time to all the citizens, the great citizens of our capital city, that we do apologize for the inconvenience of redirecting, detours that you're going to have to take because of all the roadwork. I mean, I think the city of Winnipeg has probably dropped by a foot by the weight of all the asphalt that's taking place this summer, and we apologize for that and—but we apologize for inconvenience of detours and the time it's going to take, maybe, to people to get to work in the morning or to go home at night to their families.

But this summer you're going to see a lot of construction happening everywhere, and the Province of Manitoba has put dollars, invested in the city of Winnipeg streets, double the amount, from 7 to 14 million, 21 million dollars in local street renewal. It's unbelievable, unprecedented, and we have heard Winnipeg; we've heard the mayor; we've heard council. So even though we may disagree on some things, we do agree that street renewal is important and we've put our money where our mouth is, and the opposition would not be able to do that with the kind of cuts that they're professing to make. And it just doesn't add up, and the citizens of Winnipeg know it, and we have to remind them of that.

In addition to the new provincial investment of local street renewal, the Province is going to continue with the \$5 million for regional street renewals in 2013 under the Manitoba-Winnipeg infrastructure extension agreement, as well as \$11 million as the Province's share on the Plessis Road underpass, part of the total \$25 million provincial commitment for this project. And, also, provincial funding for Winnipeg Transit will total \$46 million in 2013, and this includes \$36.1 million through the government's 50-50 transit funding partnership—50-50 program that was taken away that we put into legislation to say that the Province of Manitoba will fund transit 50-50 with the City of Winnipeg through the transit funding partnership which is the most generous transit funding arrangement in Canada. It's something that many don't know about it, but that's our vision, our support and our belief in transit.

\* (11:50)

And the Province will—is going to continue to develop the second stage of the southwest rapid transit corridor, starting with a \$5-million investment, which we've made public, but we've also told people that we're in for one third. We've always said this. We wanted to move ahead. And I know we're working with the mayor and council and I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is very, very supportive of rapid transit, but also the southwest rapid transit corridor. We've also put a million dollars into our share of the cost of a functional design study for stage 2 of the southwest rapid transit corridor, and we're looking at a contribution of over a million dollars to share 50 per cent of the costs of a functional design study for the eastern rapid transit corridor, which hasn't been talked about much. There's a new corridor heading to the eastern side, to Transcona and that area of the city. And that's important.

So, ensuring the sustainability of water and other natural resources, it's important to all Manitobans, as we know, and Winnipeggers, generally. Our government is proud to support the largest, most significant upgrades to Winnipeg's waste water treatment system in the city's history, committing approximately \$235 million to share the one third of the cost of the City's waste water treatment plant upgrades. And the City can expect to receive that, and we've made that commitment. We're good for it. And we're good for the one third—again, our portion.

So, you take a look at what the member for—MLA, Fort Garry-Riverview had pointed out. Downtown campus Red River, the new expansion to the convention centre—RBC, by the way, has lent its name; it's a true—this company is a great corporate citizen. And I know the head of RBC in Manitoba that was at the announcement at the convention centre the other day is an individual that donates freely of his time in many, many—in non-profit organizations and is a very caring corporate citizen. And I would want to commend him for everything RBC has done. And I just wanted to just say that RBC lending its name to, with deep pockets, to being supporting the new Convention Centre—and so, you know, just to, maybe, conclude my remarks on this point, the relationship with the City of Winnipeg is respectful even though we have some disagreements on some things. But we do have a similar vision of improving the infrastructure.

For example, one example in the city of Winnipeg: the City of Winnipeg knows that we've

partnered on far greater projects—so I just want to conclude by saying that thank you to RBC—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Allum:** I thank the minister for such a detailed response to my question because I think it's really important to get the facts out on the table, and so that there's clear evidence of the nature of the relationship with the City of Winnipeg and the kinds of things that we've been able to do together over the 14 years of our government, which stands in stark contrast to what the opposition was able to accomplish during the 1990s, when very little to nothing actually happened in the city of Winnipeg.

And I was always astounded when we moved here, Mr. Chair, of just how the downtown of the city had deteriorated under the Tory watch. And all of us, all Canadians, know about the corner of Portage and Main and Portage Avenue and what an important road that is for the downtown, the city of Winnipeg, an extension of Highway 1, connecting the country, and as part of nation building, and yet, when we got here and we saw the deteriorating condition of the city under the Tory watch, it was really discouraging. And so, the kinds of things that the minister was able to describe on a number of issues—and I think he was, actually, frankly, quite modest on the nature of the relationship and what we've been able to do together—he was right to point out those very important facts about transit.

We—the operating of 50-50, an unprecedented agreement, for sharing operating costs with transit, and the City of Winnipeg, recognizing the absolutely important role of transit in the development of any major city, that didn't happen under the Tories. There was no sense of any kind of building transit, of promoting commuting, of trying to get people out of their cars to save on infrastructure costs and address climate change, because, well, frankly, climate change was not an issue which they're interested in and never was, never were, and never will be.

So, on transit alone, a fantastic relationship. And then you look at the relationship on water and sewer and the kinds of things that we've tried to do together to ensure that Winnipeg has a modern infrastructure below the pavement and then, in addition, that we're working together with the City to try to cleanup Lake Winnipeg, which all Manitobans value, which we recognize is—as just an important asset to our province. And so when we work together on water and sewer initiatives, we're making not only a

contribution to the modernization of Winnipeg, but we're, in fact, ensuring the future of the province of Manitoba at the same time.

In addition, one of the things that the minister didn't get a chance to speak to at the time—and I think that little piece of information, because I was just going to address that very thing on public safety. One of the things that we've done is to, on the one side, we've worked with the City of Winnipeg to hire new police officers. We've worked with the City of Winnipeg to enhance the Downtown Watch. We've worked with the City of Winnipeg on the cadet program, which is incredibly innovative. But then on the other side of the coin, we've worked with the City of Winnipeg on crime prevention initiatives as well. We believe in crime prevention through social development, Mr. Chair, and so we've done a dramatically great work on public safety together.

On community services, another example of building recreational programming together, enhancing the quality of life for all the people of all the citizens of Winnipeg, and not just a very few, but all the citizens of Winnipeg in the downtown core, in my neighbourhood and in Riverview and in Fort Garry and across the city altogether, again, a tremendous relationship to enhance services and programs in community services. And then, of course, the other thing, which is very close to my own heart, is the work we've done together on active transportation. I was saying on that, I had the privilege of going to the buffered bike lanes announcement last week, and I was saying that I was the acting environmental co-ordinator in 2003 when the—at the City, when the active transportation folks came to me with this and, frankly, we didn't know really know what to say back. We didn't have very many bike paths. We didn't really know that active transportation was a critical feature of a modern city. In fact, we thought it was something that people like me just did; we just rode our bikes to work and got in the way of drivers. We didn't realize what an incredible asset active transportation could be not only for good environmental reasons—get people out of their cars again in the same way that we invest in transit to get folks out of their cars to save on infrastructure, but we also get them out roller blading or walking or riding their bike and improving the general health of the population of the citizens of Winnipeg.

And I want point out, Mr. Chair, and also say to the minister as well, one of the things that our side of the House constantly does is we talk about the

citizens of Winnipeg. We don't just go to that lowest common denominator, the taxpayer, but we talk about citizenship and its value in creating an inclusive and safe and secure community for all of us. And so citizenship is something we talk about, and I couldn't help but notice in the Free Press this morning, when our Premier (Mr. Selinger) talked about citizenship in terms of going to a permanent voters list, the Leader of the Opposition—what was the term that he used? He called them customers—customers. Yes, it's a service outlet. It's like he's back selling insurance again to his customers.

Notions around citizenship are very strong on this side of the House. Notice about—notice the sense of citizenship on that side of the House is remarkably weak because they think of it only in terms of the marketplace, of customers, not of citizenship and the wider obligation to make a contribution not only to the well-being of yourself, which I notice members of the House are always—on that side of the House are very interested: me, me, me; we hear it all the time, but to making a contribution to the well-being of your family and then making a contribution to the well-being of your community, making a contribution to the well-being of your community, which is something we rarely hear.

\* (12:00)

So I wonder if I could just ask the minister, then, to talk a little bit more about the role in terms of public safety both on the law enforcement side of the equation—and I hope that he'll get a chance to talk a little bit about the new chief of police as well and his vision—but then also talking about crime prevention and, well, crime prevention through social development, that broad important basket of services we do to enhance the quality of life for citizens and reduce criminality as a result.

So that's my question, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**Mr. Lemieux:** Thank you very much again to the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview.

I know—just if I might just quickly just touch on active transportation, which he was in attendance to be the representative for the Province of Manitoba on a Pembina Trail bike lane which was recently announced. And he not only was there in body and soul but very articulately was articulate in the way he presented himself and presented the approach that the Province of Manitoba took to active transportation. And that is something that is very, very important.

But a good segue may be to what is important to the city of Winnipeg is also looking at crime and the new chief of police.

When we came into government, the city of Winnipeg was burning, literally. Houses were burning. The North End was burning. Houses were—arsons were, you know, because there were—some buildings were falling down and the city was on fire because of the downtown and what was happening. And so as a government we made a decision that, you know, not only do we have to take a look at parts of the city but the whole city and take a look at what can be done, but part and parcel of that was also policing and public safety.

The new chief of police we have now, Chief Clunis, is—and the vision that Chief Clunis has for the city is refreshing and he looks at crime more kind of in a holistic way and the causes of crime.

And, you know, the Winnipeg Police Service, with the new leadership of Chief Clunis, is the recipient of new police funding for 10 new police officers, which was announced by the Premier, and six new police officers will be focused on street patrols enhancing the visible presence of the officers in areas in Winnipeg where it's needed most. And Chief Clunis has a good—very, very good approach to the addressing crime as a whole.

So, as was pointed out, that everyone has a right to feel safe in our communities and that's why we're giving more tools to the Winnipeg Police Service to keep our streets safe. And having more beat cops who know their neighbourhoods and are engaged with the community is a positive step towards reducing crime in Winnipeg. And chief's—this is Chief Clunis's vision.

And in addition, the Province will provide funding for the Winnipeg Police Service of four criminal analysts to support the new Criminal Intelligence Unit. And I know Chief Clunis has talked about this, where if you analyze and you take a look at where crime is happening and what is causes of those crimes, you need to address that as well. You can't just go in and arrest people and throw 'em in jail and throw away the key. You have to address the causes of crime. Lock 'em up and throw the key away is not the approach this government has, nor Chief Clunis or the City of Winnipeg.

And when you talk about working and supporting each other is a key element to combating

crime and building safer communities and creating a culture of safety through social development, that's Chief Clunis's vision. Chief Clunis is young. He's the new breed of police chief in this country. People from—and others are looking at Chief Clunis as the new way to address crime and address large-city challenges, and he should be commended for that. And having had the opportunity—it doesn't take very long to be in Chief Clunis's presence that you have the 'veelin'—the vision that he puts forward, and it's very refreshing, quite frankly, to see a police chief that takes a look at crime in many different ways and how it can be addressed.

So the funding announcement that the Premier made of four crime analysts will play a vital role in identifying crime patterns in the hot spots for our front-line officers. The additional police officers and cadets will assist the service's vision in creating healthy, safe and productive neighbourhoods and communities. And that's really what the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview was talking about, taking a look at safe communities, neighbourhoods, and productive neighbourhoods and communities. And that's what our government's about.

Now, to get back to what that means if you're going to cut, how are you going to provide more police officers? How are you going to assist with 10 new cadet positions that would be funded in—or it has been funded in the Budget 2013? And these cadets play an important role to enhancing public safety and supporting members of the Winnipeg Police Service, offering practical assistance to citizens and law enforcement. And I know our Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), the Attorney General, has pointed this out on many occasions, about our approach to crime, our investment not only to the city of Winnipeg but really throughout Manitoba on addressing crime.

And in 2011 Speech from the Throne, the Province committed to funding 50 new police officers—new police personnel, sorry. With today's announcement, 20 of these positions—with the announcement we made, that is a good step towards that, and it shows in concrete ways of where we're going with regard to supporting the City of Winnipeg.

So we talk about roads, we talk about bridges, we talk about Disraeli, for example, we talk about Plessis, we talk about infrastructure and we talk about the support that the City of Winnipeg's getting, and, yes, we have some disagreements, but in total,

you take a look at—and if the citizens of Winnipeg take a look at what we have more in common and the kind of initiatives we have in partnership with each other, they would far outnumber—way outnumber our differences. We have worked closely on roads and streets and police and ambulance and the police helicopter—all of those initiatives is meant to work in partnership with the City. So, yes, we have our disagreements.

And, yes, I've been critical in many ways of the City of Winnipeg freezing their property tax for 14 years. Well, what do you expect? I mean, Manitobans and citizens of Winnipeg know, you freeze taxes, you're not bringing any money in. Are you surprised that your streets are falling apart?

So, yes, we've commented on how difficult a decision it was to raise the PST by 1 per cent, but that is tough decisions governments have to make—not easy, but difficult.

Whereas, through successive administrations in the City of Winnipeg freezing property tax—Winnipeggers would understand if you do it incrementally—do it slowly. You know, explain to them why you're doing it. We wouldn't have the crumbling streets now and the sewer problems and the water problems that we're faced with had there been, you know, incremental funding through whichever way they wished—you know, the City of Winnipeg wanted to approach it. But we hear the mayor and FCM and others to their credit—the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have corrected themselves on this.

The mayor says, we only get 8 cents on the dollar. You know, let me correct the record; 8 cents on the dollar is based on the taxes that is raised through the City of Winnipeg on property tax. Well, if you freeze property tax for 14 years, it shows you the kind of money you're going to be getting. You're going to get far, far less if you were doing it at least a little bit at a time. 50 per cent of what the City of Winnipeg brings in is based on property tax, so if you freeze it for 14 years, you're not going to get very much.

But, is that all the City of Winnipeg gets? The mayor of the City of Winnipeg fails to mention that there's operating funding provided. We just mentioned there's an 8.5 per cent increase we gave: I think it's \$284 million, I believe. I can stand corrected but I'll get the correct number. That additional money we never hear about.

We hear 8 cents on the dollar. The 8 cents on the dollar is just one area where Winnipeg gets their money and 8 cents is based on property tax. Well, 50 per cent of their—of that particular area of being able to raise money is based on property tax. Well, it's 8 cents, but they get additional funding from the Province of Manitoba and the federal government through federal gas tax as well, so that is never thrown into the equation—all the extra additional investments that are made.

And so, the City of Winnipeg is getting \$287 million—you know, an increase of 8.5 per cent, not just 8 cents on the dollar. The 8 cents on the dollar was based on property tax. And if they clarified and explained to people that 50 per cent of their revenues of what they get are based on property tax—well, they never raised it for 14 years, so it's understandable why streets and roads are crumbling and falling apart.

So we are working with the City of Winnipeg to improve infrastructure. We've just recently taken a look, for example, at one particular roadway that was rated probably the worst roads, I think, by CAA in the city of Winnipeg, and that's the area around Polo Park.

The Polo Park road system is terrible—was terrible, but that's going to be addressed by an investment by the Province of Manitoba to improving all the roads around Polo Park—a huge investment that's going to be happening around Polo Park. And we as a Province recognize it and you recognize that something's going have to be done with traffic.

\* (12:10)

We also did it around IKEA. IKEA—all the roadways around Kenaston, Waverley—the contributions made by the Province. It's not just the City of Winnipeg. If you just listen to the media, you

might be led to believe that somehow it's just the City of Winnipeg contributing to those roadways and highways. And the—I'm just searching my notes for the funding announcement based on Polo Park, and I just want to be accurate so I just want to make sure that—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Chairperson, I move that this section of the committee rise.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The member for Steinbach has moved that the committee rise. What is the will of the committee?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Sorry, sorry, correction.

Okay, there was not unanimous consent to—so on that basis, this committee can no longer—right, we're not allowed to go to votes on a Friday so on that basis, this committee can no longer proceed with its business this morning. So this committee will have to recess until 12:30 today. All right? We are in recess.

*The committee recessed at 12:13 p.m.*

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*The committee resumed at 12:30 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Tom Nevakshonoff):** Order, please. The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Friday, July 5, 2013**

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