

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

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

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
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KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
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MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
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PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Take Our Kids to Work

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to celebrate the Take Our Kids to Work project. I am very proud to have my daughter, Victoria Stefanson, and her friend and classmate, Kathryn Lyon, along with Carolina Ledid-Yedid, an exchange student from Mexico City, here as my guests in the gallery today.

I also want to recognize Gwen Friesen, the daughter of my colleague from Morden-Winkler, who is also here with us today in the gallery.

Take Our Kids to Work is an annual program hosted in early November which provides employers, parents, family members and organizations to extend an opportunity to students to spend a day in a workplace environment. Students who participate in this project are able to experience and learn about the world of work, whether it be in government, civil service, corporate settings, non-profit, construction, farming, volunteering and so many other employment fields.

Take Our Kids to Work is an endeavour which offers students in Manitoba and across Canada the opportunity to explore the vast array of career fields available to them. Early education of a career path of choice is a recipe for success. Students are able to take away the knowledge of the expectations of a workplace scenario and apply that to their decision

making regarding their studies. This can continue to provide the framework and focus as to where their education will lead them in their lives post their educational careers.

Mr. Speaker, I think that all members of the House can agree with me that we are here to ensure the best for the youth in Manitoba. The Take Our Kids to Work program and facilitating any vehicle of enrichment to inspire the children of Manitoba to explore their potential, to encourage them to stay in Manitoba to live out those accomplishments and to have them pass along their secrets of success to future generations is the most worthwhile endeavour we can partake in.

Thanks again to Victoria, Kathryn and Carolina for choosing to join me and experience a day in a life of our—of an MLA. I hope your experience has been as—a rewarding one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Joyce Ormshaw

**Ms. Christine Melnick (Riel):** Joyce Ormshaw is a legend in the sport of gymnastic baton twirling. After decades of commitment as an athlete, coach, judge and administrator, she has earned a distinguished retirement.

In her own words, the madness took hold while she was a student at Tec Voc High school. Later on, Joyce decided to become a baton coach, but there were no baton clubs in Manitoba. Joyce dedicated three consecutive summers studying at a camp in Wisconsin to get the courses she needed to earn her coaching credentials. She started coaching in 1957, and from 1988 until her retirement she nurtured the success of young twirlers at the Greendell Park Community Centre. Even on the verge of retirement, she continued to coach at Greendell until the national championships last summer.

Just a few of Joyce's accomplishments attest to a lifetime devotion to her sport. She drove the cause to have baton twirling recognized as a sport by Sport Manitoba. She fulfilled the minimum requirements of 25 years of service with the Canadian Baton Twirling Federation, and for that, earned a lifetime achievement award in 1997. The same organization presented her with a volunteer of the year award in

2002, and in July 2015 the CBTF recognized Joyce with the Lynda Garland Award for Excellence. This award is given to a coach for progressive coaching, superior technology ability and innovation.

Joyce's students have carried on her legacy. They have started their own clubs and have ranked among Manitoba's top baton coaches, including Leisha Strachan and Dana Peteleski. Many of her students have represented her club at the Manitoba provincials, the Canadian nationals, the international cup and the worlds.

I am pleased that join—that Joyce has joined us today, and I want to thank you, Joyce, for all you've given to our community and the sport. Your dedication, passion and love for baton twirling has established a tradition of excellence in Manitoba and opened countless—countless opportunities for athletes in Riel and beyond. Thank you, Joyce.

#### **Former Cabinet Ministers**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I rise today in the House to remind members opposite how they described their leader.

A year ago yesterday, the member from Southdale said: People are angry. They feel the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has broken their trust.

The member from Fort Rouge said: His being clear—it's become clear to us that he's increasingly being driven by his desire to hold on to his leadership rather than the best interests of Manitobans.

The member from Minto said: I think it's fair to say this has been building for some time and, unfortunately, our concern is that the Premier has become more concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing things in the best interests of the province.

The member from Dauphin said: I'm not a wall-flower. I told him exactly what I thought.

The member from Seine River said: Being truthful and holding on to your integrity is something that my parents raised me to do, and I'll honour them with that today.

Oh, wait. That's only five. Must be the rebel five. But wait, there's more.

Not forgetting the member from Riel, who got kicked out of caucus and joined the rebel five, said, and I quote: I'm very, very disappointed in the First Minister. I'm very disappointed. I've been loyal.

And not to mention the member from Flin Flon who threw their leader under the bus: We've got to have the First Minister resign now so we can move forward. He's had his career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Manitoba LGBTTTQ Forum**

**Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I joined many of my colleagues with a group of courageous and determined young people participating in the Manitoba LGBTTTQ forum presented by the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity and the Rainbow Resource Centre. They are joining us here in the gallery today, and welcome.

These young people are working toward safer, more inclusive communities for people who are LGBTTTQ.

\* (13:40)

They are working with these collective non-profit organizations to promote recognizing diverse gender identities, gender expression and romantic or sexual orientation within their schools by running programs that teach educators and students about support and empowerment.

These youth are focusing on eliminating bullying from the inside out. Rather than giving students coping mechanisms, they go into schools to educate and change people's perspectives of what it means to be LGBTTTQ. Their work can range from a full-day workshop with ongoing support to week-long training forums with integrated year-long projects. As part of this programming, the centre holds the International Day of Pink to celebrate the 9.7 million Canadians who wear pink as a symbol of antihomophobia and -transphobia.

Being considered different is never easy. Too often, young people suffer in silence and sometimes make irreversible choices because of this. Groups like gay-straight alliances and diversity clubs are doing more than providing support for these students. They are introducing a new code of respect, compassion and empathy in our education system for students and teachers alike.

Our government wants to make sure LGBTTTQ students feel supported and safe at school. We brought in antibullying legislation to give schools the resources to address discrimination and give students the right to set up antibullying clubs like gay-straight alliances. Our government will work with students to

do everything we can to make every child in Manitoba schools feel safe.

A huge thank you to these courageous young people for having the courage to stand up against bullying and help create a safer, more inclusive Manitoba.

#### **River Heights Community Accomplishments**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly acknowledge some recent accomplishments in River Heights.

The Kelvin High School community knows everybody has the right. Students gathered to discuss how they can lead the way to a school, a community and a city that acknowledges and values equality and diversity. Four Kelvin scholars, Hunter, Jewell, Elijah and Maria, were among student representatives from 70 schools in the Winnipeg School Division who joined Mayor Bowman in a ceremony marking a week of celebration and diversity, inclusion and indigenous awareness.

The Kelvin High School golf team, which includes Cole Ferguson, Carter Bradley, Tehvv Rudd and Sean Szyda, finished first in the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association provincial golf tournament with a score of 239. According to Coach Tom Friesen [*phonetic*], no school within the Winnipeg School Division has won the provincial title for decades. Well done, Kelvin High School.

Grant Park High school's advanced placement environmental science and Envirocon students went camping for two days near Beaconia at the Boreal Woods Nature Centre. The students had a presentation by the Manitoba Trappers Association and storytelling around the campfire by an Aboriginal elder, and gained a lot of hands-on field work in forestry, soils and aquatics.

To the students, staff and faculty at Grant Park, keep up the great work.

Also, this past month, enRoute magazine named River East's Enoteca as one of Canada's 10 best new restaurants. Identified in one of the most prestigious lists of Canadian eateries, Enoteca is even being hailed as a key ingredient in the city's tourism efforts.

Last night, Naomi and I enjoyed fulsome flavoured roast crimini mushrooms, exquisite blue swimmer crab and a moist measure of roast magret duck breast. It was excellent. Congratulations to

owner and Chef Scott Bagshaw on the well-earned recognition.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes member statements.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have some guests to introduce just prior to oral questions.

Seated in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today Jackie Carey and Adam Yarish, who are the family members of the Deputy Clerk Rick Yarish.

And, also, seated in the public gallery we have students participating in take your kids to work day, and they include Riley Wiggins, who is the guest of the honourable member from Assiniboia; Victoria Stefanson, who is the daughter of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson); Kathryn Lyon; Gwen Friesen, daughter from the—who is the daughter of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen); and Carolina Yedid from Mexico City.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome all of you here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery today we have with us Ryan Bartlett, who is the grandson of our Sergeant-at-Arms, here to—for take your son to work day, and Ryan, of course, attends Jeanne-Sauvé school and is in grade 9.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here as well.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **New West Partnership Agreement Need for Manitoba Participation**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, Saskatchewan Crown corporations buy hundreds of millions of dollars of goods and services every year. Manitoba companies will no longer be allowed to bid on providing these goods and services, and the reason being that the NDP government did not see fit to accept the invitation of our neighbouring provinces to join in the New West Partnership.

Now, Manitoba PCs have believed for a long time, and continue to believe, in the win-win of partnerships. We believe very strongly that there is an advantage to be derived by Manitoba small businesses and their employers and their families in working with our neighbours to supply the goods and services that Manitobans can produce.

So I'd like the Premier to share with Manitobans today, who have been disadvantaged by this exclusion on the part of the Saskatchewan Crown corporations, if he could provide one reason as to why the government has refused to have Manitoba become part of that partnership.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I have had a discussion with the Premier of Saskatchewan. We both agreed that the focus should be on improving our Agreement on Internal Trade within this country. That is where all the premiers are right now. We expect to have a federal partner that will want to do that with us as well. The premiers of Saskatchewan, Newfoundland-Labrador, Ontario and Manitoba are working on a committee that will oversee the work being done by the ministers on the Agreement on Internal Trade.

And I do point out to the member opposite that Manitoba has just concluded a contract with the Crown corporation SaskPower of Saskatchewan for a very significant power sale, the first of its kind—the first two of its kind in the history of the province to have power sales to the west of us.

So we're doing more business now with Saskatchewan than ever been done before. And many Saskatchewan companies also do business in Manitoba.

So as we work through the internal trade agreement, I suspect that we will come to a conclusion that will allow all of us to compete on a level playing field in this country.

**Mr. Pallister:** Mr. Speaker, the conclusion that Manitobans can draw from the lack of action on the part of the government is that they're not interested in entering into trading relationships with Saskatchewan, Alberta or British Columbia.

And now Manitoba companies are being excluded from doing business with Saskatchewan Crowns, and other inhibitors to our ability to do trade with other partners may well follow. Eight months after this was announced by Saskatchewan—and the Premier had a conversation yesterday, he says, with the Premier of Saskatchewan—eight months later, no action.

Now, the New West Partnership was formed five years ago, and despite that open door that our partners have offered us, the NDP has said no. But the Manitoba Business Council, the Federation of Independent Business, Winnipeg and Manitoba

chambers have all said, yes, they would like us to be in.

Premier doesn't appear to be listening. Despite the unanimous support of the Manitoba small-business community, he's not listening.

I'd like him to name one Manitoba organization that's opposed to us becoming a member of the New West Partnership.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we've had excellent discussions and record relationships with the provinces to the rest of us.

There never has been a hydro sale in the history of the province of Manitoba to a Crown corporation of Saskatchewan for power before. We've harmonized our transportation regulations to allow trucks, commercial trucks, to move more freely between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We've had the first ever joint Cabinet meeting between Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

We're all working together on issues with respect to internal trade in the country. We have had a historic concern with what they call the person-or corporate-to-government dispute resolution mechanism. All the other provinces in Canada now are supporting a solution that allows everybody to compete on a level playing field with respect to dispute resolution. We look forward to moving forward on that with the members of the New West Partnership.

And I know that we can make progress. I've had discussions not only with the Premier of Saskatchewan but the Premier of Alberta. And we're all committed to finding solutions moving forward that will allow all of our provinces to have stronger economic relationships. After all, we are part of the economic union of this great federation of Canada.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, rah-rah to that, Mr. Speaker. But 16 years later and we're the only province that doesn't have a trading relationship with another province, and that's thanks to the NDP's isolationist approach to this issue. Every single province in our confederation's seen fit to enter into trading relationships that are productive for their people with their neighbours, except one government, and that's that government over there.

\* (13:50)

They've been opposed to every trade deal, and they're not listening to anyone, with the possible exception of some union boss in the Manitoba

Federation of Labour. Those are the only ones who are opposed, the only ones being heard by the Premier. The only one—the only reason, in fact, that he's sitting in the chair opposite is the support of that small group, and they're not working in the best interests of their members, the working families of Manitoba, in their opposition to trade.

Now, one year ago, the rebel MLA for Fort Rouge said, the Premier refuses to hear us. He's not listening to the MLAs of his own party, Mr. Speaker. He's only listening to his friends who kept him in that chair.

Will he admit that one year ago the MLA for Fort Rouge was right?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has said he would never sell Manitoba Hydro for export purposes to any other jurisdiction. That means he would turn down an arrangement with Saskatchewan that's worth hundreds of millions of dollars. That means he would forgo \$9 billion of export contracts which allows us to build more clean Manitoba hydro in partnership with First Nations in a way that will reduce and address all the environmental issues and keep Manitoba hydro rates low. That's not a trading relationship.

We do more trade to the west of us and to the east of us as the proportion of our total trade than any other province in Canada. We've always had strong relationships to the east and west of us as well as to the north and to the south, of course, as well. We will continue to do that.

We're in a leadership position with the premiers of Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador on working on the Agreement on Internal Trade. We've prioritized that to make progress on that by the spring of 2016. The ministers are working on that. We will be bringing them together, and the premiers that are co-ordinating that effort will be in a constant discussion on how we could improve that trading relationship.

That's something that was never done by the members opposite when they were in government. They had no relationship in that regard. We've got more business. We've got more jobs—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable leader's time on this question has elapsed.

### **Saskatchewan Procurement Policy Government Response to Announcement**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** He can have meetings, but Manitoba businesses can't do business there. That's the issue.

Mr. Speaker, when the media reported last week that Saskatchewan was taking these steps to shut out Manitoba companies from competing on Crown corporation contracts, the Minister for Jobs and the Economy said that he was surprised by the requirements and he wanted to discuss them as soon as possible.

But on March the 27th, the Saskatchewan government released a press release; it's entitled, Procurement action plan increases fairness and consistency for Saskatchewan businesses. I would indicate, as well, that it includes a background and contact information for further information.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister for Jobs and the Economy truly wanted to discuss the measures ASAP, why did he not pick up the phone on March the 27th when he became aware of this significant issue?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** I have the opportunity to have conversations and meet with businesses all over Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. It's a great part of having this job.

I got to say once again for members opposite that we are in the centre of the country. We take full advantage of that. We're committed to a national agreement. In fact, we do more interprovincial exports per capita than any other province or territory in the entire nation.

Businesses here locally and nationally are asking for a national trade agreement. That's what we're working towards and that's what we're committed to do.

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, there is no answer in that reply, so I'll try again.

Mr. Speaker, on September the 17th, the Saskatchewan government issued another press release. This one said, Saskatchewan Crown corporations use trade agreements to improve procurement. Now, the minister in Manitoba said he was surprised by the actions of the Saskatchewan government, but here is a second press release and it says that seven Crown corporations will continue to

be subject to the New West Partnership and will primarily source from NWPTA provinces.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister says he's surprised, but he couldn't have been surprised. Honourable Jeremy Harrison in Saskatchewan was surprised; he said that this government has chosen to raise these matters in the media without communication with either officials or at the political level and he called it disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit today that he could have asked and he didn't ask and he should have phoned when he had the chance?

**Mr. Chief:** I, like many of the ministers, all the ministers across the country, are working towards a strong national agreement. We're going to continue to do that, but that's one part of our plan.

The other part of our plan is a world-class trade infrastructure plan, and that's what we're doing, a \$5-billion investment in infrastructure for roads, highways and bridges that get Manitoba goods to market faster.

Here's what Chris Lorenc had to say about that plan, Mr. Speaker: Our businesses understand it, they support it and they've helped build it. This is Chris Lorenc: The Perimeter Highway connected to Trans-Canada Highway which links our country coast to coast, our CentrePort Canada Way which moves products more effectively, these important systems help sustain 240,000 jobs in Manitoba directly or indirectly enabled by trade.

When it comes to trade infrastructure and our plan, our businesses understand it, they support it, they've helped build it.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is not answering the question.

Now, on—about a week after that second Saskatchewan press release, Winkler company Grandeur Housing sent a letter to the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, and they copied my office. They were flagging these procurement policies, they were expressing concern, and they were inviting the minister to respond at the earliest opportunity. And the minister did nothing, no reply to Grandeur Housing.

The minister said he was surprised when this issue hit the Manitoba media last week. But will he admit today he could not have been surprised, he knew the whole time, but he did nothing to help Manitoba businesses shut out of markets?

**Mr. Chief:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. It's always a—when we're talking about a strong national plan for businesses, we're talking about world-class infrastructure, it's always a good day in the House.

You know, once again, I want to say what the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) had to say about trade infrastructure: I've been around CentrePort a number of times. I've tried to wrap my head around what it's supposed to be. I've been around infrastructure projects a long time, but that one remains a mystery.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the member—the Leader for the Opposition had the opportunity to talk to John Law, an expert when it comes to infrastructure trade. John Law gave him a great answer. Any time the Leader of the Opposition or his critic wants a second briefing, I can set that up with John Law any time they want.

#### **New West Partnership Agreement Need for Manitoba Participation**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, Conquest homes is a manufacturer of modular structures. It employs many people in the Emerson constituency who live and shop in the Altona area. They market their products throughout Manitoba and the rest of Canada, including Saskatchewan.

Conquest has been bidding on SaskPower and Crown corporation contracts since 2000. They have done in excess of \$1 million business each year for the past 15 years in Saskatchewan. Since this NDP government has refused to join the New West Partnership, these contracts are now in jeopardy.

I'm reminded of the former Finance minister, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), who said a year ago, our voices are ignored on the things that are important to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) won't listen to his trusted colleagues, will he listen to Manitoba businesses and join the New West Partnership?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** I want to thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker.

He talks about Crown corporations. Well, Manitoba and Saskatchewan agree, Mr. Speaker, that Crown corporations provide good jobs; they grow our economies; they keep things affordable, like heat, electricity and insurance.

And in Saskatchewan, they even keep their phone plans affordable for its citizens. When the Leader of the Opposition sat around the Cabinet table, he sold MTS, made his friends richer, while all the rest of Manitobans pay more.

I travel to the members' opposite ridings. They are saying they're still devastated by the sale of MTS, Mr. Speaker. They bring it up to me when I travel to their ridings.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the member, has he asked his leader—that was the plan for Crown corporations when he sat at the Cabinet table. Does that continue to be his plan today?

On this side of the House, we stand with our Crown corporations, and we stand to make sure that they stay public, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Graydon:** It's clear that the minister didn't hear the question.

Vaughn Stephenson's business is being jeopardized by this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his NDP government's refusal to join the New West Partnership.

Does today's Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) agree with the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) when she said that the Premier is, and I quote, driven by his desire to hang on to his leadership rather than the best interests of Manitobans?

Mr. Speaker, does the Finance Minister agree that we should be part of the New West Partnership, yes or no?

**Mr. Chief:** The fact is, on this side of the House, we stand with our businesses. We're going to continue to work hard for a national trade agreement.

And I invited the member from Tuxedo, any time that she wanted to come down and hear first-hand, she can come to Connie's Corner, best fried baloney in town. Even the Leader of the Opposition can't serve up better baloney than Connie's Corner.

\*(14:00)

At the end of the day, when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the Cabinet table, businesses were closing, storefronts were going dark, buildings sat empty. It got so bad, the Winnipeg Jets left town.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House, we stand with young people. We stand with businesses. We stand with families.

I ask the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson): That was the plan the leader had back when he sat around the Cabinet table. Does that continue to be his plan today?

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear that this minister will stand on the backs of businesses to keep his job.

The member for the Interlake told manufacturers in his riding that it wasn't his fault that they built in the wrong place. That arrogance led to 200 jobs leaving the province.

But by not joining the New West Partnership, the NDP government is jeopardizing businesses like Conquest and encouraging businessmen such as Vaughn Stephenson to open businesses in Saskatchewan and—in order to compete and grow.

Why won't the NDP government join the New West Partnership to prevent the continued outward migration of businesses, workers and their families?

**Mr. Chief:** Mr. Speaker, here's the facts.

Since this government has been elected, there has been a population growth of 140,000 in this government, more jobs, more businesses here than ever before.

In fact, when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the Cabinet table, there was a net loss of 30,000 people to the province. That's like losing two Steinbachs completely disappearing from the population. That was the plan that he had then.

I ask the member from Steinbach, has he asked his leader, is that the same plan he still has for Steinbach today?

On this side of the House, we stand with businesses, we stand with young people, and we stand with the good folks of Steinbach.

### **Interprovincial Migration Effect of Tax Policies**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's latest numbers on net interprovincial migration show that Manitoba's net out-migration numbers have tripled since this Premier came into office.

Will the Minister for Jobs and the Economy just admit that his tax-and-spend government is driving Manitobans out of Manitoba?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** I just finished telling the member

opposite a population growth of 140,000. When her leader sat at the Cabinet table, was a net loss of 30,000, losing two Steinbachs. The population of Steinbach's gone twice over. That's the record of the Leader of the Opposition.

I ask the member from Tuxedo, that was his plan when he sat at the Cabinet table, Mr. Speaker. Ask her, has she asked her leader, is that the same plan: businesses closing, storefronts going dark, buildings sat empty?

The Winnipeg Jets left town. That was his plan then. Has the member from Tuxedo asked her leader, is that the same plan he has for Manitobans today?

This side of the House is standing with businesses. We stand with young people. We stand with newcomers. That's the record on this side of the House.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, not only have the net interprovincial out-migration numbers tripled—that's three times more people leaving this province for every other province—since this Premier (Mr. Selinger) came to power, but over half of those people—*[interjection]*—and members opposite may want to listen to this—that over half of the people leaving are young people between the ages of 15 and 39.

Will the minister just admit that his high-tax-and-spend policies are forcing Manitobans to move to other provinces?

**Mr. Chief:** To them, Mr. Speaker, I've offered, any time she wants to see what young people are doing in the province of Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg, she can come on down to Innovation Alley.

In fact, Shaw Communications, when they created—wanted to put 500 jobs anywhere in the nation, they picked Winnipeg. And you know why they picked Winnipeg? They say it's because we have a young demographic, and when you invest in young people in Manitoba they stay here longer than any other province. That's what executives of Shaw Communications.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Those jobs are created in the riding that the Leader of the Opposition represents. Why isn't he standing up supporting young people and supporting Shaw Communications for bringing 500 jobs to Winnipeg?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, not only have the net interprovincial out-migration numbers tripled since this Premier came to power, not only have half of

those people leaving are young people between the ages of 15 and 39, but Manitoba has the second worst interprovincial out-migration rate in Canada. Those are the facts. Those numbers come from the minister's department himself.

We are losing more young people to every other province in Canada at a higher rate than any other province except one.

Will the minister just admit that his high-tax-and-spend policies are driving young people out of our province?

**Mr. Chief:** Mr. Speaker, we stand with young people. You don't have to look any further than our downtown: a record amount of young people working in our downtown, a record amount of young people starting businesses in our downtown, a record amount of young people going to school in our core area than ever before and a record amount of people living in our downtown. Those are the facts.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I've invited them down to Innovation Alley. When the Leader of the Opposition was in government, Adelaide Street was seen as a struggle and hardship. Well, it's changed because of our young people. In fact, what I will admit is PROFITguide.com just came out, Winnipeg is one of the best places to do business in Canada, because that's because of our incredible dedication, commitment of young people.

#### **Home-Care Case Concern Access to Services**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, there is another victim of NDP waste and mismanagement.

A 91-year-old woman, Edith Grunfeld, is trying her best to live at home, but she can't get the home care she needs to do so. She is so frustrated and upset that she has gone public with her comments hoping to help other elderly people who may be facing similar situations.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) to explain to Mrs. Grunfeld, a 91-year-old Holocaust survivor, why the home-care system has failed her.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question.

Every time there's a issue or a problem relating to home care, I would hope that people would report, and I understand that WRHA has contacted Mrs. Grunfeld. I think it's a significant issue,

Mr. Speaker, and I think it ought to be looked into. The system is not perfect, and every time someone can come forward and help improve the system, I think it's important.

And I'm glad she came forward, and it's unfortunate that someone who is a Holocaust survivor at that age would have to go through that kind of a difficulty. And I'm glad that the department and the region is looking into it and I hope that we can be resolved so that it does not happen again.

**Mrs. Driedger:** This government has had 16 years to prevent such a thing from happening in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Grunfeld had been in the hospital, then was discharged by a doctor but forced to stay in the hospital an extra seven to eight days because home care couldn't be arranged any sooner. That is incompetence, inefficiency, and it's a terrible way for the health-care system to run.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) to explain to seniors like Mrs. Grunfeld why they have to suffer because of this NDP mismanagement.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, it's the 40th year of the first home-care system in the entire North American continent. It was developed by Evelyn Shapiro and other pioneer people in the community, Mr. Speaker, who developed the most comprehensive home-care program in North America.

Since the 40 years, Mr. Speaker, a lot has changed. We've added palliative care at home. We've added free drugs at home. We've added now an emergency paramedic at home. We have visiting doctors at home now. In 40 years the system has evolved and has changed. That's why we've asked Mr. Toews to look at the system and to put in place additional measures in order to improve the system.

Mr. Speaker, 38,000 people depend on home care every day. It's not perfect, but it's a lot better than members opposite who wanted to privatize it. And Manitobans came out by the thousands to say no to members opposite. We don't want a private home-care system where money—the money in your pocket gets the care you get and otherwise you don't get care.

**Mrs. Driedger:** In the July auditor's report on home care under their watch, he slammed this NDP government for its poor management of the home-care system. He said that it is plagued by inefficiencies and inconsistent services. He also said

that there was a lack of strategic planning and direction.

Mr. Speaker, that's a poor way to run our health-care system and especially our home-care system.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to explain to seniors: How could she have made such a mess of our home-care system?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, 38,386 people every day rely on home care to deliver services. That's two Steinbachs, providing services to size two Steinbachs.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have this fetish about Saskatchewan. If they read today's paper, they would find out that Saskatoon hospital, that is in urban Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon hospital are asking rural hospitals to take city patients because there's not enough room in the health-care system.

We're not perfect, Mr. Speaker, but we do provide 376,000 visits to emergency hospitals, and we have the best home-care system, and it's going to be better because people come to us and we respond. We actually put in pare critical incidents. We also have reporting structure. We also put in place protection for people that wasn't in place before.

And we won't privatize it so that the dollar in your pocket gets you the care you get, like members opposite tried to do and will do in the future if they should, unfortunately, get elected under that leader.

### **Assiniboine Valley Flooding Compensation for Farmers**

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, for four out of the past five years, farmers have been unable to seed a crop along the Shellmouth Dam.

The NDP government's mismanagement of our lakes and waterways is putting financial hardships on our producers. This creates emotional hardships which are straining multi-generational farm family relationships.

Why has this NDP government not relieved these hardships on these producers as promised?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member might want to acknowledge the degree to which we've had very significant flooding. It wasn't

created by this government. There was flooding in Alberta, flooding in Saskatchewan, and I think he does a disservice to the people around the Shellmouth Dam, because we've put in place legislation and provided coverage for artificial flooding which does occur on occasion.

We also, Mr. Speaker, have supports through Agriculture, and I want to stress again that perhaps the member opposite may want to focus in on some of the very positive work we've been doing, including in his area where we've been rebuilding in terms of flood damage, investing in our highways.

In fact, I quote from the Municipality of Two Borders, which again gave this government and this department credit for some of the work where, you know, we're working in partnership with people in the southwest.

**Mr. Pivniuk:** I don't know if this minister has driven on Highway 3 this past summer.

Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP government not compensating these producers as promised? Manitobans are tired of the same NDP broken promises and want a change for the better. These producers face uncertainty year after year. They have output costs annually, regardless of whether they seed a crop or not.

Mr. Speaker, when will this NDP government stop mismanaging our lakes and waterways and will they start to compensate hard-working farm families?

**Mr. Ashton:** I'm very pleased that member talked about the management of our waterways, because one of the things this government has done is put in place a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, a \$500-million commitment to provide historic improvements in terms of flood mitigation. In fact, we partnered with the now-former government. We look forward to partnering with the new government because we are committed.

I want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that every time we put forward anything in terms of flood mitigation, members opposite have voted against it.

**Mr. Pivniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I have guests in the gallery who are from the Assiniboine Valley producers in my constituency, and they have not been—they had not had their 2011, 2012, and not to mention 2014, claims settled.

And with this NDP government, Manitobans are paying more and getting less. This government

promised to compensate producers, yet Manitoba farmers have not been compensated.

Mr. Speaker, why do they have to—what do they have to say to these producers in this gallery today?

**Mr. Ashton:** I put on the record that we have provided direct compensation in terms of artificial flooding going back to the previous decade. We did it, by the way, on an ad hoc basis. We listened to producers who talked about the need for statutory coverage. We've acknowledged, and I put this on the record yesterday, our willingness to work in terms of improving the system, because there are significant costs for administering a program for often relatively limited benefits, so we look forward to improving it.

But I put on the record again, Mr. Speaker, it's this government that not only has provided compensation, we put in place the statutory basis for that compensation. Members opposite did nothing.

#### **Climate Change Policy Request for Government Plan**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the international climate change conference in Paris is coming up later this month.

Earlier in his term, the Premier broke the law by not meeting the government's climate change commitments to reach Kyoto targets by 2012, and in the years since the Premier announced he was going to break the law in 2011, he and his NDP government have failed to produce an updated climate change plan.

Will the Premier table today his plan to address climate change, or does he even have a current plan at all?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Before I answer the question, I do want to acknowledge the presence of Jerry Dias and the students here for the forum that's going to be happening on sexual orientation and diversity with the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, and we welcome them to the Legislature here, and we want them to know that we passed the antibullying legislation.

Similar to what we've done in that regard to make a more inclusive Manitoba, we also want a climate change program in this province. We reduced climate change emissions by 37 per cent over the last decade, Mr. Speaker. We have seen an increase in climate change emissions. We have a—we are working on a renewed plan. It started with the International Institute for Sustainable Development

doing wide-ranging consultations around the community.

We see opportunities to have greener buildings. I just was at an announcement this morning for a housing co-op, Mr. Speaker, where they're going to have a very green building there. They're going to reduce their emissions, which'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions; it'll also reduce operating costs.

And we look for further opportunities in the transportation sector, the agricultural sector and, of course, we're building hydroelectricity, which is displacing megatons—megatons—of greenhouse gas emissions to the west of us and to the south of us.

And we know the opposition wouldn't do any exports of clean hydroelectricity, which would make climate change worse—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Climate change is the most important environmental problem of our day, yet this Premier and his NDP government have been delinquent both in meeting their legislated commitments and, subsequently, in providing a plan to address this problem and reduce greenhouse gases.

Why has the Premier been so slow to address what has been called the most important environmental problem of our time?

**Mr. Selinger:** We have, actually, been a leader. We're protecting Pimachiowin Aki, an east-side southern boreal forest of Manitoba, 33,000 square kilometres. We're doing it in partnership with the five First Nations that live on the east side in terms of the land use planning. We're protecting the cultural diversity of those communities and their languages and their history.

We're protecting the forest. We're protecting the wetlands. And we've put a moratorium on peat mining in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Those are all actions that have been taken by Manitoba well ahead of any other jurisdiction in this country, and we're looking at additional things we can do.

Chitek Lake, Mr. Speaker, the woodland bison is being protected in Manitoba. The polar bear protection park in the North around the Churchill area is being protected. And we're doing land settlements with the Sayisi Dene, which will protect the land, and full partnerships with indigenous people when we do planning. All of these things are

in aid of a new approach 'torards' reconciliation, a recognition of our responsibilities on climate change.

And I have to say, the member opposite was a member of a federal government which completely missed their climate change plan objectives.

We look forward to a co-operative approach on this going forward where provinces, municipalities and—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

**Mr. Gerrard:** We are already at an annual average atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration of 400 parts per million. This level is 50 parts per million above what is believed to be a safe level. It is only 40 to 50 parts per million away from a level that is expected to be associated with a 2°C rise in global temperature, a very critical threshold.

Manitoba will not only have to reduce our greenhouse gases, but Manitoba will have to also adapt to much warmer global temperatures.

What are the top three measures the Premier will take to ensure Manitoba can adapt to high global temperatures?

**Mr. Selinger:** I can only point out one very significant one to get the discussion started. We're building flood protection for the people of the Assiniboine valley, Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. Those are climate change mitigation measures which will stop those communities from being flooded.

The members opposite, including the member from River Heights, have voted against those measures in our infrastructure budget. We're leading the country on infrastructure build, including protecting communities from very serious climate change events.

Another very significant thing we're doing—the members opposite have always mused about privatizing hydro. We're seeing hydro being privatized in Ontario. That will only make climate change worse when we privatize that.

\* (14:20)

Higher rates, lower opportunities for people to address climate change by owning their own Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. That's the second thing we're doing that no member on the opposite side of the House is supporting at this stage of the game.

And thirdly, when it comes to climate change, we're protecting Lake Winnipeg from nutrification. We're protecting the waters of the province of Manitoba, and we will continue to vigorously pursue that.

And we look for the members opposite to support the measures we've put in the House that they previously voted against, Mr. Speaker.

### **Old Grace Housing Project Funding Agreement**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I know the members opposite have an allergic reaction to positive news. In listening to them today, I don't know how they would expect to accomplish anything in government given that they have no money available—it's all going to get cut—and no inclination for doing anything, because they're opposed to it all.

But there actually was some really good news today which helps address climate change, helps address something called poverty, which members opposite also aren't all that engaged in, and, perhaps most important of all, helps build our community right here in my constituency of Wolseley and maybe even set a bit of a role model for the rest of the province to learn from as well.

Could our hard-working Minister for Housing and Community Development please inform the House about the amazing Old Grace Housing Co-op, which officially got its launch today?

**Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question.

I was pleased to be able to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger), Minister for Family Services and MLA for Wolseley to announce the opening of the Old Grace co-operative housing project.

We are proud to partner with a community co-op to create a new housing project featuring communal spaces and sustainable building practices in Winnipeg's Wolseley neighbourhood.

This housing co-op will feature up to 60 new housing units in three buildings, of which 30 units will be affordable. It will include a central courtyard, a garden and other communal spaces where families can gather.

Our important investments in housing would not be possible under the PC Leader's commitment to

make \$550 million worth of across-the-board, indiscriminate cuts.

Our government knows that building and maintaining affordable housing is good for families. It breathes new life in our communities and strengthens—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

### **Agriculture Community Confidence in Minister**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** A recent CFIB survey shows that 66 per cent of Saskatchewan farmers have confidence in their ag minister. However, in Manitoba the same survey shows 19 per cent of the farm community has confidence in their Ag Minister.

Now, a year ago, the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) stated, and I quote, remaining in Cabinet with integrity is no longer an option.

Would this be why the farm community has such little confidence in the Ag Minister today?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** And it's quite ironic that the members opposite, where there is 34,000 producers across the province of Manitoba, they chose 40 maybe on speed-dial to do the survey and come up with the scenario that they chose to bring forward.

Let me say this side of the House supports agriculture. We support single desk. We supported the Wheat Board.

And we also support the great job PFRA done. I had the great privilege to meet with the municipal officials from the Two Borders RM, and we talked about a number of issues about surface water management. Yet the members opposite to choose Mr. Harper's proactive way of getting rid of PFRA, who were a watershed management organization, could have prevented the circumstances that Two Borders municipality are dealing with today.

And also, members opposite choose not to entertain any kind of further dialogue protect the hard-working rural farm families that exist in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, it was the member for Seine River that's questioning the Ag Minister's integrity, not me.

The farm community is burdened by the NDP's obsession with red tape, high taxation, which really inhibits the ability of Manitoba farms to compete with it—within the province and with other jurisdictions.

Now, a year ago, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), and I'll quote, the people of Manitoba are saying it's time for a change. I agree with the member for the—from Flin Flon.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Just to carry on in the comment that I had earlier, this is the government that brought in excess moisture in 1999. When they were lobbied when they were in government to bring that program, they chose not to. It took this side of the House to bring it into—program that is [*inaudible*] and it tends to be used out on a continuous basis.

Let's share some documentation that maybe members opposite choose not to relinquish. Agriculture and agri-food industries make up 8 per cent of the provincial GDP, and Manitoba's budget is around \$4.95 billion in finished products annually. I find it somewhat challenging where their survey shows opposite. Last year's animal and food production accounted for a remarkable 41 per cent of Manitoba exports across the country.

And also, this is the government that brought in education school tax rebate. They were at zero; we're at 80 per cent.

What's the difference, Mr. Speaker? We on this side have rural development.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

#### PETITIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** It is now time for petitions.

#### Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by V. Malanchuk, M. Kennedy, G. Johnson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

#### Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by T. MacNeish, G. Cassidy, K. Hutchinson and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair  
and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with a serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

(2) Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

(3) Residents and businesses in the Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

(4) This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government repair and reopen provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

And this petition is submitted on behalf of D. Yih, V. Cook and B. Nault.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but still have not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses in the Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

\* (14:30)

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government repair and reopen the provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

This petition is signed by R. Ehms, J. Batinebacal and P. Zohl and many more fine Manitobans.

**Community-Based Brain Injury  
Services and Supports**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Brain Injury Canada, cited at the website [braininjurycanada.ca/acquired-brain-injury](http://braininjurycanada.ca/acquired-brain-injury), estimates that 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year; over 1 million Canadians live with the effects of an acquired brain injury; 30 per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth; and approximately 50 per cent of brain injuries come from falls and motor-vehicle collisions.

(2) Studies conducted by Manitoba Health in 2003 and 2006 and the Brandon Regional Health Authority in 2008 identified the need for community-based brain injury services.

(3) These studies recommended that Manitoba adopt the Saskatchewan model of brain injury services.

(4) The treatment and coverage for Manitobans who suffer brain injuries varies greatly, resulting in huge inadequacies depending upon whether a person suffers their injury at work, in a motor-vehicle accident, through assault or from medical issues such as a stroke, aneurysm or anoxia due to cardiac arrest or other medical reasons.

(5) Although in-patient services including acute care, short- and longer term rehabilitation are available throughout the province, brain injury patients who are discharged from hospital often experience discontinuation or great reduction of services, which results in significant financial and emotional burdens being placed on family and friends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to develop and evolve community-based brain injury services that include but are not limited to case management services, known also as service navigation; safe and accessible housing in the community; proctor or coach-type assistance for community reintegration programs; improved access to community-based rehabilitation services; and improved transportation, especially for people living in rural Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to encompass financial and emotional supports for families and other caregivers in the model that is developed.

This petition is signed by D. Henry, N. Ferris, C. Reid and many other fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Grievances?

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to move the Estimates for Labour and Immigration from the Chamber to room 255, to follow after Children and Youth Opportunities, with the change to apply permanently?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to move the Estimates for the Department of Labour and Immigration from the Chamber section to room 255, to follow immediately after Children and Youth Opportunities, with the change to apply permanently? Is there leave of the House?

Is there leave of the House to permit this change? *[Agreed]*

#### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that for the meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts previously called for November 4th at 6 p.m., the following will be added for consideration by the committee: the Auditor General's Report—Annual Report to the

Legislature, dated March 2014, chapter 1: Accounts and financial statements, section 10 annual report; and Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, volumes 1, 2 and 3. Witnesses to be called: Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the—for the meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts previously called for November the 4th, 2015, at 6 p.m., the following will be added for consideration by the committee: Auditor General's Report—Annual Report to the Legislature, dated March 2014, chapter 1: Accounts and financial statements and section 10 annual report; and also Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, volumes 1, 2 and 3. And the witnesses to be called include the Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance.

That's for information of the House.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further—the honourable Government House Leader.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the House, and I'd like to have the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair, and various committee Chairs to the committee rooms.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### MINERAL RESOURCES

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the ever-entertaining Department of Mineral Resources.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

Wouldn't you know it, the floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** When we rose yesterday, we were talking about the Mineral Potential Assessment Committee, and I just want to

get a clear understanding of who actually sits on that committee.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** The committee itself is a evolving committee in the sense that there's the director of Mines and the director of Geological Survey from the Department of Mineral Resources is on it, representatives from—the director of Conservation, Parks and Protection is on it, and a representative from a specific regional office is on it, and then representatives as needed and supplied from Manitoba association of mining industries is on it as well, depending upon the region that's represented.

So if they're examining an area of the province for mineral protection—for mineral development and/or protection, then they would bring on the representatives from MAMI, for example, that would have interest in that particular area or may have application to be involved in that area. So it's a kind of an evolving committee that works on each issue in each area as it arises.

**Mr. Cullen:** I wonder if the minister could kind of walk me through the process here. So we have a committee, and I'm trying to get my head around, you know, is it going to meet on a regular basis or does it respond to something like, say, a polar bear park. And if that concept comes out and is made public, in what role does this committee play and what can it do in terms of making—does it make recommendations, or who do those recommendations go to? So I'm just seeking some clarity in terms of process as much as anything.

**Mr. Chomiak:** There was a former committee that had been put in place 20 years ago called the MELC committee, M-E-L-C, I believe, was the acronym, that had designated spots of mineral exploration and various categories of land use on a numerical basis of one to four for the past, you know, 20 years or so.

So, as the Province developed a need for a more—develop more parks development as well as a better understanding of environmental and sustainable concerns going forward, we thought it would be important to reinvent the process and to put back in place a process that actual saw the Department of Conservation and the Department of Mineral Resources sit down with the industry to review proposals that come forward, be they from Conservation or be from Mineral Resources, with respect to a review of area.

So, in the case of polar bear park, for example, there's a public process that's in place. And the committee is looking at which area should be—which areas can and should be developed and what areas should be exclusive or inclusive of mineral exploration and development. So, in general, again, to wrap it up, it's a—we determined that we needed to be more current with respect to the development of land-use planning and development of mineral potential, because there's been significant changes.

\* (14:50)

When I was a kid growing up, peat was supposed to be a really good thing for the environment and the climate, and we've now found out from current studies that peat is a significant factor in the retention of water on land. And it's important to maintain, for example, the peat environment, which is one of the reasons why the—we've put a moratorium on peat development. It's almost counterintuitive to previous scientific knowledge, but given that the climate is changing, given the evolution of the approach to, for example, to water management in this province, we've gone, you know, we go through droughts to floods.

So what was once considered a resource that was beneficial, quote, to the environment, that is, the development of peat, is now become benefit to the environment by the retention of peat, which, in turn, is used to protect the land from overland flooding and other related water events.

I use that as an example of why we decided we needed an updated process with respect to how we looked at protected areas and how we looked at land-use planning going forward, because the goal posts have changed dramatically in the past 20 years, and that's just on science alone, never mind some of the other issues that we're affected by.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's response. Clearly, land use in Manitoba is a very important issue. Certainly, from the industry perspective, looking at investing in Manitoba, the industry wants a pretty clear and concise picture of what the land use is going to be here. And, you know, we've got a lot of issues, and I guess I'll use the polar bear park as one; it looks like it could potentially encompass a fairly large piece of property which may or may not, you know, provide some—be involved in some minerals, potential mineral and maybe a mine at some point in time.

So I think this—the concept of this committee is certainly good. I'm just trying to get my head around, again, if this committee actually has any teeth and what the reporting mechanism is going to be for this committee.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I mean, that's the significant issue in this regard, and how do you meld or how do you mould together policy issues of resource utilization of resource for the benefit of the entire province on how do you protect the environment for the province. And that's where the two significant policy issues collide. And that's why we did a couple things.

That's why we've set up this new committee to do some new ratings. And that's why there's an MOU between the Department of Conservation and the Department of Mineral Resources to develop this approach so that we're not going at counter—we're not going counter to overall policies.

The second thing that I think is—there's actually two other things I want to add to that—is that we're very pleased with developments that occurred in the minister's Mining Advisory Council where we have 10 to 11 chiefs sitting with all of the mining companies in the country—in the province, as well as the department where we go through these issues and try to understand all of the ramifications of issues, be it environmental, be it First Nation, be it treaty, et cetera. I think that's one of the reasons why, in the recent rankings in terms of investment, we're one of the best in the country in terms of investment and in terms of outlook into the future, because we have the ability to sit at tables with various participants and work out solutions.

It's both an art and a science, but, if you can determine what are—the mineral potential is, and if you could build your protected area around the mineral-protected area, then you've got a win-win situation. That's not impossible to do, but if you sit at a table and work it out it is possible to do.

There's no question that industry wants firm structure and firm guidelines. In the evolution of both the law and the development of science in the last decade, we can only be so—as accurate as the latest information. So, by having the players at the table, we're able to determine what's best for both the environment and for the natural resource that lies below or above it.

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the minister for that comment.

I wonder if the minister is in a position to comment on the proposed polar bear park at this

point in time. You know, has there been a recommendation going forward that there could be set aside there—have mineral resources been identified in that particular area, and where are we at in the discussion in terms of moving that proposal forward?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's a good case in point. This is a particularly unique area to Manitoba, and the fact that there's going to be a protected area in a very environmentally sensitive area has received input from the committee, and we've been able to meld the inputs together in order to try to structure a park that satisfies the needs of the community and the province and the country, as well as to protect the potential investments and mining opportunities in that area.

So there hasn't been a final decision made at this point. It's still in the process of discussions. I think that there's been a—I think industry will have—and industry and both the department would feel that we've had a fair hearing with respect to the approach to that particular area, and we're hopeful that we'll be able to come down with a final designation that satisfies—you can never satisfy all of the needs because there's conflicting interests, but, again, it's a question of weighing the benefits and the positive and the negative to come down with both a protected area and an area that's seen as a potential for economic development.

And that is in the midst of issues of various land-use and treaty entitlement and settlements that have been ongoing for 40 years that are being attempted to be resolved in those particular areas. So it's a complex issue. There will be a park in that area, and we hope that all of the needs and inputs that—have been met by virtue of both public consultations and internal canvassing of the participants through our committee structure.

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you very much, I appreciate that response. And we'll certainly be watching that as that process moves forward.

The Orphaned and Abandoned Mine Site Rehabilitation Program, I guess, started back in 2009. Just wondering what kind of money is allocated to that particular fund. Is that an ongoing annual allocation, or how is that fund—how does that fund work and how is it funded?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The regulations were introduced in 1999. The program was established in 2000; an environmental liability account was earmarked—it

was earmarked in 2006 and to date has spent \$207 million on orphaned and abandoned site rehabilitation.

*C'est ça. [That's it.]*

**Mr. Cullen:** Appreciate that.

How is the fund financed?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The member will probably recall that the—there was an account established to look at the orphaned and abandoned sites in the province by—recommended by the provincial auditor. An account was established on the balance sheet to look at this liability and it's been drawn down—we've been drawing down on that balance from that account since the establishment of the fund to the tune of \$207 million.

**Mr. Cullen:** So the—just to clarify, then, the money's actually just—it's not coming from companies themselves and there's no allocation on annual basis into that fund.

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, the—this—in this instance, this was a liability that was attached to the Province from sites that there was no—that the Province was responsible for. There was no longer an attachment to any companies or their liabilities. There are current—there are two things happening. There are companies that are—that remediated and remediate based on their legal obligations.

And, of course, going forward we've established a different process where companies have to put up a security with respect to future rehabilitation. So that was a sort of a sea change in terms of going forward on abandoned sites and proceeding into the future for future liabilities.

So a liability account was set up in order to deal with past difficulties that we're drawing down on.

**Mr. Cullen:** I guess the question, then, is, you know, what kind of a liability is the Province exposed to into the future? Do you have a number of that or is that kind of a moving target?

**Mr. Chomiak:** To understand this, it's important to understand that there was no recognition of these liabilities in the past. There was a determination by the provincial auditor to—that there was a certain amount assessed that with future liabilities we think it's fairly accurate. We account for it every year. We pay interest on that account every year and we expend. I've known and I've watched the process. It's not up—it's as is almost inevitable, costs and other

factors enter into it, but to the extent possible that you could project future liabilities based on an assessment at a certain date we think we've done—as accurately as possible, but it's—I'll stop there.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's comments.

I wonder if he could just give me a sense in terms of how many sites have been determined. Like, I'm just trying to get a ballpark in my head just to try to get a sense of what the potential liability could be.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, rehabilitation work is completed two of the high-priority sites, Baker Patton and Lynn Lake, and work is ongoing at three other high-priority sites: Sherridon, Gods Lake and Snow Lake which will be complete, we're hoping, in 2015-16. Rehabilitation has been completed at 30 of 31 high-hazard sites.

**Mr. Cullen:** I'm glad you mention the Sherridon project, and I wonder if there was some local concerns voiced from the community there. Would the minister be able to provide an update in terms of where that project is at?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes. There was a temporary water treatment plant at the north basin settling pond and the eventual plan shared with the community is to release flow from the north basin settling pond into Cold Lake which eventually goes in Kississing Lake.

There was concerns raised this summer about the fact that the potential release of water from the settling basin was—did not meet federal and provincial standards and there was a dispute about that and different tests and had gone back and forth. We held off in the release of the water based on that. We have three community meetings that were—that are taking place in the next couple months. We intend to continue to proceed with the original plan, which was—which, by all accounts, is environmentally sound and the best way to deal with tailings and that is to neutralize the acidification of the lake and to therefore allow for the water to flow and not be further contaminated by the acidic developments.

There are some in the community who disagree in the first instance with the process that took place. This has been an ongoing project but by all accounts, both on a scientific and an environmental basis, it's probably the only way to ensure that the water is pure and uncontaminated vis-à-vis what was in place before, which was the release of contaminants into a system that could very much threaten both the—threaten the fish and the other living things that inhabit the lake.

\* (15:10)

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the minister for that, and it's encouraging to see that there is some discussion with the local communities. So, hopefully, that project will get resolved in the near future.

I want to touch on the Mining Community Reserve Fund. Just wondering if the minister could indicate how much money is in that fund and, again, how that—what the mechanism is to fund that particular fund.

**Mr. Chomiak:** The fund was established under The Mining Tax Act. It provides funding to those persons residing in mining communities who may be affected by the total or partial suspension of mining operations.

Deposits are made into the reserve by order-in-council and are not to exceed 6 per cent of the mining taxes received in a fiscal year. Projects funded by the reserve are approved by order-in-council.

In addition, we're allowed to provide funding up to 60 per cent to support the sustainability of Manitoba's mining industry, such as public geoscience, Aboriginal consultations, mining industry training, environmental 'monning,' research or remediation.

And the current cash balance as of April 31st, 2015, is \$15,485,000. That's \$15,485,000.

**Mr. Cullen:** Has there been any payments out of that fund in the last five years?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will undertake to provide the list of funding for the past five years out of the fund.

**Mr. Cullen:** It's also my understanding that if there's in excess of \$10 million in that account, money could be taken out of that account and turned over to general revenue. Is that, in fact, the case? And has any of—has that been—ever undertaken?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The act does permit that, Mr. Chairperson. The fund can't go below \$10 million in level, if I understand it correctly. It comes up every AMM and every chamber of commerce meeting that we have, and I always say the same thing: no money has flowed into general revenue from that account.

**Mr. Cullen:** I—thanks for that, and I appreciate the undertaking there.

And I think my colleague from Lac du Bonnet has a question or two.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** To the honourable minister, I would just like to ask if he can just put on the record some of the conversations and things that have happened with the San Gold bankruptcy and where are we at moving forward.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, unfortunately, the mine has gone bankrupt, not for the first time, Mr. Speaker, and that particular site, as I understand it, historically it goes up and down with respect to the price of gold. The—we were involved in the process to ensure that we assisted in the attempt to find a purchaser. The mine is now in care, and maintenance has been taken over by the lender, in this case.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I thank the minister for the brief, I guess, answer, but I'm actually looking at something a little more substantive.

Here we've got an area of the province that has been—now that have lost another major employer, and we're looking at hundreds of jobs that have gone away.

And I just want to know, what is the minister and his department doing to try to rejuvenate, get things back up and running up in the Bissett community and for that whole entire northeast region of the Lac du Bonnet constituency and the southeast portion of Kewatinook.

**Mr. Chomiak:** There's no lack of effort with respect to attempting to redevelop and continue the development in that area, and you're right; the area has been hard hit by developments. And I know from my time as minister of the—in my previous portfolio, there were several developments that we've attempted to attract to that area.

Clearly, mining and mineral resources is fairly— is fundamental to that area. I would not rule out—we certainly offer—we are able and willing to assist anyone that wants to be retrained or participate in development. I would not be surprised if, in the near-in—the way markets go, we had had a discussion earlier in Estimates about how the markets—how difficult it was in this particular environment.

As difficult as that news is, we are the only jurisdiction that's opened two mines in the last period of time, and we also were able to prevent a significant change in our projected shutdown at Vale several years ago by working with them. We worked significantly with San Gold and their principals, both

in the—during—prior to the process of bankruptcy, during the process of bankruptcy, and now in the—we are able to offer any assistance with respect to the company that now is in charge of care and maintenance in terms of restart or some other ability to move forward.

The—there's been significant co-operation with First Nations and other community members in making this a viable alternative again. And I suspect, from my own perspective only, as an individual who's watched mining developments in the last little while, when I looked at the volume of production at San Gold and I looked at the—some of the other prospects in the province that are moving to exploration—you know, if the price of gold is to—was to rise again, I think that there would be a—opportunities there based on, what I understand as a layperson, with respect to the reserves at—in that site.

I think that covers it from the provincial perspective. There's no question that it was a significant employer; it was a significant employer of First Nation and was a significant employer of locals. And there is no doubt that we would and will assist in any fashion to assist in mine development there, should it arise again.

But, right now, in the country, there's a real stretch on capital markets. And there's—the downward price of gold has affected projects all across the world.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and Minister for the answer.

I guess part of my frustration as the local representative is that, even though I know that the minister's thrilled with the opening of the other two mines, that's not really bringing any kind of peace to the people of that area, including the First Nations communities. Like I said, major employer, just within the last seven years it's the second major employer that we've lost in the region.

So what—if he can share with me, what were the last, most recent dates that he's had conversations with the maintenance company that is maintaining the mine right now in Bissett? When was the last conversation?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I believe the department met with some of the principals of the existing company as recently as the end of summer and, presently, right

now, one of our officials is in Bissett meeting with local residents concerning the future.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, presently, there is a representative of your department meeting up in Bissett?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, acting director—our director of mines is meeting today with, in Bissett.

**Mr. Ewasko:** What type of things are—the minister mentions various things that the government is willing to do to help foster a relationship with the existing company and get it started again.

I'm wondering, maybe at this time when it is down and it's basically just on care and maintenance, is this maybe a time when you start to do the exploration and the prospecting for the various areas around that region? So that, maybe, we can potentially, I guess, sell that area of the province to sort of encourage other people to come and possibly open the mine up again at a full—sort of full bore.

**Mr. Chomiak:** We have had our geological survey in that area and have it as a priority in the upcoming year.

I should indicate to the member that exploration is up from what was projected this year and we think, partially, it's a result of the expanded exploration incentives that we've put in place, which are the best in the country. And we're hopeful—every single mining job is often in six digits and supports a lot of people and brings home a lot of benefits to the community. So that is not lost upon us.

There, in rural and northern Manitoba there are not as many opportunities, per se, as you might have in a large urban centre. We're not unaware of that and so we continue to have representatives from the company on our minister's advisory council and any time we're prepared to—and I've—I have been involved in the past with companies involved in scouting out the area for different kinds of opportunities. They have not been realized but that's not for lack of trying on our part.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So this bankruptcy of San Gold, was this a shock to the minister? How long did he potentially see or department—how long did they see this sort of working towards this, sort of the final closure?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's very hard to tell in the mining community, frankly, Mr. Chairperson. I—there have been—you know, as we watched—as I watched the price of gold go down, I knew that there would be difficulties in a lot of places. We have a very small

but tight mining community and we were apprised of developments as they went along. Anytime you have a board of directors and—that are independent and you have a company that's got significant investments—and no one ever wants to get to that point of bankruptcy. And usually, on the other hand, in the mining world we see companies going bankrupt on a regular basis and being bought up by other companies and coming back again. That has happened at that site, and you—it's because of market fluctuation because of the nature of the industry.

It was only three years ago that I was at the mining—national mining conference in Toronto and gold was—that's all people talked about was gold—and there was hundreds of companies. They were talking about the future of gold in Canada, and three years later now, dozens of companies if not hundreds are—have gone under. It's a very difficult area to make predictions in.

So that's why I'm avoiding giving a definitive answer to the member about when and how we thought it was going—we have been beside that company working with that company on a regular basis, and we did everything, I think, that is possible to keep it afloat from the perspective of a provincial government.

**Mr. Ewasko:** What type of fail-safes are—well, and I shouldn't even say fail-safe. Because it's obviously from what the minister is saying, it's such a unpredictable market that you possibly can't give me a total safety net here. But we've got many contractors and various suppliers within the area that are out hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars and, you know, this affects, you know, the local communities, local families.

We already—you know, in 2008 Tembec in Pine Falls was shut down. You know, and not to bring up too many daggers here, but it took a while for the provincial government to show up there to sort of lend a hand, and then, of course, Tembec closed—hundreds of jobs gone. And so they looked to the mine and a lot of people had moved over to the mine in Bissett, and now that's gone.

So what types of things is your department working on or doing to help, I guess, protect as much as possible those people who are making their livelihood at supplying and con—subcontracting in these various industries?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It goes a bit beyond just the Mineral Resources Department. We do everything we can on

the mineral side to provide incentives, to provide a tax structure, to provide supports, to provide the training necessary, then goes beyond us to other departments and other areas of government to deal with this. The fact that we have our director of mines out there today is a testament to what we—to our commitment to it.

\* (15:30)

I do know that if there's—and I seen it—if companies come through and look for opportunities, we do our utmost to show off the potential of the region both from a mining perspective and as well as a lifestyle perspective. And Jobs and the Economy and other grants, loans, supports are available through other government departments to deal with the communities involved.

The First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, for example, has invested funds in that area for enterprises. That goes nowhere near, of course, the kind of value and the kind of job prospects of the mine, and I—unfortunately, in the mining industry there's ebb and a flow, and right now, it's in a bottom. It's ebbing.

And I have constituents that worked at San Gold and I'm well aware of the ramifications. And I don't think the bankruptcy proceedings have finalized at this point. There's still—there's federal government involvement with respect to salaries and benefits and severance-related issues. There's also contractual issues that are still before the courts, I believe. I read the judgment with respect to the bankruptcy and I can't offer any further information as it relates to those particular proceedings.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Minister, for his answer and his words. I guess, as a senior minister of Cabinet, minister in the government, you mentioned the various other departments within the government, is there—has there been—you mentioned some funds being allocated. I don't quite—I haven't quite seen that or heard of that. I also don't believe that there has been any people coming from the various departments to help with sort of a rebuild, an economic plan for the community. To me, it's more so the mine or nothing, and if there's nothing, then it's absolutely nothing and nobody's around to check it out or to help out.

So do those conversations happen around the Cabinet table about a specific community? And I mean, there's now, you know, hundreds of people out of work. There's hundreds of people that are

struggling. And I don't believe that there's been anybody from any government department that has made their way out there, I mean, besides the director of mines, but he or she are having conversations, I guess, with the mines—with the principal of the existing company. I don't believe anybody has been out there to help out with, whether it's Conservation or it's, you know, Housing or Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

So, you know, maybe give me a sneak peek into what happens in that Cabinet room as a senior minister. What types of conversations are happening to help out communities around these types of major economic issues?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The—these discussions do take place around the Cabinet table. And there are concerns with the communities. That's why we have a mining—that's why we have a fund that provides assistance to communities when they apply, a mining reserve fund.

So, as we speak, as indicated, our mining director is speaking with the community with respect to the opportunities that are from our department. I can tell the member that there are—this community and other communities in Manitoba, where a mine is closed, we do our utmost to look at other opportunities. And there have been ventures that have come and gone, will come and go, but I'm quite confident that, given the geography and the topography and the geology of the area, that there will be opportunities in the future.

That's no satisfaction to the member, I understand it, but our director is out there today talking to the community about its opportunities.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I'd just like to take an opportunity to thank the minister for the—for his answers. And I look forward to asking him potentially some other questions, either later on or setting up some meetings with him in the next couple weeks, and also to get the name of the director of mines who's gone out there to visit to have those conversations as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, let's turn from gold and talk about potash.

Can the minister explain, in the current situation I understand we have a Manitoba Potash Corporation. Where is that corporation at in terms of, you know, does the corporation now have the potash rights in that Russell or Binscarth area?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated—I don't know if I indicated in the House or publicly, the potash play or potential in western Manitoba has been in play for 40 years, for as long as I've been involved in the political world, and there's been various attempts over the years to develop that particular site.

In the last few years we had to make a determination whether or not—because of the volume and the development of the oil field we had to make a decision as to whether or not we would put land up for lease for oil and gas rights, or whether we would maintain buffer zones around potential potash development in that area in order to allow for potash development.

As I recall—and I'm doing this from memory now, again—so as I recall we determined that given the demand for potash development in the world, at some point there may be a viability to that particular play. And so we decided to then secure the—consolidate the potash resource in the Russell-McAuley deposit in an effort to facilitate development of a conventional potash mine—and I won't even get into sluice in mining or non-conventional mining.

The resource consolidation was achieved through the acquisition of a 51 per cent share of the Manitoba Potash Corporation owned by joint venture partner BHP Billiton, which controlled the northern block on the Russell area, and the withdrawal of the Crown potash rights in the contiguous southern block in the St-Lazare area following the termination of a potash exploration permit held by Agrium corp.

The consolidation of the resource in the Russell-McAuley deposit represented a step towards attracting a credible development.

Manitoba Potash then—Potash Corporation then contacted Micon International Limited to develop and execute a marketing strategy designed to identify and engage potential potash developers. Micon also provided analysis of the potash market and advance on the launch of the marketing strategy, and prepared the necessary tactical information required to successfully market the Russell-McAuley deposit, which by that point contained an estimated 1 billion tons graded by a 20.9 per cent K2O.

The marketing strategy developed by Micon to list an expression of interest—[interjection]—yes—prioritized the list of potash and fertilizer companies with the intent of selecting a developer with the experience and the resources to develop a

conventional potash mine and provide the region with economic and social development opportunities. The strategy has now reached a stage where, under a confidential divestiture process, we are reviewing proposals that are before us now.

**Mr. Cullen:** I did read this report here, and I've read it a couple times. So just to clarify, then, the Manitoba Potash Corporation does own 100 per cent. And how is this corporation established? Is this a Crown corporation and there's—no one else owns part of that corporation?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Chomiak:** It's a corporation that's currently owned by the Crown. We consolidated ownership in one entity in order to be more attractive to a potential purchaser of the rights in that area.

There have been dozens of different concepts and consolidations and purchases and flips back and forth with that property over the past 20 to 30 years, and various efforts to develop that site. In fact, in 1988 to '90 there was environmental assessments that were announced.

I've been always very careful to indicate to both the community and the general public that this is a possibility, but the development of a potash mine in that area has a fairly long timeline, probably 10 years. There is potential there. There's very complicated market factors at play. We know, for example, that fertilizer and demand for K<sub>2</sub>O is going up, I think for potash itself is going up at rates of two million tons a year in China. We also know, you know, it wasn't that long ago that potash prices were at a high of \$900–\$1,700 a ton. It's significantly dropped since then. But, significantly since then, both reserves have increased and various mergers and acquisitions have taken place. Most notably, the Chinese have invested in the European consortium, the Potash Corporation has attempted to purchase both the Israeli assets and the assets in Germany, recently. So they're—it's a complicated issue. Saskatchewan, just last week, announced the closure of their New Brunswick mine and their volume and capacity reserves have gone up.

So that's a long way of saying there are a lot of factors in play that suggest that, when we entered this process, that we do it in a fashion that was—that would open the market to all potential developers and see our way through a process that would not raise false expectations on anyone's part. But I'm very—I can talk potash for hours, as I worked in the

industry, so I know a little bit about—and I could talk for hours about it, but I'll cease at this point.

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the minister's comments.

So we've gone through the process, now, and we've got some expressions on the table. So, I guess, at this point in time now it's up to the Province to sort through those expressions and then, I'm assuming, eventually a decision will be made. I'm sure the community is interested when a decision could be reached.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I—to say there's expressions on the table may be—there's opportunities that are being looked at for expressions of interest. Is that what I think captured—we've gone through a process and the next stage is to do due diligence and to look at the opportunities, et cetera. Since the period of time when the interest was expressed and started consolidating and looking forward to going—looking into the future, obviously the market conditions have changed quite dramatically and they will change dramatically as we go into the future.

But at this point we're going to follow a process and—there is a lot of community interest at this point. My good friend, the former member from that region, now mayor of Roblin, is very much an advocate of potash and I've had many discussions with him both when he was a member of government and when he was a member of opposition. And now that he's mayor, pointing out the vagaries of the market and the vagaries of the industry, but—we all remain hopeful, and we're doing everything we can within an appropriate process to achieve what's best for Manitobans.

**Mr. Cullen:** I'm sure the mayor from Russell-Binscarth will be continuing to call you.

So what was reported in the Brandon Sun here just recently, and I'm going to quote from the Sun, and you—if you just could confirm this is where we're at.

And they talk about the number of responses from different parties. So those responses are currently being assessed on such criteria as industrial experience, capability, financial capacity, proposed exploration, resource evaluation, project development, marketing strategy and their expected contribution to the Manitoba economy.

Does that kind of sum up where we're at?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, that would be accurate.

**Mr. Cullen:** I see the clock is ticking here, and there's certainly a number of outstanding issues here, but I just want to touch briefly on some of the tax regime facing the mining industry here. And I'm wondering if the—I know the mining association has put together some proposals to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar). I assume the minister has been privy to those as well. And I'm just wondering if the minister has given any direction or any—had any discussion with the Minister of Finance in terms of—you know, some of those requests have been made by the mining association that some of the tax strategies, as they are laid out, if there might be some options to streamline some of that to make it a little more attractive for the industry.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thanks. I guess we will wait and see what might come in a budget if there is a budget in the spring.

The other thing I should touch on is, you know, the Mining Advisory Council the minister has set up. You know, I think it ultimately—probably, industry and First Nations communities are looking for some kind of a framework in terms of moving forward on duty to consult. Can the minister give us any idea in terms of that group, that organization and if there is going to be something formalized?

**Mr. Chomiak:** We have a process in place and there will be more formalized developments. It has been a tremendous experience working with this table in terms of education on the part of all participants.

We've been given credit across the country for developing this table, given the uncertainty with the development of both the evolution of the law and the difficulty in the capital markets and the commodity prices.

One of the goals of the advisory council is to improve the Crown-Aboriginal consultation, accommodation policies, procedures, timelines appropriate to various stages of exploration and mining cycles. That is easier said than done, but that is clearly one of the goals of the Mining Advisory Council.

And I know that time is tight; otherwise, I could go on again on this topic for a long period of time as well.

**Mr. Cullen:** I'm sure we could go on and on talking about mining and the oil industry, but I do want to appreciate—I do appreciate the minister's time and

comments and I want to thank him and his staff as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Minister, any closing comments?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I want to thank the member and the other members. This has been a very useful process, I think, for all of us, and I look forward to future developments. And I—we will get back and we're going to set up a briefing with the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) with respect to—it was just—we talked with officials with respect to his area and we will do follow-up on all of the undertakings that we made at the committee.

**Mr. Chairperson:** As Chairperson, I thank everyone involved.

We will now move to resolutions related to this department.

Resolution 18.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,667,000 for Mineral Resources, Mineral Resources, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 18.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$640,000 for Mineral Resources, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 1st, 2000–March 31st, should say—yes, March 31st, 2016.

*Resolution agreed to.*

And now we move to resolution 18.1 concerning the minister's salary, so the staff can be excused.

Thank you very much, once again.

\* (15:50)

So, yes, the last item to be considered is 18.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 18.1.

Floor is open for questions, if any.

Seeing none, if we're ready for the question, shall the resolution pass—oh, well, sorry, I'll read it out just to be clear.

Resolution 18.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$528,000 for Mineral Resources, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

*Resolution agreed to.*

This concludes consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Mineral Resources.

## MULTICULTURALISM AND LITERACY

**Mr. Chairperson (Rob Altemeyer):** The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Multiculturalism and Literacy.

Are we ready to jump straight into it? Okay, well, there we go.

All right, so we are now moving into consideration of the Estimates for Multiculturalism and Literacy.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Please proceed, Honourable Minister.

**Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy):** It is my privilege to introduce the 2015-2016 Estimates for Manitoba Multiculturalism and Literacy.

Mr. Chairperson, these Estimates, like our overall provincial budget, represent the steady, balanced approach and continued commitment to building our future together. Budget 2015's balanced approach focuses on creating good jobs, growing our economy and building new opportunities for families. My department's efforts will contribute to the overall commitments of this government.

To begin, I would like to acknowledge the hard work done by both staff of the department and our key partners and stakeholders. Together their efforts allow us to support individuals, families and communities, whether they are setting goals for themselves and working towards achieving them, or they are planning and participating in activities that build understanding and inclusive communities. We could not do it alone.

In terms of the Department of Multiculturalism and Literacy specifically, as you are aware, it is a focused department with two distinct areas. These areas, as I'm sure you have noted, are the Multiculturalism Secretariat and the Adult Learning and Literacy branch.

The work of the Multiculturalism Secretariat is important, as they are engaged in supporting ethnocultural organizations. And it is their efforts that essentially bring together people of all ages and origins across the province through an amazing array of activities and initiatives. These continue to contribute to our thriving multicultural mosaic and

support a deeper understanding and the celebration of our diversity throughout the province.

There are approximately 220 registered ethnocultural organizations in Manitoba, with over half of these being supported directly or indirectly by the Multiculturalism Secretariat. I am pleased to highlight that there are also over 140 different languages spoken and over 150 different countries represented in Manitoba. The success of our government's multicultural programming is due in large part to the strength of partnerships within the community, and I cannot emphasize the importance of these ongoing relationships.

Budget 2015 invests over \$20 million for Adult Learning and Literacy programming in the province. This represents an overall 2.5 per cent increase. In a knowledge-based society, relevant academic preparation and high school graduation are instrumental in preparing individuals for employment and to access post-secondary programming. It is through the Adult Learning and Literacy branch that we are able to provide these services and program, specifically targeted to both adult learners and adult educators, whether it is in the context of improving literacy skills, completion of relevant high school credits or, in fact, attaining a Manitoba high school diploma.

Adult learning and literacy programs are important stepping stones for many adults in Manitoba who seek to upgrade their academic skills and gain educational credentials. We are continuing to strengthen our network of adult education providers to better serve Manitobans. My department will register 42 adult learning centres throughout the province to provide tuition-free high school credit programming for Manitoba's adult population.

Completion of courses through adult learning centres will allow Manitobans to pursue employment or further education and training, opening up opportunities for them and their families. High school credits and high school diplomas are key to ensuring that adults are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.

Last year alone, 8,389 adults continued their high school education through various adult learning centres around Manitoba; 1,425 adults obtained a high school diploma. Now these adults have the ability to further pursue their goals. Once they have their high school diploma they can choose whether they want to go on to post-secondary education, continue skills training or enter the workforce.

Strong literacy skills help position Manitoba's adults to take full advantage of current and future employment opportunities and improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Budget 2015 will support funding of over \$2.6 million for 33 agencies throughout the province to provide tuition-free adult literacy programming. We anticipate that our network of providers will serve over 10,000 adults throughout Manitoba in 2015-16.

I'm pleased to share that Budget 2015 also provides funding for a new, full-time, wrap-around literacy model focused on the needs of social assistance participants. This new, one-step program will include job search, apprenticeship, skills training and career development resources.

Our government remains committed to developing the labour force for the growing First Nations and Metis populations. It's important to take into consideration that 45 per cent of learners in adult learning centres, and 38 per cent of learners in adult literacy programs identify as Aboriginal. We need to continue to develop programming and curriculum to be responsive and relevant to this important segment of the population.

Strong literacy and numeracy are essential skills for individuals to be successful in obtaining high school credits and high school diplomas. They are essential for individuals to effectively participate in training and work experience programs, and essential for them to gain and hold employment. For these reasons, as minister, I recognize and value the importance of adult literacy and learning, and commit to working closely with my colleagues to further our government's pledge of 75,000 new workers by 2020.

As you can see with the number of organizations this department supports, we clearly have many partners involved in providing services to Manitobans right across the province. Though we may not be comparable to larger departments, the focus of our efforts alongside our partners is what contributes to the building of a strong foundation for the future of our province.

So, with that, Mr. Chair, I would like to express my appreciation to the Multiculturalism and Literacy staff for their hard work and dedication. I look forward to the committee's review of the

departmental Estimates and welcome comments and questions related to my department.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for that opening statement.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden):** I just wanted to—thank the opportunity to be able to sit with the minister of multicultural literacy and look forward to having a conversation based on what's happened in the number of years in the province of Manitoba.

I know the province of Manitoba is a very multicultural society. It's been—even in my own family, we have a number of ethnic groups in representative. My mother-in-law is from Jamaica. My grandparents on my dad's side both came from Ukraine. My mom's side, they came from England, and with my wife's father's side, they also came from England. And many of our—my relatives—my own family have married into other nationalities. One brother married into an Icelandic family and another brother married into a Metis family, and so in our family we have a lot of multicultural and when we get together—and it's great, and it's so important that in the province of Manitoba that we do focus on that.

Coming from a town the size of Virden with the economic opportunities in the oil-rig field and the other—in the agriculture sector too, it's providing a lot of jobs in our region, and it's so nice to see even since we moved to the town of Virden how much our diversity has changed in the rural areas.

We have many—many—now Filipino families who have moved into the town of Virden. We've had some Jamaican families, who now work in the service industry, have moved into the community. We also seen Ukrainians coming from the country of Ukraine, not just who are third generation. So it's really nice to see that and, you know, we have many First Nation reserves in our—in my constituency that I feel honoured and become friends with, especially with one of the chiefs from Sioux Valley. The other day we just went horse-back riding and we were able to talk about different issues in the area.

And also literacy. You know, one of the first things when we moved to the town of Virden, my wife was looking for a job and she was blessed to get her first job actually with APPLE. It's a literacy program in the town of Virden, and that was her first

job, and to this day she still has many of her clients who are actually—become friends, and she taught them the confidence of learning English and being able to take that confidence and gaining improved employment, and so as a community we still see those people and they're very appreciative.

And, again, we were blessed in—when we moved to Virden how we—this sort of this portfolio really, really relates to some of our own experiences.

And I want to thank the minister for her taking this time to have this conversation.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Under—well, we thank the official opposition critic for those opening remarks as well.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a Department in the Committee of Supply. So, accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 44.1.(a) contained in resolution 44.1.

And now we can invite the minister's staff to come on up to the table and join us here, and perhaps the minister, once they are settled, you'd be so kind as to introduce them to members of the committee.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I'm delighted to be joined here with me my assistant deputy minister Veronica Dyck, executive director of learning and literacy Nancy Buchanan, director of Multiculturalism Secretariat Tehani Jainarine, and acting executive financial officer Claire Breul.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Excellent.

One last item before we get into direct question and answers is: Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department globally or chronologically?

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Globally.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Globally has been suggested. Honourable Minister, that's acceptable?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Globally it is.

**Mr. Chairperson:** All right. Thank you.

It's therefore agreed questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all the resolutions to be passed once all the questioning has been concluded.

Wouldn't you know it? The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Mr. Chair, I just—I guess first question I would like to—it's with multiculturalism. On page 9

of the 2004-'14-2015 annual report, it mentioned in the event that the multicultural secretariat co-ordinate with the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties. Was the 20—March 21st Human Rights Film Festival or other event—that it—the paragraph wasn't clear, where was this event hosted? What were the costs associated with it, and how many of—many from the public were in attendance?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Could my colleague please repeat the question?

**Mr. Piwniuk:** On page 9 of the 2014-2015 annual report, it mentioned that in an event, multicultural secretariat co-ordinated with the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties was that March 21st, Human Rights Film Festival or another event, the paragraph wasn't clear. Where was this event hosted? What were the costs associated with it, and how many of the public were in attendance?

**Ms. Marcelino:** The youth anti-racism education, the film festival to celebrate Multiculturalism Day as well as the cultural show, the film festival happened at the Garrick theatre, and the Multiculturalism Day festival at Old Market Square. For those events, a total of \$18,000 was given to MARL, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties.

As for the number of participants, we will have to provide the number of participants to my colleague.

\*(16:10)

**Mr. Piwniuk:** On page 10 of the 2014-15 annual report, you mention the youth event that was co-ordinated with the secretariat and with the City of Winnipeg called React to Racism.

How many in the public were in attendance of this event, and what were the costs associated with it? Is there plans to have the—it to be co-ordinated for next year?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Approximately 100 youth participants of that event. As for the cost, we have to provide that very soon to my colleague.

As you know, we're always open to partnering with the City of Winnipeg. Very recently, we partnered—our government partnered with the City of Winnipeg and other sponsors from the province to the—to Mayor Bowman's ONE conference, a well-attended, very well-participated-in conference. And this participation with the City could be—more of this could be happening as we go forward.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Thanks for the answer to the question, Minister.

Next question I have is on page 10 of the 2014-15 annual report. It states that there was 109,000 of assistance expenditures, in addition to 67 of other expenditures and 216 of—216,000 of salaries and employee benefits. Can you provide a detailed breakdown of the assistance expenditures?

**Ms. Marcelino:** I thank my colleague for the question.

This is a very important activity for our department—the provision of assistance to hundreds of multicultural organizations. There is a one-grand pot in our department, and it is called the ethno-cultural support program, very valuable resource for multicultural organizations. And the assistance for this 2014-15 year totals 109 million—*[interjection]* Oh, I'm sorry, 109,000 cash for portion.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So, then, the assistance expenditures—so that's 'assisisty' of all multicultural groups in the province of Manitoba, then, with their events or organizations or. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Oh, I'm sorry. Yes.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Thanks for the answer from the minister.

The next question I have is on page 12 of the 2014-15 annual report regarding adult learning centres. There has been a decrease in the outcome since 2013-14. Eight thousand learners completed the 11,752 courses for the high school credit, whereas in 2013-14 there was 8,389 learners and 12,250 courses were completed. There were also 1,329 ALC learners that graduated with the high school diploma in year '14-15 whereas there were 1,425 in '13-14.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Specifically, what is my colleague's question?

**Mr. Piwniuk:** There was also 1,800–1,852 post-diploma credits in 2013-14, but 1,334–3,346 in the year prior in 2012-2013. So this year, 137 people obtained their GED certificates, whereas last year there were 166.

Can you explain why there was an outcome decrease across the board, and what MAL is doing, advertising and recruitment? Why is to ensure that

there's no downward trend in adult literacy learning in 2015-2016 fiscal year?

**Ms. Marcelino:** I would like to inform my colleague numbers will really change from year to year. There'll be no fixed statistics on the number of students taken in, number of graduates who finished the courses. It all depends on who applies and what their needs are, and the needs of each and every student varies. Some will need just a few credits, some will need more than five or 10 credits, so each case or each student will be—will have different requirements.

As for the numbers, learning centres in most regions are—that are reporting strong economic growth and low unemployment rates are creating conditions for lower learner enrolment numbers. Likewise, learning centres continue to focus on quality programming rather than on merely quantity of learners, and so on meeting the needs of learners as mandated under The Adult Learning Centres Act, learning centres continue to develop strong partnerships within the communities.

Likewise, lower enrolment numbers are evident in areas where census data show declining population. In particular, circumstances can affect learning centres' enrolment numbers. Examples includes a continued trend toward using more effective classroom-based delivery model, error in reporting and limiting the number of underage learners as per policy guidelines.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Just wanted to get a clarification between—if you could explain the difference between adult learning centres and adult literacy centres, like, programs.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Those who are enrolled in literacy programs or in literacy centres do not have the basic credits to pursue high school credits—or did not have the basic knowledge to be able to pursue courses that are needed to pursue a high school graduation diploma.

The adult learners that are in the learning centres are pursuing high school credits that will allow them to graduate with mature high school—what's the term now—a diploma, or high school diploma.

So, for example, in Winkler, specifically, there is the adult learning centre and the literacy centre. I notice that the students in the literacy centres are—yes, mature, some of whom have been citizens for a

very long time. They were farmers of the area. Some was even close to 90 years old and have never been to a school—have never been to a school situation, yet at that age in their life they thought they need to be able to be literate. So they applied to the literacy centre, whereas the adult learning centres provided by Red River College, they are adults wanting to pursue, maybe, post-secondary education, but earlier in life they didn't finish their—they didn't graduate from high school, so they're enrolled in, say, additional English courses and some sciences, and they—many go on to proceed to post-secondary education, either pursuing teacher certificates—some are into health care or nursing programs, one even pursuing—would want to pursue university engineering courses.

So, with the literacy courses they may or may not proceed to obtain high school diploma. Some might proceed into that, but others, they just want to have functional literacy.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** How many adult learning centres are there here in Manitoba, and where are they located?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Mr. Chair, and my colleague, we have 42 registered learning centres all over the province.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Okay. Those 42, like, when I saw the difference between an adult literacy program, where, you know, you're a person who, maybe has a very low education, you're explaining, so they—you know, want them to get the confidence of learning to read properly to a level, a decent level, and maybe possibly pursue in getting their high school.

So those 42 adult learning centres, to get those credits, so they actually have separate programs within that location, then, with the two different, one with the adult literacy and the other one with the learning centres, are they in the same location in all the 42 locations?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Some literacy centres are located in the same adult learning centre; some are separate. And they're all over the province. I'm not sure, I think APPLE's literacy centre is also in the APPLE learning centre. But I know in Lac du Bonnet, if I'm not mistaken, or one of the areas there, the centres are separate.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** They're separate within that community, then, the two locations. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Oh, sorry. Honourable Minister.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Some can be separate from the learning centre. The literacy centre is separate from the learning centre; some are together. They just have one building or one area.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So when it comes to a literacy program, let's say teaching, let's say for individuals who have a very low education level, what kind of a qualification does that person need, like, the teacher need, in order to teach that program?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Mr. Chair, the new credential for adult literacy instructors will ensure that all learners involved at agencies funded by the Manitoba Adult Literacy Program will receive instruction from instructors who have the necessary knowledge and skills to support learners increase their literacy levels. The credential will provide adult literacy instructors with recognition for the training and professional development they're required to take. The credential is based on the Manitoba competency standard for adult literacy instructors. The Manitoba competency standard for adult literacy instructors has been developed over a number of years in consultation with the adult literacy field. The standard is grounded in essential skills profiles of adult literacy instructors and co-ordinators. The standard defines what instructors must know and be able to do to be effective in their role.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Well, question for the minister: Does the requirement for one of the teachers need a teaching degree to teach the adult literacy program?

**Ms. Marcelino:** If they were to teach in our adult learning centres, yes, they are required to have their certificates. However, in literacy centres, they just will be allowed to teach if they have completed the adult literacy course, from theory to practice. So, with learning centres, yes, because it's similar to the regular high school institutions that teachers have to be qualified, registered, licensed.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Piwniuk:** One—like, I've sort of had some outreach in some of the different programs in the province, and one of the persons that I've been spoke—speaking to, the concern that they had was that when you're—before, there used to be some volunteers who would actually, you know, get paid, on a, you know, a certain level because maybe they have a higher—enough education level that they're not 'nessarily' teachers, but they can relate to the students. Much like my wife, my wife does not—she had a phys. ed. degree, but she never had a teaching

degree. But she could relate to the individuals, and I think, even to this day, they said how effective she was because it was her personality, not so much the degree, you know.

And I think in some programs I was talking to, they're concerned about that because all of the sudden now, you might get somebody who actually has a teaching degree, but you had to pay more, which they only have very few resources to pay that person to make that—to make it effective and make sure that they're on budget. But at the same time, they miss—they might not have the opportunity to get that one person hired who can relate to these students, who can teach it properly and be able to still be within their budget and be—make sure that they're—the students are going to be looked after.

And that's a concern, too, I think, to a lot of some of these programs out there because they are faced with very low funding, especially rural Manitoba.

**Ms. Marcelino:** As you know, we have standards for our learning centres, even for our literacy centres. But what you mentioned are relevant and important, so our department would be willing to sit down and listen to these concerns raised by community members or even those in the literacy centres. We'd like to hear from them and we'll be open. We won't be sacrificing standards; we still have to meet those standards, but there are cases wherein, if standards are met, we'd like to pursue with whatever arrangement would be effective.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So some of cases, when it comes to these programs where they're really tightly funded, they—you do have some concessions if they find the right volunteer to teach that program, that you would actually consider them hiring that individual, then, even if they don't have a standard, let's say, a teacher's certificate or a certified teacher?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Yes, for the information of my colleague, this estimate—or the budget for this year's learning centres were—was increased by 2.5 per cent, and that is to be able to provide wages of instructors in the learning centres comparable to what the regular school board's or school division's salary are.

However, that is not the case for literacy centres because consultants there have to work in organization on a case-by-case basis. *[interjection]* Oh my, they did receive an increase to the instructors in learning centres. And, as mentioned, we would

be pleased to hear how this has helped those organizations.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Like, I guess, based on a number of years previously, a lot of these adult literacy centres basically didn't receive and were very flat when it came to funding, even the year that the PST was increased by 1 per cent. That's a 14 per cent increase in their purchase of their items that they have because of 1 per cent PST means an increase of—on that tax level. And so that was a big impact to their budget because their budget didn't increase but the PST did. So they're paying one more per cent. And then also, being in business for myself, we've always, when we did five-year-plan projections, 10-year-plan projections, there was always—we have to always factor inflation. And in this case, the last five years, there was no factoring in inflation. So, really, in a lot of cases, a lot of these programs were actually being cut based on the cost of living.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I appreciate my colleague's statement. When I came to this portfolio, I noted that they have been flat in their budget. So, with the help of our departmental staff, we worked hard in spite of the situation that we're facing as a government to have this increase to our department. So we were able to provide 2.5 per cent increase, and it went to upgrade the salaries of the instructors.

That desire to really increase the budget of the department was as a result of my visits with all the adult learning and literacy centres in the province. I really—I found out first-hand how committed this staff are and the need to really get their salaries at par with the education sector of the province. And so we have obtained this increase, and we're mindful that should there be increases again for the other sector, we would like them to have the same increase. So that is a goal that we'd like to pursue.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So that increase will then continue based on inflation or the indexing of other professionals in the teaching profession? Or what about the cost of—the actual cost of the operation of all these facilities too? Was that also included in that increase? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I'm sorry. Kindly repeat the second part of the question. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Sorry about that, Mr. Chair. Also the operations. Like, there's also, you know, the office supplies, the office rent, all that go—that all increases with the cost of living.

\* (16:40)

**Ms. Marcelino:** Okay, every learning centre provides their annual—or we receive applications on an annual basis from each learning centre, and these applications are reviewed carefully and decisions are made in the context of the larger budget.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** In all these centres, how many centres are able to actually provide a test for the GED? Is it all them 42 facilities, are they able to provide the GED test, or do you have—the individual have to go to a larger centre to write that GED?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Students who have satisfied all the requirements for finishing the courses successfully register with the department and the department will indicate which of the 16 sites in the province those students will write their GED tests.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So an individual, let's say in the southwest corner, let's say Melita, what is the closest centre that they can write this GED test?

**Ms. Marcelino:** We will provide my colleague with the locations of GED tests at—off the bat, we don't know where it is for people from Melita.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** So you don't really know like, it depends on when they—supply and demand, I guess.

**Ms. Marcelino:** For people in Melita specifically, we will find out later on where they can write the test.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Yes, there was one situation where I think the concern was that the GEDs were more focused in Winnipeg, and you had to come to Winnipeg.

There was testing done in Brandon, and even sometimes was supplied into some of these centres—like—I know my wife actually had to monitor a GED when she was working there. But now I was told that there must be a possibility that they moved—they would possibly have to go all the way to Winnipeg to write this test because that's where the only opportunity lies.

Biggest concern for rural people, especially if they're, you know, may have a lower education level,

a lot of times they haven't really went far from their communities. To go to Winnipeg would be very intimidating for some of them. I know we had some people come in from a constituency for—to come to the Leg. Here. Most—a lot of people don't like to drive in the city of Winnipeg and that was a concern for they have.

So that's—my concern is, you know, Brandon in—you know, if there's other centres in rural Manitoba that these individuals can go to so there's less intimidation. I think may be one reason why they probably dropped out of high school is that they were intimidated, you know. So this is why we want to make sure that the services are provided within all parts of Manitoba.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I thank my colleague for expressing the concern. We're—we are—we hear you so we'd like to take this under advisement. We want people to have ready access to services, and testing site is a service so we'll look into that.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Yes, you—with literacy I think it's so important that, you know, we were looking at the funding and, you know, a lot of concerns where some centres were really facing challenges because the funding was, you know, flat.

And like any kind of—any households or any—your own household try to budget or in business, you know, with everything—costs going up or doing business anywhere, the increase in taxes, you know, the biggest concern for these programs is to make sure that continuing adult literacy is provided so that people who are, you know, have lack of literacy, who want to better themselves, who want to build up their confidence have these programs within their reach.

You know, having—you know, being focused more into let's say ACC to go to their adult literacy program, learning tenders, whatever, and—or Red River.

One reason why the public could've dropped out of high school is they were intimidated just in high school and in a high-school setting. But to put them into a college setting, sometimes these small programs like APPLE. has or the Brandon Literacy Council or the friendship centre in Brandon, those are areas where they feel that there's not that intimidation. I think it's so important that these facilities have that welcoming sense of—to those individuals, and I think that's so important.

Is that what you're also looking at too, is making sure how important those centres are for people who may be feeling a little bit intimidated?

**Ms. Marcelino:** You're correct there in your comments that students when they first come to adult learning centres or literacy centres have their confidence are not all in there. However, you would be surprised that because of the commitment and the concern and the compassion of staff, this—and the persistence of the staff, these students appreciate the—that concern and they realize that, hey, these people are helping me improve myself and they—in due time they obtain that confidence and the desire and the persistence to finish their program.

And after they finish their program you'll be surprised how equipped they feel themselves to be, and ready to pursue the post-secondary additional training courses to improve their employment potential, and some obtain work that they find meaningful. There was one particular learner—adult learner who was deemed to be a very good—who is a very good worker, but couldn't be made supervisor because he didn't finish high school. The moment he finished his mature high-school diploma, he was made supervisor.

So these learning centres that we have be it—the one in Virden. I've spoken to the outgoing director there. They expressed—or they shared the joy and the fulfillment and how rewarding it was for them to see their graduates really move on to bigger and better things in life and improved employment opportunities is really very evident in these graduates' lives.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Yes, I agree with everything the minister says there, but I guess the concern, I think, in rural Manitoba is a lot of things have been, you know, closed down, like hydro—Manitoba Hydro offices were closed down. And in the last five years—like, say, in the last five years, has there been any centres that are actually closed in certain areas of the province or even going back to 10 years, even?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Not very certain on the number of centres that were closed over a 10-year period. Scant recollection is about two. But we need to look into our records and provide you with a definitive response.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Okay. On page 13 of the 2014-15 annual report, there was a \$15,000 increase in other expenditures from the last year. Can you give me a

detailed breakdown of these costs and explain why these increases was—were necessary?

**Ms. Marcelino:** May I ask my colleague, is page 13 correct? Are we—

**An Honourable Member:** Page 13.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Thirteen? It's not—are you looking at actual 2014-15 and the Estimates 2014-15?

**An Honourable Member:** Well, there's—that's right. There's, like, \$110,000 difference in other expenditures [*inaudible*]

There was an estimate of 328 and there was, actual was 218.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Yes. If my colleague could see items 1 and 2 beneath the figures quoted, it says there, item 2 under expenditure mainly reflects savings related to a reduction in advertising activities, lower than budgeted requirement for general operating expenditures, professional services and transportation due to reduced out-of-province travel. So that could be the reasons for the difference in figures from actual to estimate.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Okay. So there was nothing that was transferred to another department, because I know some things were transferred to Treasury or to the Finance or other departments.

**An Honourable Member:** That hardly happens in our department.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Okay, sure.

Ministerial expenses have gone up considerably this year: vehicle costs from 13—three—\$3,600, approximately in 2013-2014 to \$9,000 in 2014-15; accommodation costs of 201 and—in 2013-14 and then to 538 in 2014-15; the cellphone costs up from 267 to, in 2013-14, to \$2,100 in two thousand—currently, this current period. What are these drastic increases to the expenses coincide with the creation of the MAL as a new department? If not, why have these expenses gone up as such?

**Ms. Marcelino:** What page are you referring?

**Mr. Piwniuk:** I guess it's the expenses—the detailed expenses on page—it was a comparison that was done from the previous year of ministerial expenses, and it's from the actuals.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I don't see the pages; however, I would like to—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, order. Minister's got the floor.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I have, without giving you the exact figures, I could appreciate the increase in—especially in transportation, because since I have been in this portfolio or from day one that I have undertaken this portfolio, I have decided that I wish to visit each and every learning centre all over the province, which I, all outside of Winnipeg I did, except for Dauphin, and this basic—was really an energizing and inspiring experience for me, seeing adult learning centre staff do the work that they do, the care that they—and instruction that they provide. It was really inspiring for me, and so when I came back from all these trips, I told my colleagues we have to provide additional support to all these learning centres. The flat budget for the last four years is not acceptable because they do a marvellous job providing adults with the capacity to improve themselves and improve the situation of their family life and be really a good member of society because of the education that they obtained from learning centres.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** When you consider the extra travel that you've now—you've explained that you've been to different areas, have you been to Brandon in the last month meeting with a group of Filipino individuals in a restaurant?

**Ms. Marcelino:** I have been to all learning centres outside of Winnipeg and several in Winnipeg.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Forgive the interruption, but the hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

#### ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** Yesterday, on the—Estimates process, I was in mid-sentence, in my response to the member for River Heights with respect to the work that we're doing with the people that have become known as the '60s scoop survivors.

Now, this is something that we have raised to some degree with the previous national government. And we certainly want some resolution brought

upon—brought forth for the survivors of this unfortunate dark cloud in our history as Canadians. The issue, I guess, is that we create a TRC-like commission because the stories want to—the people that have these stories want them told and they want them to be broadly known. With that in mind, we've asked Coleen Rajotte on her own time to work with us, and she has made representation at the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations during the spring session of that forum. And she will again make a representation at that same forum in a time ahead.

We are communicating with the survivors that started the work with us, and we hope that we're able to give them a sense that they do, indeed, belong here, that this is their home, and what happened in the past is something that we regret dearly. And, as members know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made the apology, an official apology, back in June to the survivors, to the '60s scoop survivors that endured this tremendous—these tremendous hardships in years gone by.

But there's a lot of work to be done in that regard, and I certainly looking—I'm looking forward to raising this matter again with the minister appointed this morning by the incoming government, Dr. Marilyn—or Carolyn Bennett. I, indeed, have a lot of respect for Dr. Bennett, having had previous discussions with her on a variety of issues, and I know her commitment on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and I certainly look forward to further dialogue with her in a time to come.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Chair, I've got a number of questions, and we've probably got about 15 minutes, so maybe we can try and do our best to do what we can in the short time we have available. The—I've got a, you know, a big concern about the communities of Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Dauphin River. And in Little Saskatchewan, for example, you know, they've been in a situation for months where they should have been out for tender for the houses, and although we have had the tender let and that's proceeding for the road, the housing tender has not been even put out. And it's frustrating because it may mean we completely lose this whole year as a construction season. And I think it's frustrating for many in the community, so I would ask the minister if he will do whatever he can to try and ensure that that tender process is proceeded with as quickly as possible and that the tender is let soon.

**Mr. Robinson:** To the best of my understanding, Mr. Chairperson, is that since the signing of the BCR by the First Nation, the road tender has been awarded and construction is occurring. Canada and Manitoba have been addressing the First Nation's concerns in the housing project tender. And the housing tender project is expected to be released next week. Both the road and the housing tender will be developed or have been developed and reviewed by Canada and Manitoba, and both have passed the test in terms of the standard tendering practices that Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada usually utilizes, so I'm proud to report that progress is being made in that respect.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister. One of the concerns of people in around Lake St. Martin is that the government, as I understand, is projecting that people need to be protected to a level of a lake of—I think it's 806 feet above sea level.

\* (14:50)

Now, with the wave action, that means, as I understand it, that you actually have to protect effectively to 809 feet, and the concern is that, compared to where the communities have been historically, this is very high and it makes community planning very difficult.

I would ask the minister if these numbers are accurate.

**Mr. Robinson:** As the member knows, and I've reported to the House on several occasions, and we've also had staff brief both the members for River Heights and Agassiz on this matter, 806 is the level and the negotiations with the First Nations Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin, Pinaymootang and Dauphin River is at various levels in terms of infrastructure needs and in terms of the housing needs.

We—on the particular matter of the 806, I will defer that to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. Upon receipt of their understanding and their dialogue with that, I shall have a letter drafted and I will address it to the member for River Heights within the next 30 days.

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

There are a number of people who are from Lake St. Martin who were evacuated and chose to live at the radar base. They occupy, I think, a small proportion of the housing which is at the radar base and they are very concerned that there has been

discussion about the possibility that they might not be able to continue to live there. I talked to one individual who, when he was evacuated, lost, you know, all his furniture and the belongings of his home at a very considerable expense, that he's had to put in new furniture because the original furniture in the place was not designed for long life. And, you know, so he's now put quite a bit of effort and expense into where he's living at the base and would like to stay there.

What's the situation for people like—the few people from Lake St. Martin who are still at the base?

**Mr. Robinson:** I will look into that in greater detail. I know that the gentleman that the member's talking about is probably Mr. Sumner, and I know that he's raised concerns with us previously on the—on that very subject that the member just raised.

Again, this is an issue that's currently being taken into consideration because I have no idea as to what the provincial evacuation site is going to be used for in the time ahead. I know that the Province of Manitoba purchased that. We have considerations, however, to consider with the RM of Grahamdale. And I hope that I can have a response to the member from River Heights in the coming days, as well.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I look forward to hearing from that—in fact, the individual is a different one, but, I mean, the story's very similar so.

I've had a meeting recently with Ron Evans of Norway House and he has shown me a documentary about the situation of the Two Mile Channel, and we discussed the situation of the Two Mile Channel and the Eight Mile Channel. There is still significant amount of debris in the area which is—should have been cleaned up. I mean, it's an environmental problem.

And there's, in addition to that, because of the, you know, redesign of—with the channels and so on, there's been significant erosion which also need to be addressed. And I just want to, you know, there were some meetings a number of months ago with Hydro about this, but things seem to have stalled over the last number of months and it seems like it, you know, they're not sure what's happening and would like this to move ahead instead of stalling, and maybe the minister can give me an explanation.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yes. We recently met with Chief Evans on the Two Mile Channel and the Eight Mile Channel, which is towards the Playgreen Lake area,

which has also attributed to the damage that's caused by the northern flood arrangement that occurred several years ago. But I agree with the member from River Heights that, indeed, it's an issue that has to be addressed.

I've asked our officials from the provincial government to work with Hydro to find a resolution to the issue, and I know that they are working on it, and I do apologize, and I will apologize, personally, to Chief Evans when I see him that it's taking a little longer than I would like in getting a response back to him. But the issue is being worked on currently by our provincial government staff and also, particularly, Manitoba Hydro. And hopefully we can have a just settlement for the Norway House Cree Nation in that respect.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister. I wonder if the minister, in dealing with Dauphin River, Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan, which have now been evacuated people for about four and a half years, does the minister have any, you know, estimated time when people will be back in their communities?

**Mr. Robinson:** As I said, the—this is really a difficult issue and I personally feel bad about the amount of time that the people have had to leave their communities, Little Saskatchewan, Dauphin River and Pinaymootang. I think that we roughly have three from Pinaymootang that are outside of their community and 230 from Dauphin River, 408 from the Little Saskatchewan First Nation and 1,183 from Lake St. Martin First Nation.

What we are doing with Lake St. Martin is that we're building an entire new community right from the ground up in that area, and we've had to deal with a lot of challenges in that respect. And, certainly, on the part of the provincial government, I will assume the responsibility in that respect; and the federal government as well, I'm sure, will assume their portion of the responsibility. And I'm quite sure that the governments of Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan, Dauphin River and Pinaymootang will also assume responsibility that they have because we have been working government to government with the First Nations, the federal government as represented by their negotiator, Mr. Dutchak, and our negotiator, Mr. Harold Westdal, and along with their representatives. One of the challenges that we've had to face is the numerous times that there's been changes in people that we've

had to deal with from a couple of those communities, definitely.

In the case of Dauphin River First Nation, we signed an acknowledgement of fundamental elements in December of 2014, and discussions regarding the comprehensive settlement agreement is progressing and the final draft is anticipated by the middle of this month. And, if there is a willingness by Dauphin River to proceed, there could be a community ratification vote as February 2016. And we hope that soon thereafter, at least in the case of Dauphin River, that the move back home will start commencing.

\* (15:00)

And, at this point in time, I'm not in a position to say when Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan and others that have been dislocated from their homelands will be back in their homelands. I can't give a definite date. If I did, I'd only be guessing, and I certainly don't want to do that anymore. I know that previously I gave some dates that were not—that were incorrect, but that—I don't want to blame, I don't want to point fingers at anybody because of that not coming to be at that time.

So, as of November 3rd, there are currently 1,824 members that are evacuated from their communities and residing, primarily in private residences in—mostly in Winnipeg, but also other communities in the province of Manitoba. But certainly one I thing I am happy about, anyway, is that there's nobody in hotels any more. Certainly that's something that I didn't like seeing, either. And I will take our share of the responsibility for that, but we want to make sure that the people will return to their homes and—in quick order as soon as possible. And we will commit to providing updates to members in the months ahead.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Thank you, and I'm ready to proceed by the line by line of this point to wrap up this section of the Estimates.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We'll now put the questions on the resolutions.

Resolution 19.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,429,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 19.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$106,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 19.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 19.1.

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.

Resolution 19.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$992,000 for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Executive, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This completes the Estimates for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for Children and Youth Opportunities.

We'll briefly recess to allow the minister and the critic the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department.

*The committee recessed at 3:04 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:11 p.m.*

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES**

**Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** I do. Yes, I do.

Thank you. I do have an opening statement. On behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Opportunities, and on behalf of the ten ministers of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and their departments in the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy, I'm pleased to present to the Committee for its

consideration the 2015-16 Expenditures Estimates for Children and Youth Opportunities including the Healthy Child Manitoba office.

It was truly an honour to be appointed in November 2014 to lead this department and to chair the only legislated Cabinet committee in Canada designated and dedicated to improving outcomes for our province's young people from their prenatal months through to their post-secondary years. We're proud of Manitoba's whole-of-government approach, and we know that all members of our Legislative Assembly share this decades-long commitment to focusing on prevention, using the best available science and knowledge, and working across sectors in partnership with communities.

Today, I also want to personally thank the member opposite who was unable to be here for her 13 years serving as an MLA, and hopefully she'll read this in Hansard, advocating for the needs of children and youth and families both in the House and across our province. I know that we shared, among many things, both a personal and professional commitment to improving mental health and well-being for all.

Mental health matters, of course, to every Manitoba–Manitoban and the future of our province. And we know it is for everyone, every place, every day, in our homes, in our families, in our child care, our schools, our universities and colleges, in our workplaces, we will keep building awareness and understanding, reducing stigma and strengthening all the systems including, but not limited to, health care that matter for mental health from early childhood to schools to communities.

On May 4th, 2015, I was proud to announce alongside Minister Crothers and on behalf of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, Manitoba's first ever whole-of-government strategy for Child and Youth Mental Health. Budget 2015 commits \$2 million in new funding for the first year of a 10-year cross-departmental strategy to improve the mental health and well-being of our young people from before they were born to when they enter adulthood. You will see this noted in the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review provided as part of the 2015-2016 Departmental Expenditures Estimates process.

The Child and Youth Mental Health Strategy is part of Manitoba's Rising to the Challenge provincial mental health strategic plan for all age groups. The CYMH strategy will include universal programs for

whole communities, selective programs for children and youth who need additional supports, and intensive programs for the most vulnerable in our province across urban, rural, remote, northern and First Nations communities.

All of our provincial departments from Health and Healthy Living to Family Services to Education and Advanced Learning and all of our community partners are committed to evidence-based investments in a balanced approach across the continuum from mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, all the way to interventions and treatments to children and youth with the most complex needs.

A major focus of this new provincial strategy is to strengthen the Child and Youth Mental Health workforce. Over the coming year we will work with all systems that serve children to identify opportunities as well as gaps and workforce needs across the continuum from prevention to treatment, and begin to address the most urgent gaps.

In partnership with the Department of Health, Healthy Living and Seniors, Family Services and Education and Advanced Learning among others, this blueprinting process will include our many community partners such as regional health authorities, Child and Family Services authorities and school divisions.

We have been inspired greatly by how Child and Youth Mental Health has been prioritized by the leadership from our RHAs, the CFS standing committee and the Children's Advocate, and our K-to-12 education system including the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba School Boards Association, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Business Officials and other leaders.

I want to publicly thank, if I am allowed to, Carolyn Duhamel and Ken Pearce, both retiring this year from providing executive support to our school boards and our Teachers' Society.

We know that most adult mental health problems begin in childhood and adolescence, and so promotion and prevention are imperative. We know we can make a big difference by supporting parents, especially pregnant moms, and building resilience in young people, especially from the earliest years.

This is why the new Child and Youth Mental Health strategy includes new funding for our very own made-in-Manitoba program called Towards

Flourishing, which brings mental health promotion facilitators to strengthen our already amazing public health system in all the regional health authorities, particularly our successful, province-wide Families First program in serving the mental health needs of moms and dads of newborns across our province. Towards Flourishing was developed right here at home by Healthy Child Manitoba, the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority along with all RHAs and other TF community partners.

In February 2015, we were proud to announce Starting Early, Starting Strong, our multi-year early childhood development strategy. ECD is the foundation of lifelong mental health, and we will co-ordinate these two strategies very closely, including Towards Flourishing and expanding the Seeds of Empathy program and early learning settings.

Building on strong early childhood, our young people must continue to flourish during their school-age years. This is why Manitoba's new Child and Youth Mental Health strategy includes new funding to increase the number of classrooms across the province, including in First Nations, for offering the PAX program in grade 1 and continuing to build capacity in First Nations for the Roots of Empathy program up to grade 8.

Both programs have been incredibly popular and in great demand province-wide since we began piloting them several years ago. More importantly, our pilot evaluations as well as research studies from other jurisdictions have shown that they are very effective in promoting the mental health and well-being of young people from an early age and can have lasting life-changing impact up to several decades later.

And because an ounce of prevention is, indeed, worth a pound of cure—actually, several pounds—these studies also show tremendous cost effectiveness with every dollar invested returning up to \$56 later on.

We are strengthening partnerships across sectors because child and youth mental health is everybody's business. We know that no single department or service delivery system can do it alone. These partnerships are crucial and we need to keep working to offer the best possible assessment and treatment services while also strengthening mental health promotion and mental illness prevention so that

fewer children and youth need clinical services the first—in the first place.

On May 28th, 2015, I was proud to stand beside the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) in announcing new initiatives to strengthen both the prevention side and the support side of our child and family services system. This including refocusing current resources to strengthen the reach and potential impact of the family for—Families First home visiting program within the Point Douglas community in Winnipeg by partnering with community-based organizations who are gifted in reaching many of the hardest to reach families with the greatest needs.

Families First has come a long way from its first few pilot sites in 1998 to province-wide implementation in 1999, followed by incredible research in evaluation results showing that it increases positive parenting and evaluation, parent well-being, family social support and community connectedness. And most recently, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy has reported that the programs reduce the rate of children being taken into CFS care by 25 per cent and reduces the rate of child maltreatment injury hospitalization by 41 per cent. All partners are committed to maintaining and strengthening the flagship program for families.

On October 6th, 2015, the Minister of Family Services and I were also proud to announce the expansion of the COACH program to serve children and youth ages 12 to 15 with complex needs. A 24/7, 365 day-a-year model of co-ordinated, wrap-around services, this builds on the successes of the original award-winning COACH program for children five to 11 that began in 2001 through a partnership with Macdonald Youth Services, the Winnipeg School Division and the departments of Family Services and Education and Advanced Learning, co-ordinated by the Healthy Child Manitoba office to serve children and youth with the highest levels of behavioural, emotional and academic needs.

\* (15:20)

On a personal note, I remember vividly my days, years ago, not that many years ago, working on the front lines with some of the most vulnerable teenagers in our communities, and I will never forget their lives and their stories, and that is why I'm so proud of highlighting to the Committee of Supply this year the multi-year mental health strategies for children and youth.

We are excited to continue building opportunities for all youth in Manitoba. Budget 2015 introduced new youth jobs, which we're very excited and very proud of. In closing, I look forward to this committee's review of the 2015-16 Estimates of Expenditure for Children and Youth Opportunities, including the Healthy Child Manitoba Office, and I welcome the feedback of our committee members.

And we have members now, not just—

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic have any opening comments?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I will be very brief, because I want to make sure that there's as much time as possible for questions.

I have some concerns about the outcomes that we look at in terms of children and youth in Manitoba we're talking about.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the critic for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 20.1.(a), contained in resolution 20.1.

At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

**Ms. Wight:** I have with me Jan Sanderson, the deputy minister and secretary to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet; Rob Santos, the senior scientific director and associate secretary to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet; and the amazing Dave Patton, ED of Finance and Administration.

I suppose I'm not supposed to make jokes up here, right? Oh, sorry.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically, or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'd like a global discussion, please.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

It's agreed the questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Gerrard:** When the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) was the minister, it was discovered that one of the programs—I think under the healthy child program—was not actually being accessed by a lot of the people who would have been eligible, and I think that the number was about 23 per cent of the people who were eligible who were actually accessing the program, and the minister, at that time, who was the MLA for Point Douglas, started an effort to try and get more awareness of the program and I wonder if there has been any follow up and what proportion of people are now accessing the program.

**Ms. Wight:** Yes, okay, so that would be the Healthy Baby program. And what we discovered, what Kevin and I used—or, I'm not supposed to use his name, the member from MLA—from Point Douglas discovered, was that not everyone was getting to the support part, even if they were getting the benefit. And all the people who should have been entitled to the benefit weren't aware of it, as you said.

And, so, one of the things that started—we then got going was PIIPC. So, PIIPC goes right out into the community to find the people. It doesn't wait for them to come to you, so they go right out into the community and try and find the moms that are pregnant and try and remove as best they can the barriers that keep them from getting prenatal care and support and that sort of thing. They've been tremendously successful, that's partners in integrated and inner-city care, although I think they've changed their name recently.

And so it has been tremendously effective and we're continuing that and it's always my hope that these things—we can expand them into other areas because I think that's one of the key factors is that you bring health care right to the people who need it most, and that program is doing that really effectively. So that has improved, the numbers. That's one example of one of the things that we've done to improve the numbers.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would follow up: What are the current numbers? What proportion of those who are eligible are now receiving?

**Ms. Wight:** Yes. We will be able to, at some point, rerun those numbers. That has not been possible to this point.

I would like to put on the record, though, while we have the opportunity, that Partners in Inner-City Integrated Prenatal Care reduced barriers to prenatal care for some of the most at-risk pregnant women

and reduced pre-term birth by 69 per cent, and ICU admissions by 79 per cent and infancy FS apprehensions by 25 per cent. And the majority, 86 per cent of those clients were Aboriginal.

So we're looking to expand. We have research dollars. We're going to look at a similar situation in the North where we know, you know, there's many folks that can really benefit from this kind of an outreach where people go right to them and they do things like solve the transportation and say we can get you right now, you know, to prenatal care. We can make sure that you get bus passes. We make sure—and hook them all up with the services as well that are out there before they have the baby, obviously.

So it looks incredibly hopeful, so I'm really believing that we will be able to get even better results from those kinds of things.

If you want to push for more of that, Jon—oh, I'm not supposed to call him Jon.

**Mr. Gerrard:** One of the things which is of concern in terms of children in Manitoba is that when we look at the number of children using food banks and the food bank use since 2008 having increased more percentage-wise in Manitoba than in any other province, and this is, you know, an important outcome measure of how we're doing in terms of supporting children. And it's rather disturbing to see this increase in food bank use and, of course, children using food banks here in Manitoba.

**Ms. Wight:** Sorry. Was there a question?

**Mr. Gerrard:** So this, presumably, is one of the outcomes that the department would like to improve, and what is the, you know, what is the minister doing to try and improve the situation here so there will be not as much need for children to be using food banks?

\* (15:30)

**Ms. Wight:** Yes, I apologize, but it—that simply isn't our department. So if I could refer you to the Department of Family Services, they would be handling that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Another outcome in terms of children, which I'm looking at here—I have a table with the number of youth admitted to Correctional Services. And I see that the number in Manitoba, from 2009-10 to the present, has gone up, whereas the number in Ontario, for example, has gone down. In fact, it's about 50 per cent lower than it was back in

2009-2010, and the same in New Brunswick, the same in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So we seem to be an outlier in the number of youth who are admitting to Correctional Services. This clearly is one of the outcomes that we would like not to have, right, in terms of how well our children and youth are doing. And I would ask the minister what, you know, she is doing that would try to help improve outcomes so that there were fewer children needing to have to be admitted to Correctional Services.

**Ms. Wight:** Well, when it comes to the justice piece, that is, of course, not under us, but we are doing all kinds of programming that works towards that goal. And they start at the various, earliest states.

So all the work that we do prenatally, all the work that we do in early childhood development where we're reaching out to some of the most at-risk families, to me, is—and I want only more to go there because I think that is proven to be the No. 1 best spot to be able to put your investment to lower, whether it's that or whether it's, you know, kids running into other difficulties or health issues. All of those things, I think, are tremendously affected by those initial programs in early childhood development. And so that's where we are really concentrating a big effort.

We also run all of the other programs, like Lighthouses, for example, 71 Lighthouses. I'm sure you're—you know about them and they're all across the province, and they work to find healthy things for our kids to be doing after school. And—we want much more than just, you know, them not to be in crime; we want them to reach their potential as you do, right, reach the very best possible goals in life. So all of the work in Lighthouses, all of the work in our Bright Futures programs, do those things, like After School Leaders and, in fact, I just met with the Pathways people and see the folks who are working in Point Douglas area and the success that they're having in reaching out to our students, the ones who might've dropped out, the ones who may not have, you know, made it, who often do end up in our criminal justice system.

And so they're doing a tremendously good job in that area, coming up with all kinds of different ways to reach out to these kids, and it's a different, you know, it's a different way of working. Sometimes you have to be willing to work with these kids at night. You have to be willing to go to their home and knock on the door and, you know, find out where

they are, and these folks are doing that. And they're finding ways, really creative ways, to get them involved in school again.

Interestingly, one of the biggest credits that they never seem to be able to get is recreation credits. And I guess it's not really—phys. ed.—not really too surprising because I know the kids I worked with would often come, and they had been picked on or they'd been bullied in school and it was often through, you know, phys. ed. that that happened the most, sadly.

And when they would come to work with us and we would get them involved in activities in a safe way, where nobody was making fun of them and nobody was harassing them, they often discovered all kinds of skills and abilities that they didn't know they had. And that goes to, you know, one piece of the Circle of Courage that we know is one of the four things that make our youth successful, and that is mastery.

And I think that Circle of Courage really speaks to what these programs are doing because they are belonging, and we know that, you know, some of the things that lead kids into some of the most—you know, into gangs and things like that are that sense of not belonging to anyone or to part of the community. And so these programs and folks that are so committed and give them that safe place to be and that sense of belonging and work with them to discover that there really isn't anything they can't do, that they've had all kinds of—there's all kinds of resiliency in them that they didn't know they had, and they discover that they are able to master things and learn to do things and to be independent and empower them to take charge of their life, and then to give back.

So generosity is another huge piece of that, and the best programs that we have do all four of those things. So I think they're incredibly important. I'm proud to be connected to them. There's all kinds of different ones so—because there's all kinds of different kids so you need to have different programs that suit different youth and where they're at so we have a swell turnout.

I don't know if we're still the only people in the country with that, but that's working with kids under 12 before, you know, that had been caught and in trouble with the law but we know, you know, there's—they're too young to be charged, and we are able to work with them early on and get them on a different path in life. And that program tries to work,

as many of these programs do, that we're trying always to work with the family.

Sometimes that's not possible, as I'm sure you're aware. But whenever we can, we want to get the family involved and get them part of what's going on with their kids and helping to empower them as well to find out what kind of resources are out there, how can they help their children because the one thing I found is that—and I'm sure you have—is it doesn't matter who you are and what parent you are and where you came from, what kind of life you led, you want something better for your child always. And so empowering those parents to be able to help their kids do that is another piece of the programs that are involved in our department.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, the—one of the problems that we have is that we can design what appear to be wonderful programs but until we're actually seeing reductions in outcomes like province-wide like fewer kids actually needing to be admitted to Correctional Services then, you know, that's a measure of whether the programs as a group are actually working. And when we're still have, you know, high numbers of kids being admitted to youth—being admitted to Correctional Services, you know, it tells us that, you know, we haven't yet really got it entirely right.

And let me talk about, you know, another example, dental surgeries. To have dental surgeries, really, and the need for them are a reflection of nutrition. And so, if we're actually improving nutrition, then we should see a reduction in the need for dental surgeries in the first few years of life and, you know, because this is—these dental surgeries are age five and under, there should be a reflection pretty quickly, right, if we've got an effective approach from a nutrition point of view. But we're not yet seeing reductions in the number of dental surgeries for kids.

We have, you know, programs which deal with trying to reduce alcohol during pregnancy because FASD is a significant issue. It's the most significant, you know, mental health issue emerging from kids at the time they are born and subsequently. And yet, you know, maybe the minister has some statistics which suggest that alcohol use in pregnancy is actually going down. The latest ones I have suggest that it's staying about the same.

And so I'm quite concerned that, you know, we may be doing a lot of things but the—we're not actually achieving what we need to be achieving which is, you know, fewer kids needing dental

surgeries, fewer mothers drinking during pregnancy and fewer kids with FASD.

\* (15:40)

And so, you know, the—one of the examples that the minister gave was the 25 per cent reduction in the newborns being taken away at birth, all right, which is, I mean, this, for that program, is absolutely excellent, but when we look at the province-wide statistics, the latest ones that I saw, you know, there hasn't been a drop province wide. And so there seems to be a problem in taking what's working in one local area and actually doing it province wide.

So, you know, let me ask the minister, you know, what is she doing at this stage to try and take things which seem to be working in pilot programs and actually implementing them province wide so that we have reductions in the numbers of these, you know, problem outcomes?

**Ms. Wight:** I always want to do more; there's no question about that. And so I think that what we've done and what we've been able to do is find and study some programs, first of all, which is always the beginning, to see if they work and to actually make sure that those investments are working.

And a great example is one that I'm sure you're well aware of at Lord Selkirk Park, with the Abecedarian model, working with our littlest people there and providing intensive intervention and watching their development. Increase in scores increased massively, and not only that but it carries a component with it that I certainly hope to see expanded that includes resources for the families as well.

So—and what we've seen is amazing. Like, as the children progress, the parents are going—they're so excited to see hope in their children and to see that change, and it is motivating them to go back to school and them to get jobs. And they want to keep ahead of their little ones, they say. So that has been really, really, really positive, and we're certainly working to expand it.

PIIPC, that I already spoke about, is another example where we're taking it up north. A really excellent example is Families First, which had really excellent statistics as well in reductions, 41 per cent reduction in hospitalizations for abuse and neglect of children and 25 per cent reduction of children going into care and also, I believe, reductions in—or increases in the number immunized and that sort of thing. And it is currently at about 1,500 families.

And Towards Flourishing was the mental health component of that, which we have since taken province wide since we were able to study it and add it on, and it's, as I said, a made-in-Manitoba component that embeds mental health right into the work that the Families First worker is doing in those homes. And that is going province wide.

So, boy, I want everything province wide, that's for sure. And we're working on that. We're working on moving all of those things that we see and are proven and expanding them.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I thank the minister. And I'm ready to move to line by line now.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Resolution 20.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,526,000 for Children and Youth Opportunities, Healthy Child Manitoba, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 20.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,009,000 for Children and Youth Opportunities, Youth Opportunities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 20.1.(a), the minister's salary contained in resolution 20.1.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**An Honourable Member:** No further questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Resolution 20.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,124,000 for Children and Youth Opportunities, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This completes the Estimates for Children and Youth Opportunities.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for Labour and Immigration.

And we will have a short recess.

*The committee recessed at 3:47 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:52 p.m.*

**LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Chairperson (Jim Maloway):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Yes, I do.

I would like to take a few moments to discuss some of the activities undertaken by the Department of Labour and Immigration, as well as to highlight some of the achievements over the last year.

The Department of Labour and Immigration plays an important role in contributing to Manitoba's growth and development by protecting the rights of workers, ensuring public safety and by promoting the province as an immigration destination of choice for skilled workers and entrepreneurs and assisting them as they integrate into our labour market, our business world and our communities.

On the labour side of things, Manitoba has a strong history of making changes to labour legislation and programming that have improved the rights and safety of Manitoba workers. We continued this tradition in 2014-15 by making significant changes in all areas administered by the Labour Programs division, including workplace safety and health, employment standards, pensions, labour relations and those areas under the responsibility of the Office of the Fire Commissioner, which include fire prevention, building and fire codes, emergency response and technical safety—technical equipment safety.

Since 2000 we have introduced and made extensive changes to our major legislation, including The Workplace Safety and Health Act, The Employment Standards Code, The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, The Pensions Benefits Act, The Labour Relations Act, The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act and others.

In many cases, the amendments were the most comprehensive changes made to these statutes in over 20 years. We have also made many regulatory improvements to support these acts.

I believe that these changes have made real improvements in the lives of Manitobans. We are committed to modernizing safety and health laws, improving monitoring and making the changes necessary to create a genuine culture of workplace safety and prevention in our province.

Our province's safety and health officers are inspecting high-risk workplaces and those that have never been visited before. Workplace safety and health inspections are focusing on priority sectors, high-risk hazards and workers most vulnerable to serious workplace injuries and fatalities. We are proud to say that, as a result of our continued focus on inspections, Manitoba's time-loss injury rate has fallen by 41 per cent since 1999.

We have increased Manitoba's minimum wage each year since 2001, resulting in a significant increase in the purchasing power of Manitoba's lowest wage earners. On October 1st, 2015, Manitoba's minimum wage was increased to \$11 per hour.

Manitoba has had one of the most stable labour relations climates in Canada in recent years, and in 2012 we had no work stoppages for the first time since 1956.

In 2014 we had another stable year with only one work stoppage.

Changes we've made in the areas of pensions over the years have been aimed at insuring that the pension promise of an income for life continues to be valued and protected in Manitoba. We are continuing to look at ways that we can improve the way we deliver our programs and services.

In April 2013 Manitoba released its new five-year plan for workplace illness and injury prevention. This plan was the result of extensive consultation with workers, employers and key stakeholders, and builds on the success we have had over the past 10 years. The plan calls for a significant program and legislative changes which we have already started.

In 2014 we made changes to The Workplace Safety and Health Act and regulation to expand and strengthen protections for workers, including the right for workers to refuse dangerous work and to improve enforcement provisions targeted to employers who repeatedly place workers in danger.

We also brought in changes to The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act and Employment

Standards Code to help ensure that workers employed by temporary employment agencies are not prevented from obtaining permanent jobs.

Amendments prohibit temporary employment agencies from taking actions that could prevent their workers from being hired by another employer such as contractually restricting workers from entering into direct employment relationships, charging fees to workers and preventing clients from providing reference for workers.

Ongoing updates to Manitoba's Construction Codes also continued in 2014-15, highlighted by the development of changes to energy-efficient requirements for houses and small buildings. These new requirements, as described in Section 9.36 of the National Building Code, will result in new homes being nearly 20 per cent more energy-efficient without adding significant additional cost to consumers.

As well, we've introduced Bill 69, The Technical Safety Act, that will modernize safety standards for equipment such as elevators, boilers, amusement rides, fuel systems and electrical devices. We are currently working on developing new regulations for each type of equipment and stakeholder consultations are planned for 2015-2016.

On the immigration side of things, Manitoba has been working to develop and foster Manitoba's immigration strategy which continues—pardon me, which remains a key pillar of our province's economic growth strategy and continues to add to our cultural diversity. Since 2000, over 150,000 new immigrants have settled in Manitoba and over 30,000 newcomers have immigrated to rural Manitoba, contributing to the economic development of 130 communities.

Annual immigration levels to Manitoba have increased from 3,725 arrivals in 1999 to 16,248 in 2014, the highest number of immigrants received since the start of modern record-keeping in 1946, beating the previous record set in 2011.

In 2014 Manitoba also received the highest number of refugees in its history and the highest number of refugees per capita in Canada. Our share of immigration to Canada has increased from less than 2 per cent in the 1990s to 6.3 per cent in 2014. Our newest immigrants come from over 150 countries, and in 2014 the top source countries were the Philippines, India and China. Our very successful Provincial Nominee Program remains the

main driver of Manitoba's immigration growth. Since 2000, over 100,000 newcomers have arrived through our provincial nominee program, and in 2014, 75 per cent of all of our newcomers arrived through that program.

Manitoba continues to support communities' involvement in the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program through strategic initiatives overseas. The department also continues to assist employers who register under The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act to recruit workers already in Manitoba through Manitoba Start or overseas when local workers cannot be found.

The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for business continues to be a major contributor to maintaining vibrant communities in many areas of Manitoba.

Since 2000, there have been 737 businesses started and over \$245 million invested in the province.

\* (16:00)

The program has also been a major contributor to maintaining vibrant communities in many areas of Manitoba, with 31 per cent of investments made outside of Winnipeg.

In January 2015, the federal government launched a new express entry system, and my department developed a new sub-stream within the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program to begin using some of the additional nomination spaces allocated to the Province through Express Entry.

On April 30th, 2015, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program introduced a series of improvements including the permanent reopening of the Skilled Worker Overseas Stream, launching an expression-of-interest inventory management system and moving to a process based on procedural fairness. EOI will help decrease processing times, improve approval rates and allow the Province to quickly identify and approve candidates who best meet Manitoba's labour market needs.

As part of Manitoba's ongoing role in the development and support of immigration services in the province, Manitoba developed the first standardized, immigrant-specific career development curriculum for immigrant labour market services in Canada and continue to fund and administer Manitoba Start, Manitoba's single-window, early-arrival immigrant intake referral, employment

readiness and job matching service. Manitoba Start provided services to around 6,000 immigrant newcomers last year. Through Manitoba Start and other initiatives such as the career development curriculum, our goal is to continue to increase labour market development success for immigrants, and the results continue to be impressive. Manitoba's established immigrants had the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada in 2014, and Manitoba's immigrants had the third highest employment and participation rates. Our retention rate is also very strong at about 87 per cent.

I'm also proud of Manitoba's continued leadership in international qualifications recognition led by the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner and its work with regulators to ensure our internationally experienced workers can achieve faster and fairer certification in their chosen occupation. Recognition Counts! Micro Loans program also continues to provide accessible low-interest loans for immigrants in regulated professions so they can achieve full certification.

I'm looking forward to sharing information about my department and answering your questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The official opposition critic, the member for La Verendrye.

**Mr. Smook:** I would like to thank the minister for her opening statement with the length of it. I won't be quite as long.

I also believe that immigration does play an important role in the growth of Manitoba, starting with the immigrants that arrived here in the 1800s to the 16,000 immigrants that came here in 2014. Immigrants, they all have played an important part in Manitoba's success. They've made great achievements to—or contributions to Manitoba, and I'd like to thank all of them for coming and choosing Manitoba as a place where they want to call home.

We also talk about safe workplaces. Safe workplaces are important for both employers and employees because an employer cannot run a business without an employee, so it's in the benefit of both to have safe workplaces.

And those are the only comments I'd like to make right now. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 11.1.(a) contained in resolution 11.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

**Ms. Braun:** I'm joined by Ben Rempel, who is our ADM of immigration; Dave Schafer, our Fire Commissioner; Amy Thiessen, our acting executive director of finance; and Jeff McCulloch, acting director, policy, legislation and research.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Global.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It's agreed that it'll be global. Thank you. The—is it agreed that it will be a global discussion? *[Agreed]*

Thank you. The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Smook:** I'd like to start by introducing my staff: Raquel Dancho, who's a policy analyst with us. So we do have somebody here with us to give us a hand as well.

I would like to start. There were some issues in last year's Estimates that we never did finish off. I'd like to ask the minister some questions on the PNP for business.

Can the minister provide an update on the recommendations made by the Auditor General in the report of 2013? During last Estimates, the minister stated the 13—that of to 13 recommendations made, eight were completed and five were in progress. Could the minister tell us what progress has made on those five, if some of them have been completed or are they a work in progress or has nothing been done on any—on some of them?

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you for the question.

Okay, of the 13 recommendations, eight have been completed, and the remainder, five, I guess, are still in process.

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you, Minister.

Could the minister tell me what progress has been made on those five and what—which five are they?

**Ms. Braun:** Okay, one of the recommendations, that was to create a database, and the—my—what I've been—indicated here is that the database has been put into place and they're currently developing the procedures to ensure that the application document—sorry—that the application documentation is also appropriate.

And the three that are still being worked on, and that is: monitoring the nominees to ensure they comply with the deposit agreement; developing a process to follow up on nominees who do not comply with the deposit agreement; the program to formalize arrangements with other departments and agencies to obtain and share personal information on landed nominees and the program set—to assess its long-term performance by developing a tracking mechanism and regularly monitoring whether nominees continue to live and operate a business in Manitoba.

**Mr. Smook:** Have—has anything been done on those, like, the four that haven't been, like, you create a database, you say it's just about done, but the monitoring of individuals, has anything been done on that field?

\* (16:10)

**Ms. Braun:** We are in the process of negotiating arrangements with other departments to—for the information-sharing component. We're also contacting multiple third-party data sources and continue to seek legal advice concerning privacy and other issues that are related to that sharing of information.

We're also—the Business Settlement Office is taking steps to enhance awareness with its clients regarding the reporting requirements, one-on-one counselling sessions with the settlement officers to emphasize the importance of complying with the deposit agreements. And we're continuing to work with CIC to improve the regularity and quality of our data sources to make sure that we can better monitor the retention rates of our immigrants.

**Mr. Smook:** When was the last time the Province signed an agreement with the federal government in regards to the PNP for business? And what are the Province's obligations for tracking nominees in that agreement?

**Ms. Braun:** That agreement was in 2003, and it was to be for two years. In more recent years, those things have changed somewhat because under the Charter, Canadian Charter of Rights, it's created some issues that need to be examined.

**Mr. Smook:** Are there ways that you can go around like the—to seek your information? Could you set up the program a little differently, that it would be able to—the program would generate the information that you need?

**Ms. Braun:** We're currently in negotiation with CIC, but they have to approve all of the changes. They have to be in agreement with them.

**Mr. Smook:** I'd just like to make a comment that the minister spoke a lot about, you know, changes to the programs, doing new things, but I would ask her: How can this be done without proper information?

Some of the areas that she talks about, you have to have—that's very vital information before you can make changes to a program or you can, you know, enhance the program. So I'm just wondering why nothing has been done up until now; like, it seems like it's dragging the heels of this monitoring. It's something that the Auditor General had asked for, and I'm just wondering why nothing has been done about it.

**Ms. Braun:** We regularly report to the Auditor General and—it's a requirement. We're also engaging with various partners to make sure that we have accurate information, and working with the federal government to gain access to data and information as well, so it's an ongoing process that we're constantly in contact with various stakeholders.

**Mr. Smook:** Could the minister tell me how many businesses have come across that have successfully met all the requirements and have started a business in Manitoba for the last three years?

**Ms. Braun:** Thank you for the question. We'll have to get back to you on that; we don't have the information for the last three years.

**Mr. Smook:** Could the minister provide me the information for last year?

**Ms. Braun:** We'd have to get back to you on last year's numbers as well. What we can say is that since the year 2000 that 763 business investments have been made by program nominees.

**Mr. Smook:** Would it be fair to say there was, say, 100 last year, or more or less?

**Ms. Braun:** I'm sorry; we'd have to get that detail to you.

**Mr. Smook:** Just a question, but if there's less than 200 people—or 200 businesses, would it be impossible—like, I know the minister's department

has a fairly large staff. Would it not be possible to, say, phone these businesses every six months without interfering with the privacy laws?

**Ms. Braun:** The Business Settlement Office gets in touch with those businesses every six and nine months, and that responsibility falls under Jobs and the Economy.

**Mr. Smook:** Could the minister not talk to the Jobs and the Economy minister? I mean, sure—unless you're in different silos, but wouldn't it be possible to get those numbers so you would have those numbers available to you?

**Ms. Braun:** That will be prepared to give you those numbers; we'll get back to you on that.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, in regards—last year in Estimates, we discussed areas of permanent residence and temporary residence and, basically, when a person qualifies they receive a permanent residency. And there's been a lot of question about how long those people—and that's one of the reasons for monitoring, because we don't know how long these people are staying here in Manitoba.

Now, at that time I had mentioned that BC had used a work permit or a temporary residency, and the minister said, well, that's up to the federal government; we've asked for it. But, since then Saskatchewan has also done this and there's also another province, Nova Scotia, that is basically doing the same thing with work permits.

Now, with work permits, would the minister not—because then there would have to be an agreement; they couldn't just walk away from here, because they would only have a work permit, not a permanent residency. Would that not be a way to monitor the business applicants?

**Ms. Braun:** That is exactly what we have asked CIC. We've put a proposal forward to them on that issue and we have not heard back from them yet.

**Mr. Smook:** How long ago was that proposal put forward to them?

**Ms. Braun:** Within the spring of this year.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, is there not something in the—where, basically, I have to see if we can find it here. The minister doesn't necessarily have to ask the federal government for this, but there is an area where the provincial government can just apply directly to have that person have a work permit

without getting permission in the whole general scheme of things.

**Ms. Braun:** BC's system is different from Manitoba's system. The way they operate is not the way our system—they're not similar in that regard. We have to nominate first, whereas in BC they're able to do it—the temporary visa first, and we—our system does not—is—we don't have permission to do it that way.

**Mr. Smook:** The Auditor General has asked for this going back as far as 2011, and it's now just about 2016. What efforts has the government made to try to solve this problem? I know that you say that you—but it seems something doesn't seem right where we have other provinces just all of a sudden coming on board and doing it, but we don't seem to be able to fit that.

**Ms. Braun:** Well, I think every province has to obtain permission from CIC, and so each province has obtained permission at different times, and that's why we're still waiting for our proposal as of this spring.

**Mr. Smook:** Manitoba's losing population to interprovincial migration. According to data from TD Economics, Manitoba has the second worst interprovincial migration rate in Canada. In 2012, Manitoba lost over 4,200 Manitobans to other provinces, and I believe that number's closer to 7,000.

Does the minister's department have any idea as to how many immigrants Manitoba has lost?

**Ms. Braun:** I think that it's good to say that we retain over 80 per cent of our immigrants. We lose very few to the other provinces.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, I believe the minister mentioned the rate of 87 per cent, but that 87 per cent, what is it a rate—like, what is it of? Is it of 10 or is it of 10,000, or what is that—87 per cent of what?

**Ms. Braun:** That number is a result of the—from the last census.

**Mr. Smook:** So that would be a total of all immigrants that immigrate to Manitoba?

**Ms. Braun:** Yes.

**Mr. Smook:** How many dollars are spent on local and international promotion and recruitment of skilled workers and entrepreneurs?

**Ms. Braun:** Our out-of-province budget is \$120,000, but it's not necessarily used all the time. Or the total amount isn't necessarily expended.

**Mr. Smook:** What part of that would be on international—like going overseas to do recruitment fairs, et cetera? Is that included in that number?

**Ms. Braun:** It varies every year depending on which—where they're going to be recruiting, but it's usually about 60 per cent.

**Mr. Smook:** Does the department have any recruiters hired in different countries around the world, and what kind of dollar value would they take from the Province?

**Ms. Braun:** No, we don't hire third-party contracts.

**Mr. Smook:** Does the government have any government-employed recruiters that are stationed in different parts of the world?

**Ms. Braun:** No.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, we've had a lot of concern lately about untendered contracts. Does the department do any untendering—untendered contracting?

**Ms. Braun:** There is some untendering that is done. All of the expenses and all of the information regarding of services that the department uses are—it's all online, so it's all accessible.

**Mr. Smook:** I thank the minister for that answer.

Could the minister explain to me what strategic investment groups are and how many strategic investments there are in her department?

**Ms. Braun:** Could you explain what that is?

**Mr. Smook:** That's a good question. I just read it someplace that there's a strategic initiative group, and I was just wondering what it was.

**Ms. Braun:** It's actually strategic recruitment initiatives, and it's when the department goes overseas with employers to specifically look at recruiting skilled workers.

**Mr. Smook:** Would these groups be included in the number that the minister gave me in regards to recruitment, then, the \$160,000?

**Ms. Braun:** It's \$120,000, and yes.

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you, Minister.

Back in 2012 there was a lot of controversy from the previous minister's office about the death of the nominee program here in Manitoba due to the federal

government taking it over. Now, I'm—we still are doing really great in immigration. I'm just wondering if the minister could comment on why the program hasn't died.

**Ms. Braun:** Well, we have been doing very, very well. The program, unfortunately, remains capped at 5,000 nominees, and we are certainly looking forward to having conversations with the new minister to see whether those levels—there's any interest in increasing those levels.

And I think that's a feeling that is shared by all of my colleagues across Canada. It was actually something at the last federal-provincial meeting that we had that we sang in unison.

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you, but what—I believe the whole controversy was more on settlement services.

\* (16:30)

Could the minister comment on settlement services? I mean, we obviously are doing well with immigration with over 16,000. Could the minister comment on that?

**Ms. Braun:** As the settlement services were returned to the federal department to distribute, one of the things that we noticed is that there was a period of time in which the devolution of Manitoba being able to distribute those funds, some of the chinks in the armour were starting to appear and one of the things that we started hearing about last year was the fact that English as an additional language classes were disappearing because of the restrictions on which that had been placed on the different organizations that were delivering the settlement services.

So that was one of the biggest ones is that we were finding that a lot of folks were not able to access English as a second—or additional language class, and that was certainly an area that these organizations were expressing to us that, really, it was a—it's a hard one to sort of backfill.

**Mr. Smook:** On page 25 of the supplementary information of her legislative review, the minister mentions investing in the ongoing integrity and quality assurance of the P-MPNP through approved verification monitoring evaluation and evaluation capacities.

Like, we have discussed this. Is this some of the stuff because—does the minister have an actual plan of this, because this all falls in line with what the auditor gentler—an Auditor General is asking for? I know you—that you've said that you are working on

it, but is there an actual plan out there that describes this?

**Ms. Braun:** Absolutely. There is a process that is in place and Manitoba has a—is regarded as one of the best in terms of verification and making sure that the integrity of the program is sound. So it—there is definitely—the process is one that's admired by the other provinces, and we certainly lead in that area.

**Mr. Smook:** Is this something that's in written form someplace or is that just the way the ministry operates or why is it that the Auditor General was still not satisfied with a lot of things if this is something that the Province is doing?

**Ms. Braun:** The Auditor General did acknowledge that the integrity quality process that we have is very good, and that is something that we continue to improve upon, and there is monitoring, also, overseas in terms of making sure that there's verification of credentials

**Mr. Smook:** I know that the PNP for business is very important in Manitoba, and the minister would agree with that. Now I believe we had discussed someplace that there's approximately roughly a quota of 400 that they look for, but we've never seemed to be able to get to that number. What are the minister's plans to get to a higher amount of business nominees for the province?

**Ms. Braun:** There is no quota. Our goal is to attract the best quality. So it's quality not quantity that we're looking for. So the 400 quota is—doesn't exist.

**Mr. Smook:** Could the minister tell me how many deposits have been returned for the last, say, three years? And how many have been retained?

**Ms. Braun:** We'll be happy to get that information to you.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, well, that is important information because we talk about, the minister just mentioned, bringing in quality applications. It is important to have quality information—quality applications, but if we're rejecting 50 or 70 per cent of them, that sort of speaks to not quite that.

When we have money that's kept, I know it goes to the economic development corporation. Could the minister tell me some of the areas that where that—like, money is used to fund programs from there for the department, I would presume?

**An Honourable Member:** Sorry, could you repeat that?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook).

**Mr. Smook:** The Manitoba Development Corporation, there's money that's put aside in there from the different areas of immigration, like, the money that's kept behind for, you know, failed—what does the government—does the government use that money for certain programs?

**Ms. Braun:** That money is managed through the Jobs and the Economy. And it's their responsibility to see how it's used.

**Mr. Smook:** How about the Growing Through Immigration—is that also looked after by Jobs and the Economy?

**Ms. Braun:** Those funds are the responsibility of Jobs and the Economy. And what we are able to do is we can request to use some of those funds, and they would be used for Manitoba Start or Recognition Counts!

**Mr. Smook:** Has any of that money been used in the last three years for those?

**Ms. Braun:** We do have a joint initiative with Jobs and the Economy with SEED, and that's the Recognition Counts! program.

**Mr. Smook:** In the Auditor General's report, there was also part of it that was concerned about some of the things that were happening in the immigration where things were being done illegally and things weren't right. Has the minister started any type of program to try to stop some of the things that were happening?

**Ms. Braun:** There is no evidence of illegal activity in the auditor's report.

**Mr. Smook:** In the overview of section—of the 2013, two thousand—annual report, it mentions a new council called the advisory council on citizenship, immigration, multiculturalism. This council was not discussed in the '14-15 annual report. Could you tell me why or—what this council does and what it's—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable Minister.

**Ms. Braun:** The MACCIM, as we—the acronym that we use for it, was a result of some legislation that brought the Manitoba Immigration Council and one other council together under one umbrella. And this was at a time when the department was Immigration and Multiculturalism. And so that particular piece of legislation was proclaimed in October, and

the committee was announced towards the end of October, when we had our first sort of official inauguration of the MACCIM council.

\* (16:40)

And, essentially, they are there to look at priorities in the area of immigration or refugees that emanate from my department that, as minister, whatever emerging issues are there that we would like them to examine. And they represent a cross-section of settlement groups, multicultural groups and, certainly, employers that look to PNP for workers.

**Mr. Smook:** Is there a list available for that?

**Ms. Braun:** Yes, uh-huh. Okay, I'll just read them off. Okay, the chair is Christina Semaniuk, and she was a previous chair of MIC. We've got Tony Teixeira, Garth Pitzel, Jeff Traeger, Bintou Sacko, Gillian McGrath, Ismael Mukhtar, Roselyn Advincula, Stephanie Miller, Stephanie Fries, Paul Holden, Terra Friesen, Sandy Trudel, Ben Starkey, Alfred Koineh, Suenita Maharaj-Sandhu and Tracy Wintick [*phonetic*].

**Mr. Smook:** I would thank you for that.

Going to the annual report of 2013-2014 and the annual report of 2014-2015, if we go to the Department of Labour and Immigration on pages 44-45, in the salaries column, it says actual 2012-2013 is 288, and then the actual '13-14 is at 236, which shows a great decrease of 52. But, then, when we go to the Estimates—or, the annual report '14 and '15, it's showing that the 2013-14 actuals are 295, which is kind of a big discrepancy from the other report.

Could the minister explain that, please?

**Ms. Braun:** May we have the page reference for the last one? [*interjection*]

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable member for La Verendrye.

**Mr. Smook:** Page 42-43 for the '14 and '15 where it shows, like, the actual is 295, but, yet, in the other one it shows 236. And then for the '14-15 it's showing 272, which is showing, again, a decrease.

So it's showing decreases both years in a row but, yet, they're using completely different numbers. What's the reasoning for it?

**Ms. Braun:** It's probably a discrepancy between—transfers between departments but we certainly will get that information to you.

**Mr. Smook:** I thank you because it is very deceptive when you look at the two years—or the two different reports that show that there was a decrease in salary both years but yet the numbers don't jive, so we would—I would appreciate the information on that.

**Ms. Braun:** Okay, it's been explained to me that it's an accounting—there's been a reorganization of data. So it's an accounting process that was changed that has accounted for the difference.

**Mr. Smook:** Could that be sent to me as well? Like, the accounting difference, like there's got to be a reason. Accounting errors, I mean, if there's always accounting errors, you know, then stuff doesn't balance, but.

**Ms. Braun:** It's not an accounting error; it's a organizational restructuring but we will get the information to you.

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you.

Back in March of this year, the Fire Safety Task Force released a report on fire safety improvements in 24 personal-care homes, hospitals and other buildings where six recommendations were made. The Manitoba government accepted all of the recommendations, but at that time I believe the numbers of dollars available for that would not meet the money needed to do the recommendations.

Could the minister give me an update as to what has been done, how many of these recommendations have been done, et cetera, et cetera?

**Ms. Braun:** Many of them would have been through Health, and the monies that were going to—whether it's a—redoing a sprinkler system or other devices in those facilities would have come from Health, so that information, I don't have.

**Mr. Smook:** Would the Office of the Fire Commissioner have any information on that? I'm sure they're constantly reinvestigating and stuff. Would they have information saying how much of it has been complete?

**Ms. Braun:** The process is over a 10-year period and so things have been progressing and it will vary from year to year. So it's an ongoing process that will take over the 10 years, and I know that with the minister's comments at the time the report came out was that there would be a looking at—acquiring the funds and

seeing what is possible to do with the budget allocations for each year.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, I believe one of the things that the minister had said was that they would be going to Treasury Board and asking for more money.

Has this happened? Have they gone to Treasury Board?

**Ms. Braun:** That would be something that the Health Minister—information that she would have that I don't.

**Mr. Smook:** Would the Fire Commissioner's office have any information? Like, you talk about it's been started. But, I mean, has it been started? Has half a per cent of it been done? Has 10 per cent of it done? We talk about a 10-year program and we understand that it takes a while to get this done. But could the minister give us any idea as to where it is?

**Ms. Braun:** We'll endeavour to get you that information.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Smook:** Thank you. In the 2013-14 annual report, page 18, it states express entry program would be launched in January of 2015 which was 10 months ago. How many nominations has this new program helped to get into Manitoba? And what are the benefits of this program and what are the costs associated with this program?

**Ms. Braun:** We are nominating individuals to the express entry, but costs are footed by the federal government.

**Mr. Smook:** Does the minister have any specific trades that they're using, like for the expressed entry. Is it, like, are we bringing in more nurses? Are we bringing in truck drivers? Does the minister have an idea of what we're bringing in in that program?

**Ms. Braun:** That's an area that we keep in conversation with Jobs and the Economy, so we look at what our market—our labour market needs at the time, so it may vary from time to time during the year, depending on what, you know, where we see the needs are.

**Mr. Smook:** Could the minister provide me with a listing of some of what these jobs have been over the last 10 months?

**Ms. Braun:** We nominate through express entry to the federal government, the same type of skilled workers that we would through the PNP, and it

represents a cross-section of our diverse economy, so it may be finance, construction—I'm not sure. We've done nurses lately because we still have many, but it, you know, the nominees reflect what we're looking for in terms of what our labour market is looking for.

**Mr. Smook:** I thank the minister, but would I have to go to the Jobs and the Economy Minister to ask that question? Basically, I would like to know what are our needs today, or what does the department feel our needs are today, or for the last 10 months?

**Ms. Braun:** Projections in terms of what our labour market is looking for is on a website through Jobs and the Economy, and they update it fairly regularly, so you'd be able to access that information in terms of what we're looking for.

**Mr. Smook:** In the 2014-15 annual report on page 18, a new inventory management called expression of interest was mentioned as being in the preparation-to-launch phase, with the purpose to improve processing times as well as the alignment of provincial nominees with clear labour market requirements.

What is the status of this system, and has it started?

**Ms. Braun:** It is implemented and it is working.

**Mr. Smook:** In the PNP for business and also just in the PNP, there's always been a huge waiting list that, you know, you'd close the—close off the stuff.

Could you give me an update as to where we are right now with the number of people waiting to—

**Ms. Braun:** Well, one of the issues we're always dealing with is that we receive far more applicants than are the levels that we are assigned by the federal government, so that is always an issue, but getting back to the expression of interest, we were able to eliminate a backlog of just under 3,000 applications for the business category within 14 months and we're now able to offer new applicants processing times between three and six months, so it has been effective. But, again, Manitoba is a place that immigrants are looking to, and, you know, we've almost doubled the number of applicants we've gotten over the last number of years. So, we deal with quite a number and, unfortunately, the 5,000 still sort of hangs over our head.

**Mr. Smook:** Well, I want to thank the minister for all her answers. I'd like to thank the staff for being here today because it's important that we have the staff here, and I'm sure they all do a wonderful job

for the minister. So I'd just like to thank them for being here today.

And I do have several hours of questioning left, but I think we'll just leave it because it is five to 5, and I know that people will probably hang me if I continue on so.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We'll now deal with the resolution 11.2.

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,491,000 for Labour and Immigration, Immigration and Economic Opportunities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,696,000 for Labour and Immigration, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 11.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$214,000 for Labour and Immigration, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 11.1.(a) the minister's salary contained in resolution 11.1.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions.

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty—[interjection]—member for Lakeside.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Would you repeat that, Mr. Chair? I didn't understand what you were trying to say. It seemed like you were trying to rush it so.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Well, to the member, I would—asking if anybody had any more further questions.

**Mr. Eichler:** Oh. Proceed.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding 660,000—[interjection] What? We'll start that one again.

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$661,000 for Labour and Immigration, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

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

This also concludes our consideration of the Estimates of this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255.

I'd like to thank the ministers, the critics and all honourable members for their hard work and dedication during this process.

Committee rise.

**AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

\* (14:40)

**Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard):** 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 Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Will the ministerial and opposition staff please enter the Chamber.

As has been—as had been previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner and the floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** For the minister, just confirm for me that he was elected in 2011?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** That is correct; I was elected in October of 2011.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And when did he become the Minister of Agriculture?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** It was January the 13th, 2012.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And what other committees of Cabinet does the minister sit on?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I've sat on the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And just so I understand this, does the minister have any position on the Treasury Board or is he just a member of the committee?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I am just a member on the Cabinet—or Treasury Board, pardon me.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Could the minister provide for me the number of meetings that he has missed for Treasury Board since he was—been put on—since he's joined Treasury Board?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I don't really have the numbers in front of me.

I would have to say I've been at a majority of the TB meetings, but there's been some that I may have missed. But I don't have exact figure. If you would like, I would gladly provide that information later on.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I would appreciate getting that information, and I should have backed up one step, there. When did—when was he appointed to the Treasury Board?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** My apologies, I don't have the exact date when it was, but I'll gladly share that with the members opposite at the same time with the number of meetings I may have missed.

**Mr. Pedersen:** In the Estimates book there is a number of staff positions, et cetera. Is—where would I find in the Estimates book—or, was the Ag Department paying for any of the severance on the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) departed staff who took severance payments?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Not to my knowledge. There is no indications that, based on the question posed. But, if I may, Madam Chair, and to members opposite, I'd like to introduce the four staff members that are in front of me, please. Thank you.

Deputy Minister Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, sitting to my right; and, beside Dori, to the left of her, is Anne Leibfried, executive financial officer, financial administration and information technology service division; to my immediate left is Leloni Scott, who is assistant deputy minister, ag-industry development and advanced division; and to her left is David Hunt, who is assistant deputy minister of Strategic Policy and Innovation Division.

Thank you.

**Introduction of Guests**

**Madam Chairperson:** Just before we carry on, I just want to—we know today is take your kids to work

day. We are joined by some guests in the gallery. Linda Brooks, Lina Gebreyesus, Miriam Kabonesa. They are grade 9 students at General Wolfe School, and they are guests of the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), so we welcome you here today.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes, welcome to the students from all members today that have brought their students to work today.

Is there anywhere in the department spending where the department has paid for any of the great proliferation of steady growth signs that are all across our province? Is the Ag Department responsible for paying for any of these signs?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** According to staff, I guess there may be a small amount of dollars invested, but very little as far as allocation dollar amount. But I'll gladly share that once we're able to, kind of, to summarize the question and provide the necessary information to members opposite in the near future.

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Pedersen:** Well, I would certainly appreciate getting a list of where the signs are located and how much cost there is to the department for that, as well as, obviously, what the sign was placed for—what the project was where the sign was placed, and the Ag Department was paying for.

A couple other things. On page 7 of the Estimates book, there is some reorganization of the department.

Can the minister explain the changes from previous years and the rationale behind those changes?

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

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** It's definitely exciting times in agriculture, and I thank the member opposite for the question. As, you know, as agriculture changes on the landscape, sometimes departments need to do some adjustments. And as the question's been posed by the member opposite, we've done some minor changes, but kind of on a number of focused areas that we see the development of rural economic development in the department. And we're one of many departments that want to see and enhance that type of derogatory.

So I guess to facilitate the questions that was brought forward by the member opposite, ag industry development and advance division, they're in a—

the column on page 7. We have a new terminology called Ag Resources, which has been similar name change, but it provides additional resources and opportunities to help out. Also—which is in addition to ag environmental team, in addition to the Crown Lands team and combining soil service and ag weather 'laboration'. So those were probably the key changes to that segment of it.

Overall in the pillars, as they've been identified, the five bottom pillars, on page 7, there is another one called rural development, and we continue to emphasize the importance of rural development which takes in a number of opportunities. And that would—really, what it does is it condenses the combine of rural leadership and organization development resources—additional rural secretary staff resources combining the community economic development and rural economic policy and the intelligence resources.

Moving over into the strategic policy innovation division, we have sector policy planning and programs. So it's basically a transfer of sector-specific policies and resources, and additional resources focus on strategic planning for sector planning.

And last but not least, research and market intelligence, basically a transfer of diversification centres to go to the GO centres and realignment with the core research management and oversight combines with research and market intelligence and analyst units.

So I think that's kind of a brief description to the member opposite, but if there's any further information required, we'll gladly share that of the reorganization of the various departments that existed for a number of years.

**Mr. Pedersen:** On page 12 of the Estimates book, you're showing a steady complement of work, and I believe this is across the entire department of 420 workers, full-time FTEs, and yet I'm seeing a 2 and a half per cent cut in salary costs.

Could the minister explain that?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** They stay to—for the record, as there's been no positions cut, we maintained status quo from last year.

You know, as we've had a great number of gifted people work in the department and continue to work with us, and sometimes the day comes when they've done their due diligence of working in the department and are always looking towards that official retirement. And, obviously, we're kind of in

the transition right now of senior experienced individuals choosing to go into retirement. And the replacements are of the younger age, and basically on the pay scale—is adjusted based on experience and education level.

So, to answer the second half of the question to the member opposite, it's best he—probably more structured towards their experience and opportunity to meet the targeted pay scale that historically was set. So it's more of the turning over of young versus the experienced producers.

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Pedersen:** So, currently, right now, how many of the senior staff are you aware of that have already notified you that they are going to retire sometime in this fiscal year?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** We have had no formal information provided to us that—at this point in time, that we know of any senior or staff that are choosing to go into retirement and, as you know, member opposite, that there is a requirement of at least a two-week notice, given if they are choosing to go into retirement or seek employment somewhere else. But at this point in time, to our knowledge, we have no such documentation in front of us.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So what is of current vacancy rate as a percentage across the department right now?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** As of September the 18, 2015, we, as the member opposite knows, that we're in a transition of a realignment in the departments, and presently our total vacancy is sitting at about 23.58 per cent. But, since then, we've been—we've repositioned two ADM positions and also two directors' positions also in the department which takes in livestock and ag resources. So we continue to, you know, research for new individuals, and realignment in the department as we have now somewhat done some realignment, and we're looking for candidates that will fit the appropriate criteria to fulfill the job description.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Will the minister provide me with a list of vacant positions, and that would also be then as to where the relevant section his department is, of those positions? As you say, you're realigning them, so may not necessarily know where these positions would fit unless you provide that for me, if you would do that.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes, we'll gladly provide the information. As staff is aware of it, we'll gladly provide that to you as soon as possible.

**Mr. Pedersen:** There's—was some office closures in previous years. How many GO centres and GO offices are there currently in Manitoba?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** As to the question related by members opposite, we presently have 31 offices throughout the province of Manitoba and 30 of them being in rural Manitoba.

**Mr. Pedersen:** If you have a—almost a 24 per cent vacancy rate across your department, and I look back at previous budgets: 2011-12, the department was \$389 million total; '12-13 is \$241 million—a sizable drop there, but I understand from that year a large group of employees were moved over to Finance. But then, if you go into '13-14, you're at 211—you dropped another \$30 million out of your—off the department; '14-15, you dropped another \$4 million off your department; and you're dropping another \$3 million estimated in '15-16.

So, is there—what's the rationale behind—in this department, when you look at—overall government spending has grown exponentially in the last number of years. You're running huge deficits; you're borrowing phenomenal amounts of money, and yet the Department of Agriculture continues to shrink. So, does that concern you as an Ag Minister or is Agriculture being put to the back of the burner in this government? Or why is it that this department—you're running—close to a quarter of your staff are vacant right now; your budget is shrinking. Where does that set up Agriculture within this government for the years to come?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Thank you, member opposite, for the question posed, and, obviously, I've said it numerous times, and I will continue to say on behalf of the staff and on behalf of the government of Manitoba: Definitely Agriculture's very key, and we will continue to focus on Agriculture in partnerships not only with the previous federal government, but the new federal government as we look forward to reconnecting with the new federal Agriculture minister from PEI.

\* (15:10)

You know, as we all know, in my four years of being Agriculture Minister, it's been a great pleasure to represent the hard-working farmers and producers of what they've done, and we see opportunities that exist.

You know, we've had some—we've had to take on some responsibilities as far as traditionally what the previous federal government chose to offload to

our department. And we continue to somewhat stay concentrated on the importance of agriculture, and I'll give you some examples: whether it's the community pastures program; whether it's the importance of a CFIA, you know, the rabies program that has somewhat been offloaded us as well; we continue to work on the PED virus that is very important.

We as a department work in harmony with the federal government in every opportunity we can. And when we talk about changing opportunities, we also work with private sector. And we know that private sector is quite involved when we talk about crop surveillance, crop identification. Historically, you know, the department maybe was more involved hands-on identifying weeds and stuff as the agronomist within the department. We felt fairly strong that, maybe, it was an opportunity to give industry a chance. Obviously, we still have appropriate staff in place, but it was no sense being in the same footsteps as the private industry. So there's an opportunity of the sharing of working which justifies a reduction in some of the staff numbers.

But, also, you know, as we set up new visionary and we work with industry, there's an opportunity that we continue to move into a transition period of—as a department and what traditionally has been done and how we can refocus our visionary for the betterment of the agriculture industry, not only from the hands-on producers, to the entire food chain, with working with processors and working with great industries like Maple Leaf and HyLife, and a number of industries, such as working with duties, maybe with the Keystone agriculture producers that are taking on some of the jobs that, traditionally, maybe staff department used to do.

It's a matter of working together with commodity groups and also working with the federal government and sharing of resources. So I think part of our rationale is that we see a realignment of the department and an opportunity to continue to make a lean machine and being—moving forward for the betterment of agriculture. And yet, I think that we've done an excellent job, and we continue to fill some vacancies, but once we get into the transition of the new model, I think you'll find the team will be stronger than ever before.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So when will your transition be complete and you'll bring vacancy rates back down to manageable levels, which is, normally, you know, 4 to 5 per cent?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** As the member's posed that—we're in the ongoing aggressive realignment in the department, and our mission here is, in the next two months, to fill 20 positions that are presently being advertised. And in the next number of months, we intend to move forward with the additional 20 positions, but, to the member opposite, it's an ongoing, continuous building of a structure that—we call it realignment and priorities in dealing with not only the producers, but also realignment with the processors and opportunities that deal with—I'll give you a prime example, it was a pharmaceutical, a nutraceutical world where I had the great privilege to tour St. Boniface hospital, and we're talking about the new adaptation of food developments—or the grains that are developed in the province of man—and how could we provide added value in the nutraceutical and pharmaceutical.

The other thing that's—we're working very diligent—with private partnerships, along with a number of other universities, colleges, is the Grain Innovation Hub, that I'm sure member opposite heard about, is a opportunity to enhance diversification on traditional programs that we had within the department. But what it does is accelerates communication with stakeholder groups, but also with a number of universities and—across Canada, but also with colleges throughout the province of Manitoba.

I'm very proud that we've moved forward with the local food initiative, entrepreneurship, and we see major strides of that moving. And so, every month or every two months we see numerous requests come in and changes, and we are in a position right now of realignment and the transitions will continue. It's a department that never changes as far as realignment and priorities we see within the agriculture industry and the added value that brings rural economic development.

So I think you'll stay tuned for a number of further involvement of labour numbers in our department.

**Mr. Pedersen:** On page 99 of the Estimates book, down towards the bottom, under Rural Economic Development, it says: Provide one year transitional administrative support to Manitoba 4-H Council to aid in their meeting, et cetera, et cetera.

What is the transition that's occurring in—within your department for the Manitoba 4-H Council?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** You know, as one of the great celebrations being Ag Minister was attending a function in Winnipeg when the 100-year event took place at the Fairmont, I believe it was. One hundred years, and, obviously, in the great community of Roland, Manitoba, was the start of 4-H and obviously the member opposite is quite familiar with that geographic location. It is—[interjection] Oh, you look awfully young. So it, you know, it is a great 'testatue' to be very proud, the province of Manitoba, Roland, Manitoba, obviously, no less.

And, you know, the partnership has—people are so dedicated to the 4-H that are with us today, and historically we need to never lose sight of those people that were involved in 4-H. And obviously with my daughters both being in 4-H, it was a great monument of building of social characteristic of individuals and—but when we talk about the 4-H transition, based on the question posed from page 99, MAFRD and the Manitoba 4-H Council are developing a funding agreement that enables the M4H to be an overall decision maker—making body responsibility for policy development.

Administration and management at the 4-H program in Manitoba, MAFRI will continue to provide technical expertise, facilitation and training and resource support for the 4-H program to create an opportunity for youth and community leadership development. And no better people to do it, because they're definitely a grassroots organization.

This transition supports MAFRD's priority of strengthening rural leaders and organizations throughout the partnership and builds the organizational capacity of the M4HC.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So is the dollars of support to the 4-H program being pared down, being cut? Is it the same for this year as it was in the last fiscal year? Just wanted to know where it is financially.

You can say all the good things about 4-H and how you support it, but what I'm wanting to know is, is the financial support there for the 4-H program, because I know that they're going out and getting corporate sponsorship in order to continue the program.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** The 4-H financial support continues to remain the same based on historical dollars previously allocated.

And I think, back to the earlier comment that member opposite posed to the 4-Hs looking for corporate sponsors, I think we both know that always

has been and they always will continue to look for outside sources of funding to support programs that are—whether it's travel programs and whatever else. You know, one example is, I think, the York-Benimaru Foundation and, you know, it was a great pleasure to meet up with the individuals that supported this and continued to support since the tsunami scenario that happened in Japan, and knowing a number of relatives that were quite privileged to go on an exchange student. And it is, truly, a pleasure to meet Mr. Benimaru and their family who continued to support that in hundreds of thousands of dollars towards the 4-H organization. So, basically, it is a true pleasure to have the opportunity to meet with individuals like that and the grassroots organize that's continued to lobby for additional funding that, historically, has always taken place. So I think that would close my comments on the financial support.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Partner 4 Growth program, would the minister provide me with a list of the actual program—projects in the fiscal year 2014-15, the cost of these projects and the administration costs of these projects? Can he provide me with a written list of this?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** By all means, I'd like to share the information that members opposite are asking.

The Partner 4 Growth is a great program where we work with community foundations and work with economic development officers as they—this provides an opportunity to expand local businesses or new, emerging businesses throughout the province of Manitoba.

So Partner 4 Growth, the program 2014-15 applicant: Arborg-Bifrost Community Development Corporation, the amount was approved for \$14,000; Archie Community Development Board was approved for \$6,900; Asessippi Parkland Tourism, which is in the Parkland district, is \$5,400; Beausejour Brokenhead Development Corporation, which is in the Eastman, received \$12,000, was approved for \$12,000; Central Plains-Pembina Valley tourism central, which is \$7,600; the City of Dauphin, Parkland, received \$1,210; Erickson—the Town of Erickson, amount approved was \$8,000; Fisher Branch and District Chamber of Commerce received \$677; RM of Grahamdale, Interlake, received \$3,500; Icelandic Festival of Manitoba received \$5,000; La Broquerie community development received \$5,513; Minto—'miota'—pardon me, Miniota Community Development Corporation

received \$13,642; Minnedosa and Area Community Development Corporation received \$453; RM of Mountain received \$15,000; Niverville Chamber of Commerce received \$1,433; and we also have the Rivers Train Station resource committee received—

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Order. Order. On a point of order?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Just a point of clarification, I asked for a written list. I didn't ask him to read it out for me.

Can he just provide me with a written list?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** We'll gladly provide that list to the members opposite. *[interjection]*

**The Acting Chairperson (Dave Gaudreau):** Member for Midland.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you.

Local food—a year ago, the minister told us in Estimates that they were developing regulations. Have those regulations been written? I don't need the regulations written out; if the regulations have been written, can we get a copy of the regulations regarding local food?

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** It's a privilege to talk about a subject that I think really is very key on rural economic development not in the rural perspective but to the general public that really appreciates the great food that is grown in the province of Manitoba, and an opportunity of expanding market places for small-scale processors.

I think what members opposite are well aware is that the department established a small-scale food working group chaired by Dr. Wayne Lees, and I think he is no stranger to members opposite and the great time he spent in the department working as a chief veterinarian officer for a number of years.

So, as we move into the opportunity of expanding the marketplace and the opportunity that the rural entrepreneur is choosing food safety was always a No. 1 criteria and we continue to exercise that. We're very fortunate in the province of Manitoba to have the Food Development Centre which is a very key tool to develop the new innovative markets when we talk about local small-scale food processors.

So we're estimating that in 2012 it's going to be an estimated value of about \$320 million, which will include about \$241 million through farmers' markets and \$65 million at the farm gate, \$13 million at U-Pick-Its and \$1 million at the market gardens throughout the buying clubs. Vegetable production alone in Manitoba plies over 1,000 Manitobas, injects over \$80 million per year into our economy.

So, basically, as we go back and look at the statistical information, that more justified putting on two permanent staff people that will be involved to set up the business plan but also to educate the new entrepreneurs, moving forward, of the small-scale sector. So staffing support small-scale food production processing. As I indicated, two staff members have been 'affined' to focus on the needs in small-scale food processing in the business.

Steps to organize the small-scale: The department's supporting a meeting with small-scale food producers and processors—discuss ongoing organization of the sector in 2015. So our wishes are to complete the small-scale sector and to compile that information as need be and come back with recommendations but also to the member opposite, to set up a template that somewhat makes it somewhat manageable for people to go on the website and understand the importance of it.

So we are working with a number of variety of industry people, and we'll continue to do that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** So I'll take it from that answer, then, there is absolutely zero progress in bringing forth regulations.

A different subject: Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council lost \$12 million of producer and taxpayer money over its duration, \$650,000 for this loss on the sale of the, well, net proceeds, I guess, out of the sale of the lot on Marion Street. Is there a final financial statement of available for the now-defunct Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** The final audit has been completed, and I think if you were to go on the website, I think it's available for your information to research as of a week or two ago, I believe.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And just one final question, and my colleague here from Lakeside is itching to go, so.

Bulk petroleum storage, on-farm bulk petroleum storage: The Department of Conservation has been talking about new regulations on there. Has your

department had any input into developing new regulations for bulk petroleum on-farm storage?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes, we're—we've been in discussions with Department of Conservation regarding the subject at hand, but also, as the member opposite may recall, we're also working with the Keystone agriculture producers. Just this year alone we've offered Growing Assurance, a program through GF2 where producers can go online; it's the best BMP, a program, best management practices, that provides some financial assistance to producers that choose to make the applications in the transition to regulations that are upcoming in a number of years and being proactive of addressing any potential environmental risk of fuel spillage and opportunities.

So let me be repetitious. There are online applications through BMPs, and the Keystone Agricultural Producers is part of the delivery agency on that program.

**Madam Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, we will move to the consideration of resolutions.

The first resolution is resolution 3.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,163,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Strategic Policy and Innovation, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 3.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$135,106,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Risk Management, Credit and Income Support Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 3.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,671,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agri-Industry Development and Advancement, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 3.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,422,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agri-Food and Rural Economic

Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 3.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$356,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 3.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$250,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 3.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 3.1.

At this point, we request that the ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item. And we thank them for their attendance and assistance here today.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing none, we will move to that resolution.

Resolution 3.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,275,000—try it again—be it resolved—

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,277,000 for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

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

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

We will take a brief recess and we'll be called back by me, by the Chair.

*The committee recessed at 3:45 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 3:47 p.m.*

### MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

**Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Municipal Government.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government):** Madam Chair, I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments on the 2015-16 Estimates for the Department of Municipal Government, and I'd like to begin by acknowledging the very hard work and professionalism of Municipal Government staff and the work they do with Manitoba municipalities and stakeholders throughout the province, such as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, in really building this province, and I will have, once we have staff at the table, I'll go through the individuals, they're here with us today, but there's many in the gallery right now and a few others in the loge, but I think—and I think the—my critic would agree that the professionalism in the department is really a second-to-none, and people are working very, very diligently on behalf of the province of Manitoba in building this province north, south, east and west.

I also want to comment on my relationship with the critic, which I very much appreciate. We've had the opportunity to share some time together discussing bills in a collaborative and open and forthright and honest manner, and I do want to say that I very much appreciate. My critic is a person who is an able member of this House and I also want to say that I quite very much like him and his affable nature, and I may have reason to doubt that assessment later on, but as we kick off I just want to acknowledge both the hard work of the department staff and also the hard work and good nature of my critic.

Madam Chair, Manitoba continues to provide record levels of funding to Manitoba municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg. Budget 2015 will provide a total of \$458 million in 2015 for municipal infrastructure and service priorities, including support for roads, water and sewer infrastructure,

flood protection, policing and public safety, as well as other areas of municipal endeavour.

\* (15:50)

Through the Building Manitoba Fund, we will invest one seventh of the provincial sales tax in municipal infrastructure and transit priorities. In 2015-16, Manitoba municipalities will receive \$324.5 million from the Building Manitoba Fund, an increase of 11 per cent from the previous year—or, sorry, \$11 million from the previous year. Provincial funding through the Building Manitoba Fund will support major new infrastructure investment in street renewal, the delivery of transit and new rapid transit service and recreation and community facility upgrades in the city of Winnipeg.

In addition, municipalities across Manitoba will benefit from increased investments in road and bridge renewal along with continued support for critical water and waste water treatment upgrades in communities throughout the province. Building on the success of a recent investment in the renewal of municipal roads and bridges, a total of \$16 million will be available through the new Municipal Road and Bridge Program which represents an increase of \$3.5 million from the 2014 level, an increase of nearly 25 per cent.

This investment is doing great things across the province. The new Municipal Road and Bridge Program will be simpler, more flexible and easier for municipalities to access by combining and enhancing the level of provincial funding previously provided through three separate grant programs. Since 1999, provincial capital and operating support for municipalities has more than doubled, thanks in large part to making a commitment to sharing PST revenue with municipalities.

Manitoba is committed to working with our federal and municipal partners to renew infrastructure in municipalities across the province at levels never before undertaken in provincial history. Through the—under the new Building Canada plan, we will identify and fund common priorities to benefit municipalities across the province of Manitoba. Manitoba's federal allocation under the new building plan, provincial and territorial component, is \$467.7 million over 10 years and is invested as follows: \$420 million are for projects of national and regional significance typically valued at \$10 million or more, and \$46.7 million is allocated for a Small Communities Fund to support

smaller projects in communities with populations of 100,000 or less.

In 2014, through the Small Communities Fund, Manitoba committed \$15 million towards 26 projects in Manitoba communities with total project costs of \$47.9 million. This includes 10 drinking water infrastructure projects, 15 waste water infrastructure projects and one solid waste management infrastructure project.

And Manitoba is demonstrating our ongoing commitment to infrastructure renewal in Manitoba municipalities and made that commitment by launching a third application intake for the Small Communities Fund in May. In addition to the Small Communities Fund, Manitoba is moving forward with three projects under the PTIC-NRP program. Twelve point one million dollars, which has been committed towards a \$43.5-million renewal of the Cartier regional water treatment plant expansion, \$2.9 million committed towards the \$8.8-million construction of the Brandon Municipal Airport expansion and \$12 million committed towards the \$36-million waste water treatment plant in the city of Thompson.

As Minister of Municipal Government, I also have responsibility for the Energy Division and with it a mandate to implement the priorities under the Manitoba clean energy strategy. These priorities are focused on ensuring there is a reliable and affordable energy supply to Manitobans, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating economic opportunities throughout the province.

This year, Manitoba looks forward to finalizing of the Canadian Energy Strategy committed to by Canada's premiers and co-chaired by the Province of Manitoba. Manitoba will also work with officials in Ontario to implement actions under a memorandum of understanding signed by the premiers of Manitoba and Ontario in 2014. Two key areas for collaboration under this MOU include the development of a national task force at reducing diesel use in remote Aboriginal communities co-chaired by Manitoba and Ontario. This task force will bring together provinces and territories to pursue innovative solutions to reduce diesel use in remote communities throughout Canada.

The second key area of collaboration is the identification of opportunities for mutual action on efficiency standards for energy products such as windows, television set-pot boxes, PVRs and lighting.

Budget 2015 maintains the Province's commitment to invest in programs and initiatives that are important to Manitobans. We are working to facilitate clean renewable energy development and we are providing municipalities with long-term predictable and sustainable funding to support municipal infrastructure and service needs.

Overall provincial funding to Winnipeg will total \$322.8 million, a \$9 million or 2.8 per cent increase over the 2014 funding levels. Through the Building Manitoba Fund funding for Winnipeg Transit in infrastructure will total \$212 million in 2015. Winnipeg will benefit from over \$1 billion in multi-year provincial infrastructure and transit funding by 2020, including \$250 million for street and bridge renewal projects.

This historic level of investment includes almost \$60 million in 2015, sharing 50 per cent of the cost of more than 160 local and regional streets, sidewalk and back lanes in every city of Winnipeg neighbourhood. Up to \$225 million for the southwest rapid transit way stage 2, and Pembina Highway underpass project are also on our agenda. Provincial support for the initial cost of this project will start to flow in 2015.

Up to \$234 million has been identified to support the most significant upgrades to Winnipeg's wastewater and treatment system in its history. Two hundred and seventy million dollars in transit operating support by 2020 including \$40 million in 2015 through our government's 50-50 transit funding partnership is also available to the City of Winnipeg.

Manitoba is the only province in Canada to support transit operating costs through such a funding arrangement and the only province in Canada that guarantees funding for public transit in legislation. A hundred and thirty million dollars in further support to community recreation infrastructure is available to the City of Winnipeg and Manitoba works in partnership with the City to address recreation and community infrastructure needs.

Madam Chair, I could go on but you have given me the one-minute notice so I will wrap it up with that and refer to my remarks as questions come through at the process today.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** In the essence of time I'll forgo that and get right into it.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the critic for that.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 13.1.(a), contained in resolution 13.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to join us in the Chamber and when they—after they arrive I'll ask the minister and critic to introduce the staff in attendance.

Okay, I will start by asking if the minister would like to introduce the staff that are joining him.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Caldwell:** I appreciate that.

Joining us today at the—before me here right now is Deputy Minister Fred Meier; assistant deputy minister, provincial-municipal support, Laurie Davidson; acting director of Municipal Finance and Advisory Services Mike Sosiak; and financial administrative services, Acting Director Joanne Velez. Thank you very much for being here with us today.

And in the gallery we're joined by assistant deputy minister, Community Planning and Development, Ramona Mattix; assistant deputy minister of financial administrative services, Craig Halwachs; executive director Canada-Manitoba agreements, Karlene Debance; general manager, water—Manitoba Water Services Board, Dave Shwaluk; executive director, Energy Division, Jim Crone; and Barb Harrison for—on behalf of the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Secretariat.

**Madam Chairperson:** And the member for Lakeside, to introduce your staff.

**Mr. Eichler:** Welcome to the municipal staff that's here. We certainly appreciate you taking time for this opportunity to ask a few questions of the minister.

Rob Pankhurst is our researcher that's joined us here in the Chamber this afternoon. I think you'll find him a wealth of knowledge. We're looking forward to working with him.

**Madam Chairperson:** Okay. I thank both of you, and I welcome your staff here with us in the Chamber today.

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

**Mr. Eichler:** Global, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairperson:** It's been suggested that we have a global discussion. Is that agreeable? *[Agreed]*

So it's agreed, then, we're going to move through questioning for this department in a global manner, with all resolutions to be passed once questions have concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Eichler:** Community Planning and Development, a division of the department, I would note that the staff from this department provided support for what the department describes as amalgamation initiative. Can the minister please outline what the amalgamation initiative is, and would that be the same thing is commonly referred to as the forced amalgamation group?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I'm not entirely certain what the critic was referring to in terms of correlating different organizations there, but the department does provide ongoing support to municipalities, and in no small measure. That's really what the department does almost in its entirety, whether it's funding infrastructure projects or helping resolve issues through the Municipal Board in terms of governance.

So we do provide services broadly to municipalities. We provide funding support to—on a project basis to municipalities. We provide consulting services to municipalities when they run into challenges in terms of their governance or other issues that they may consult with us on. That has pretty much been the case for this department since its inception, decades and decades, even before I was born.

But I—maybe the member—we're just unclear as to really, I guess, the specifics of what the member was wanting to get from us.

**Mr. Eichler:** The amalgamation initiative is what I was referring to. How many staff were assigned to this initiative? And you had talked about some of the supports that you had referenced in regards to the municipalities, but in particular the amalgamation initiative, how many staff were assigned to that initiative?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I appreciate the clarification. Thank you very much.

There were no additional staff hired within the department in terms of supporting the amalgamation exercise. It was done with resources in house. We did hire, on a consultative basis, a consultant for a period of time that—which has lapsed some months ago.

We did provide a great number of supports in partnership with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Municipal Administrators' Association. In those terms, we provided supports, a number of supports, to amalgamating municipalities. We provide facilitations for working groups that identified and monitored and addressed issues related to human resources and finance and accounting and administration, et cetera. The working groups included representatives from the AMM, the MMAA and individual municipalities. We provided, as a department, integration checklists and timelines, documented supports. The integrated checklists were provided in April 2014. They identified tasks required for integration and timing for when tasks should be completed, those sorts of checklists to help and assist municipalities in meeting critical dates.

We provided seminars for CAOs in April of 2014, as well, to facilitate discussion on the integration of tasks related to amalgamation. We provided supports for planning districts, facilitating the realignment of planning districts and working with new municipalities to identify opportunities to join planning districts or create new planning districts. We're very supportive as a government, and I expect the critic is as well, of strong planning at the municipal level, and we wanted to take the opportunity to facilitate greater planning as this exercise unfolded.

We provided information and training seminars in the fall of 2014 to the MMAA, targeted to CAOs. The department did provide a small grant, and I'm just going to confer with the department about what the grant was in support of these seminars, but there was a small grant in support of the information and training seminars that was conducted in 2014. We provided transition committee seminars in November of 2014, focused on the role of transition committees, including the development and presentation of a human resource firm. We provided financial plan templates in a seminar in January 2015 to assist amalgamating municipalities in preparing and integrating financial plans.

There was a field consultant support, which I had made reference to at the outset here, from 2014 to March 2015, the hired individual to support individual municipalities in areas of human resources and accounting and finance on a case-by-case basis in partnership with the AMM. So there were a lot of supports put in that were developed in-house using existing resources and there were—it was a lot of work done in hand in hand with the Municipal Administrators' Association, as well as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities through their executive offices in Portage la Prairie.

I hope that helps a bit.

**Mr. Eichler:** Are there any municipalities that have not met the January 1st, 2015, amalgamation deadline?

**Mr. Caldwell:** No, there—as of January there were none.

**Mr. Eichler:** Is there any municipalities that have applied to the minister or his department that would opt out—ask to opt out of the amalgamation, and if so, when?

**Mr. Caldwell:** In my time there hasn't been any municipality that has done that, and the department indicates that previous to me there was none. There's no municipality that made application either.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Eichler:** In terms of data incurred by municipalities in the course of the amalgamation, is the minister aware of any circumstances where the debts or costs that were incurred to municipalities—what we're thinking about here is human resource, legal cost, breaking of leases, that type of thing; selling buildings, municipal offices—who's responsible for those costs? And did the Province assist the municipalities in any of those costs that may have been incurred as a result of the amalgamation?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Upon coming into the office, in fact a year ago yesterday, the member will know that I've got a fairly extensive municipal background with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and their predecessors, the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities. I did proactively engage the AMM and their former president Doug Dobrowolski and their executive director Joe Masi to canvass the municipalities that had been amalgamated to try and gather some data that was a little bit better than anecdotal for which to consider assisting in costs that

may be identified by municipalities as being associated with amalgamation.

There—we haven't got a process in place to respond at this stage to the canvassing that we did, but I undertook the canvassing so I would have a better idea as to the challenges being faced by municipalities in terms of new configurations. I'm still considering that—the data that we got from that canvass in partnership and in co-operation with the AMM.

It's my view as minister that—and previously as minister of Education, I did put in place, when we amalgamated school divisions, some resources from the Province to assist with costs that took place. I feel that that is something that would have some value in this case. But we are reviewing the data that was canvassed by municipalities for the purposes of offering some provincial assistance. As I said, we did that in—when I was minister of Education, and I'm inclined to consider that as Minister of Municipal Government.

I do want to say also, however, that there was considerable cost savings for municipalities and considerable improvements, possibilities for service delivery for municipalities and citizens throughout the province through amalgamating municipalities. The benefits of amalgamation are many, and they can't be minimized. Certainly, when we amalgamated the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities in 1998-99, to form the now unified Association of Manitoba Municipalities, there were great benefits obtained by municipalities by merging two previous provincial bodies into one municipal body, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

I know in the school divisions there were also a great many benefits realized in terms of putting more resources into the classroom and providing for fewer administrative costs and more front-line delivery investment opportunities. Amalgamation of municipalities means that the municipalities can expect to realize benefits that will allow them to direct more funding into servicing their communities they serve and supporting the citizens who count on those services, including the better—a better ability to capital—fund capital projects and reduce operating costs through the sharing of infrastructure assets, such as water treatment facilities and recreation centres. The opportunity to provide for more effective provincial investment into regional infrastructure is an opportunity that's presented by a

larger tax base for municipalities. There's also opportunities to realize savings and efficiencies through economies of scale and strengthening of administrative capacities for amalgamating municipalities.

And many municipalities now have, for example, Madam Chair, a chief financial officer in addition to a CEO. Municipalities are also, with added resources available to them and larger tax bases, they're able to attract more businesses and local development with reduced red tape and the harmonizing of municipal fees and regulations.

So the exercise which was undertaken—you know, it seems like I've been involved in amalgamations all my life, since before I came here, when I was a municipal official with the old UMM and MAUM and merging into AMM, and then once I arrived here, doing school divisions as minister of Education and amalgamating school divisions across the province, and now, more recently, with municipalities, Madam Chair.

All the way through, at every level, the objective has always been the same. If I take off the politics of the issue, which I think—when we put political lines on this, it often does a disservice to the exercise, but when we merged AMM—or merged UMM and MAUM to AMM, it was to get even better efficiencies and to provide for better resources and better service delivery to our constituents, in that case, provincial municipalities. When we undertook the exercise in school divisions, it was to redirect resources into the classroom and provide efficiencies at the administrative level. And the same principles that informed the provincial—municipal bodies to merge, that informed the merging of school divisions, they were the same principles that were at play in the exercise to merge municipalities.

It has been challenging. It's been a number of years since the initiative was undertaken, but it has been successfully undertaken, and municipalities are beginning to realize the benefits of a larger tax base, a better allocation of resources and the opportunities that provides for service delivery and economic development.

**Mr. Eichler:** Moving to page 26 of the department's 2014 annual report, in terms of the total salaries line, the department notes a significant underexpenditure compared to its target and includes the following explanatory note: The underexpenditure was due to several vacancies.

Can the minister explained how many vacancies there are currently in the assessment branch as of now?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I'll just start responding while staff is looking for some details.

We did—we have hired some staff since the Estimates were published, and that's what staff is looking for now, so there's been a little bit of an addition to the staff complement from the perspective of where it was when we went to print on the Estimates.

\*(16:20)

We do have a fairly active recruitment strategy—excuse me—for attracting new talent to the department. It's obviously challenging in a competitive environment where private sector incomes are often quite a bit more significant than government sectors, particularly provincial government sector. We have been mindful of—and agile as we undertake to recruit more talent for the vacancies that we have in the department.

We have been very agile in ensuring that service delivery isn't compromised by vacancies within the department, and I do want to, again, you know, at the outset I did commend staff who are with us today, but you know, we have several hundred staff in the department that run the gamut from Assessment Services to water services to infrastructure, Madam Chair, so we are cognizant of the challenges of vacancies. We're cognizant of maintaining service delivery and levels of service delivery and have to be agile in that, and we are actively engaged in recruiting talent to the department.

But it is a challenge; there's no doubt about we've got a very robust economy in Manitoba. It's projected to be the top economy in Canada in this coming year. It's a very competitive market and a very strong economy in Manitoba.

But we are making some headway, and I just got the data from the department. There have been 16 new positions filled in assessment since the 2014-15, so there have been some—we've had some success; we continue to work at it, but I appreciate the question because it did allow me to speak to the challenges we have in this regard.

**Mr. Eichler:** The—in regards to that, you said you filled 16 since the Estimate books were printed, so how—well how many vacancies is it—total vacancies is there in the assessment branch, then?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for the question. The—of course, you know, vacancies and people coming and going within the department is very fluid, and we do have—not every day obviously because the numbers are—don't—aren't 365, but we do have a very fluid environment for employment where people retire and people join throughout the days and weeks and months of a year.

The total vacancies as of—as at March 31, 2015 was 46 positions. There were 16 hires also done in that period. Right now we have 35 vacancies as we sit right now. I've just been advised by the assistant deputy minister there, 35 right now. As at March 31, there were 46 positions vacant. As at today, we have 35.

**Mr. Eichler:** In regards to the assessment during the amalgamation for the municipalities, my understanding is it was done by the assessment branches in the—in Winnipeg rather than from the rural branches.

Could the minister explain why and what basis was it used to help those municipalities or assist them in the merger? So why was the amalgamation, the assessment branch done in Winnipeg, or was it done in Winnipeg and rural branches?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I appreciate the question. In terms of the assessment that was taking place, nothing did change the assessment that was undertaken. It was the same as it has been for decades.

This may be what the member's referring to in terms of his reference to Winnipeg, that when the boundaries of the new municipalities were changed and their roles were updated when we had two municipalities merging into one, the roles for those two municipalities, in being updated, were transferred to the data centre to put into our database, and that data centre is located in the city of Winnipeg. But, in terms of assessment itself, nothing changed at all. In terms of where the data's maintained for all municipalities across the province today, yesterday, four years ago, the data centre's in the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Eichler:** In the essence of time, I've agreed that the member from River Heights could come in at quarter-to, so I'll try and prioritize a couple of the others in—ones in regards to the Taxicab Board responsibility to investigate and resolve complaints against taxicab drivers for service failures, breaches.

What was the number of complaints received, the number of complaints found to be, in fact,

breaches of the regulations or service failures on part of the taxicab operators, and then in the last part would be the number of complaints considered to be resolved on those complaints that were received by the department?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I thank the member for the question.

Just—staff is looking through their paper here to see if we've got stats on the number of complaints made. The Taxicab Board would have, because they're charged with managing the industry in the city, and I could probably get that information by the Taxicab Board in the absence of it here.

Page 11—okay, there is some—page 11 of the Estimates annual report 2014-15—sorry—the annual report 2014-15, page 11, I refer the member to. It is the reporting of the Taxicab Board; 2014-15 service volumes says that there were 77 complaints filed in 2014-15, which was decreased from 2013-14 which saw 123 complaints made. So, according to the information provided by the Taxicab Board, Madam Chair, in 2014-15, there were 77 complaints filed to the Taxicab Board. In 2013-14, the year previously, there were 123 complaints filed. And that's data provide by—provided by the Taxicab Board.

**Mr. Eichler:** How many were considered to be breaches of the regulation, Madam Chair?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Madam Chair, the Taxicab Board hasn't provided that information for the annual report 2014-15, but I can take it under advisement and try and provide the information to the member at a future date.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Eichler:** I thank the minister for that.

In 2009, the department commissioned the Winnipeg Taxi Study that was undertaken by Tennessee Transportation and Logistics Foundation. The study noted several concerns, including lack of capacity, public perception that the service was lousy, the status quo alternative is not really viable alternative to the Manitoba Taxicab Board.

So we'd like to see what has been done on that and the manner of which the department's going to be addressing these concerns once the study was completed. Obviously, back in 2009 was when it was commissioned. So we'd like an update on that, please.

**Mr. Caldwell:** A couple of points in relation to the 2009 work that was done. There have been a number

of changes that were followed up. It was first went to that date, the increase in number of accessible transit—taxis and vans across the system emerged from that exercise. We've been pretty aggressive on that, as a matter of fact, in terms of providing increased handicapped accessible, seniors find the service invaluable and, of course, those who have a wide—those who are afflicted by a wide range of disabilities in terms of mobility have benefited from that expansion.

Also, and I think this is the most important thing in the context of today, is virtually at the point of conclusion of that study, new technologies began to emerge around transport and networking companies. And we're in the middle of the throes of that, both nationally, not yet locally but nationally and internationally, in terms of transportation networking companies or the—kind of the misnamed rideshare, which is more ride selling, such as Uber. So—which—they're expanding rapidly around the globe.

We are embarking upon a fairly significant consultation, in fact, probably the most significant consultation in this industry since the departure of the horse cabs, in terms of engaging the industry, the taxicab industry, the hospitality industry, the hotel—restaurant associations, the Chamber of Commerce, business sector.

I dare say the member, I urge him to participate as well and citizens more broadly in the city to define how the taxi industry or the transportation and private transportation sector is going to look in the years ahead. We know that just from the global landscape, and I really do mean global landscape, that the traditional forms of taxicab—the taxicab industry, the traditional forms under which it's operated is changing very dramatically right now internationally and that it's going to have real impacts, both positive and negative because with change, you know, there are positive and negative impacts as we go through periods of change. But there—this year, this fall and into winter, the largest, I think, undertaking in terms of engaging the public on the taxicab industry will be taking place in this province. I hope to get, and we all hope, I think, collectively, in the city, to get a consensus on how best to manage the new environment that is confronting what has been a fairly traditional environment, as I said, since the day of the old horse cabs.

So we did make some—there were some changes that emerged out of the 2009 exercise, primarily

related to increasing the number of handicapped-accessible cabs and vans. But it's really been superseded by more recent developments around Internet technology and the use of apps for ride selling between a client and an individual contractor who may work or may not work for an international corporation. This is—this evolves. Sound reasonable?

**Mr. Eichler:** Just to follow up on the minister's comment. In particular with people that are handicapped or disabled, I know I've had a number of calls, and, of course, you know, it's hard to get an exact number, but I do know that I've had several calls with people's wait times, in particular, for people wheelchair-bound and handicapped. And I would suggest to the minister or his department that, you know, that's a concern that's been brought forward to me, and I would urge the minister and his department to certainly have a look at that. I don't have hard data. I don't have the expertise, the staff, to follow up on that, but it's certainly something, I think, that we need to be working towards.

In the essence of time, I do want to move over to the PST. How much PST was collected from municipalities in 2014, and will any of that money be rebated back to the municipalities?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I do appreciate the member's comment, the critic's comment about handicapped-accessible cabs and vans. We do have an aging population in many of our communities, and I know that that service is well appreciated and I also know that service has got stressed in terms of its capacity to deliver as quickly as folks would like.

In regard to the question about PST, we do not track specifically what municipalities are paying. It—we don't track specifically, I don't think, what any sector's paying in terms of PST. But I can tell you—or tell the member—[interjection] Thank you. I can tell the member, Madam Chair, that through the Building Manitoba Fund, we will invest one seventh of the provincial sales tax in municipal infrastructure and transit priorities, and in 2015-16, this means that Manitoba municipalities will receive \$324.5 million, which is an increase of \$11 million from last year.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Eichler:** On conservation districts, Madam Chair, I know there's been some budget cuts to conservation districts. What is the Province's plans in assisting those conservation districts and the work that they do? How do you see that rolling out since the cuts have come into place and enabling them to

be able to carry on the best they can in order—because they do a lot of good work, as we all know, and I would like the minister to comment on that, please.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Well I—thank you; I do agree with the member. Conservation districts do very good work across the province, but I have to defer to my colleague the Minister of Conservation to respond to it. I don't have that within my bailiwick.

**Mr. Eichler:** Thank you. We'll move on.

Rural airports: As we know in rural Manitoba, we've had a number of health services that we haven't been able to receive, so rural airports are really important to us in rural Manitoba, and the funding has not changed for several years.

Is there—is the department looking at assisting those rural airports, and if so, how, and when will that be coming into effect?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I—the municipal airports are in the bailiwick of MIT, so again the department wouldn't have any of that information, but MIT would be able to provide it.

**Mr. Eichler:** I'll make this my last question, so the member from River Heights and—I do want to, before I sign off, thank the staff and I know we have a good relationship, and I may come back after—off the record trying to get some more information so—but I do want to talk about Dutch elm disease, which is a growing problem and concern not just with the city of Winnipeg, but right across the province.

And now that the municipalities are more involved in taking those out, has the Province considered to hiring private contractors to manage Dutch elm disease within Manitoba? Would that be something that the department would be looking at?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I—it's a bit of a—it's a trifecta here, I'm afraid that Conservation is responsible for the line item—for Dutch elm disease, so I can't help the member with that either, I'm sorry.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question to the minister—first question deals with some concerns in relationship to The Forks which is, or should be, one of the premier destinations for tourists in Manitoba.

The—there have been, actually for a number of years, some concerns over leaks in the roof of The Forks, concerns which are sufficient—some of the

businesses have told me that there are, occasionally, water dripping down on them, that The Forks has to bring out buckets on a fairly frequent basis when there's a heavy downpour, and I just wondered whether the minister was aware of this situation, and what—when obviously in conjunction with The Forks North Portage corporation, what the plans were to address this.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I do, like many Manitobans, enjoy The Forks in all four seasons that we have in the province of Manitoba. I'm looking forward to getting on the ice and skating the longest trails in North America again this winter. I'm hopeful of—it depends on how the ice freezes on the Red and the Assiniboine.

And I do appreciate the—I was sitting, in fact, at The Forks this Canada Day weekend, and I was sitting, watching—facing into Saint Boniface from the skate park, watching young people do amazing skateboard feats. And, as I scanned the horizon from the north to the south from where I was sitting, the entire cityscape, the entire cityscape, everything in my field of vision from the north, where the human rights museum now rises, through the skate park that that was before, and to the hotel—Inn at the Forks to my south—that entire horizon did not exist when I was elected in 1999. That entire cityscape did not exist when I became—when I was elected—first elected as an MLA. And I marvelled at that.

There were several hundred people—there were several thousand, actually, people—at The Forks that night enjoying a beautiful evening, and I marvelled at the transformation that has taken place, the profound transformation that has taken place at The Forks in the city of Winnipeg, and across this province as a consequence of the investments, year after year, that this government has been making in the city of Winnipeg and in communities throughout our province. And the evidence of that was before me. Physical evidence of it in the infrastructure that was before me, and human evidence of it in the enjoyment that was being had by the families, young and old, the kids in the skate plaza, myself enjoying the evening; that investment has had a meaningful and long-lasting, positive impact on the city of Winnipeg.

And, that investment—to a penny—has been opposed by members opposite. I appreciate the member bringing casework in here about the leaking roof at The Forks. I appreciate that. If there is casework in that regard, I'm more than happy to

introduce the member to the—those folks who manage The Forks marketplace and we can work together to address the leaking roof that the member alleges here and there with water under it. I know I do see, from time to time, even in my own house in Brandon, and in Winnipeg, I regret to say, sometimes do get leaking roofs. They get—you have a weather event, the water gets under the shingles and it drops into my top floor of both the houses in the member's constituency in River Heights, where I live in Winnipeg, and in my own home in Brandon where I'm the MLA. So I do know that, from time to time, in our homes, and in commercial businesses and, apparently, at The Forks that there does have occasion—there is occasion for water to get in.

But I'm happy to assist the member with this casework, and I would be happy to, as I say, connect him with folks at The Forks to have a discussion about his allegations.

**Mr. Gerrard:** It is, of course—the minister is the one who is responsible, who has the duty to provide, you know, oversight where there are concerns. And, you know, I would appreciate the minister having a look into this situation and following up.

\* (16:50)

The—one of the things that the government has—the government has brought in is changes so that there would be more turnover of boards. And, in another, I think, Estimates session I had inquired as to whether these changes would be applicable not just to legislated boards, but to other boards where the Province had appointees, and I was told that was the case.

And so I would ask the minister: What is his, you know, timeline for looking at the board appointees and whether he's going to make any changes which would be in compliance with the general approach that the Province is taking to board appointments?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know that there's several hundred boards and agencies across the province of Manitoba. I know that not only in my department—I don't have that many boards in my department, frankly. There are a few, but there's not that many compared to regional health authorities, which is under Health, or other—Culture has a number of boards. I mean, there—Education has a number of boards with the colleges and universities. There's not that many in my particular department; there are a few.

But I can say in broad strokes that there are several hundred boards in the province of—boards and agencies in the province of Manitoba, that it is literally a daily exercise in terms of engaging Manitobans to serve on—doing public service on boards throughout the province. It's an ongoing exercise. It has been such for decades, again, predating my life on this planet, that the Province of Manitoba appoints members of the public to boards and commissions, again, at universities, health—regional health centres, at colleges. It's something that engages every minister's office in terms of canvassing and engaging citizens to serve on boards.

I can commit to the member that we will continue to engage and seek Manitobans' input on boards and to encourage Manitobans to dedicate themselves to public service by serving on boards. And I have to say again, in my time as a public elected official, which is almost a quarter of a century now, I've been nothing if not absolutely impressed at the level of public service that Manitobans demonstrate daily in their lives, and I know that the commitment of Manitobans to this province is great, and I know that those who give of their time to serve on the innumerable boards and commissions and agencies that the province has throughout Manitoba is really inspiring.

Several—as I said, there's several hundred boards, I think roughly in the neighbourhood of three to four hundred boards and agencies and commissions that pass their way or wind their way through this Legislature. There's several hundred more at the municipal level of government, and there's probably several—there's several hundred more in that in terms of the non-profit sector, which means tens of thousands of Manitobans are literally doing public service on boards and commissions.

It's an active and dynamic part of every minister's job to, as I say, encourage participation of citizens on boards, and, again, I'm very grateful for the active participation of Manitobans on boards that I'm responsible for, and I'm—I hope that does answer the member's question. We are always engaged in encouraging more participation and encouraging Manitobans to participate broadly in building this province.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I know we've got pretty limited time left, so if the minister either doesn't have the available or wants to send me a letter with the information afterwards, that would be fine.

This has to do with—there's a provincial tourism centre at The Forks which is quite important for giving people information about tourism in the province. There—that tourism centre was under construction for—I think it was something more than two years. As things were turning around, there was an alternate site there which was filled temporarily, but I just wondered if the minister could provide an explanation for why the construction took more than two years.

**Mr. Caldwell:** It's the same as the last three questions of the critic from the official opposition. It's—this—it's—the tourism centre is not under Municipal Government authority. I'm not, frankly, sure if it's under Tourism's authority or not. I think Travel Manitoba—I think it may be under an agency's authority. I don't want to speculate, but it's certainly not under Municipal Government.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. Given the time, that's the end of my questions, and I thank the minister.

**Madam Chairperson:** I thank the member.

Seeing no further questions, we'll move to resolutions.

Resolution 13.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$30,785,000 for Municipal Government, Community Planning and Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,971,000 for Municipal Government, Infrastructure and Municipal Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$382,848,000 for Municipal Government, Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 13.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,844,000 for Municipal Government, Energy Division, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 13.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 13.1.

The floor is opened for questions.

Seeing none, we will move to that resolution.

Resolution 13.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,385,000 for Municipal Government, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2016.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This ends the consideration of Estimates for the Department of Municipal Government.

Given that we are approaching 5 o'clock, I suggest we just take a brief recess. [*Agreed*]

*The committee recessed at 4:58 p.m.*

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*The committee resumed at 4:59 p.m.*

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

Call in the Speaker.

**IN SESSION**

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

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