

Second Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| AGLUGUB, Cris | The Maples | N.D.P. |
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon. | St. Vital | N.D.P. |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | N.D.P. |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon. | Thompson | N.D.P. |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon. | Gimli | N.D.P. |
| BRICK, Marilyn | St. Norbert | N.D.P. |
| CALDWELL, Drew | Brandon East | N.D.P. |
| CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon. | Kildonan | N.D.P. |
| CUMMINGS, Glen | Ste. Rose | P.C. |
| DERKACH, Leonard | Russell | P.C. |
| DEWAR, Gregory | Selkirk | N.D.P. |
| DOER, Gary, Hon. | Concordia | N.D.P. |
| DRIEDGER, Myrna | Charleswood | P.C. |
| DYCK, Peter | Pembina | P.C. |
| EICHLER, Ralph | Lakeside | P.C. |
| FAURSCHOU, David | Portage la Prairie | P.C. |
| GERRARD, Jon, Hon. | River Heights | Lib. |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin | Steinbach | P.C. |
| HAWRANIK, Gerald | Lac du Bonnet | P.C. |
| HICKES, George, Hon. | Point Douglas | N.D.P. |
| IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri | Fort Garry | N.D.P. |
| JENNISSEN, Gerard | Flin Flon | N.D.P. |
| JHA, Bidhu | Radisson | N.D.P. |
| KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie | St. James | N.D.P. |
| LAMOUREUX, Kevin | Inkster | Lib. |
| LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon. | The Pas | N.D.P. |
| LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon. | La Verendrye | N.D.P. |
| LOEWEN, John | Fort Whyte | P.C. |
| MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon. | St. Johns | N.D.P. |
| MAGUIRE, Larry | Arthur-Virden | P.C. |
| MALOWAY, Jim | Elmwood | N.D.P. |
| MARTINDALE, Doug | Burrows | N.D.P. |
| McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon. | Lord Roberts | N.D.P. |
| MELNICK, Christine, Hon. | Riel | N.D.P. |
| MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon. | Minto | N.D.P. |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie | River East | P.C. |
| MURRAY, Stuart | Kirkfield Park | P.C. |
| NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom | Interlake | N.D.P. |
| OSWALD, Theresa | Seine River | N.D.P. |
| PENNER, Jack | Emerson | P.C. |
| REID, Daryl | Transcona | N.D.P. |
| REIMER, Jack | Southdale | P.C. |
| ROBINSON, Eric, Hon. | Rupertsland | N.D.P. |
| ROCAN, Denis | Carman | P.C. |
| RONDEAU, Jim, Hon. | Assiniboia | N.D.P. |
| ROWAT, Leanne | Minnedosa | P.C. |
| SALE, Tim, Hon. | Fort Rouge | N.D.P. |
| SANTOS, Conrad | Wellington | N.D.P. |
| SCHELLENBERG, Harry | Rossmere | N.D.P. |
| SCHULER, Ron | Springfield | P.C. |
| SELINGER, Greg, Hon. | St. Boniface | N.D.P. |
| SMITH, Scott, Hon. | Brandon West | N.D.P. |
| STEFANSON, Heather | Tuxedo | P.C. |
| STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon. | Dauphin-Roblin | N.D.P. |
| TAILLIEU, Mavis | Morris | P.C. |
| TWEED, Mervin | Turtle Mountain | P.C. |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon. | Swan River | N.D.P. |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 17, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, Volumes 38A, 38B are there for the members. Volume 38C will be delivered in about an hour.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 32

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Rural highways are part of the mandate of the Province of Manitoba.

Under a previous commitment, the Province of Manitoba would be covering the costs of four-laning that portion of Highway 32 that runs through Winkler, Manitoba.

The Department of Transportation and Government Services has altered its position and will now undertake the project only if the City of Winkler will pay half of the total cost of construction. The provincial government's offloading of its previous commitment will cost the City of Winkler several million dollars.

The City of Winkler has now been informed that it will have to wait several years before this project could be undertaken.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider honouring the previous commitment and complete the four-laning of Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, absorbing all costs related to the construction as previously agreed.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Government Services for the construction of rural highways.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the significant and strategic importance of the completion of four-laning Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, especially as it relates to the economic growth and the development of the city of Winkler and its trading area.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the valuable contribution of the city of Winkler and its trading area to the provincial economy and reprioritize the four-laning of Highway 32 for the 2004 construction season.

Signed by Bill Braun, Ben Hildebrand, Garry Spent and others.

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

Proposed PLA–Floodway

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Under the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway, the Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) which will require all floodway workers to pay union dues and which may require all non-unionized companies and workers to join a union.

This Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has publicly stated a project labour agreement would automatically require all floodway workers to pay union dues, even if they are not part of a union.

Forcing all floodway workers to pay union dues may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

* (13:35)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his government's plan to force all workers involved in the floodway expansion to pay union dues even if they are not part of a union.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ensuring any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by George Bell, Robert Matias, Judy Matias and others.

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by C. Squez, Frank Garrido and Teresita Reyes.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition:

These are the reasons for this petition:

Alzheimer's is a debilitating disease.

Cholinesterase inhibitors are known to slow or even prevent the progression of Alzheimer's.

The provincial government asked for the development of an Alzheimer's strategy in 2000 and was presented with nine recommendations in 2002, none of which has yet been implemented.

In the absence of a provincial Alzheimer's strategy, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority put in place a policy in November 2003 whereby Alzheimer's patients entering personal care homes are being weaned from certain Alzheimer medications in a move that the WRHA's vice-president of long-term care has referred to as a financial necessity.

The administrative costs of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have more than tripled since 1999, to a total of more than \$16 million a year.

In a move that amounts to two-tier medicine, the families of Alzheimer's sufferers in personal care homes may request that the drugs continue to be delivered at the family's expense.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to ensure that his attempts to balance his

department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of seniors and other vulnerable Manitobans suffering from this debilitating disease.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider reversing his decision to deny Alzheimer's patients in personal care homes access to certain medications.

To request the Minister of Health to consider implementing a provincial Alzheimer's strategy.

Signed by Cherry Morand, Brent Pilch, W. Czmola and others.

Proposed PLA–Floodway

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the

Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

* (13:40)

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed Jake Reimer, Norma Lavallee, R. D. Young and others, Mr. Speaker.

Highway 227

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of highways 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure the safety of all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of Ross McRae, Donald McRae and Marie Slocombe.

Proposed PLA—Floodway

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has tabled legislation in the Legislature that may result in the \$660-million expansion of the Red River Floodway by the summer of 2005.

The Premier of Manitoba plans to subject all work related to the project to a Project Labour Agreement (PLA).

The proposed PLA would force all employees on the project to belong to a union.

Approximately 95 percent of heavy construction companies in Manitoba are currently non-unionized.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has indicated that the forced unionization of all

employees may increase the costs of the project by \$65 million.

The chair of B.C.'s 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce has stated, "Major industrial projects built under project labour agreements from the energy sector in Alberta to off-shore development on the East Coast have repeatedly incurred cost overruns, labour disruptions and delays."

Organizations including the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and the Canadian Construction Association have publicly opposed the Premier's plan to turn the floodway expansion project into a union-only worksite.

Manitobans deserve an open and fair competition that protects taxpayers from unnecessary costs and respects workers' democratic choice.

Manitobans support the right of any company, both union and non-union, to participate in the expansion of the Red River Floodway.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending his government's forced unionization plan of companies involved with the Red River Floodway expansion.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider entering into discussions with business, construction and labour groups to ensure any qualified company and worker, regardless of their union status, is afforded the opportunity to bid and work on the floodway expansion project.

Signed by Glenn Rost, T. Friesen, Stan Unrau and others.

Pharmacare

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition and these are the reasons for this petition:

Pharmacare is a drug benefit program for any Manitoban, regardless of age, whose income is seriously affected by high prescription drug costs.

Under the Doer government, Pharmacare deductibles have been increased by five percent each year for the last three years. As a result of the 15% hike in Pharmacare deductibles, individuals are facing increased costs ranging from \$36 to \$660 a year. Seniors, fixed- and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively impacted by these increases.

* (13:45)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in Budget 2004,

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and direct those savings into sustaining Pharmacare.

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to consider re-evaluating his government's priorities and to consider suspending his government's plans to spend \$100 million on new VLTs at a time when seniors and fixed-income Manitobans cannot afford medication.

It is signed by Edith Capri, Miranda Ward, Louise Adams and others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Sport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2004-2005 Departmental Estimates for Sport.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Kris Van de Spiegle and Sigrid DeGroot who are from Belgium. These visitors are participating in a study tour of Canada and they are the guests of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gaming Policy Casino Expansion

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, even though he was vehemently opposed to gambling when he was opposition leader, this Premier has expanded gambling by establishing new casinos and increasing the hours of operation. He did all of this despite his previous opposition to gambling and despite the fact that in 1999 Manitoba Lotteries said our province had reached its saturation point. Can the Premier tell us if he will be adding more casinos to Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite, when he quotes 1999, will understand we made certain commitments in the '99 election. We made further commitments in the 2003 election which, by the way, were debated about a year ago today in the communities across Manitoba. We know that the level of revenue in this year's budget, the 2004-05 budget, is on a percentage basis below that which we came into power to receive.

Mr. Murray: Under this Premier's watch, when it comes to gambling machines and facilities, Manitoba has long since surpassed its saturation point. The province has the worst gambling addiction in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Despite that, we have learned that the Premier now has his Gaming Minister, the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) examining whether a political or business case can be made for expanding gambling in Manitoba, not just Aboriginal casinos, but more government-owned and operated casinos.

Casinos and gambling, Mr. Speaker, is not a long-term economic strategy. Will this Premier recognize that and will he put an end to his gambling expansion and get to work on putting in a long-term economic strategy that creates permanent jobs here in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: We do have permanent jobs in Manitoba. We have an average of 6000 more jobs per year under this administration than under the members opposite. Perhaps he might want to ask the member to his left who, when she brought in VLTs for the salvation of rural communities and then ultimately into Winnipeg, stated that this was a free choice for individuals to make.

We have actually put in policies on responsible gaming to try to deal with some of the issues, legitimate issues of choices that people make. Having said that in 1999, well, in fact in 1996, I was critical of members opposite expanding, in '97. I was critical of members opposite expanding the two casinos in Winnipeg, considerable amount of investment.

They said it was \$55 million. Boy, were we ever surprised later on when we had an auditor's report, and it was almost triple that in terms of costs to the public. We will not be having any more government casinos. The only issues that we are dealing with now are the issues that were contained within the Bostrom Report.

* (13:50)

Mr. Murray: I think that the issues that the Premier should be dealing with are the issues that were so near and dear to him when he was in opposition, that gaming was the crack cocaine for society. Those were the words that he said. Now he is double-dealing to Manitobans. That is his problem.

We understand that the Premier has asked his Minister of Gaming, the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) and it was asked by the *Brandon Sun*, Mr. Speaker, if the Doer government had any plans to expand gambling by building new casinos on its own or with First Nations. The Gaming Minister, the honourable Member for Fort Rouge stated, and I quote: "That is too far in the future for me to guess on at this point." That is what he said.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has already built new casinos and he has expanded the gaming hours in those casinos that are current. The result is that Manitoba has become home to the gambling addiction problem here in the entire country of Canada. I know any economic strategy from the NDP is a gamble, but clearly more gaming and VLTs in Manitoba is hardly an economic strategy. Will the Premier do the right thing, put a hold to any more gaming casinos in the province of Manitoba and build a long-term economic strategy?

Mr. Doer: Well, when members opposite came into office in 1988, the revenues—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —from gaming I believe were in the \$40-million range, Mr. Speaker. Subsequent to that there was an announcement made in the early nineties to save rural economic development from the Conservatives, to put VLTs in rural hotels. There was the opening of the Fort Garry Hotel casino, the affairs of which we are still cleaning up in government. There was the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I can understand some of the members' sensitivity as I go through this history. I have their press releases year after year, Mr. Speaker.

The expansion of VLTs took place in the early 1990s in the city of Winnipeg. The creation of two new casinos took place in the McPhillips Street Station and in the Regent Avenue casino. The expansion of those casinos took place with misinformation to the public after the '95 election. The statement made on VLTs was made by one Larry Desjardin. In the 1995 election, my commitments are on the record in terms of gaming—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only change that has taken place is that the percentage of revenue from gaming from where it was in the change of government has been reduced from about 3.5 percent or 3.4 percent to 3 percent under this administration.

* (13:55)

Gaming Policy Social Costs

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, in December of last year, the government announced that it would be spending taxpayers' dollars to determine the feasibility of further casino development.

Last week, the Minister of Gaming stated that the request would soon go out to examine whether a political or business case could be made for building yet another casino in the province, possibly in Brandon, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Gaming indicate why he is studying the business case for a new casino before he has bothered to study the social impact of the current level of gaming in the province?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, there was no responsible gaming policy in the previous administration. The enormous expansion of gaming that took place under that administration took place without any assessment of impacts, without any consultation with the people of Manitoba, without any involvement with the communities in which the huge casinos were built, without talking to anyone, residents or anyone else.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are pleased that our Ministry of Gaming and our government has put more money, more resources, more energy and, with the new equipment going into casinos, more ability to monitor gaming, to tell people how long they have been at machines, to give them information to manage their gaming in a responsible way.

We have more than doubled our spending on responsible gaming. They had no policy. Our government has a strong policy on responsible gaming, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I was not asking the minister if they would be monitoring people already sitting at VLTs. We are asking what the social cost of gaming is in this province. The Minister of Gaming has said that he will be spending taxpayers' dollars to study the possibility of placing another casino in Manitoba. Given the government's need to addict more Manitobans to gambling to pay for its already spending addiction, the likely outcome of this report is hardly a thriller. Manitobans already know that there is enough gambling in the province.

Will the Minister responsible for Gaming today cancel his plans to study the expansion of gambling and put that money into public hearings and a public

review of the social impact of gaming in the province?

Mr. Sale: In June of 1993, the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) said ultimately people choose whether or not they are going to spend their disposable income on gambling or smoking or drinking. People do ultimately make those decisions. No one is forcing any Manitoban to gamble in any way, Mr. Speaker.

No policy on responsible gaming, Mr. Speaker, education for our labour force in the casinos, messages on the screens, advertising, a great expansion of treatment resources, increased funding to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba through our Health Minister, we are very concerned about the social impacts of gaming which is why the Gaming Control Commission has a number of studies under way all the time on this issue. We are confident that we have a strong policy on responsible gaming. They had no policy whatsoever.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the minister to the year 2004. Last week was Suicide Awareness Week in Canada. Other jurisdictions have heard reports of the human toll of gambling, yet the Minister responsible for Gaming spends money on studying the potential to expand gambling but nothing about the human costs of gambling.

Mr. Speaker, we all have heard about the revenue from gambling but we have heard very little about the socio-economic or the social impacts. Why will the Minister of Gaming not commit to study the public impact of gaming and commit to public hearings so that all Manitobans can really understand what the cost of gambling is in the province?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, in 1997-98, there was \$966,000 going from Manitoba Lotteries to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba; this year \$1.9 million. In terms of the revenue responsibility in this province, it has fallen from 3.5 percent of our total revenue to 3.09 percent of our total revenue.

We are less dependent on gaming today than we were when we formed government some years ago, Mr. Speaker, and we are proud of that. We are working every day at understanding the gaming issues more thoroughly, understanding how people can identify their own risks through appropriate

education and on-line advertising. We are very concerned about the social impacts of gaming.

That said, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that it is about 3 percent of the population that have a serious risk. We are very concerned about that 3 percent, but 95 percent of Manitobans use gaming responsibly.

* (14:00)

Gaming Addictions Suicide Rate

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): The minister as usual talks one line, but in reality he has cut the budget this year to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Their spending is going to be down. This province has the highest per capita gambling activity in all of Canada. We hear that studies on gambling-related suicides indicate that gambling addictions are a significant factor in as many as 10 percent of all suicides. This could mean that as many as 15 Manitobans take their own lives each year as a result of gambling-related addictions, yet this government refuses to report to this Legislature on how many individuals who commit suicide have gambling as a contributing factor, and they refuse to conduct any studies on the economic and social costs to this province.

I would ask the Minister of Health when he will table a report with the Legislature that indicates how many Manitobans who took their own lives gave some indication that gambling was a contributing factor.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the reality is between 1990 and 1999 that side of the House had absolutely no responsible gaming policy. In 2001 the MLC developed the first responsible gaming policy in North America. When you look at the current Manitoba prevalence rates, which are used by the industry across Canada and into North America, they are inaccurate in their assumptions. Manitoba, at 3.4, is in fact the lowest in all the five western provinces from Ontario to B.C. This side of the House has taken a responsible side to gaming. That side of the House did absolutely nothing.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the real numbers from Statistics Canada indicate that Manitoba is only

second to Alberta in the per capita spending on gambling, only second to Alberta and well ahead of most other provinces. This is the only province in Canada where the average family spends more money on gambling than they spend on Christmas. This government needs to be ashamed.

But the issue for the Minister of Health is why he is not following the recommendation that all coroners across Canada agreed to. They agreed, and I will quote from their report, that they wanted a report to the Legislature in every case where, "gambling was a potential or possible contributing stressor implying something that tipped the person over the edge."

This was suggested in 2003. I would simply like the Minister of Health to stand up and tell this House when he is going to table a report with this Legislature indicating where gambling was a contributing factor in any suicide.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned by my colleagues, that side of the House had a responsible gaming policy that went like this, from the member just opposite from River Heights there, "Ultimately people choose whether or not they are going to spend their disposable income on gaming or smoking or drinking. People do ultimately make those decisions and no one is forcing them to do that."

Mr. Speaker, in 2001 this side of the House took gaming and the responsibility of gaming very much to mind. Responsible gaming increases year over year. Just from last year we have seen an increase of 24 percent in money for AFM and in fact since 1999, 77 percent. The member uses out-of-date material. We use up-to-date material. It is used by all the gaming industry right across North America. In fact, at 3.4, it is the lowest out of the five provinces.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, this question is to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), and it is about providing this Legislature and the people of Manitoba with information on how many people who take their own lives identify gambling as a contributing factor. Every coroner across Canada has agreed that this is valuable information for the public and for legislatures to have.

I would simply ask the Minister of Health to stand up and tell this House and tell Manitobans

when he is going to abide by their unanimous recommendation to report information to legislatures that indicates how many people in Manitoba have taken their own lives where gambling was a contributing factor. When can we have that report?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that the members opposite during 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, had the largest expansion of gaming in the province of Manitoba, some 5300 VLT machines. As we moved on and they developed the largest expansion of gaming in Manitoba's, in fact the western provinces' history, they opened up two casinos with no responsible gaming policies at all.

This side of the House has developed one of the best gaming policies in all of North America. In fact, it was the first policy on gaming in North America in 2002. Working with professionals at AFM, we have been using information and, in fact, the technology that we have put into the new machines is the best in Canada on responsible gaming.

Education System Funding

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker,—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor. If other members wish to have questions or on that side wish to answer them, you will all have a turn.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this Premier attempts to justify the many program and service cuts that are in his recent budget, he claims that the province is in a financial crisis, that money is tight the Premier says. Interestingly, the same Premier, whose budget slashes health care services and provides an even smaller share of the overall costs of funding public education, has told the *Winnipeg Free Press* that he apparently now has an additional \$100 million for schools.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell this House, can he please tell all Manitoba students, parents and teachers when their schools will be receiving that \$100 million?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition asked a question and he has the right to hear the answer. I would appreciate the co-operation of all honourable members.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I believe it is on page 10 of the budget.

Mr. Murray: This Premier has said to the *Winnipeg Free Press* that he has been, quote, "studying plans that would eliminate most of the tax credits along with the special levy which would allow the province to provide an additional \$100 million directly to the school boards each year." Eliminating the education tax credit would cost property owners about \$175 million but eliminating the special levy, according to the most current numbers available in his own working group's Education Finance Report, would cost him \$334 million so he needs to find about \$160 million more. In the absence of a long-term strategy to create jobs and grow the economy—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the question. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please. I need to be able to hear the question in case there is a breach of a rule or a departure of our practices. Once again, I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of any sort of long-term economic strategy and jobs to grow the economy, can the Premier explain where he is going to find the additional \$160 million he will need to eliminate the special levy and where he is going to find the additional, according to what he said, \$100 million more he is supposedly going to give to schools? Is that why he wants to build more casinos?

Mr. Doer: Fact No. 1, the amount of money and the percentage of revenue coming from casinos in this budget is down from about the average of 3.5 percent dependency that was happening opposite. Fact No. 2—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you. Fact No. 2 is contained on page 10 of the budget. It is not that complicated. I would ask him to read the budget.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, what is interesting about what this Premier is saying is that he has told a reporter for the *Winnipeg Free Press* that he had an additional \$100 million to fund schools, an additional \$100 million.

We know that what Manitobans want is lower taxes and they want the provincial government to fund education properly, not 60 percent, not 70 percent, not 80 percent but 100 percent. That is what Manitobans want.

* (14:10)

Will this Premier scrap his plans to build more casinos and get to work on implementing a long-term economic strategy that creates real jobs, creates growth in the economy that will allow his government to properly fund education, rather than looking at casinos and VLTs as an economic strategy? Will he do the right thing?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, going from 3.5 percent or 3.4 percent of revenue dependency that we inherited down to just over 3 percent revenue requirements in this budget is a reduction in the amount of money coming, on a percentage basis, from lotteries, and it is an increase in the amount of money in revenues coming from the economy. Get those facts straight. Second fact. I know the members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Thank you. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, on page 10 of the budget, Manitoba's education property tax credit provides \$179 million. I digress and say \$56 million more than when we came into office, continuing on in assistance to homeowners and renters.

Next year we intend to transfer \$100 million in property tax credit directly to the school divisions. To ensure transparency of equity for homeowners from this transfer, there must be no reductions in benefits to individual recipients. This change will ensure accountability in provincial education funding.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is members opposite increased everybody's property taxes by \$75. By decreasing the property tax credit, we have lowered property taxes by \$150 by increasing the property tax credit \$56 million. That is also in the

budget in terms of where we are going into the future.

Education System Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand the Minister of Education says that there will be no announcements about education funding until the final report is released by the minister's Working Group on Education Finance at the end of June. He has repeatedly refused in this House to answer questions. Some two weeks ago, when we asked him questions about a preliminary report that came out from his own working group he kept saying, "Wait for the final report. Wait for the final report." On the other hand, yesterday the Premier announced \$100 million for education and in the same breath stated, "We are not just going to put more money in without making some changes."

Was the Minister of Education aware of this announcement, and why would the Premier make an announcement on education funding before the minister's working group finalizes its recommendation?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, as the First Minister has said, "it is in the budget on page 10," the reference to the fact that \$100 million in property tax credits will be applied directly to the school divisions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, in Estimates I asked this Minister of Education to explain what this \$100-million transfer was. He repeatedly told me in Estimates that \$100 million was nothing more than an administration, how it is going to be flowed. Yesterday the Premier announced \$100 million more for education. We were assured that it was just an administration. Is this a hundred million more for education? Does he understand his own Estimates books?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget on page 10 clearly articulates what we are intending on doing and secondly, the member opposite has lots of questions on the basis of

the incomplete amount of support to school divisions on it in terms of a percentage basis. At minimum, we might be able to make the member opposite more accountable in terms of what this government is spending on public education.

Mrs. Stefanson: This is unbelievable that the Premier does not even understand his own Estimates books. We were repeatedly told by the Minister of Education that was nothing more than administration, the way the money was going to flow. Now this Premier wants to get up and stand up and say that he is putting \$100 million more into education and try and take the credit for that.

That is absolutely unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Premier, the fourth Minister of Education, because the Minister of Education refuses to get up and answer any questions, I ask this Premier today, what does this mean. Is he putting \$100 million dollars more into education, or is this simply an administration, the way the money is going to be flowed into education?

Mr. Doer: Well, the member opposite herself on numerous occasions does not include the \$175 million that goes directly to taxpayers and directly to municipalities for education tax credits. She does not include that in support for education. At minimum we are increasing the accountability of the members opposite and increasing the transparency for all citizens of Manitoba, starting with the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Education System Funding

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, if the Premier was being totally honest with this House he would understand simply that the \$100 million in the budget has nothing to do with new money. It is simply a transfer of payments from one to the other. The Minister of Education told this House on May 4 that he believes the increase in property tax credit, as the Doer government promised to do in 1999, was the right way to go. A quote on May 4 from Hansard, he said, "Three consecutive years with respect to increasing the property tax credit. We are on the right track."

I would ask the minister today, does the minister still agree with that statement. Does he believe that increasing the property tax credit was a correct public policy to implement?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, what is the correct approach to take is affordable, sustainable, predictable funding of education, increasing funding every year as we promised five years in a row. We have increased it at the rate of economic growth. What is the appropriate policy is reducing the education support levy as we have promised to do and in three consecutive years we have been able to reduce the education support levy. What is appropriate is increasing the property tax credit and providing transparency around that property tax credit when members opposite reduced the property tax credit. We have increased that property tax credit.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the Minister of Education still believes it is good public policy. I would question the Premier why he does not because we saw from him, and I quote again, "the Premier said he has been studying plans that would eliminate most of the tax credits along with the special levy." The fact is he thinks this would provide an extra \$100 million to school divisions.

Will the Premier just stand up today then and simply advise the people of Manitoba, and those people dealing with their underfunding of education, that he is not going to tamper with the property tax credits that he has raised in the last three years? Is he going to leave them the way he is? Will he just stand up and confirm that today?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the amount of money being transferred to the school divisions is consistent with page 1, or page 10, of the budget. The amount of money available to transfer to property tax owners and make that money transparent, rather than a \$44-million amount, it is \$100 million because we have added \$56 million more than what the Conservatives had when we came into office.

The second issue of funding is the whole issue of what we are funding on an annual basis, what we promised in '99, what we are delivering on an annual basis in the area of education support. We are funding at the rate of growth of the economy, as we promised, not the bad old days of cutting back on that amount.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the \$175 million, \$100 million of which is not included in the analysis or so-called analysis conducted by members opposite when they try to comment on the education support. This will help them.

* (14:20)

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, we are also keeping our promise on reducing a second tax on education. Members opposite left a \$96-million ESL on education. We are consistently and each year reducing that ESL.

The fifth issue, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of portioning. The members opposite increased the portioning on farmland for education. We have decreased the portioning on farmland saving farmers \$7 million.

The sixth issue is going to be market value, which of course will come in in late '05 to deal with the '06 year.

Mr. Loewen: Well, it was a fairly simple question. I mean, with due respect, the answer should be fairly simple too. You are either going to leave the property tax credit at \$400 or you are going to reduce it to provide what you call an additional, and I remind the Premier he is saying an additional \$100 million, not what he has in the budget, because that is not additional. That is just a transfer from one department to another.

He is talking about an additional \$100-million worth of funding to schools. Is he going to provide that additional \$100 million by reducing the property tax credit or can he or the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) stand up today and tell Manitobans that they are not going to reduce the property tax credit to find the supposed extra \$100 million? Is it going to remain at \$400? Just simply tell us the answer.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I refer the member opposite to page 10 in the budget.

Red River Floodway Expansion Protected Communities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Liberals support the expansion of the Red River Floodway. For example, we are concerned about recent reports which show different levels of flood protection for different communities in the Red

River Valley. With the floodway expansion, Emerson, St. Jean Baptiste, St-Pierre-Jolys, Morris and Winnipeg will be protected from a one-in-seven-hundred-year flood.

Grande Pointe, St. Adolphe, Niverville and Ste. Agathe will not be protected from such a flood. Is the Premier going to establish a double standard where some Red River Valley communities are protected from a one-in-seven-hundred-year flood and others are not protected?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the first community we should be talking about in Manitoba probably is the Peguis First Nation, and we are quite concerned that they have even less protection than any other community in Manitoba. Hopefully, we can get an agreement with the federal government to deal in a more equitable way with the conditions in the Fisher River.

I would say that people living in and around the Fisher River and the Peguis First Nation, a First Nation I might say, Mr. Speaker, that was established with people from the Red River Valley living in and around the Red River and Lake Winnipeg being sent into a reserve on the Fisher River and still today we would argue not adequately protected in that community. I would hope the member opposite is looking at the priorities on the basis of need.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of flood protection, there is no question that it was decisions made by former Minister Axworthy and former Premier Filmon, an announcement that was made in Room 254 in the Legislative Building dealing with floodproofing, I think it was in the election. In fact, I think the member opposite was still in Cabinet, if I am not mistaken.

There were a number of decisions made in May of 1997, after the great throwing of the sandbag of the same period. I expect that those decisions were cleared through Cabinet [*interjection*]. No, we were not in government at the time. There was a lower level of protection. I will be accountable for the decisions we have made in government and, certainly, it is a lot different than the decisions the member opposite made.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am concerned about Peguis and the Fisher River. In fact, I raised it earlier on.

But my question today deals with the Red River Valley. I have a concern, and Liberals have a concern, that the NDP government, of which you are a part, is setting a double standard. Recent reports show that, under the floodway expansion and the construction which is planned, there are no plans to protect Grande Point, St. Adolph, Niverville and Ste. Agathe from a one-in-seven-hundred-year flood while Emerson, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Pierre-Jolys, Morris and Winnipeg will all be protected from a one-in-seven-hundred-year flood.

I ask the Premier why is the Premier setting a double standard for flood protection for communities in the Red River valley.

Mr. Doer: A number of those decisions were made by the former Liberal government, in which he was a partner, and the former government. Subsequent to that, the IJC reported and recommended that Winnipeg and the Capital Region of Winnipeg, it is not just Winnipeg, I might point out, proceed to a one-in-seven-hundred-year protection. At the committee two years ago we talked about this challenge, and we also talked about the whole issue of the fact that there is an investment today. It is the only money today, the \$240 million, by the way, that has been approved by the federal government and the provincial government to date, that deals with one-in-two-hundred and I think it is eighty years, which is consistent with the flood of 1812 and its impact on the city of Winnipeg.

There is no question individual farm houses have been protected to one-in-one-hundred years in 1997, 1998, 1999. Some communities are protected to one-in-one-hundred years, some protected to one-in-two-hundred-and-fifty years, Winnipeg now is one-in-ninety years. There is no question that this will provide for one-in-two-hundred-and-fifty-year protection. As different reports come out, there are different levels of protection in Manitoba, starting with the decisions that were made and announced in May of 1997.

Gaming Policy Gilbert Park Housing Complex

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier and it is in regard to Gilbert Park. Gilbert Park is one of the largest, if not the largest, non-profit housing complex in the province of Manitoba. What we have seen at Gilbert

Park over the years is an ongoing deterioration ever since this government has taken office. It was moving towards tenant management and this government has chosen, for whatever reason, to abandon that concept. But today I was provided a copy where this gaming policy in which a minister says the best gaming policy in North America is now going to be allowing for legal gambling or bingo on a monthly basis in Gilbert Park. It is also going to allow for break-open lottery. I find that what the government is doing in the Gilbert Park area is not in the best interest of the people that live in Gilbert Park.

My question put quite simply to this government is: When is it going to start helping people that live in the Gilbert Park area as opposed to trying to keep them down?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, any group of residents in any housing development, public or private, has the right to apply for licences to conduct either a one-time or an ongoing form of bingo. All of those licences are applied for through the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, who examine the premises, who decide whether it can be licensed or not, who ensure that the bingo paper that is used is legal, who ensure that the operators are trained, who ensure that the money goes for the intended purposes.

Is the member saying that some people who live in some places should be ineligible for the same thing that other people in Manitoba are eligible for? What kind of public policy would that be?

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

École Crane

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise before the House today to speak about École Crane school grounds transformation project. By beginning in their own backyard, these students, teachers and volunteers are working to make our community a better and more sustainable place. I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication and for helping to make our community diverse and environmentally aware.

These hardworking and conscientious students and their teachers began working to transform the school grounds in 1997 into a clean and natural place for humans, plants and animals. Since this project began, they have introduced many natural features such as native shrubs, trees and wildflowers, which help to make this an environment for all species of birds and insects. In the fall of 2002, they built a fence in the courtyard adjacent to the kindergarten classroom. In the spring of 1997, they established perennial beds and, in 2003, they built seating, began gravel pathways, installed shrubs, perennials and a playhouse.

The school ground transformation committee consisting of 19 members was established with a mandate to design a school yard that was ecologically sound and would enhance learning and recreational opportunities for students and staff. This committee has been working hard by volunteering and fundraising to raise the money for their projects. They have also involved students in the planning, designing, implementation and maintenance.

The committee believes that it is important to manage the school grounds in a way that will instill an appreciation for nature and the environment. The goal is to provide a public good for the community while also supplying an important educational asset for the neighbourhood children. I would like to thank the committee, the parents, the volunteers, principal Elizabeth Bennett and the students of École Crane for their dedication. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Doug Manness

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on the record about a constituent of mine, Mr. Doug Manness, of Springstein. Mr. Manness is a crafter of fishing lures that are just as much for collectors as they are for fishing. He has been making his own fishing lures for over 30 years, whittled from the branches of willow, maple, elm, poplar and caragana.

Each of them is carefully hand painted. Some are painted blue and pink with light reflectors to look like scales, some have tiger stripes and one even has a maple leaf painted on it. If you are a collector, these lovely lures could be found at Sage Pelican Gallery in Lockport and Richard House next to

Medicine Rock Cafe in St. François Xavier. His company is Water Wolf Lures and his shop is located in Oak Bluff. At one time, people had to make their own fishing lures. It was not until 1910 mass manufacturing of fishing lures began.

Manitoba's fishing season started Saturday, May 15 in southern Manitoba and will start next week in northern Manitoba. Almost one in five Manitobans fish every year and will catch, on average, 14 million fish, but they will throw back about 11 million of these caught fish. Manitoba has the largest catch-and-release rate in Canada, of 76 percent.

Fishing brings 30 000 non-Canadians and about 7000 Canadians from outside Manitoba to the province each year and contributes \$120 million to the economy. I would like to congratulate Mr. Manness on his finely crafted hand fishing lures and wish him and 37 000 other people, happy fishing this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

River East Transcona Community Schools

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I was very glad to attend a meeting of the River East Transcona Community Schools Initiative that featured the premiere of the recently produced video, *Making a Difference*. The video highlights the many program successes of the Community Schools Initiative, a project in the River East Transcona area.

Our government has introduced Healthy Child Manitoba funding programs that enable seven schools in the River East Transcona School Division to participate: Polson, Lord Wolseley, Sherwood, Prince Edward, Bertrun E. Glavin, Valley Gardens Junior High and John de Graff schools. Teachers, administrators, community leaders and families work together to promote healthy child development by improving parental access to resources and support. This fall, representatives of the River East project made a presentation at the National Family Service of Canada Conference in Ottawa. They told me that, as a result of the Parent-Child Coalition funding from Healthy Child Manitoba, our province is leading the way in strengthening the links between families, schools and communities.

There are a number of interesting programs such as Roots of Empathy, Rock and Read, Family Rooms and Literacy Links. As well, Families Connecting is a Healthy Baby program designed to assist soon-to-

be and new parents in connecting with other parents, health professionals and children.

In fact, our government's Community Schools Initiative is growing all over Manitoba to bring parents, schools and communities together. In 12 areas of Winnipeg and 11 regions across Manitoba, parent-child coalitions are being formed to bring together local resources through partnerships. Together we are building competent, compassionate and responsible citizens.

I especially commend Trish Ward, chair of the River East Community Schools Initiative and Jan Smith, the community schools co-ordinator, for their leadership in this project.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see that the River East Transcona School Division is working in partnership with our government through Healthy Child Manitoba. This program is making a difference and instilling a sense of caring and resiliency in our youth.

Cops for Cancer Fundraiser

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I am pleased to share with this Assembly the success of a recent fundraising campaign, Cops for Cancer. Law enforcement agencies from southern Manitoba participated in the Canadian Cancer Foundation's Cops for Cancer fundraiser. Members of the Dakota Ojibway Police Services, Morden police services, Altona police service and RCMP members of the Morris detachment volunteered to shave their heads in order to raise funds for cancer research. A grand total of \$14,000 was raised this past weekend.

Police officers, hairdressers and many members of the public attended the head shaving that took place in the Altona mall on Saturday. This was a wonderful opportunity, not only to raise public awareness about cancer but also for the public to see a different side of law enforcement officers. Many women and men devote their time to protecting and serving our local communities, preventing crime, educating our young people about safety issues and diligently carrying out their duties to ensure public safety.

I appreciate the efforts of the law enforcement officers for the difference they make in our communities, and we all applaud the efforts of the

Cops for Cancer participants for their compassion and dedication to a most worthwhile cause. We know that cancer is a devastating disease that could affect people of all ages in all parts of the province. This year, the Canadian Cancer Society anticipates 145 500 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer. In their lifetime, 38 percent of women and 43 percent of men will develop cancer and almost 25 percent of Canadians will die from this form of disease.

The funds raised by the Cops for Cancer go towards continued research on prevention and treatment of cancer. My hope is that the ongoing research will be most effective in dropping the incidence of cancer.

Once again, thank you to the officers of Altona, Morden, Dakota Ojibway and Morris law enforcement agencies for their generous contribution, and above all, I want to thank Constable Dan Defer of the Altona detachment for the organizing effort that he put into this. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

North End Wellness Centre

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, Friday, May 14 was a happy day for residents of north Winnipeg. The former north YW-YMCA facility, which closed June 1995, was the site of a news conference announcing \$3 million through the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program for renovations and new construction of the North End Wellness Centre.

I would like to congratulate the community partners who have been working hard on community consultations and a business plan, namely the North End Community Renewal Corporation, the YM-YWCA of Winnipeg, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, SPLASH Child Care, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Construction will begin December 2004. They will keep the gymnasium intact and improve it and demolish the remaining part of the building. New construction will include an indoor skateboard park, a climbing wall, a child care centre, a community kitchen, cafe, meeting place and offices for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority staff.

I would like to thank the funders: the federal government represented by Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, the provincial government, whose million-dollar

contribution was on the table several years ago, represented by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk), the City of Winnipeg, represented by Acting Mayor Dan Vandal, forgiving the property taxes and donating the land and the building.

I would like to thank the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, who has been pushing for this project for years, the MLA for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), who has promised to raise a million dollars from the private sector, who was also present at the news conference, the MLA for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), who has been pushing this in Cabinet, plus all the residents of north Winnipeg who have spoken to me and other elected representatives over the years saying, "When is the building going to reopen; when are we going to see some action there?" I am happy to report that this day is coming soon based on the news conference of last Friday.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

* (14:40)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Would you please canvass the House, Mr. Speaker, to see if there is agreement to change the Estimates sequence so that in Room 254 the Estimates for Culture, Heritage and Tourism be considered ahead of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, the change to apply permanently, and that the Estimates for Transportation and Government Services be moved ahead of the Estimates for Water Stewardship, with this change to apply for today?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to change the Estimates sequence so that in Room 254 the Estimates for Culture, Heritage and Tourism be considered ahead of the Estimates for Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, with the change to apply permanently, and that the Estimates for Transportation and Government Services be moved ahead of the Estimates for Water Stewardship, with this change to apply for today?
[Agreed]

Mr. Mackintosh: Would you please call Supply, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 23(5), the House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will now be considering the Estimates of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is yours.

Mr. Robinson: It is my privilege to introduce the 2004-2005 Estimates for Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. Culture, Heritage and Tourism administers a wide variety of acts and offers many programs and services that affect the quality of life in Manitoba. Our responsibilities are much broader than our name implies: not just arts and culture, heritage and tourism, but also recreation and fitness, libraries and the government-wide responsibilities for translation services, freedom of information legislation, government records and communications materials and services.

I am pleased to note that, in an extremely tight budget year, my department has sustained support to the external organizations we assist through grant funding.

Members opposite will be familiar with many of these organizations, which include major institutions such as the Manitoba Museum, the Winnipeg and Brandon concert halls, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, CCFM; as well, external agencies mandated to provide support to other organizations and individuals such as the United Ways, Manitoba Arts Council, Manitoba Film and Sound and the Manitoba Community Services Council; the Winnipeg Public

Library and 54 community and regional libraries throughout the province of Manitoba; major arts and cultural festivals such as Folklorama, Festival du Voyageur, the Winnipeg and Brandon folk festivals as well as numerous community festivals throughout rural and northern Manitoba.

Forty-four recreation commissions throughout the province, 25 community arts councils distributed across the province, 110 museums and historic sites, 8 regional tourism associations, 400 community organizations are assisted annually through the Community Places Program.

While maintaining support levels of these organizations, I am also pleased to say that we are able to provide augmented funding in certain areas.

As announced in the budget speech, this budget provides for a \$450,000 increase in operating support to the United Way of Winnipeg. This funding will enable Manitoba's largest United Way campaign to continue its pledge that all funds raised are directed into the community and not a penny is used for administration. A framework has been established for funding of the United Ways outside of the city of Winnipeg and no longer will they receive their funding funnelled through the United Way of Winnipeg but instead, funded via a direct relationship with the Province of Manitoba.

Our sustained support for cultural industries in Manitoba is now showing tremendous benefits. I recently hosted a lunch for our Juno and Genie award nominees and I also enjoyed watching the success of our own Guy Maddin and Gary Yates as their films, *The Saddest Music in the World* and *Seven Times Lucky*, continue to achieve national and international acclaim. I also applaud the achievement of "Tipi Tales," winner of the prestigious 2003 Parents' Choice Gold Award, and our numerous other Manitoba success stories.

Manitoba is firmly behind the growth of our film industry. Over the past year, production value rose \$29 million to just under \$109 million. More growth is expected this year. The calibre of the artists is a main success factor, but government also plays a supporting role through funding from the Manitoba Arts Council and Manitoba Film and Sound, support to industry associations, the film and video tax credit and other programs. This year we awarded the first Manitoba Emerging Filmmakers Award to Daniel

Eskin, encouraging the development of the next generation of filmmakers and fulfilling a campaign commitment. Winnipeg will host the 2005 Juno awards next April. The City of Winnipeg, the Province, the federal government and the private sector are working in close collaboration to create an event that will raise the standard by which future Junos will be measured.

The tourism industry in our province supports more than 60 000 full- and part-time jobs for Manitobans. Tourist expenditures have grown from 24 percent since 1999 to \$1.4 billion in 2002. As members know, we have introduced legislation to establish Travel Manitoba as an arm's-length agency of the Crown. This legislation establishes a new public-private partnership for tourism delivery. Our staff is working in close collaboration with the Manitoba tourism industry and other experts to finalize the transition plan to the new agency. We anticipate the transition to be completed by April, 2005.

The department that I am responsible for is looking at developing the economic potential of adventure travel, ecotourism and watchable wildlife as well as other cultural and heritage tourism sectors. Initiatives will include expanded marketing programs, industry workshops and product development activities. We are working on ways to build capacity, using new tourism information systems.

Under the direction of the Aboriginal leaders advisory group, my department is also developing a strategy for Aboriginal participation in the tourism industry. The objectives include increasing Aboriginal participation in the tourism industry by creating employment and business opportunities, enhancing the Aboriginal tourism product. Initial reactions from the Aboriginal community have been very positive. We look forward to a more prominent place in the industry for Aboriginal attractions, entrepreneurs and employees.

Despite our commitment to the tourism industry, our government does not believe it has a role to play in the direct operation of resorts. We are reviewing development and management proposals this summer in conjunction with private sector expertise to review development opportunities for Gull Harbour Resort and Hecla Golf Course. We are optimistic that a long-term solution can be found that will be beneficial to the tourism potential in the Interlake region.

In the past year 12 heritage structures, including churches, houses and railway stations were designated by local governments as municipal heritage sites under The Heritage Resources Act. Each building is a vital part of the community's fabric and connects us with the past. I have also accepted the recommendations of the Manitoba Heritage Council to designate three provincial heritage sites this year. They include the Commonwealth Air Training Plan Hangar No. 1 in Brandon; Mowbray School in the R.M. of Pembina; and Ralph Connor House in Winnipeg, which houses the University Women's Club.

Interest in heritage grows every year. Our department launched a Manitoba Day Heritage Partnership Project in 2001, inviting community heritage organizations to join with local schools to develop heritage projects. The project has grown from 1500 participants in 2001 to 5000 participants in 2004.

Recently we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Hudson's Bay Company donation of its archival collection and its museum collection to Manitoba. The collections have been housed in Manitoba for 40 years, but the official donation and the subsequent establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation ensure that the collections will remain in Manitoba and be sustained in perpetuity.

We have also announced the launch of Keystone, an electronic initiative to provide access to records held by the Archives of Manitoba, available later this spring. Keystone will provide around-the-clock access to our archival treasures for people carrying out research in schools, libraries and in their homes.

I am also proud to be part of a government with a strong focus on the needs of children and families. Our department has responded to the concerns of parents and introduced legislation for the classification of video games in Manitoba. Our legislation is consistent with the aims of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and seeking to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material in video games and in allowing government to consider regulating emerging technologies if they pose a similar threat to children.

It is well documented that children and youth are becoming less active. Our department is working

with partners across the recreation, education and health delivery systems, forming the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba to move toward a 10% increase in physical activity for Manitobans by 2010.

In January and again in May Aboriginal artists from across the province were invited to a round table to meet with myself and our staff from various departments and agencies to make recommendations on the needs and realities of Aboriginal artists in Manitoba. Arts and cultural advisory councils have been established to provide guidance to government and maximize the effect of public expenditures on arts and culture programs for First Nations and Métis people. I am pleased to say that we have been able to direct \$100,000 toward Aboriginal cultural initiatives, a small step in providing greater recognition of the significance of Aboriginal culture and tradition, but a significant one in the current economic environment.

Our department also administers The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, otherwise known as FIPPA. We have just published the statistics for the 2003 calendar year on the FIPPA Web site. The numbers continue to reflect the good job that departments and agencies are doing in responding to requests in a timely way, despite a 300% increase in requests received over the last five years.

A FIPPA review is now underway. My colleague from the constituency of Fort Garry is chairing that on behalf of our department, along with the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), on the PHIA side. Manitobans have given us their views at public hearings and through written submissions. We are now considering the input we have received. We thank all those who have contributed for their interest and their thoughts.

Our department assists all government departments to communicate broadly with Manitobans. Over the past year, staff have helped launch a province-wide Health Links service, the flu-vaccination campaign and the quit smoking campaign.

Our staff also co-ordinate the dissemination of public information about the SARS outbreak, the West Nile virus, forest fires, severe weather and flood forecasting.

Our department is actively involved in At Your Service Manitoba initiative. Our staff also operate the Manitoba Government Inquiry telephone service, the Web site answer desk and oversee daily updates to the Manitoba home page. Inquiries from Manitoba government programs and services has increased by 30 percent in the last five years and on-line answer desk inquiries have increased by 300 percent.

Chairperson, these are just some of the things I could tell you about our department. They are only a few of the highlights from the past year. In closing, I am proud to be a minister of a department with such an extensive array of responsibilities that affect the quality of life for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to thank the minister for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Morris, have any opening comments?

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Just briefly.

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is yours.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just briefly, a few comments as a new member. This is my first Estimates process so I am going to keep my comments short because I do have a number of questions and probably I will not get to answer them all.

* (15:00)

I do want to thank the minister for his openness whenever I have gone to the department, and thank his staff as well, and recognize that all of the things in Culture, Heritage and Tourism, the arts, whether that be dance, whether that be the visual arts, music, film and sound, literature in the forms of libraries, recognizing that this is very important to the culture and enriching our lives in all of Manitoba, very important to all of us.

Also, what he touched upon, the recreational facilities, and I am a lifelong proponent of physical activity and continue to do that. Libraries, as well, are very important for rural areas where people are less able to get services. I notice the minister did give a list of organizations such as the heritage organizations, recreational and libraries cross the province. I am wondering if he could provide me with those lists.

Also, just in Tourism, I think that tourism is something that we need to have grown in the province because of the number of tourists that want to come to Manitoba and there are a number of things, many things, for them to do here. We have a very rich diverse province where we can offer many things to tourists. With that, I think that I will close my opening remarks because, as I said, I do have a number of questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition with those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 14.1(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in Resolution 14.1.

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. We ask the minister to introduce his staff.

Mr. Robinson: The Deputy Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism is Sandra Hardy, who is seated to my immediate left. Next to her is David Paton, the Executive Director of the Finance Division. We have Mr. Hubert Mesman from the Tourism division and Ms. Ann Hultgren-Ryan from the Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs division.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister. Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department in a chronological manner or have a global discussion?

Mrs. Taillieu: It would be fairly global, but I think I will go through in a fairly organized manner through the Estimates book, but global.

Mr. Robinson: Sure.

Mr. Chairperson: It is agreed that the questioning for the department will follow in a global manner with all items to be passed once the questioning has been completed. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just, first of all, to refer to the organizational chart of the Estimates book on page 5,

I would like to ask with the numerous councils and boards if I could have a list of all the members on the councils and boards along with their remuneration rather than go through them all separately. But I do have a few specific questions. Would that work?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we will avail ourselves to providing our colleague from Morris the members, the chairs, I would think, and all the board members' remuneration. I will avail to provide that information to her in writing.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just a few questions in regard to the councils and boards. Are all the members to these councils and boards appointed?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, with the exception of the Manitoba Community Services Council on the same page that our colleague is looking at. We are responsible for appointing all the board members, or the government of the day, is responsible for appointing all the members of those particular boards with the exception of that one: the Manitoba Community Services Council. We have no say as to who is appointed on that board.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, in regard to the Manitoba Community Services Council, has this council now been established?

Mr. Robinson: Yes. It has been in operation since 1989, I believe, and it is a self-appointed board that receives financial support from the Province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you. I must have been thinking of something else. Sorry. The Privacy Assessment Review Committee. Is this a permanent committee or a temporary committee?

Mr. Robinson: Yes. This is a staff committee from the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism who are called together whenever there is an issue that requires attending to. It is called, commonly referred to as the PARC. The representatives come from Family Services, Health, Transportation and Government Services, Justice, Intergovernmental Affairs, Education, Industry, Economic Development and Mines.

The committee is currently chaired by a gentleman from our department by the name of Gordon Dodds. It is brought together whenever there

is a need to discuss an issue relating to a particular topic, privacy assessment. That is how this works; it is an ongoing committee, but at the staff level.

Mrs. Taillieu: The Manitoba Arts Council and the Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation. I do believe I have seen annual reports for those two groups. I am wondering if the other boards and councils produce an annual report?

* (15:10)

Mr. Robinson: On the organizational chart the Manitoba Arts Council does provide us with an annual report. The Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation does similar. The Manitoba Heritage Council does as well, as does the Heritage Grants Advisory Council. Those are in our departments so they are reported when our department reports.

However, the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation also provides a report. The Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain also provides a report. The Manitoba Community Services Council does also provide a report.

Manitoba Film Classification Board is reported through our department. The Privacy Assessment Review Committee does not. The Ministerial Advisory Council on Tourism does not. Venture Manitoba Tours does provide an annual report.

Mrs. Taillieu: Would it be possible to get copies of those annual reports?

Mr. Robinson: A number of them are tabled, and I will ensure that the reports from those different committees and councils are provided to the member.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that. Just one other thing then on this page. I notice from last year's Estimates that the Human Resources Services, Melanie Schade, the minister said that she was not paid by Culture, Heritage and Tourism, but she is still on this organizational chart. I wonder where she is paid from.

Mr. Robinson: As is the practice in some of our government departments, there is an amalgamation or a co-operation with several departments. In this case there are three other departments, along with

Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that include Finance; Industry, Economic Development and Mines; Energy, Science and Technology. Those four departments co-ordinate, amalgamate and co-operate.

One person is selected to work in the human resource area. Therefore, her salary is picked up by one of these other departments. However, she is still a very integral part of our department indeed on a human resources side. That is why she is still there. But she is also responsible to three other departments equally important as ours.

Mrs. Taillieu: The minister has said that there is going to be a new Travel Manitoba created which will act in a similar way as Manitoba Film and Sound. But, on the organizational chart, Travel Manitoba is still under the department. I am just wondering why.

Mr. Robinson: Part of the discussions we are having, as the member knows, is that we are phasing in the new Travel Manitoba Act. I believe that it is in second reading right now. We will be going into committee on that and also to hear representation from outside parties on it.

We have it currently on the organizational chart because it will take approximately one year to phase in with a board of directors that will be appointed by this government. We expect that during that phase-in stage it will remain within this department until such time that the transition is complete.

Mrs. Taillieu: I am now going to page 23 of the Estimates book. I notice that under Financial and Administrative Services, there are three less staff. I am wondering if these vacancies are permanent or whether they are going to be filled.

Mr. Robinson: The three FTEs indicated on that page are the ones that have been removed in this past budget exercise and will not be reinstated in the foreseeable future.

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for that. I am now going to move on to Manitoba Film Classification Board. Just a few questions there. I have already asked the minister if he would provide me with the board list and remuneration, but I was wondering if all of these board people in Manitoba Film and Sound have expense accounts.

Mr. Robinson: According to legislation, there is a minimum of 15 members on the board, and I think currently we have 32 members on the Manitoba Film Classification Board. They are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses only and they do not have expense accounts. As an example, those that may live outside of Winnipeg, in another region of this province that may have to come in for a meeting or the work that they have to do in classifying films, or for a sitting, so therefore the only expenses that they are paid is for out-of-pocket matters.

Mrs. Taillieu: Would that fall under Other Operating, the \$26,800?

Mr. Robinson: There is a per diem, and I do not have the per diem rates at my disposal, Mr. Chairperson, but, certainly, under the line of Transportation, that is when they are reimbursed for the commute from whatever community they may come from in Manitoba to attend to their business, which is usually carried out in the city of Winnipeg. As well, from the Other Operating line, 26.8, that is for hotel expenses, expenses that members may incur while doing business for the Classification Board, usually in the city of Winnipeg.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Taillieu: On page 24, it says, under Expected Results: "Reduced number of videos submitted for classification as a result of new exemption policies." Yet the board has been increased, I think, to 32 from 27 last year. Yet, on page 7 of the provincial revenue booklet, the Manitoba Film Classification Board fees are going to increase by approximately \$50,000. Can the minister explain this? On the one hand, the number of videos is expected to go down, the board members have increased, but there is an expected increase in fees.

Mr. Robinson: The number of videos has increased I am told. I am also told that if we look at, this is from the revenue supplement, the quote that has been made by the Member for Morris, item (c), I believe. When she compares that to page 25, the total sub-appropriation of 483.3 is exactly the same amount as contained in the main budget figures.

The recovery costs apparently are being realized for the first time. Other videos have increased. On the videos containing music is where the exemptions occur primarily, unless there is an alert to examine a

video that may contain explicitly violent or sexual content material. So I believe that would answer the question raised by the member, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, I am looking at the comparison from 2003-2004 of last year to this year's increase in revenue, which is approximately \$50,000, even though there is an expectation that there will be less videos rated. I am wondering, if there are less videos rated and more revenue expected, are fees for rating film and video increasing.

Mr. Robinson: It is not going to be in this area that the increase is going to occur. In fact, the increase is going to occur for mainstream film. Also I would just note that the volume of units requiring classification from 1998-1999 has increased from 3604 to 5918 in 2003. So the volume has risen as well.

Mrs. Taillieu: The number of videos and films for classification has increased. So the Estimates book is wrong, then, in saying that there is an expectation of reduced number of videos to be rated?

Mr. Robinson: What I quoted from was last year's Estimates, I should have been clear on that. We are trying to contain that at the current time. I was referencing the Estimates book from last year, the annual report from last year. I was just giving an idea as to the increase of units that are being received for classification, so if I misled the member, I am sorry. I did not mean to do that. I was referencing the annual report of our department for 2002-2003, specifically on Manitoba Film Classification Board work.

Mrs. Taillieu: What is the fee currently to rate film?

Mr. Robinson: We are currently faced with charging \$30 a reel. That is being reconsidered now. New rates will be announced in due course, once that work has been completed. It will go per copy as opposed to reel. Thirty dollars a reel.

Mrs. Taillieu: Is there a difference in the rate for adult video?

Mr. Robinson: I am advised that there is no charge for mainstream videos; however, for adult videos it is \$2 a minute.

Mrs. Taillieu: So the no-charge for mainstream videos, what did the minister refer to with the \$30 per reel?

Mr. Robinson: I was referencing theatrical film.

Mrs. Taillieu: I appreciate that. According to the video game industry, there are between 2000 and 3000 new video games produced every year. These video games can take up to a 100 hours to proceed through all of the events in the game, not to mention the expertise required to work through these video games, and I am referring to video games that are violent and sexually explicit in nature, particularly these ones like *Manhunt*, which has inspired many people to want classification here.

Does the minister intend to hire specific technical people to review these video games?

Mr. Robinson: We have talked about this issue before, as the member knows, and the intention of the legislation that we will be reviewing in committee in a very short while of course. This legislation will enable our government to perhaps look at the possibility of adopting the ESRB ratings, that is, the Entertainment Software Rating system, and we are looking at that. At the same time, the work at the national level is carrying on addressing this issue.

* (15:30)

The preferred method, of course, as I said all along is to have a national rating system in rating the adult video games that are indeed very troubling to parents and others. The idea of the legislation that is currently before us is to try and adopt the current ESRB ratings that are currently out there and perhaps, depending on our will here in the province of Manitoba is to enforce the industry ratings that have been adopted under the ESRB and include that as part of our work here in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: Then I understand from that that the video games will not be rated by the Film Classification Board. Will there be a fee charged for a classification on them that would suggest an adoption of the industry standard?

Mr. Robinson: At the current time there is no intention to charge a rate. It is safe to say as well that no provinces have adopted the ESRB ratings even though that is, I believe, what the ideal situation would be. Certainly, the provinces will be sharing communication in that regard as the work carries on

at the national level in trying to address this ongoing problem, which will only escalate as technologies evolve. With respect to the legislation that we have introduced here in the province of Manitoba, it is quite similar in British Columbia and also Ontario, so we are the three provinces nationwide that have begun the work of addressing the whole issue of these video games.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, under the proposed new legislation, it will be illegal to sell or rent these games to anyone under 18, that is my understanding. How is this to be enforced?

Mr. Robinson: We believe that it is important for all retailers to be responsible to Manitoba's children and that this legislation will ensure that, throughout Manitoba, parents will have the knowledge, we would hope, that violent or sexually explicit video games will not be sold or rented to their children. We believe that the legislation provides an opportunity for parents, retailers and government to work together and protect our young children from these explicit images that they may not be mature enough to see. So we are encouraging parents to get informed about these videos, and speaking as a parent, we do not always know what is out there. It has been a while for me, particularly, trying to catch up with what is out there, but we can only say that the current legislation that is being proposed is something that we believe will address the need that is out there. We will continue to work with parents and also retailers in making sure that they choose to co-operate.

The Film Classification Board itself will have an inspector, who is currently on staff, and, on a complaints basis, will act on these issues as he or she deems fit. There may be times when an investigation will be required if a complaint should arise about a certain game and the investigator that is currently employed by the Manitoba Film Classification Board will be dispatched to have a look at whatever is being viewed and make that determination as to whether or not the retailer may have rented or sold the game to a said individual, the said juvenile, potentially. At the moment we have the ability to seize a product if the warnings are ignored and fines are currently up to \$5,000, if indeed this should ever get to that stage.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, it sounds very much like this will be a self-policing legislation and, in

fact, does not really sound like it will be enforceable. However, I am going to move onto another question.

The new legislation provides for the establishment of different conditions for licensing video distributors or retailers and video game distributors and retailers. What are the different conditions?

Mr. Robinson: We have talked about this before, the member and I. We are, first of all, working toward enacting the necessary legislative changes that will examine the adoption of the entertainment software rating boards classification system subject to a provincial override in the event of complaints.

We are also trying to make it an offence to make games classified as adults only or mature available to minors. We are trying to allow for adoption of classifications made by other provinces as well. We will continue to explore opportunities to develop a national standard for video game classification and the national working group that has been looking at this issue met again in Vancouver recently, and further dialogue is obviously required and that dialogue will be ongoing.

*(15:40)

At the same time that the legislation is adopted by our House, our Legislative Assembly, then there is a need obviously to develop the regulations and upon the completion of our legislative process here in Manitoba, then we will move to at the same time working on the regulations and hopefully proclaim this some time in the fall. That is normal but it is with all things considered a relatively fast pace enacting and proclaiming legislation in our province, I am told.

Mr. Chairperson: Order. I will just interrupt here for a minute.

I would just like to remind all honourable members of our Rule 41, which states that no member shall revive a debate already concluded during the session or anticipate the matter appointed for consideration of which notice has been given.

Beauchesne's Citation 512 reinforces this position as do several Supply Chairpersons' rulings from 1996. Bill 25, The Amusements Amendment Act, is currently before the House, and I would suggest that it might be more appropriate for the

member to comment on the bill at second reading or during the committee stage. I recognize that there is a connection between this bill and the Estimates under consideration, but I would ask all members to focus their comments on the matter currently before the committee.

Mrs. Taillieu: I apologize for going into area. I am just very keen on finding out everything I can, so I apologize. I would also like to say that I am in support of the spirit of this bill. I think that, when you look at the violent nature and the explicit nature of some of these video games, which, I have to admit, I have not seen myself but I am told and have read much in the media about it, so certainly in no way am I being critical of this legislation, but just wanting to find out particulars and understand it a little bit more so that we can vote on it appropriately.

However, I will move on to the next question. I have a number of questions so I am going to have to prioritize here, but one last question in regard to the Manitoba Film and Sound. The Indian movie industry, and I mean the Indian movies from India, it has been termed Bollywood, because it is one of the world's largest producers producing some 800 films a year. I suppose that we would not know how many of these films are coming into the province, because I do not believe that they are rated here in Manitoba by the Manitoba Film Classification Board. Is that correct?

Mr. Robinson: I am not familiar with the term. It is relatively new to me. I have heard it. These films are rated if they are submitted. To the best of our knowledge we do not have an exact number of how many of these films may enter Canada at any given time. So I cannot give the number of films that come from India.

Mrs. Taillieu: I guess I have a concern with movies that are coming into the province and may not be rated, may not even have an industry-standard rating on them. Then the people that are viewing these movies do not have the same benefit of having a rating and we would know not what is in these movies. I am wondering if the minister can comment.

Mr. Robinson: This is an issue that has been discussed at the national level, not only here in the province of Manitoba, but it is of a concern to other jurisdictions, other provinces in Canada. So this is

one of the issues that was recently discussed at a national meeting of jurisdictions and it is currently being discussed.

It is hard to say, for example, if a movie were to come in from another country that is neither in English nor in French, so this is something that the other jurisdictions, along with ours, are trying to understand better and better equip ourselves in how we deal with these films that may enter our country, but it is not an issue that is only isolated to the province of Manitoba, but it is indeed an issue that is of concern to the other jurisdictions of the other provinces and territories of our country.

Mrs. Taillieu: In November of 1999, there was a study done by the Manitoba Film Classification Board, and it suggested that there was, possibly, a need at that time to rate these video games. Diane McGifford, when she was the opposition critic—sorry, the Member for Lord Roberts was the opposition critic, and she had been vehemently demanding that these games be rated. That was in 1999 and before that. Then the NDP took over government in 1999. I am just wondering why in opposition they were so definite in wanting these video game ratings, and then now it is five years later and it is just happening now. I am wondering why it took so long.

* (15:50)

Mr. Robinson: Well, I want to tell my colleague that I did not hear those comments from my colleague from Lord Roberts at that time. I guess I was not listening.

I just want to say that no action did occur nationwide; the other provinces did not move. In the meantime, the work was ongoing with the provinces and the other territories. In talking about this, it was identified to be an issue back then. Unfortunately, between 1999 and 2004, nothing has occurred, but I believe that the member and I should be given some credit for at least agreeing on one thing that needs to be addressed, and we are moving forth now. We in Manitoba, being a relatively small province in comparison to other provinces in Canada, ought to be commended for having the foresight in pursuing the legislation that we are.

Mrs. Taillieu: I am going to move on from the Manitoba Film Classification Board and I thank the minister for his answers.

On to page 29, under the sub-appropriation 14.2.(b), Grants to Cultural Organizations, there has been an increase in grants here of \$734,000. I am wondering if the minister can provide me with a breakdown of which organizations received what amount of money.

Mr. Robinson: As I said in my opening remarks, we are going to be providing an increase to the United Ways. This increase is something that has long been worked at by our department and the United Ways of the province of Manitoba. There is \$454,000 that is going to be increased for them. A \$100,000 increase to community initiatives, and that is to support Aboriginal art and cultural initiatives in the province of Manitoba, for example. I do not believe that there has ever been an initiative to promote indigenous arts and culture in any jurisdiction. However, we are going to make a conscientious effort here in the province of Manitoba to do that.

There is also, and I cannot give many details on this because we have yet to work it out within our systems, Mr. Chairperson, and that is increases in salaries for major cultural agencies, including the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, Manitoba Museum and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. They have collective agreements with unions which parallel the master agreement with the Manitoba Government Employees Union. So this is the increase that is highlighted. It reflects an average increase of roughly 2 percent to the salary support provided by the department to some of the major agencies. We are obligated, of course, under collective agreements to live up to that. The details have not been ironed out in that regard, with respect to the major cultural agencies, but I would think that this would give the member a better picture to her question.

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for that, and I also commend the work done in the promotion of Aboriginal art.

A question in regard to the Manitoba Arts Council, I believe last year I saw a line, the Arts Stabilization Manitoba Fund. I cannot find that in the Estimates book, it may be there, I just cannot find it. I am wondering if that has been discontinued or changed the name.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Robinson: We are in the fifth year of a five-year arrangement on the Arts Stabilization Program. Of the \$875,000, that money actually comes from the UDI monies from the Intergovernmental Affairs department, \$200,000 a year was committed for five years and, as I say, this is the fifth year. That is what is reflected in the papers.

Mrs. Taillieu: I am going to skip around a bit here and go to the Archives of Manitoba on page 47. I would like to address a number of questions in regard to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

In last year's Estimates, the minister said that the review of FIPPA, as we know it, would be brought back to the Manitoba Legislature by May of 2004. I know that those committee meetings have been ongoing and, indeed, to be back on the table before the end of May, it would have to be within the specified review time frame. When can we expect to see this report tabled?

Mr. Robinson: As our colleague from Morris indicated correctly, the review has just pretty much concluded with you, Madam Chair, as the chairperson of that. Public hearings have concluded and we are continuing to receive written submissions. A report is being prepared and that will be tabled in the House. A preliminary report will be tabled in the House, we hope, by the end of May. That will be a prelude to the bigger report that we hope to table by the conclusion of this session.

It is an aggressive schedule, if I may, Madam Chair, but we do have certain things to live up to.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under the legislation, I believe that the review has to be conducted and the report tabled by the end of May.

* (16:00)

Mr. Robinson: The way I understand the process, Madam Chair, we will be providing a report on the progress. It would be a year come the end of May that we began the process, so we will be updating the House and it will be provided to the House, to be tabled in the House. There is still work to be done beyond that, but I think that, providing we do a report, that we are still in compliance with the requirements under law.

Mrs. Taillieu: I will move on to another question. In the report respecting privacy, by the Ombudsman, it

stated that six in ten Manitobans believe they have less privacy than they did five years ago and 55 percent of Manitobans believe that they will suffer a serious invasion of privacy in the next two years. Does the minister plan to enact similar legislation to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA, as it is called federally, to protect all private citizens, not just those in the public sector?

Mr. Robinson: As our colleague from Morris pointed out, PIPEDA is a federal law; however, provinces can model something similar in their respective jurisdictions. It is not an issue that has received a lot of attention, nor was it brought up during the hearings that were held in our province quite recently, but certainly we will be considering this and other issues of access and privacy. So, as we review what Manitobans have had to say, it will perhaps be also included as part of the report that will be tabled in the Legislature.

Mrs. Taillieu: What are the charges for someone wanting to access information?

Mr. Robinson: Currently there is no fee to apply, two free hours and then, beyond that, \$30 an hour. Then when the information is provided, 20 cents a page.

Mrs. Taillieu: How does that compare with other provinces and the federal government?

Mr. Robinson: Other provinces have a fee to apply. Our rates here are quite comparable to other provinces, quite similar, and I think that we are no more expensive nor any less cheaper than other provinces in that regard.

Mrs. Taillieu: The fees can be waived for a FIPPA request, but only one fee was waived in 2001 and none were waived in 2002. I am wondering what the revenue generated from FIPPA requests in one year would be.

Mr. Robinson: I will give our honourable colleague the figures of the last year, 2003. It was roughly \$7,600 in 2003 based on 1300 requests that were made.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just an interesting note, the number of FIPPA requests has more than doubled in the last five years, according to the Ombudsman and at a

time when interest groups are seeking more transparency and accountability, I am wondering what is the disparity here.

Mr. Robinson: I can only respond to my colleague in my own way, without any facts and figures. I would think that interest in government is developing in greater numbers than we have experienced in the past. She is absolutely right that there is a greater call for transparency, accountability, and so on. I believe that is the sign of the times that we indeed want our governments to be more accountable. The demand for access to information is going to continue to grow. I believe that trend will carry on.

I believe that I indicated in my opening remarks that the high percent of requests that have been made in the last five years, as an example, has escalated by 300 percentage points. So indeed it has continued to grow. I think the high point previously was in 1996-97. In 1996 we had roughly 700. Then it went down to a low in 1999 of just a little over 400, and it jumped back up. Since '99, it has continued to escalate to where it is at the current time.

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for his comments. I would like to ask a few questions in Tourism. Under Tourism Marketing and Services there has been a reduction of two people. Are these not to be replaced? It is on page 53.

* (16:10)

Mr. Robinson: The member is absolutely right. It was part of the budgetary process. Those two positions will not be replaced.

Mrs. Taillieu: Are the staff in the Tourism department appointed or are they hired through normal process?

Mr. Robinson: The staff are hired through a normal process, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under The Travel Manitoba Act, is it the intent to transfer the existing staff to the new agency?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Madam Chair, it is the hope and desire having the staff from Tourism Manitoba without losing any of their seniority nor their salary move to the arm's-length agency of government that will be created when the act comes into force later

this year. The intention is that no loss of jobs will occur. It will be my responsibility to reassure the employees of Travel Manitoba that this indeed will be the case.

Mrs. Taillieu: I would just like to ask you a few questions in regard to Gull Harbour. We know that there was an additional investment of \$700,000 put into the Gull Harbour Resort. We also know that there was an RFP to seek out potential other uses for the area. The minister also responded in Question Period that First Nations were being consulted about alternative uses. I wonder if the minister can elaborate on what the intended use for Gull Harbour is.

Mr. Robinson: In August of 2003, when it became apparent that we needed to devote more attention to the Gull Harbour Resort and golf course, we as a government felt that it was important. We all agree that we should not be involved in the hotel business or the resort business, and we directed the department to seek alternative development opportunities for the resort and the golf course. It was also agreed at that time that current facilities would remain open while the government pursued alternative uses for the facilities. As the member knows, there is a good number of people that are employed from the Interlake region at the Gull Harbour Resort. The numbers escape my mind at the moment, but there are over 100 people employed from the Interlake region of Manitoba.

In January of this past year, Ernst & Young was retained after an open public tender process to, first of all, assess the investment opportunities, develop an appropriate marketing program to identify and source development investment candidates with the highest potential, aggressively market the opportunity to the investment community and the hospitality industry, to develop interest and secure conceptual proposals from interested parties, evaluate and short list preferred investment proposals.

We also are not only doing that part of it, but at the same time, there is dialogue occurring with First Nations, Peguis First Nation being one of them, and some other First Nations in the province of Manitoba, on possible other uses for the resort without bringing any undue stress to the Interlake region of our province. We believe that many opportunities could be had with this location. That being said, Ernst & Young is obligated under the

terms of reference of the request for proposals and the contract that was awarded to them to come back to government and provide recommendations and an analysis on the best proposals, and we hope to do that later on this spring.

Mrs. Taillieu: Is there any intent to utilize Gull Harbour Resort as an Aboriginal casino?

Mr. Robinson: No, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Taillieu: The minister also commented in our Question Period that he was meeting with union officials. I am wondering, are the unions controlling the evolution of Gull Harbour Resort?

Mr. Robinson: When I was making reference to the unions, it was the unions that are currently representing the government employees that are employed at the facility. We want to give these people assurance that they will not be out of a job next week, tomorrow, because they do have families to provide for, as well, in that region of Manitoba.

Part of the responsibility of Ernst & Young and why they were awarded the tender is to have dialogue with not only First Nations and other groups but indeed with the unions. We want to ensure that these people will not be out of work in the short term and certainly, in the long term, to have opportunities for them in the event that there is a prop or something that we can all agree upon, that this location could be used for, but the discussions that are occurring with the unions are, particularly, the unions that represent Manitoba government employees.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister explain why the 700,000 or thereabouts was put into Gull Harbour before the use was determined? It seems to me that if you are renovating, you need to renovate for the use that it is intended to be rather than renovate and then renovate again.

Mr. Robinson: The request for additional loan act authority for Venture has been an annual process to accommodate operating expenditures and to provide funding for capital projects. The increase to the loan guarantee is in no way related to, or a result of, the recent RFP process to explore new development opportunities at the resort. The money, the \$700,000 we are talking about, is comparable to what has occurred for the last several years and, in fact, I think

is a little less than it has been in previous years, in order to maintain the operation. That is simply to maintain its operation and there is no capital outlay in that \$700,000 that was authorized by the Province very recently. It is simply maintenance capital.

* (16:20)

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Does the government intend to sever the relationship between Gull Harbour resort and the golf course, or is it intended that the golf course and the hotel are being offered as a package, because the golf course has been generally considered a profit centre?

Mr. Robinson: The resort and the golf course come as a package.

Mr. Cummings: What about the ongoing relationship with the golf course at Falcon? Has the government any intent to change the arrangements? I believe at one time, at least, they were under joint management.

Mr. Robinson: The Falcon Lake golf course has always been a part of Venture Manitoba. However, in this particular case, the Falcon Lake golf course is not a part of the Hecla resort and the Hecla golf course and the work that is ongoing in trying to find alternative uses. There may be ways that we must change laws that may have to be changed with respect to Falcon Lake but, indeed, it is not a part of the current work that is occurring.

Mr. Cummings: I just wondered if the minister would mind going back a little bit in the discussion that has just been going on, and if he could comment on my question around the makeup of the board of directors for Tourism Manitoba in the new structure that he anticipates. Something that I find interesting is that, wherever this has been contemplated, usually it is the industry that makes up the vast majority of the directors, the management of the operation, because generally it is contemplated as making Tourism Manitoba closer and more responsive to the needs of those who are in the industry. For some reason I am not really reading that in terms of the announcements and the direction that this seems to be going.

I wonder if the minister could comment on the makeup of the directors that will eventually be running Tourism Manitoba. They will be his

appointees. I understand that. But is there a direct reference anywhere in the information that they have been putting out that these will be people who are actively involved and participating in making a livelihood out of tourism in this province?

Mr. Robinson: Under the sub-heading of Board of Directors, the Member for Ste. Rose will note that nine to fifteen persons will be appointed to the board of directors. From 7(1) to 7(3)(e), this is how the makeup of the board will be. I think it is self-explanatory, three-year terms, maximum of two terms. It will be staggered with three to five new appointments each year. It will include representatives that will represent Destination Winnipeg; the Aboriginal and Francophone sectors; representatives from various clusters. As well, as the member knows, we will also have representation from the industry itself. Nine to fifteen will make up the board. Three will be appointed by the government; the other representatives on the board will be from the sectors that I identified, which is the tourism sector.

Mr. Cummings: The minister can tell me to have this discussion when the bill is in committee, but just looking at it at this stage, it seems to me that after you appoint three government representatives, which will not necessarily have any connection, public interest and cultural diversity of the population, those conditions do not necessarily represent the invested industry.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I am not critical of them being there. I am more critical of whether or not these sections in the act are prescriptive enough about those who would make up the balance of the board. I am assuming the minister of the day, whoever that might be, would have the confidence of the industry and the good sense to appoint proper people, but legislation is generally intended to provide the authority and in some cases to be prescriptive about the nature of who would be there. These sections, are they considered acceptable to the advisory group to the minister?

Mr. Robinson: The work that has been done and how we drafted up the legislation that is currently before the House, and certainly we will have the opportunity, but I welcome the opportunity of talking about it here because I think it gives us some idea as

to what we will be talking about in the next little while.

This is something that has been recommended to us and, certainly, the people from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Tourism have advised government to pursue. Thus that is why I direct the interest of the member to 7(2) under Board of Directors, that only three directors are to be appointed to represent the government. However, the board will have between nine and fifteen directors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and these people are going to come from the industry itself. Recommendations will be made by people in the hospitality industry, as an example, people from others. We have had several calls from other sectors of the tourism industry wanting representation on the board when it is put together. Two are operators, restaurant owners, people that look after cultural attractions, many of these people want to be represented on the board, and included, of course, are Aboriginal people and the Francophone community.

Mr. Cummings: Well, the minister can take it for advice or any other way. I would have thought that under (d) there might have been a way of being more prescriptive, that there would be representation appointed from the accommodation sector, which it says that, but it would be at the minister's discretion rather than at the recommendation of that group, that body, if you will, and that was really what I was interested in. I actually do not expect an answer to that but it is a point that I wanted to raise. I will leave it with the minister, and perhaps we will have a chance to discuss it further in legislation.

* (16:30)

Mr. Robinson: Thank you, and I will certainly take the advice of the member. I value his advice. I have always valued his advice and I will certainly take that into consideration. I will direct that, as well, to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Tourism. I believe we will be hearing some other representation when this particular bill gets to the committee stage.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairperson, on page 55 under Other Expenditures, under Tourism Planning and Development, the Communications line, this year it is 309,000 as compared to 118 of last year. Can the minister explain what this very significant increase is for?

Mr. Robinson: The reason for the increase in that particular line is to engage a consultant who can work with the broader and representative group to identify a brand and image for the Province of Manitoba, one that is suitable for use by all partners. The impact will be significant in that our province will express a consistent and professionally developed image and brand as recommended by the Premier's Economic Advisory Council.

We believe by working together to develop the image and brand we will be able to leverage our collective costs and efforts in the future, achieving more success and working independently. So in direct response to the member, that is why the increase and that is on the branding issue.

Mrs. Taillieu: Is this brand something that a consulting company was hired for and, if so, which one? Or an advertising company?

Mr. Robinson: We have staff from our department that are currently working with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and the request for proposals is still underway. We anticipate that the proposals are still coming in and no decision has been made on the final selection.

Mrs. Taillieu: Could the minister provide a list of the people that this was tendered to?

Mr. Robinson: I will provide that list to the member in writing and would ask her to allow me five days to prepare that list for her.

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for that, and my colleague from River Heights has a few questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would like to ask the minister with regard to Capital Grants which is on page 56, the grants with respect to Heritage Buildings, and would like to know whether at this point decisions have been made as to how that is going to be spent; and if not, what the process is going to be in terms of the capital expenditures from Heritage Buildings.

Mr. Robinson: Under the Heritage Building grants, the formal application process is usually announced in June. For this year we have roughly \$210,000 for the entire program.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, and can the minister tell us about the evaluation process and on what criteria decisions are made and how the money would be allocated?

Mr. Robinson: The applications are ordinarily reviewed by staff from the department which includes a professional architect. Buildings are assessed on the integrity of the building. The other requirement is that they be provincially or municipally designated to be that; however, I will share with the member of River Heights, when they become available, a copy of the application forms

Mr. Gerrard: I appreciate that and thank the minister. Just to, perhaps, give the minister a moment to tell us a little bit about his view of heritage buildings, and his approach to heritage buildings in Manitoba.

Mr. Robinson: Well, I am very committed to this as the member knows; I take the advice of the Heritage Council very seriously. In this last year, I designated 12 buildings in Manitoba, which is commendable, I would think. We will continue working with people in our department, people that work on this, and continue to make great strides in that area.

Mr. Gerrard: I appreciate the designation of the buildings, and is it possible to get a list of the ones which were designated last year? I would much appreciate that.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I will provide when I send the other material that I committed myself to sending the Member for River Heights, also the list of those buildings that he requested.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister, I know, has visited the gallery called the Graffiti Gallery, where the group involved has been quite instrumental in turning a number of young people who were graffiti artists into real artists. I hear that they may even be having a show at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. I do not actually have that confirmed, but I know that the minister had expressed an interest in this gallery and, I think, has visited the gallery. I wonder whether the minister is planning to provide any support to this meritorious effort.

* (16:40)

Mr. Robinson: Well, the member is absolutely right. The Graffiti art gallery is something that we should all be proud of and embrace and could be used as a model in other communities in this province. It is indeed something that Steve Wilson, I believe is his name, that runs the gallery, should take great pride in

because many times troubled youth are taken in and shown a more positive path and taken from the negative lifestyle that they have lived and put in a proper trail of life as it were.

We support completely the work that is occurring there, which not only deals with graffiti, as its name implies, but indeed, in different art forms. We believe that this is a worthy project to continue supporting, to continue working with.

In fact, we have asked Mr. Wilson and another representative from there to join our Aboriginal artists round table. They have been working with us on that and it is one of the people that I have asked to work; this young woman, Shawna is her first name, and she is a wonderful young woman, but I cannot remember her last name. She is one of the representatives from the community that I have asked to work on an ongoing working committee together with people from our department, people from the federal government, from Canadian Heritage to work on finding solutions on artists' co-operatives and other areas that they feel a desire that requires attention.

Last year they received \$15,000 from the Province of Manitoba. Currently, they receive some money from Neighbourhoods Alive! as well. We obviously want to continue working with them. We are trying to find ways and project dollars and whatever becomes available, certainly, as the member knows, these are tough times in government to approve things like that even though they are very worthy. We know the value of the Graffiti art gallery and will certainly continue supporting it to the best way we know how.

I believe that there are opportunities here, given the working group that we have put together that includes Mr. Tariq Khan from the Canadian Heritage department as well as other community members. Together these people are trying to find solutions on some of the aspirations that these artists in the community have. We believe that that is paying off in a very valuable way in a time to come. We certainly wholeheartedly endorse them. Whatever we can do in the interim to assist the ongoing work of the art gallery, we will certainly look at.

We cannot commit any money at this time, however, but I think on a project-by-project basis we have been trying to make the community aware of

the existence of the Graffiti art gallery. As the member knows, some of these young people that are taking part in this are sometimes sent there by the courts. We should be talking to more government departments, both at the federal and provincial government levels. I know that the City, to a degree, does support the work that they do there. Certainly, currently our government, through Neighbourhoods Alive!, is maintaining its support for the Graffiti art gallery.

Mr. Gerrard: I think that due to the amount of time that has passed that I will just comment, I think that Steve Wilson and the work that he and his group are doing shows what a positive impact that art can sometimes have on young people and that it is better to invest in that kind of positive way rather than having to deal with young people who fall afoul of the law and ending up with all the costs that are associated with the justice system and the prison system. Clearly, things that we can do in a positive way in this area would seem to be meritorious.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just one more question to go back to Tourism, and that is in regard to Gull Harbour again. Gull Harbour resort is situated in park land. I wonder if there is any consideration going to be given to transfer land out of park land for the appropriate or for the right purchaser.

Mr. Robinson: It would be premature for me to speculate on what the company that has been contracted to do the work, what kind of recommendations that they will come back with, with respect to the reality of the location of the resort. I think that we will listen to what the recommendations are. We will have to deal with that issue when it arises. We are cognizant, and I know the Ernst & Young company is very much aware too of the reality of the uniqueness of this resort and its location. I know that sensitivity will be a given. I think that we expect it to be the recommendation to come in a form of it being a lease, not a transfer.

Mrs. Taillieu: So I take that as that the government is considering doing that?

Mr. Robinson: No, I am just simply speculating. I cannot venture into that territory. I would want to see the recommendation. When we come to that then it has to be carefully looked into.

Mr. Cummings: Just to follow up on my colleague's question, a sale is not off the table. I understand the

difference between sale and lease, but can the minister provide us any assurance that a sale is off the table?

Mr. Robinson: I am only speculating that it would be a long-term lease. The other department, Conservation, knows that this is a park, so the sale would be highly unlikely. I am only speculating that the recommendation that would come back, if indeed there are other uses found for the resort, would come and would require a lease. I do not foresee a sale occurring because of its current location and the designation of that location.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I appreciate the minister's candour, but I still bear the scars from parks being sacrosanct. I am asking for a firm answer that a sale is not an option.

Mr. Robinson: I do not want to predetermine what Ernst & Young are going to do. They may come back with a recommendation not to sell. On the other hand, they may come back with the recommendation to sell. I do not want to venture in that area because I do not know. I do not think anybody really knows, but indeed there is some work that has to be done. I eagerly anticipate their report. That will be tabled with government in late spring.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I will only ask one more question in that respect. I recall being chastised for selling a half an acre of gravel parking lot because it was park. I would hope that the minister would take that message back to his colleagues that if a sale is an option they be prepared to defend the idea of de-parking.

Mr. Robinson: I will take that advice from a senior member of this Legislature whom I have great respect for, and keep it close to my heart.

* (16:50)

Mrs. Taillieu: I would like to move on from that then to go into the Arts Branch, which we would go to page 33. Actually, my questions in this regard are fairly global, not really related to lines here. But just to refer to what I am looking at, I was just going to ask the minister if he can tell me the current value of the government's art collection.

Mr. Robinson: It is roughly \$3 million for approximately just a little over 2700 pieces.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister give me a breakdown, or perhaps a list of where the pieces of art are located at the present time?

Mr. Robinson: They are located in provincial buildings, whether it is the Department of Justice. Certainly it could be viewed on-line. We do not usually get specific on that because of security reasons. However, certainly, in a private discussion, I would gladly talk with the member about some places that they could be viewed, but they are certainly available on-line. Most government offices, the buildings, this building and other public buildings, certainly the art work is located there, judges' offices, ministers' and deputy ministers' offices in this building and other public buildings included. But, specific locations, sometimes it is a little touchy because of security considerations.

Mrs. Taillieu: While I do not think it is the minister's intent to say that government offices are insecure and subject to losses from there, however, I suspect, though, that perhaps he would maybe have a catalogue of the pieces of art.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, I do believe I responded to that question in the earlier one. They are available on-line and they could be viewed there.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister tell me when the art collection was last appraised and the level of insurance?

Mr. Robinson: Like other governments, we are self-insured. Currently, we are engaging some experts to provide advice to our government on evaluating the worth of some of the artwork that we have within government and that we are responsible for.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister tell us what the budget is for acquiring art and where it would appear in here?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, we do have \$13,300 for acquisitions, \$12,000 for maintenance and I believe that could be found under Supplies and Minor Capital.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just moving on to Film and Sound, recognizing the achievement of Film and Sound and the expansion of the industry in Manitoba and how it has brought a number of productions into the province and also supported a lot of artists, but I did have a question in regard to line 3, Film and Sound

Development, being \$3,641,900, which would be the amount expended by the province. Yet, in the Manitoba Film and Sound annual report, it is on page 29 of that report, the revenue from the province is \$2,352,626. I believe that would be from the last year, so even just using last year's figures, there is still a \$1.3-million difference. So it appears that, on one hand, the stated revenue by Film and Sound is less than the expenditure claimed by these Estimate books.

Mr. Robinson: We have not tabled the annual report of the Manitoba Film and Sound Corporation for 2003-2004. The report being referenced by the member is 2002-2003, and that was prior to the announcement of this government in last year's budget, in the 2002-2003 budget, of the \$1-million increase by the Province to continue growing the film industry and the \$1-million increase that this government provided to Manitoba Film and Sound in last year's budget. So it is not reflected in the '02-03 annual report, as she has alluded to. However, when the report becomes available for '03-04, it will be reflected on there, I am sure.

Mrs. Taillieu: When can we expect to have the annual report tabled?

Mr. Robinson: Ordinarily, these reports from Manitoba Film and Sound reach us in late July. I am obligated to table them in the Legislature in the fall. So I would expect to table them during the fall sitting.

* (17:00)

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for that. It is just a bit confusing when there is only one line in the Estimates book for Film and Sound Development, and the Estimates book comes out with the process of the budget, and then the annual report for Film and Sound comes in later. So it is a bit confusing and a little hard to interpret. I guess I am thinking along the line that this will happen the same way when tourism becomes a one line item, as it is proposed, to become an agency similar to Film and Sound, where it is just very difficult to see how the money is flowing there.

Last year there was a fund called the New Media Equity Fund that was to provide, I think, \$300,000 annually over three years, but I do not see a reference to this fund. But there is a new fund called the

Manitoba Interactive Media Fund. It appears to be the same. I am just wondering if you can confirm that.

Mr. Robinson: That item will be found in the annual report of Manitoba Film and Sound under the heading of new media, I believe, interactive media.

Mrs. Taillieu: For clarification, is that in the next annual report?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, it will be, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thanks to the minister for that. I note that the CEO of Film and Sound was seconded to Canadian Television Fund for a period of several months last year. I just wondered if her remuneration continued when she was seconded.

Mr. Robinson: During the time of her tenure at the other location, her salary was paid by them. Her salary was not paid by Manitoba Film and Sound.

Mrs. Taillieu: I just wanted to congratulate the minister on his trip to Edmonton in support of the Winnipeg initiative to have the Junos here next year. I just wondered if the minister could provide the names of the people that accompanied him on his trip, their itinerary and their expenses for that trip.

Mr. Robinson: From my office, it was only myself. I went on a weekend fare. I stayed in a modest hotel. Accompanying me were members of the business community in Winnipeg. I cannot tell you what it cost them. As far as spending government money, it would be my fare and my hotel, and that would be it, I think. There are others, of course. There was quite a contingent of Winnipeg and Manitoba people that were there promoting our city, the city of Winnipeg, as part of the Juno promotions.

Included in this trip I am advised that it also included Mr. Mike Benson, who is an arts consultant from the Arts Branch of our government. Harold Ranville, who was previously employed and now at MARIA which is the Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association and our colleague, the MLA for Fort Garry, so that would be the cost of our contingent from government.

Mrs. Taillieu: Perhaps the minister could provide me with the details of the expenditures. I am

wondering if there were expenditures for entertainment costs.

Mr. Robinson: Aside from the travelling expenses, hotel accommodations and so on, from the Province that was what we spent. I cannot give an accurate figure at this time.

On the entertainment part, we did have a Manitoba Night which was cost-shared with the city, the private sector, and the provincial government of \$10,000 each to host the Manitoba Night, which was emceed by Fred Penner and Ray St. Germain and featured performances by Burnt, Eagle and Hawk, also Harold Ranville who is a local artist, as well as Randy Bachman, along with Doc Walker.

It was probably one of the better entertainment venues that there was in Edmonton. Of course we are a little biased and we were trying to promote our city and ensure that we have a good audience in Winnipeg when the Junos come to our city on April 2, 3 and 4, 2005. For the member's information, that is basically the breakdown. The precise figures I could provide for her in due course when that information becomes available.

Mrs. Taillieu: I congratulate the minister again on the Manitoba Night. Just a question in regard to the artists that were performing there, and I am sure they did a wonderful job, I wish I had been there. Were their expenses covered?

Mr. Robinson: All the artists that performed there were actually nominated for a Juno so their expenses were covered by CARAS, which is the Canadian Academy of Recording and Arts Sciences, which take care of the Junos. So no, there was no expense from the Province. In fact their expenses were covered because they were Juno nominees.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Taillieu: I thank the minister for that. Just a question in regard to the Public Library Services. Of course I wish to recognize the increase in the budget to public libraries across the province as there has not been a funding increase for quite some time. The minister indicated in a letter to a constituent: "It is my department's intention to undertake a review of library funding through the Public Library Advisory Board."

The issue of population change will be a part of that review and the minister indicated the public

reviews would be held in the summer. I am wondering if the minister has a schedule for the public reviews of library funding.

Mr. Robinson: We were very happy with the ability to increase the amount of money that rural libraries receive. I recall saying that the \$300,000 increase from last year, I recall saying that we were going to do a review. However, we are currently manpower shy, if I could put it that way, in order for us to conclude a review.

Nevertheless, the dialogue continues with groups like the AMM and others, and we have decided to put the review on hold until such time that we are in a position to carry on with the work that is required, but certainly that is on a radar screen. That is something that we would like to do, and we have discussed this matter with different groups and others, including the AMM. We believe that it is important to have a catalogue of what is available in the province of Manitoba at the current time.

Mrs. Taillieu: I am going to ask a question in Recreation and Regional Services under Grant Assistance, and this is just for clarification. Recreational Opportunities Program, Recreation and Regional Organization Grants, Community Festivals and Events, and, again, I say just for clarification, I wonder if the minister could give me an example of what would qualify, just one thing that would qualify under each of these things so that I understand what, if I were going to refer people to grants, what area would it go into.

Mr. Robinson: Certainly, we are trying to place emphasis in order to not only encourage recreational activities by the youth of our province, but indeed we are trying to work with recreational groups, including a group called Rec Connections based out of Portage la Prairie. I have had the occasion of meeting with these people over the last several months on a couple of occasions.

We have engaged on an idea which will enhance people's participation in recreation which does not necessarily have to be in the form of recreational activities as we understand them, whether it is organized sports activities, but in canoeing, kayaking, outdoor activities. These constitute as well as being significant recreational opportunities. We are doing some work with these people known as Rec Connections, and we are providing, as well, financial

assistance to municipal recreation commissions, encouraging the establishment of partnerships among the communities and places like the school divisions to develop meaningful recreational programs, we believe.

At the same time, if I may, Mr. Chair, respond to our colleague with respect to the community festivals and events. We have budgeted this year, I believe, \$215,000 roughly for signature events and others, but one that stands out would be something that is very close to her heart, and I know a very significant activity in her constituency, and that is the Morris Stampede. There are other activities like that throughout the province of Manitoba which our government is lending some support to.

Mrs. Taillieu: The Community Places programs have actually seen a decrease of about \$400,000 and, thank you, the minister's department did supply me with a list of Community Places grants. I looked over that just to see where the grants were going. Interestingly, 21 of the 26 grants that were higher than \$25,000 have been distributed to NDP constituencies, and only 5 to Conservative areas, although in lesser monies it is fairly well distributed.

In looking over the distribution of monies, I just had one question in regard to a provincial money that was allocated, and I am not sure, maybe the minister can correct me on this, but I am wondering why provincial money would be allocated to a federal reserve. I just noticed that Fort Alexander Reserve had received \$10,000, and I just had to question if that was an appropriate allocation. Maybe the minister can advise me on that.

Mr. Robinson: Since the change in government we have tried to make this more of an inclusive program in the province of Manitoba. The member will also note that there was money that went to Tadoule Lake, one of most remote reserves in the province of Manitoba.

Certainly, I can say that First Nations communities are probably among the highest-need areas that require Community Places monies. I think that we have been trying to be fair. Given that there are 62 First Nations in the province of Manitoba, I think, relatively speaking, they are not a significant player in the allocations that occurred these past couple of years.

There have been some changes as to how the Community Places Program works. For example, the maximum funding available now through Community Places is up to 50 percent of the first \$15,000 a project costs, and up to a third a project costs over that amount. That maximum grant amount is \$50,000. So the question could be why has Community Places funding been decreased from previous years.

We believe that in practical terms, the of funding available through the Community Places Program has not been reduced. The amount of funding which applicants will receive from the Community Places Program will be unchanged from the previous years. In previous years, although the theoretical maximum grant was 50 percent of project costs, that level of funding was rarely approved for projects larger than \$15,000. So it kind of works itself out in the end, and we believe that it is something that we are proud of.

We approve, roughly each year, \$2.5 million. We must remember that this is a program that was once worth \$10 million to us in the province of Manitoba but, over the years, has taken a decline to where it is at this year which is in the neighbourhood of \$2.5 million.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you to the minister for that. I was just seeking some clarification on that one point, and I would like to thank the minister and his staff for their open dialogue today. I am prepared to move to line by line.

* (17:20)

Mr. Chairperson: We will read the resolutions into the record.

Resolution 14.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$41,709,200 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Recreation Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,946,700 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Information Resources, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,613,500 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Tourism, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,931,300 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Capital Grants, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 14.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$293,300 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is Item 14.1.(a) the Minister's Salary contained in Resolution 14.1. At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the table for consideration of this last item. The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Taillieu: We will pass that.

Mr. Chairperson: We will read Resolution 14.1 into the record.

Resolution 14.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,827,500 for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for this department. What is the will of the committee? Is it the will of the committee to call it 5:30? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5:30, committee rise.

TRANSPORTATION AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be continuing with consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Government Services. It was previously agreed to consider these Estimates in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): When last we met, I was asking the minister about the allocation of funds from the provincial gas tax which will now be fully allocated, as I understand it, to supporting the construction and maintenance of roads.

One of the issues which has come up quite often relates to the federal gas tax, and of course a portion of the money raised through the federal gas tax is then transferred back to Manitoba through the equalization transfer, which last year was \$1.4 billion.

So my question to the Minister of Transportation is will he be making the case to the other members of his government that a portion of that \$1.4 billion should come back to his department to be spent on the construction and maintenance of roads.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I thank the member for the question. With regard to funds and dollars that are coming to the province from the feds, the argument has been made and many rural municipalities make the argument about the \$165 million approximately in gas tax revenue that the federal government takes out of the province and that is the argument that municipalities have been using.

Having said that, the dollars that come to the Province of Manitoba are, of course, in general revenues, and each department makes a case for dollars. I mean, I will continue to make a case for Transportation, but our Cabinet as well as many other cabinets work as a team and you work on your priorities. In our particular case, we are looking at Education and Health as being the two fundamental priorities that we have.

So those are the areas where they have taken most of the dollars over the last five years and that is understandable. We understand it because we made a specific decision to direct our dollars that come into the province, revenues that we certainly have, have been dedicated or geared to health care and education because they have been a priority to us.

So the member raises the question about the whole issue around gas tax and I think when you are talking about gas tax, gas tax may be an issue this coming federal election whenever that may be. A lot of Manitobans are going to be asking questions about the gas taxes that are taken out of the province and saying, "What are you putting back? How much of that specific gas tax that you take out of the province, how much do you put back into Manitoba?" So, I mean, they will have to answer that, and they will have to be accountable for that. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: The 1.4 billion which comes back, which includes some component of the tax raised through the federal gas tax, that \$1.4 billion is there to provide equality of services across different provinces. I mean, that is the nature of how it was organized in the agreement. The question here is: As regards transportation, construction and maintenance of roads, one of the services that you as a minister believe is critical to equalize from one province to another, are you going to make the case that some of that \$1.4 billion which comes in equalization should be spent on the construction and maintenance of roads in Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you for the question. How about if I pose this question to the member from River Heights: You supply us with 50-50 funding on health care again and that will open up the purse strings a little bit for transportation. The federal government used to provide 50% funding at one time in health care. If they did that, I would do that any day. Do that tomorrow, Mr. Prime Minister, and we will get more money for transportation.

Mr. Gerrard: Well the minister gives me more credit when he says, "Mr. Prime Minister" and you. I am a provincial leader. We have separate parties. We are an opposition party here, and all I am trying to do is to understand what the provincial government's priorities are.

Whether this minister believes that the services which should be equalized under equalization include the roads and the construction and maintenance of roads, and whether the minister believes that some of the federal gas tax which is collected and then transferred back under equalization should go to his department. But it would appear that the minister is going to sort of dodge around this issue, and, you know, or call for all sorts of things which I did not even ask for in the first place.

Because the time is pretty pressing and I promised the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) that I would be quick, I will just ask the minister about one road. A number of years ago the road from Glenora to Pilot Mound, the hydro poles were routed so that there could be a more direct road put in for part of the distance between Pilot Mound and Glenora.

Is the minister planning to build a road by the hydro poles or is he just going to leave the situation as it is at the moment?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. We cannot hear. The minister is trying to reply here.

Mr. Lemieux: I know the member from Carman is always very interested in any roads even coming close to his constituency, but the member from River Heights is also concerned about those roads. I appreciate the question. I believe we are referring to Highway 253, but the member is right. There were hydro poles that were moved, utility poles moved. Once again, it is in the queue and it is part of that \$1.3 billion or \$1.2 billion of requests. I mean, I appreciate the question very much, and once again these are these difficult challenges that we have. I appreciate the question.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask for a very specific number contained in the budget that has been allocated in the Estimates for construction, operation and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Lemieux: What we are looking at is that the total maintenance and preservation dollars are \$111,485,500.

The infrastructure capital is \$87,167,600. That is less third-party that we talked about, from the feds or other third-party recoveries, minus \$8,230,000, which leaves us with total infrastructure-related expenditures at \$190,403,100.

Mr. Faurchou: Just to understand it clearly here, the \$111 million, is that actual expenditure or is it 121 less recoverable? I am trying to get the actual amount of expenditure planned for this year, because

you had said that also there is \$26 million that is going to be amortized, which is recovered here. So really it is \$111 million plus \$26 million plus the operational side of things at \$65 million. It is the total amount of money for construction, operation and maintenance of the transportation infrastructure.

* (15:00)

Mr. Lemieux: Just a question for clarification for the Member for Portage. He used a figure \$26 million. I am wondering where that is coming from. Where is the reference or what are you referring to?

Mr. Faurchou: The \$26 million came as a recoverable expenditure because that was referred to, as far as the capital investment, where it is going to be amortized or debenturized over time. So essentially it is an expenditure this year, but it is not really in the books on the basis you do not have to pay for it right now because you are amortizing it over a number of years.

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to state to the honourable member that he will recall and note that the combined maintenance and preservation budget has grown by \$2 million this year from a budget of \$109.3 million to \$111.5 million. That is approximately, because I mentioned before that the maintenance and preservation was \$111,485,500.

When you take a look at the enhanced budget as now shown in Part B, capital expense, it shows projects like reconstructing existing roads, new construction such as twinning or intersection improvements. There are federal-provincial projects such as the SHIP Program and the Prairie Grain Roads Program as well as the Airport Capital Assistance Program.

So the budget figure is now showing net of federal contributions. The capital investment budget has grown by over 10 million this fiscal year and expected to grow by another 10 million next year.

If you take a look at the total infrastructure related expenditures last year, in '03-04 it was \$178 million, almost \$179 million. This year it is \$190,403,000.

Mr. Faurchou: Thank you very much. So we are looking at the \$190,403,000 of anticipated expenditures this year.

The second question is in relation to a figure of dollars that are extended by the department to municipalities for their transportation and infrastructure systems. Is that a combination of grants in assistance as well as work in municipalities and local government districts?

Mr. Lemieux: Just to make reference to the number, the question of the member from Portage la Prairie, asking about work in municipalities and local government districts and organized territories, there is a slight increase to \$3,265,900 from approximately \$3,238,600 last year. So there is a slight increase with regard to dollars to work in municipalities and LGDs and unorganized territories.

Mr. Faurchou: In regard to the LGDs, how many are there at the present time?

Mr. Lemieux: When I said work in municipalities, it should have been former local government districts and unorganized territories, but I will check and see, I think there might still be one in northern Manitoba, but I will double check that. The member from Carman is correct when he was wondering whether or not there are any that still exist. I understand there might be one, but I am advised that in most cases it is the former local government districts.

Mr. Faurchou: I appreciate the answer. Now, the bottom line in all of this is that we are being asked to debate tomorrow and pass into third reading, after public hearing, a bill, The Gas Accountability Act. What then currently are we looking at under present Estimates as to increased funding to transportation infrastructure bases, this act?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the member for the question. This question might be better posed to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) with regard to that act.

Mr. Faurchou: One last question I would like to ask is that of Government Services as it pertains to a building that currently houses the Department of Driver and Vehicle Licencing. I just want to ask, as to that building, what Government Services has planned for that facility and others that currently house individuals responsible for. Could you lay out the plan now in regard to the pending agreement?

* (15:10)

Mr. Lemieux: I believe it is 1075 Portage Avenue, currently, where DDVL is located, a provincial building. Currently, that building will be used by the staff who are there and, because there is a transition phase with regard to the movement of DDVL over to MPI, the staff, I am advised, will continue to stay there and continue to use that building. Because of the transition, my understanding is that, and I have been advised on this, the building will in all likelihood be sold to MPI; but, with regard to the business decisions, because it is a phased-in process, we will have to see what transpires with regard to DDVL and MPI.

Mr. Faurchou: So then the building sold to MPIC will then be as an asset sale and revenues to the province. After that takes place, then the DDVL staff that are still in the building will then be renters, or they will be leasing space from MPIC for the activities that are staying with the department.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, DDVL staff will be MPI staff, right? I mean, that is the move. Essentially that building will be in all likelihood MPI's building, but, I mean, there is no contract or agreement at this particular time of sale or anything like that to MPI. That is where it stands as of today.

Mr. Faurchou: I am a little confused insofar as the supplemental issue of Estimates here indicates that there will still be a significant number of personnel of DDVL origin that will be on the Transportation payroll this year. I am confused. If all personnel are moving over to MPIC, then we asked about one particular individual, that being the Chief Registrar, is not moving. I know her office is in there. So just one example would be her position.

Mr. Lemieux: I believe the member is referring to page 75 in the supplementary information booklet, which shows 296.65 staff or FTEs. Then this particular '04-05 will show Total Salaries and Employee Benefits at 148. But next year that number, if you see the small, little asterisk, not an asterisk but a No. 1, it says: Reduction in expenditures and FTEs reflect a transfer of resources to MPI Corporation effective October 1.

As I mentioned before, there is a transition period related to this movement of DDVL over to MPI. We believe that it will be very, very successful in not only the movement of the people over and staff, but the reasons for doing so, as was stated in

the Deloitte & Touche report that the previous government received.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I have a couple of questions in regard to just some issues that I had to leave unfinished when I left to go out to another Estimates on Thursday of last. That is in regard to a couple of questions that the minister indicated that he would provide some information for me. I wonder if they had it today, in regard to the costs of running the ferry at Pipestone Lake in the Cross Lake region.

Mr. Lemieux: I would just ask for the indulgence of the member that if we could have slightly a bit more time. The department is looking for that. We tried to put together a number of different answers for the member from Russell as well as a question that you had asked with regard to further information about the clarification of funding provided by Manitoba Hydro related to the Netnak or Pipestone bridge project. That particular question I have an answer for, but the other portion of that, the ferry question, we do not have the dollar figures here today, but we will get that if the member will provide us with a little bit more time. We will be able to provide that for the member.

Just to answer the question that the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) had raised with regard to the Manitoba Hydro-related project, the Pipestone bridge project, the total cost for the structure and related road works, the approaches and alignment is \$25.2 million.

The project is cost-shared with Manitoba Hydro as follows: the Province of Manitoba is \$11.4 million and Manitoba Hydro is \$13.8 million. That adds up to \$25.2 million. As of March 31, '04, approximately \$18.2 million has been expended on the project as follows: the Province of Manitoba has expended \$9.7 million and Manitoba Hydro is at \$8.5 million for a total of \$18.2 million. Project expenditures for the '04-05 fiscal year to complete the project are about \$6.9 million, almost \$7 million, to be funded by the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro.

Manitoba Hydro's funding is provided directly to the general contractor based on invoices approved by the department. I know that the member was asking, trying to get the details behind that. We tried to be as accurate as we could. That is the reason why we asked for time, just to make sure we would get those numbers.

Mr. Maguire: So, if the minister could confirm, the Manitoba government just bills Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Hydro pays the Manitoba government for their share?

Mr. Lemieux: Manitoba Transportation and Government Services manages the project, but what we do is we receive the invoice or approve the invoice and then Manitoba Hydro pays that particular invoice to the contractor.

Mr. Maguire: Can the minister indicate to me what the population of Cross Lake is?

Mr. Lemieux: I understand that it is approximately 5000. I stand to be corrected, but I think there are around 5000 people up there. Once again, I have to comment that as a government we have made a commitment to northern Manitoba, whether it is dealing with the community of Churchill or whether it is dealing with the community of Cross Lake or The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, many communities in northern Manitoba. By that I mean we have also put in winter roads in Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet and Brochet area which did not exist before.

We continue to do work up north because we believe that northern Manitobans are Manitobans like any other Manitoban and deserve to have transportation into their communities. This Netnak bridge, I understand, at the deepest part of the river it is approximately 60 feet deep.

* (15:20)

I previously mentioned about the court cases, that there was also a Court of Appeal case, I believe, that stated that, as part of the Northern Flood Agreement, this community deserved to have access. So, as a provincial government, we are very pleased to be able to do our part to try to not only accommodate this ruling but also to provide that community with access that is needed in a dire way.

Mr. Maguire: Just to move on, the minister had indicated the other day that there was about \$60 million more that he could spend in his budget on this area of highways and maintenance, capital on maintenance since taking government. I want to remind the minister that the other day he indicated that they were tripling the amount of winter road monies used in winter roads from '98-99. I caution the minister that if you use those same years over the

three-year period up to the end of '02—and I would need to check to see how much that has improved in the last year, Madam Chair, but, yes, there was some increase in some funds put into that in an overall manner. I would caution that the administration costs in that area had increased close to 15 percent, while the maintenance and construction budget at that time had gone down 8 percent in those areas. So, while the minister is indicating otherwise, I am sure he is assuming that most of that \$60 million is going into maintenance and construction. I just have to ask him if he can confirm why that differential there, being so heavily involved in the administration side for salaries and other areas of administration.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. Everyone knows that when you are operating, if you are operating a grader or whatever the equipment is, the grader just does not go by itself; or if you are doing asphalt, it just does not happen by itself. You do have people that are also working on those projects and there are collective agreements that do take place and the numbers are generally reflected accordingly.

With regard to the Cross Lake Ferry, and I thank the member for that question, we were able to get the number. It is \$175,000 a year, give or take \$25,000, depending on the amount of hours that it is actually used. Let me remind the members opposite, I do not, and they know that I do not, I generally do not get very partisan on every issue. But with regard to that bridge, the Netnak Bridge, that was a case that was appealed. The Court of Appeal ruled that, and people can correct me if I am wrong here, but there was a ruling made that the government should act on it, and the previous government did not act on it. So we righted a wrong, if you want to call it that.

So I mean, I feel quite strongly about the fact that that community of Cross Lake deserves the attention of the Manitoba government to address that. They deserved, the courts stated, based on the Northern Flood Agreement, that this is something that was coming to them. This is not a handout from the Province of Manitoba. This is something that, as a community, they deserved this.

So, having stated that, I just want to state that I hope the member, and I am not sure if he caught the number. I know he was discussing an issue with his colleagues. The Cross Lake Ferry was \$175,000,

give or take \$25,000 depending on the weather conditions and so on.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Chair, I just have an issue that has come to my attention from an industry that is extremely important, not only in Manitoba, but, certainly, in the area that I represent, and that is in the oil industry, of which 95 percent of the oil industry is in Arthur-Virden in Manitoba. I want to bring to the attention of the minister the issue of weight restrictions. I know that most of the heavy construction equipment in that area that is used for drilling and for servicing wells is overloaded in the summertime for the 10 months of the year when we do not have road restrictions. I also know—

An Honourable Member: Near mainly Waskada or just over there?

Mr. Maguire: In the whole area. I want to bring to the minister's attention a concern that has been brought to me over each of the last three years, and that is the situation that, even though these people pay a special permit as the minister is, perhaps, even proposing under Bill 12, that they already pay this permit for 12 months of the year and yet for 2 months of the year they do not get to move anywhere. So, number one, why are they paying a permit for 12 months of the year? That is not the issue, though. The issue is, the situation we are faced with now in Manitoba, as I understand it, and the minister can correct me if I am wrong, is that we have a blanket policy that road restrictions come on on a certain date and go off on a certain date in this province. It is my understanding this year that is May 25, the first Tuesday after the long weekend here, a week tomorrow. I could be wrong on those dates but it is really around the end of May. That is not the issue either, but I just wanted to ask if that was the case.

The issue is there is an exceptional drilling program, and, of course, the minister can understand with oil prices at \$41 a barrel. Where the concern is here is that these people cannot get drilling rigs to come back from Saskatchewan if they get into Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's road restrictions ended at the end of April, and they have a program that they can re-instate road restrictions given a disaster that happened, like the snow of last week, on a 48-hour notice, which Saskatchewan has done over last

week's period. It is my understanding that we are losing about a quarter of a million dollars a day right now in investment in Manitoba because these people cannot move in Manitoba with a permit, with a guide or with anything else.

An Honourable Member: That is Saskatchewan.

Mr. Maguire: Well, even within Manitoba. There are rigs that have gone to Saskatchewan previous to restrictions coming on because they know that they can work in Saskatchewan for an extra month over what they can work in Manitoba. I realize that there was a four-inch rain in eastern Manitoba earlier, right at the end of March, but western Manitoba did not get any of that, virtually. Some areas got a half an inch, some might have gotten an inch. It is the driest spring we have had in western Manitoba in some 15 years. I would ask the minister if we cannot either do, now, a permit this week or even come into a process of differential movement for this particular industry for subsequent years because, and I realize it is very late, but there is an indication to me that there are service rigs, not drilling rigs, but servicing rigs, that are located in Manitoba, that if they could actually get into Saskatchewan could be working right now, and they are owned by Manitobans. They are losing about \$50,000 a day by not being able to operate in these areas and, even though in the one case, if this rig could move about two miles, they could go to work and it would take about three days to service each well that it is presently drilling.

* (15:30)

I can talk to the minister afterwards if we need to, but I just want to bring to his attention that while these roads are already dry in western Manitoba because of the circumstances this spring, even the snow that we had over the weekend has not left any water in the ditches in that area, it certainly has gone in and dried up and many of the dugouts still are not full in western Manitoba. So I would urge the minister on behalf of this industry to bring in a process of being able to allow them to do business in this province, because once those drilling rigs, particularly on the oil side, leave, if they are in Saskatchewan and it is easier to move a mile or two miles to the next well, they certainly will, as opposed to a drilling company have to pay \$15 to \$20,000 to bring that rig back into Manitoba to do work on a smaller project. So I would like to outline that to the minister.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the information that he puts on the record because it is important, that it is an industry in the corner of the province that he is most familiar with, but, as he mentioned, the truck productivity bill, yes, that is the approach that has been taken in Saskatchewan. Ours is a little bit different, but the idea behind the truck productivity bill was trying to address situations like this where you might have vehicles or trucks damaging the road. The companies are very much aware of it; they are willing to contribute to assist. It is a voluntary program. They do not have to participate in it, but it is voluntary, they feel that it is good for business, and we would also want to reflect that, too, as a government. We are not trying to discourage business in Manitoba. In fact, it is the opposite. We are trying to encourage business, so I appreciate the point that the member is making. It is an important industry in Manitoba. Even though much smaller than Alberta or Saskatchewan, it is still a very important industry for Manitoba and the corner of the province that he is from.

Mr. Maguire: I just want to let the minister know that it is detracting from the economy of Manitoba, that these people, as well, know that they could pay a permit. What they are afraid of with the proposed bill is that the fees will be high enough that it will be a deterrent to them being able to move in their own industry. They have indicated to me that they do not mind, if there is a concern with a provincial road or a municipal road that they are responsible for causing damage to, that they would and have in the past helped pay for them.

There may be circumstances where there have been more negligent companies that have not, but the ones that have indicated to me their concern would dearly like to have the ability to work even if it was later this week. I told them that I would be bringing this up today in Estimates, and I would urge the minister to look into it if we can in regard to allowing them to do some business, given the dryness of the roads in western Manitoba and the ability to carry them.

I want to, at this time, pass this over to the member from Carman. He has some questions on Government Services, I believe.

An Honourable Member: No. One more on highways.

Mr. Maguire: Oh, one more on highways.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I thank the member for the question, and it is an important issue. The department has looked at this. I mean, I am not going to pretend that they have not. They have looked at this over the last number of years, and when they are taking a look at road restrictions, the province is broken down in many ways into climatic areas, looking at the different precipitation rates and so on, and what quality or condition the roads are in.

The department has been looking at possibly looking at the southwest region as a different climatic area, because it traditionally has been drier than the rest of the province and arguably, looking over our history as a province, it has been, and so maybe it should be looked at as a different climatic area and take a look at what the restrictions are with regard to that area compared to other areas. The member from Arthur-Virden raises a good point, not only on behalf of his constituents but on behalf of the industry as well.

My concern is we do not want to detract from the industry, and I think we should, as a department, really seriously look at this climatic region as different than others. So the department is going to review that and take a look at it, but I thank the member for that suggestion, the suggestion of doing something about it and enhancing the ability for the industry to do business and not being a speed bump in the way.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Madam Chairperson, my question arises from the fact that this minister has been very agreeable to having open dialogue with members on this side of the committee room, and I guess it is not the venue that we should be using, but using his words, that he is willing to discuss certain areas, his terminology, when he uses the word "queue" and he uses it several times. I am going to be referring specifically to the 242 from No. 23 to No. 2. You will find there is a little jog on the 245 which leads me into some background. The 245, which travels all the way—to make it easier for you—right from Carman at No. 3, and it travels in a westerly direction. Then, when it hits the 244, it goes up to Notre Dame and from Notre Dame it travels west again.

From the time it leaves the 244 and when it goes west, it goes about a mile past the 242 and, at that point, is paved. So it is paved from the junction where you would turn north to go to Treherne all the

way back to Carman. Now, it actually ends there, I mean paved. If you go further west it is gravel. If you went north to Treherne it would be gravel. If you went south to Somerset it is gravel. So, we basically have not RTAC but we have paved road on the 245, up to about a mile past the turnoff to go to Somerset. Where would the 242 be in your queue? What would it cost to do the 242 from 23 going up to No. 2 to tie in with the 245, that is already paved, so it would give us some initiative to want to travel north of Somerset, south of Treherne, west of Notre Dame?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question, the member from Carman. What I am referencing when I say the queue, I am referring to over \$1 billion that is always put in of requests every year. It has been growing every year. It continues to grow and continues to grow because our transportation infrastructure system is deteriorating, regrettably. The roads are about a 20-year time span, and bridges, I understand, are about a 40-year time span, with regard to their ability to put up with wear and tear and so on.

Hopefully, I have answered the one question to the member about what the queue means. It is talking about the \$1 billion-plus of requested transportation infrastructure projects every year that come into the office.

Secondly, with regard to the question about much it would cost to do that, I have had the opportunity to look at the map in front of me, and there are approximate costs no matter what project you are looking at and the reason there is that is because of the quality of the existing road itself and the base that exists. But it approximately goes anywhere from \$275,000 to \$325,000, probably on average around \$300,000, to do such a road, and that is per kilometre, sorry. So it is expensive. It is very, very costly. I mean, the whole issue around transportation and transportation infrastructure is a very costly endeavour. You try to meet these challenges head-on as much as you can, because you are not only talking about roads, you are talking about bridges and airports and so on. So I am sure the member knows that. I will not repeat myself, but I thank the member for the question.

Mr. Rocan: The reason I do raise it is because, I guess, in our dialogue back and forth, and I understand that motor vehicle is being taken over by MPIC because on several occasions even MPIC,

there is not a week that does not go by that there is some kind of charge against that corporation for either windows or accidents. There is not a week that does not go by that there is some vehicle that has had some sort of a mishap in that section of road. It has to one of the worst pieces of highway that I have had the opportunity to travel on and I think I have travelled on every road in Manitoba.

Without a doubt, Mr. Minister, if there is a way to move that road up on the queue, and I am sure, with the support of MPIC and several other individuals, I would hope that the minister and the department staff and his ministry would look favourably at moving that one up on the queue. Even though I understand it is very expensive, by the numbers that he puts out there, if ever there was a need to fix a road, sir, I would venture a guess that that would be one of them.

* (15:40)

Mr. Lemieux: Just a quick comment, that we are looking at the roads all the time. I thank the Member for Carman for the question. He does a diligent job on behalf of his constituents, and I thank him for raising this particular road to my attention. The department looks at all the roads, but I can tell the member, if he has travelled on those roads and he thinks that those are some of the worst, I have travelled on absolutely horrendous roads on reserves in Manitoba in some of the reserve communities. I thank the member for the question.

Mr. Rocan: I would agree with the minister. I have also had the opportunity, sir, to drive on many of those roads. I have helped build many of those highways. So I am not going to get into a philosophical debate with you about the condition of the roads in southern Manitoba versus the condition of the roads on reserve lands, so I want to express my views that I agree with the minister.

Are we ready to move on to Government Services, or have you got some more highways questions?

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to ask the minister, in regard to the cost of the winter road from Lynn Lake to Tadoule Lake, I know that the minister has received a letter regarding a concern from Timber Wolf Trucking Limited. I wonder if he can indicate to me any of the circumstances around that particular

issue as well as including the costs of building the winter road and keeping it open from Lynn Lake to Tadoule Lake.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I should reiterate that this partnership between the community, the federal government, INAC and the Province is very important for winter roads. There is a big benefit to a lot of these communities, and I am familiar with the letter that the member raises from a local mayor. I thank the member for the question, but with regard to the specific dollars, we do not have those dollars broken down with regard to the specifics on that stretch.

Mr. Faurichou: We have to conclude the Estimates now. I just want to leave on the record, is there any projection as to the time frame for replacing the Women's Correctional Institute, which effectively was announced some years ago? In the last four years there have been basically no monies allocated for capital improvements and only a minimum maintenance budget on that 110-year-old facility.

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to thank the member for the question. No specific time lines as far as an exact date that I can comment at this time.

Mr. Faurichou: This question was deferred by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) to the Minister responsible for Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), from what start date to what completion date? I know we are looking for a search committee or a committee to be struck to look for location, but once that has been struck to completion of the building, are we looking at four years, five years, eight years?

Mr. Lemieux: With regard to what our department is doing, we are looking at approximately \$250,000. It has been included in our departmental budget to facilitate initial costs upon completion of the consultation process. We feel that the consultation process is important to have some input with regard to this important decision, and it is not a decision that we make lightly.

Mr. Maguire: At this time, Madam Chair, I guess we would like to proceed with the line-by-line.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 15.2.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$65,725,800 for Transportation and Government Services, Highways and

Transportation Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.3. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$38,073,100 for Transportation and Government Services, Government Services Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.4. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$125,609,900 for Transportation and Government Services, Infrastructure Works, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 15.5. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$145,824,800 for Transportation and Government Services, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Mr. Maguire: I just have a question for the minister in regard to the northern communities and the amount of dollars that go into winter road construction and that sort of thing, and making sure the people have access.

How much does the Province put into flying people out of remote locations like that, or is it totally a federal responsibility?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the question. I do not have the specifics. Health might have, if it is an emergency.

I am not sure if this is what the member is referring to, but Health might have those numbers. What kind of costs are attributed to flying people out of the northern communities into Winnipeg for health concerns or into another community because of health-related issues?

Madam Chairperson: The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Government Services is item

1.(a) Minister's Salary, \$29,400, contained in Resolution 15.1.

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

Resolution 15.1. RESOLVED that there be granted to her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,539,400 for Transportation and Government Services, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

That concludes the Estimates for Transportation and Government Services.

We will now proceed to Water Stewardship. Shall we recess for a brief recess? It is requested we break for a one-minute recess. Is it agreed? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 3:49 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:00 p.m.

WATER STEWARDSHIP

* (16:00)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): It was previously agreed to consider these Estimates in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Madam Chairperson, I have questions with regard to a news release and subsequent information with respect to a thousand cottage lots that has been proposed by the Conservation Minister. Of course, this is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), but it certainly has a bearing, I think, on his department.

First question is this. I am looking through the package that I received on the weekend, and I note that there are only seven cottage lots that are proposed for Lac du Bonnet constituency, in spite of the fact that probably there are more cottage lots within the constituency itself than any other area. There is good reason for that in the sense that the natural resources are there, the lakes, the rivers, the

forests and so on, which make cottage lots quite attractive.

The other thing I noticed as well, when I look at the Grausdin Point subdivision, which is the one that is being proposed. There are seven lots within there, Grausdin Point, which is on Lake Lac du Bonnet. I look through all the other subdivisions, or most of the other subdivisions in which there are lots that are available. There are three hundred and sixty that are, in fact, in this package in spite of the fact that the Province has identified seven hundred lots this year on draw. There are only three hundred and sixty, of which only seven are in Lac du Bonnet constituency. What I noticed about all of this is the fact that they are not new lots. They really are existing lots in existing subdivisions that have not sold. I would like the minister to confirm that is the case.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): The member is asking the question in the wrong set of Estimates. This is the Department of Conservation. As a former Conservation Minister, I can indicate the involvement of the department in the development of the lots, so I believe the difficulty may be the fact that the Department of Conservation has completed its Estimates. But assuming the member can raise these questions in the House or raise them directly with the minister, Department of Water Stewardship is not the department that is involved in this other than areas that might indirectly be part our responsibility, but it is the Department of Conservation.

Mr. Hawranik: I believe in the Estimates process for the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), in the Conservation Estimates, he was leaving it up to the Minister of Water Stewardship to determine how many lots and where and how many waterfront lots were available. He did not seem to answer too many questions of me during those Estimates. I thought maybe this minister would certainly have more answers, obviously not.

Mr. Ashton: The member need only look at the Estimates book to determine what the Department of Water Stewardship is responsible for, and cottaging is not one of them. The member can raise the questions in Question Period, Concurrence or other venues available, but if you want to ask questions to me about highways as well, I might know something about that as a former minister in terms of previous budgets, but I am the Minister of Water Stewardship

and have been since the department was created. If you have questions in regard to this matter, we do have a department and there has been the announcement, and I think would be appropriate to pursue them. The Department of Water Stewardship is, and I think I outlined the many areas we are involved with, but in terms of the direct provision of cottaging, that is the Department of Conservation and has been since the creation of the department in 1999 and, of course, predates that in the form of various other departments.

Mr. Faurschou: Just for clarification, it was the Conservation Minister that stated that the Minister of Water Stewardship would effectively give direction as to what water bodies would be available based upon water quality issues and available waterfront areas based upon the Minister of Water Stewardship and they would then look at accessibility in cottage lot development and other things, but it was Water Stewardship that was identifying water bodies that would be available for cottage development.

Mr. Ashton: The question that the member was asking was specifically from the announcement in terms of number of lots, where those lots are, et cetera, and that clearly is the Department of Conservation that has been involved with the planning with it. Clearly, they work with other government departments. If the member has questions that relate to any specific areas that come within Water Stewardship in terms of lakes, I am certainly prepared to answer that. The question was clearly about the cottaging announcement which was made by the Minister of Conservation.

The member knows that in the planning of any activity, you will be working with other departments and obviously taking into account other levels of government, whether it be municipal, Northern Affairs or First Nations or the federal government. The federal government has its own areas of jurisdiction through DFO, through other areas.

The question was raised in terms of the announcements, specifics raised in cottaging that clearly is the case. I am prepared to answer questions in regard to the Department of Water Stewardship on any water-related activities. I just want to make it clear that it is the Department of Conservation that in this particular case is the lead department, obviously, is the department that made the announcement for good reason because that is where the direct

jurisdiction lies in terms of the cottaging. If the member has any questions about any water-related areas, our budget is here, our staff is here. I previously introduced our staff. We would certainly be more than willing to answer that.

Obviously, in this particular case, I want to stress again, our department would be consulted in terms of whether there were any water-related issues on any proposal of government, whether it be this or dealing with protected areas, but clearly we are not the department that determines how many cottage lots go where. Our department is consulted when it comes to water-related issues.

Mr. Gerrard: I would like to ask about the department's plan with respect to Dauphin Lake. I know there was a memorandum the department was involved with in the fall of 2000 to develop this plan. Can the minister give us an update on status?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I thank the member for the question. I know he has raised this question in the House. I think if the Member for River Heights had the opportunity to talk to, for example, the West Region Tribal Council and residents of the area, he will know there has been a fair amount of work that has been done in terms of slot limits, in terms of conservation measures, in terms of permitting.

I can certainly give the member an update in terms of the latest situation. There has been a fair amount of, I think, very effective work done in that area by all that have been involved in terms of that. There have been a number of measures already taken.

I will perhaps undertake, if the member would like, to give him a detailed response. I could provide the exact details in terms of the advisory board that has been in place, the slot limits, the protection of spawning grounds, the permitting. So there has been a fair amount of activity that has taken place over the last number of years.

Mr. Gerrard: It would be helpful to have that. It would appear that there are a number of things that have been done, but there is not really a written plan summarizing the overall. I certainly take the minister up when there is an opportunity to do that. Can the minister give us a brief update on the status of the situation on Lake Winnipegosis and the planning process there with regard to the fishery?

Mr. Ashton: Well, as the member knows, we have put in place the Lake Winnipegosis advisory board, which has pretty broad representation. Certainly we know the challenge in the lake. There was a collapse of the pickerel stocks going back close to 20 years now. We are looking to the advisory board to bring together a broad view of people in the area, particularly people that know the lake quite well.

In fact, I certainly know that we put a lot of thought into the advisory board. I think that is fairly important. I just want to indicate that the board has been meeting, I believe, on a monthly basis. They are looking very specifically at issues related to the resource itself in harvesting, spring spawning protection, walleye stocking, which obviously is an issue that I know has been raised in the past, and habitat enhancement and protection.

* (16:10)

They are currently also planning to hold community round table meetings to ensure input from all interested parties. I think that is very wise, given the great amount of interest in what is happening. I want to indicate just by way of a bit of background that there was an index netting project back in fall of 2002. The reason it was not completed was because of low water levels that affected boat and harbour access.

Of course, I think the member will know we have had some general problems related to that. My understanding is that, based on availability, the round table is being planned for September as the latest update. So, certainly, that is important.

In terms of the current status of the walleye stocks, Fisheries advised us that the stocks continue to be stressed and that there are still significant challenges ahead in terms of stock recovery, and I look forward to the round table and the board dealing with the many complex issues that are going to be critical for us in terms of moving ahead and improving the situation on Lake Winnipegosis.

Mr. Gerrard: I keep on asking these questions to keep the minister's feet to the fire on this issue because, you know, it has moved pretty slowly during the first four-and-a-half years of this government. Does the minister have any plans with respect to Pelican Lake, given the significant fish die-off this spring there?

Mr. Ashton: Rather than delay the process significantly, because my understanding is that members are anxious to raise a series of questions and I do not want to delay things on each and every case, but what I can do is maybe get an update on Pelican Lake. We are actually reviewing a lot of the lakes this winter based on what happened.

I can indicate that it was certainly not as bad as we had anticipated. I mean, the initial projections last fall in terms of the drought situation and the combined impact of that with the weather have been helped somewhat by precipitation in the last period of time, but I will undertake to get an update on the lake and what the current status is in terms of fish in the lake.

I also appreciate the member, I think the phrase was keeping my feet to the fire. It is certainly the role of an opposition MLA. Having been in opposition for 11 years, I am sure there are a few toes of ministers that I probably burnt a little bit. Okay, probably more than just a little bit, but I certainly appreciate the questions.

I can indicate, in terms of the lake, one thing I am advised of is we are looking at stocking and the key challenge in that lake is eutrophication, it is the challenge that we are dealing with in many similar lakes with similar ecology. There are limits to what can be done. I mean, aeration is tried in some cases. It has limited impact.

I always liken a lake to an aquarium, and if you look at a pump that you need to aerate even a small aquarium, you multiply the capacity of water and I am sure the member will know, there are limits to what can be dealt with, but I will certainly provide the member with an update in terms of any of those particular lakes that he is concerned about.

Mr. Gerrard: I know the minister was planning to have some meetings on Killarney Lake. Can he give us an update on the situation there?

Mr. Ashton: I am glad the member asked this question, because the reason I was late was because I was meeting with Killarney and it just took place, actually, this afternoon. My intention had been to visit Killarney directly but because of responsibilities in this House, as in having to be around for Estimates, it was becoming quite obvious it would have been delayed somewhat.

Without getting into all the details of the meeting, what is being proposed is the use of a particular chemical to control algae and the chemical is not registered in Canada. It is used in the United States. We are looking, as follow-up to the meeting, at determining if the chemical is in application for approval in Canada. Obviously, we would then assess both through any federal restrictions or requirements, and our own, as to whether it would be applicable here.

What was also, I thought, quite useful in the discussion, we also talked in terms of some of the other activities that are taking place in Killarney. They have a committee that is really committed to not only improving the health of the lake, but also working with the conservation district and Killarney itself on ways of actually dealing at source with the problem.

So I was very encouraged in terms of that, but we undertook to find out if the chemical that is being talked about in Killarney is actually registered. We know it is not registered for use, but whether it is an application for registration for use here in Canada. Clearly the chemical is actually a pesticide. You would not use it unless it was registered, unless it met all the federal requirements, then any provincial requirements. We are going to follow up from the meeting in terms of that deterrent where the chemical is at.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if the minister can give us a status report on the Treherne Dam.

Mr. Ashton: I can indicate that there is continuing local interest and there has been work undertaken right now in terms of feasibility studies. I know the Department of Agriculture has been working with people in that area. Certainly, it is one of a number of proposals that I am aware of as minister that has been talked about for some time. But there is some work now that is taking place at the local community level in terms of looking at obviously the cost-benefit and what form it might take.

It really is in the same category as a number of other similar types of developments that have been raised in committee. There are many pretty good ideas out there. Obviously, you have to go through a feasibility stage, but you also have to look at cost-benefit as well. The local communities that see the benefits in this particular proposal are looking at that right now.

Mr. Gerrard: Can the minister provide his view of the encouragement or lack of it for tile drainage in Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: It certainly is something the department advises is not commonly used, but like any other type of irrigation and depending on the environmental impacts certainly could be considered. As I said, it is not common provincially, certainly not something that I am aware of as being something that is widespread in its use. I assume the member is either a proponent or an opponent of this or at least has some sort of sense of that. I certainly appreciate the member's feedback on this as well. As I said, it is not widespread in Manitoba currently.

Mr. Gerrard: Particularly around Carman and from the belt from Morden, Winkler, up to McCreary, there is increasing use of tile drainage, particularly with respect to potatoes, but also for other crops. It is interesting that in Ontario, approximately 50 percent of the farmland there is tile drained with significant benefits in terms of decreasing risk and increasing yields. It may be something that the minister could learn a little bit more about.

* (16:20)

My next question has to do with the Red River Valley and the report in the *Steinbach Carillon*, which shows that for a one-in-seven hundred-year flood that Emerson, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Pierre-Jolys, Morris and Winnipeg would be protected after the completion of the floodway, but that Grande Pointe, St. Adolphe, Niverville and Ste. Agathe would not be protected for a one-in-seven hundred-year flood. I would ask, is it the minister's plan that this would be an approach that he and the government would take, to make sure that certain communities are protected, but to have a lower standard for other communities.

Mr. Ashton: I believe this is a follow up to the question the member asked earlier.

Oh, by the way, I should mention on tile drainage there is a study that is ongoing currently to evaluate its effectiveness and advantages and disadvantages so I will maybe keep the member posted in terms of that particular study. I think the member is making a distinction between permanent and emergency floodproofing. Clearly, our floodproofing currently consists of permanent structures, whether

they be the floodway-related aspects, community dikes, emergency protection, the ability to put in protection when needed, and certainly we saw that in 1997. A fair amount of the Red River Valley is protected currently on a permanent basis, as has been the case the last number of years. We have put \$110 million in terms of floodproofing the Red River Valley. In fact, there has been \$120 million of floodproofing generally, not including anything related to the recent expansion of the floodway, and \$110 million of that is in the Red River Valley.

I think the real issue here, when you are looking at any of the floodproofing that takes place, you look at what is feasible, you look at what is cost-effective and, clearly, there are similar approaches taken throughout the Red River Valley, approaches that lead to different elements in terms of floodproofing in specific circumstances. I think if the member would look at it, many of the communities we are referring to would have the protection with additional sandbagging.

The Premier raised the issue of other areas in the province. We are looking very much at Peguis right now. The reason I state that is because there has been a lot of work post-1997 in the Red River Valley that has in particular also included Roseau River, the First Nations community, and I do want to add to what the Premier indicated earlier, that we do have some discussions right now ongoing with the federal government. We have actually been moving on an expedited basis. The Minister of Indian Affairs has directed staff to look at some immediate solutions to some of the problematic situations in terms of drainage in the area.

I just want to stress again that we take floodproofing very seriously. It is not a question of double standards. It is a question of what is effective in each and every circumstance, and what is effective may vary from community to community in terms of both the permanent or the diking capabilities. That is important to stress. If you go through the IJC process and report that was put together, the development of the floodway, that was essentially how we got to the choice of the expansion option, rather the Ste. Agathe option. It was based on what was appropriate, what was cost-effective, and the cost-benefit ratio.

We talked about the Treherne Dam just a few minutes ago. Any of those kind of developments,

whether it is for floodproofing or for other purposes, agricultural, recreational, it is put through the same kind of scrutiny, the cost-effectiveness.

I can certainly provide, if the member wishes, a summary of where we are at following that latest round. I believe it was \$110 million in terms of floodproofing. I think it might be useful for members of the committee. I can provide them with a complete list both of what has been done and, essentially, the flood preparedness that has resulted from the additional floodproofing.

By the way, also I will undertake to keep the member posted as to further developments in the design side of the floodway expansion because it is important to note the floodway expansion not only protects the city of Winnipeg to one-in-seven hundred-year level flooding, it does have impacts in parts of the Red River Valley as well, which vary according to how close you are to the floodway itself.

So it is not just about Winnipeg, or I should say, not "just," protecting Winnipeg is important, but it does have some other advantages for the other areas. I can also undertake to keep the member informed about some of the work that has also been taken as part of the design process to deal with some of the other related concerns, not just the level of floodproofing but erosion, in particular, groundwater issues which I have already announced.

We have some very significant news in terms of the design. We are now looking at going no lower than two feet. I know the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) asked me this in the House the other day, but that is very significant if you compare it to six feet and you compare ground-water impacts from what is happening. But I can provide the member with a complete list, if he wishes, of current floodproofing, both in-place and any further floodproofing that will result from the expansion.

Mr. Gerrard: I will close because the member from Portage is going to take over, but let me just in closing say that I think that what people are concerned about is that, whether it is permanent and temporary, the capacity and the commitment be there to take it to a similar level. I think that the article which, for example, appeared in the *Steinbach Carillon* which showed very clearly that there was a differential protection has clearly raised some

concerns, and I think legitimate concerns, and that it is important to have a look at those. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: I appreciate the member for raising the question. I can also indicate too that there is clearly need for further flood protection. I mentioned Peguis, but certainly there are a number of proposals including the Red River Valley that were not funded under the previous agreement and it may be something that we can undertake to look at with the federal government, not just dealing with the particular circumstances of Peguis, but other areas in the Red River Valley.

I want to put on the record we are very pleased with the federal support for Phase 1 of the floodway expansion, but I can list several other areas, I think, where we could use a federal-provincial co-operative effort, working with municipalities as well, and First Nations, to improve floodproofing. So I appreciate the member's concern.

Mr. Faurshou: One last question on behalf of my colleague from Arthur-Virden. I understand he approached the minister and the minister promised an update as to the Medora boiled water issue. He asked me how long will it be before that information is forwarded to him.

Mr. Ashton: I could tell you it is in the mail. It is not. We have a full package. We can deliver it personally. Maybe as critic you can deliver it personally so we have a complete update.

Mr. Faurshou: Madam Chairperson, I am prepared to move them line by line.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 25.2.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,480,400 for Water Stewardship, Water Management, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.3.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,577,300 for Water Stewardship, Fisheries and Water Quality Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.4.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,913,800 for Water Stewardship, Manitoba Water Services Board, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:30)

Resolution 25.5.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,575,000 for Water Stewardship, Capital Assistance Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.6.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$754,700 for Water Stewardship, Minor Capital Projects, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 25.7.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,134,200 for Water Stewardship, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship is item 1.(a) Minister's Salary, \$29,400 contained in Resolution 25.1. At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

Resolution 25.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,287,800 for Water Stewardship, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Thank you for recognizing me. Having had no opportunity to ask the minister questions, but this is certainly a good time since the minister is responsible for precious water resources of this province [*interjection*]

Madam Chairperson: There is a question from the Member for Russell.

Mr. Derkach: This is not a trick question. It is a straight-out, forthright question which actually involves the water resources on the Assiniboine catchment basin which is fairly important to the people on the western side of the province as it is throughout the breadth of the province.

Over the course of the last number of months, the staff of the minister and water resources personnel have been holding some preliminary information meetings, I guess, is the way to term it best with respect to raising the level of the Shellmouth Dam, the Lake of the Prairies by some six or eight feet, and I was wondering whether the minister has apprised himself of the impact of doing that on the Shellmouth Dam.

Mr. Ashton: I know the member has raised some concerns already in terms of the overall situation at the Shellmouth Dam. I can provide him with an update in terms of what is happening currently. I think I know some of the concerns that he is referencing. There are ongoing concerns with the Shellmouth Dam from some people who are obviously impacted.

Not having my faithful staff on my left-hand side here, I was going to suggest I can undertake to follow through in terms of that. Certainly, there are discussions going on now and the operation is very up front in terms of that. I am more than willing to not only update the member in terms of recent developments, but if there are any particular concerns, if he wants to place them on the record now, it would be appropriate. I have already talked to him as recently as a couple of weeks ago on the Shellmouth Dam, and we have had other discussions in the past. I certainly would undertake to do that after Estimates as well.

Mr. Derkach: Has the minister apprised himself of the master plan that was developed for the Shellmouth Dam area and the lake, that was drawn up in 1967, I believe, when the dam was built? Was a commitment made by the then-government to the people of the area?

The reason I ask this is because this is very much like the case of the northern flood agreements that were drawn up and took multitudes of years to settle. I just, as a matter of fact over the past

weekend, had the opportunity to go back to the maps and the master plan and look at the commitments that were made by the then-administration to the people of the area, because of the displacement of the many hundreds of people from the valley and also the acknowledged demise of a community that had some 540 people in it.

As a result, the impact of the flooding of that valley was to be mitigated by development along the lake. Some of that development included of course recreation development, some included agricultural development, some of it included such things as trout streams, fish spawning areas, all very conducive to environmental stewardship, if you like. At the same time there was also a fair amount of effort put into the development of a tourism industry.

Now, when we were in government, Madam Chair, and I am not saying this to pat myself on the back or anything, but it was a recognition of the commitments made that led us to invest in the development of the ski hill tourism entity which was part of the master plan. To that extent, I am wondering whether the minister has made any effort to acquaint himself with the master plan, with some of the commitments that were made to the area, and whether there is any movement with respect to furthering those commitments in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Ashton: Well, 1967 was a little bit before my time and perhaps the member's time as well. But I am certainly aware of the general background, going back to 1970, and the origins of the dam and its purposes and the ongoing pressures and the differing impacts both positive and negative from the Shellmouth.

But I would certainly undertake, if the member has any specifics from the 1967 agreement that he feels should be looked at particularly in regards to water stewardship. I am certainly open to any information he has on that.

The member and I have had a number of discussions on Shellmouth Dam, and he knows, having been in government, the various conflicting elements of what the dam does. It has been made even more complex with recreational use, for example, being a pretty significant element has to be identified, in addition to agricultural and other factors and of course its role in terms of controlling flows on the Assiniboine River as well.

So there are various elements that the member I know has raised certainly with me. I would certainly be prepared to look at this 1967 agreement. I am certainly aware of the Shellmouth Dam as construction and the subsequent refurbishment and the various elements with that.

The member, I know, is also aware of that as well but anything from 1967, recognize that it is before my time, if it is relevant to the current operation of the dam and other policies in the area, I would certainly be more interested in reading about it. I am interested in history largely because history a lot of times helps us interpret current events and gives us a much better sense of the future. So, if the member has any relevant information, I would be more than willing to look at it.

* (16:40)

Mr. Derkach: The reason I bring this to the minister's attention is that the minister knows that along with PFRA an outstanding claim at Kamisak was settled. Now this claim goes back to 1967 as well. That was finally settled and it was millions of dollars as I understand or a million-some dollars as a matter of fact and rightly so. It should have been settled. There are also outstanding concerns below the dam, which have not been resolved yet. Those stem back from 1967.

In addition to that, the commitment made by governments then to compensate the area for the flood mitigation in Winnipeg that the dam was going to do and for the availability of water to the loss of the area—now, when we see discussions regarding the raising of the level of the lake, it also brings back to me the other commitment that was made with respect to additional water on that catchment area. That was the construction of a dam on the Shell River which would allow the dam to be maintained at a particular level using the reservoir to either maintain that level or to enhance it as necessary.

So I simply would like to, and I waited for this opportunity when the minister's staff were not here to make sure that the minister was just not regurgitating what staff were telling him but to indeed take to heart that this, I view, is no different than the Northern Flood Agreement or any one of the northern flood agreements that was entered into in good faith.

Again, those flood agreements were entered into before my time and before the minister's time, but it took until the 1990s—here, I will do this because we did settle the northern flood agreements during our term of office, but it took that long. I am wondering whether the minister is prepared to look at it with the same serious point of view as the Northern Flood Agreement was looked at for the people who were affected by them.

Mr. Ashton: I am not sure how the member dealt with Estimates when he was minister, but I can assure the member that I never regurgitate what staff says to me. I ask for the latest information and advice where appropriate, but when I say something on the record it is not regurgitation. It reflects certainly, as minister, the department's view and more political questions, political, the Province's view.

Point of Order

Madam Chairperson: Member for Russell, on a point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Just so that we do not get embroiled into a long debate here, I will withdraw that choice of words, Madam Chair, because, sincerely, they were not appropriate. I could have used a better choice of words to try to make the point that I was trying to get to. That was that I really wanted the minister to think about it carefully because it is his view that is going to be important to the understanding of this.

Madam Chairperson: There is no point of order, and I thank the member for his statement.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Thank you. I certainly welcome the withdrawal. That may save us a few minutes.

I have more than direct knowledge of the Northern Flood Agreement because I represent three communities, the northern flood communities. War Lake, York Factory First Nation, and actually War Lake is not a direct signatory, but, certainly, York Factory, Split Lake, Tataskweyak and Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Nelson House, so three direct signatories and another community that has certainly been affected as well. I also represent communities that were not signatory to the Northern Flood Agreement, Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei

which had some impacts but there have been separate agreements.

I think it is important by the way, with the Northern Flood Agreement to recognize what happened in the 1970s. By the way, I remember the impact on the Burntwood River. It was significant flooding. There was no agreement. The agreement was not negotiated until the dying days of the Schreyer government in '77 and then was agreed to by the provincial government and the signatories to the agreement in 1978.

So I think the Northern Flood Agreement is somewhat different because essentially development took place and then efforts were put in place to deal with the various different problems that happened, and I can testify to them.

Each faced a different impact, Cross Lake for example. Many cases were lower water levels; other areas were higher water levels and had certainly a huge impact on the communities. So I am not sure if the Northern Flood Agreement is a direct parallel because, in this instance, I think what the member is pointing to are commitments that would have been made prior to the construction of the Shellmouth Dam, which was constructed in 1970.

I think it is important to note that, dare I say, those were the days, when in fact there was a very significant federal presence, PFRA, and this is one of the best examples of that in Manitoba. But certainly if the member is aware of that, if there are any particular elements of that, I am sure that when he was part of government they reviewed the same information, I am sure that in that 11-year period would have looked, very much, at implementation of every aspects and if Assessippi was seen as part of that, then certainly I acknowledge that, but if there was anything that was overlooked in the 11-year period that we should be looking at now, I am certainly prepared to look at it.

I am just going to look to my department here. That is not regurgitated. That is the way I operate, by the way, and I think the member knows that. I think that is the way most ministers do. I am sure he operated the same in government too. I am always open to additional information and additional perspectives.

With the Shellmouth, I will be the first one to say on the record, I have said it before and I will

repeat again, that we recognize the impact it had on the area, the many positive elements of the Shellmouth Dam, but the continuing issues, and I hate to use the word stakeholders, in this case, citizens of the area, many of whom are impacted very differently. I have met with a number of groups personally and I never cease to listen. You cannot always, by the way, with the wisdom of Solomon here; you cannot always meet all of the expectations or all of the needs. In fact, when you are making these operating decisions, clearly you are going to have impacts on some people. But certainly we have tried to minimize them. When I say we, I think the provincial government generally. This predates when I was minister and even predates us being in government, and it was very much part of the operation and management at the Shellmouth Dam, historically. But any more information? I am open to looking at it.

Madam Chairperson: This completes the Estimates of the Department of Water Stewardship.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Housing.

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

The committee recessed at 4:49 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:52 p.m.

FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Does the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing have an opening statement?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Yes, I do. I am pleased to present to this committee for its consideration the 2004-2005 Expenditure Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Housing. I look forward to engaging in a constructive discussion regarding the direction that our government has set out for the department in these Estimates. Recently, our

government outlined its funding commitments for this fiscal year in the provincial budget. It is a budget that focusses on building the foundations of a stronger, safer Manitoba. Our government's priority of supporting children and families today will provide for a brighter future for tomorrow.

This year's budget provides \$912.8 million for the Department of Family Services and Housing. This represents an overall increase of \$38.8 million or 4.4 percent over the 2003-2004 adjusted vote. Key areas for investment include services for persons with disabilities, improvements in our child care system, a restructured child and family services system to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Métis peoples, and improvement of housing conditions throughout Manitoba. I will elaborate on these priority areas later on when we will look at the department's main operating divisions in more detail.

But, first, I would like to say a few words regarding the department as a whole. The Department of Family Services and Housing is committed to improving the quality of life for Manitobans through furthering the social, economic and labour market inclusion of all citizens. We strive to ensure that diversity is respected, that people feel accepted and valued, and live with dignity and security. We work with the community to support Manitoba children, families and individuals to achieve their fullest potential. Family Services and Housing supports citizens in need to achieve fuller participation in society and greater self-sufficiency and independence. We help keep children, families and communities safe and secure and promote healthy citizen development and well-being.

Our mission is accomplished through provision of financial support; provision of services and supports that assist individuals to improve their attachments to the labour market; provision of supports and services for adults and children with disabilities; provision of child protection and related services; assistance to people facing family violence or family disruption; provision of services and supports to promote the healthy development and well-being of children and families; assistance to Manitobans to access safe, appropriate and affordable housing; fostering community capacity; and engaging the broader community to participate in and contribute to decision making and respectful and appropriate delivery of programs and services.

The department has three major program divisions: Employment, Income and Housing; Services for Persons with Disabilities; and Child and Family Services. In addition, the Community Service Delivery Division is dedicated to the delivery of the department's services throughout Manitoba and the Administration and Finance division is responsible for maintaining a comptroller function for the department.

The department also has two internal service providers: Policy and Planning and Human Resource Services. Two other units report to me directly: the Social Services Appeal Board is an independent board that hears appeals for the majority of programs and services provided by the department. The Disabilities Issues Office co-ordinates disability policy across government and reports to me in my capacity as Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities.

The department will be undertaking a number of initiatives this fiscal year. Some of the areas that we will be giving attention to include: expanding supports and services for citizens with disabilities; establishing a new children's therapy initiative; implementing year 3 of Manitoba's 5-year plan for child care; and completing the implementation of a restructured Child and Family Services system that will expand and extend services to First Nations Child and Family Services agencies to all off-reserve areas in the province, as well as to create a Métis Child and Family Services agent's authority for agencies and offices province-wide.

We are establishing a one-tier system of income assistance delivery throughout Manitoba, working with community organizations and other northern stakeholders to address housing issues for northern Manitobans in conjunction with other social and economic issues that contribute to a lack of adequate and suitable housing in northern and remote communities.

We are continuing to rehabilitate neighbourhoods in the inner-city areas of Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. We are implementing initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing in Manitoba under the federal-provincial Affordable Housing Agreement and are continuing the implementation of the integrated service delivery initiative so that we may better address the needs of citizens, shift away from program focus delivery

toward a broader emphasis on the multiple needs of the individual or the family and better coordinate social services to reduce barriers and create more accessible and tailored services for citizens.

I would like to add that the department is providing both financial and volunteer support to the Disabled Persons International World Summit to be held in Winnipeg in September 2004. Approximately 1000 delegates are expected to attend the summit, including representation from the United Nations, the World Bank and foreign government dignitaries. This event will provide an extraordinary opportunity for the Province to showcase its efforts to increase awareness of disability issues and initiatives to improve accessibility and supports for persons with disabilities.

I would also like to mention that the department has completed a strategic planning process to more clearly define its vision, mission and goals as part of a strategic management initiative currently being undertaken.

This employee-led initiative involves staff from all levels and areas of the department who contribute their knowledge and actively participate in the discussion and development of both long- and short-term priorities, goals and objectives, performance measurements, and program delivery improvement.

By more clearly defining the department's goals and program objectives, we can better monitor and measure the effectiveness of the services we provide. This information will, in turn, assist the department in allocating resources more effectively and to achieve maximum service results.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Family Services and Housing staff for their ongoing work on behalf of the department, their dedication to continuous improvement, and their commitment to the provision of high-quality service to Manitobans. I believe that the funding we have made available in 2004-2005 Estimates addresses our priority commitments for providing supportive and preventative services for Manitoba families and children. We are supporting persons with disabilities to live and participate fully in community life and assist persons with low income, and we continue to increase and improve the supply of affordable housing throughout our province.

These commitments support our government's goal of building thriving and safe communities in which to live and of providing affordable government for Manitobans. I am very much looking forward to this committee's review of the Department of Family Services and Housing's expenditure Estimates for 2004-2005, and I welcome the comments of committee members.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the Minister of Family Services and Housing for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable Member for Minnedosa, have any opening comments?

* (17:00)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): As we are going to have a very short period of time to do Estimates, I think we are just going to go into the questions.

Madam Chairperson: I thank the critic for those remarks. In Manitoba practice, debate of the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in Resolution 9.1.

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

Ms. Melnick: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my deputy minister and members of the department's senior staff: Debra Woodgate, Deputy Minister; Martin Billinkoff, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Service Delivery Division; Kim Sharman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment Income and Housing Division; Gisella Rempel, Assistant Deputy Minister, Services for Persons with Disabilities Division; Peter Dubiński, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Family Services Division; Grant Doak, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Administration and Finance; Jim Derksen, Executive Director, Disabilities Issues Office; Joanne Reinsch, Director, Human Resource Services.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister. We will now proceed to the remaining items contained in Resolution 9.1 on page 74 of the main Estimates book. Shall the resolution pass?

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you for your patience. Yes, I would like to go through the Estimates process through a global.

Madam Chairperson: It has been suggested that we have discussion on a global basis. Is it the will of the committee? Is it agreed? *[Agreed]*

Mrs. Rowat: I have never led this, or it has been a long time, so I appreciate the patience. I first would like to congratulate the minister on her new portfolio. Actually, for the last few months I have had opportunity to discuss issues with her. I appreciate the openness and the willingness to help. I have been through a few briefings and I would like to go through a few more over the next few years, but any that I have attended I appreciate the staff support and guidance and the response that I have been getting. So thank you very much, to start.

I would like to start with the organizational chart and probably some of the positions and to find out more or less where they are at. I would like to start with the non-political staff and just some of the changes that have occurred in the org, if that is fine. Policy and Planning Acting Director Jan Forster, could I get some background on where she would have come from?

Ms. Melnick: I would like to thank you for your opening comments. Certainly, if there is any information that you need in briefings, please do not hesitate to ask. We will be happy to help you out there.

On Jan Forster, she began with the management intern program and has worked through the department. Recently, we had Drew Perry go to Treasury Board; Grant Doak, we were fortunate to have him move into an acting position. So Jan is actually in the position that Grant was previously in.

Mrs. Rowat: Under the Employment Income and Housing section of the org chart, there seems to have been some changes to that area. I just wondered if you can give a little bit of background, but also to give me the names of the individuals heading up the four areas, please.

Ms. Melnick: Okay, we are just wondering, changes in what way.

Mrs. Rowat: I am looking at the org chart from last year's org chart, the Housing Program, Corporate

Services, employment and income programs, and the Manitoba Housing Authority. The structure is different and I just wanted to know when that occurred?

Ms. Melnick: The changes you are referring to were brought about through the implementation of the integrated service delivery where we have moved to the River East Access Centre, which I think you have been to. That sort of delivery service mode has brought about some reorganization of the department, so that we can be offering services in a more comprehensive manner. So those are the changes that you are seeing, but the people are still in the same positions.

Mrs. Rowat: I would like to discuss your political staff just to get a sense of whom is there and if people have moved on, where they have gone to. Carolyn Ryan is still, believe, with your department. I have just talked to her yesterday. I just wanted to ensure that she is in the role of special advisor.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, she is.

Mrs. Rowat: Once Carolyn moved into another area on September 25 of 2002, there was a time-lapse or space available between her and Nathan Laser. I just wanted to know if there is somebody in that position, executive position, a position between him and Carolyn.

Ms. Melnick: I think you are actually asking about Tom Garrett as opposed to Nathan Laser. Yes, I believe the person was Lonnie—I have to get Lonnie's last name.

Mrs. Rowat: Lonnie Patterson. Is Nathan Laser employed with the department?

Ms. Melnick: No, he is not.

Mrs. Rowat: Was he employed with the department anytime during 2003?

Ms. Melnick: No, he was not.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Rowat: Tarya Harapiuk was employed with the minister's office up until September 2002, where did this individual move to?

Ms. Melnick: I just want to correct the record. Nathan Laser is, in fact, one of our staff on this listing here.

Mrs. Rowat: On that clarification could I get some information, is he within the Department of Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, he is the executive assistant.

Mrs. Rowat: Is Nathan Laser an executive assistant with the Department of Family Services and Housing?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, he is.

Mrs. Rowat: Back to Tarya Harapiuk. Could you indicate to me where she is now placed?

Ms. Melnick: She is now with Labour Relations and Treasury Board Secretariat.

Mrs. Rowat: Thomas Garrett, his title and, I guess, I do know that he is still with your department, but his title, please.

Ms. Melnick: Special Assistant.

Mrs. Rowat: An individual by the name of Jane Gray was employed with the minister's office. Can you please tell me if she is still in the department and where she has moved to if she is not?

Ms. Melnick: She is with the Policy Secretariat.

Mrs. Rowat: Her position with the Policy Secretariat?

Ms. Melnick: I am not sure of her exact title. It is not part of our Estimates.

Mrs. Rowat: Susan Deane, if you could indicate to me where she has moved to.

Ms. Melnick: She is with the Council on Post-Secondary Education now.

Mrs. Rowat: Jamie Skinner, is she employed with Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: No, she is not.

Mrs. Rowat: I have on record here that she was on a term with the Social Services Advisory council. Could you confirm that?

Ms. Melnick: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I wonder if the minister could tell me how many housing units we currently have in Piney and how many vacancies there are.

Ms. Melnick: We do not have that information handy but we will certainly be happy to provide it for you.

Mr. Penner: What I would really like to know as well is how many units we currently have in operation in Vassar and in Woodridge and in Sprague and a list of them and which ones are operational, whether there have been any divestitures of units in any of those communities, and the other one is Middlebro.

The question I have is, I had received a letter a couple of weeks ago from a former constituent that has been moved to Ste. Anne. We have Manitoba Housing units in Ste. Anne, is that correct?

Ms. Melnick: Yes, we do.

Mr. Penner: The letter indicated some significant concern about the ventilation within that unit, and I was wondering whether the department might want to take a look at the Ste. Anne facility and check into the ventilation systems over there because of the complaint was about the stale air in the unit and that sort of stuff. So I wonder whether the department would want to take a look at that then.

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we would be happy to. I do not believe we received the letter within the department, but we would be happy to find out and certainly do what we can.

Mr. Penner: What I will do, I will pass the letter on to the minister. Then that way you have a name to attach to it now. I will see to it that you get it. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Rowat: Madam Minister, I would like to talk a little bit about the devolution process that is currently occurring in the department. I have several questions, if we could go through that.

Starting on page 69 of the Estimates book, I would like just some clarification on numbers, please. Under Other Expenditures, the total is \$291,000; in 1999-2000, it was 17.7; and last year Estimates, 54.6. Obviously, the major category

increases, the Other Operating, would be the virtual private network. I just wanted to ask the minister if she can provide me some background on that network and the status of the network and how it will benefit the department.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, the purpose of installing the virtual private network was that it is a secure system that would be available to all the authorities and agencies that were appropriate to have information about the children in care so that we could better communicate throughout the province to better care for the children.

Mrs. Rowat: I was wanting to know if this system will be available for shelter systems as well, women's shelter systems.

Ms. Melnick: This is for children in care, specifically.

* (17:20)

Mrs. Rowat: The status of the implementation of this system, where is it at in being made available within the department?

Ms. Melnick: We are rolling out the system as we are implementing the Child Welfare Initiative. To date we have finished Interlake, Eastman, Central and North, or formerly NOR-MAN.

Mrs. Rowat: The next line, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Child Welfare Initiative, the Estimates for last year in the Estimates book indicated almost \$5 million in expenditure allocation. As it turned out, on this year's Estimates it is looking like it is just under \$3 million. Can the minister indicate to me how much, I guess two points, why the reduction in allocation, and how much has been spent to date on the initiative?

Ms. Melnick: Madam Chairperson, \$2.1 million was transferred to the Child Protection Branch as core funding for the authorities and \$399,000 was a reduction that has occurred. The costs of implementation are being reduced as the implementation rolls out, so that is where the \$399,000 comes in.

Mrs. Rowat: I am just trying to determine what the total costs have been to date on the transition.

Ms. Melnick: We will have to provide that information for you.

Mrs. Rowat: I have a list of questions regarding the process to date. Is the Manitoba government making a concerted effort to recruit and train Aboriginal people to fill the positions within those four agencies?

Ms. Melnick: Actually, the question around the provision for students is in Advanced Education, but we have worked with Winnipeg Education Centre through Advanced Ed providing 25 new students over the next four years.

The authorities are responsible for the hiring of their own staff so they will be, in regard to your culturally appropriate, dealing with that. The province did set up standards for the hiring of individuals to work within the authorities. Those standards were developed in partnership with the four partners.

Mrs. Rowat: The Disability and Community Support Program offered out of Red River community college was mentioned. What in this program makes people eligible to work in Child and Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: It provides people the skills to work within the shelter system and in-home supports for children with special needs.

Mrs. Rowat: So the educational and hiring criteria will be acceptable to the Child and Family Services agencies that will be employing just based on this program?

Ms. Melnick: The focus of this diploma is to work with children with special needs throughout the Child and Family Services areas. So again, it could be within the shelter, it could be within in-home; but the training is specific to children with special needs rather than a position.

Mrs. Rowat: With the recruitment of individuals into the different agencies have there been any problems with the secondment to date of individuals into the different agencies?

Ms. Melnick: No, there have not.

Mrs. Rowat: Have there been any refusals by seconded workers to go into the newly formed agencies?

Ms. Melnick: No, there has not.

Mrs. Rowat: Have there been any accepted buy-out packages instead of relocating to a different area of Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: No, there has not.

Mrs. Rowat: The four child and family agencies, do they report directly to yourself? What is the chain of command for these agencies?

Ms. Melnick: The agencies report directly to their authorities.

Mrs. Rowat: So just to be clear, the accounting mechanism is to the authorities that are formed and those authorities are put together through what means? I have been looking at the Web site, but the Web site has not been updated since last year, so I am just trying to get a sense.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5:30, committee rise.

LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

* (14:40)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Will the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration. Will the minister's staff please enter the Chamber? We are at page 125 of the Estimates book. Questions?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Continuing where we left off on Friday, I was wondering if the minister could tell us is Karen Kennedy still one of the minister's special assistants.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): No.

Mr. Schuler: Well, I will ask then, is Adrienne Bage still a special assistant to the minister?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: Can I ask the minister who replaced Karen Kennedy as special assistant?

Ms. Allan: Adrienne Bage.

Mr. Schuler: Is Karen Kennedy still employed in the Department of Labour?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: What is Karen Kennedy's position now in the department?

Ms. Allan: Employment Standards Officer.

Mr. Schuler: And when did she start this position?

Ms. Allan: We would have to take that as notice and get that information back to you.

Mr. Schuler: Under the category of executive assistants, is Bob Luna still one of the minister's executive assistants?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us does Bob Luna still work for the Department of Labour?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us what the job description is of Bob Luna, what his title is?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Luna is on a term position in the Multiculturalism Secretariat and his duties include research and reporting on programs and funding mechanisms in federal, provincial and territorial governments to support multiculturalism. He is doing research. His title is program consultant.

Mr. Schuler: Is Brenda Reave-Deamel still an executive assistant to the minister?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: Does the minister have only one executive assistant?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Schuler: Under the category of special advisers, is the former Deputy Minister Tom Farrell still advising the department?

Ms. Allan: No, he retired.

Mr. Schuler: He has no contracts with the department. He is not on any kind of retainer. He is retired and gone fishing.

Ms. Allan: Yes. He is retired. He has gone fishing with one of those new fishing lures that the MLA for Morris was talking about.

Mr. Schuler: Well we certainly do wish him well. He deserves it.

Again, I just want to confirm with the minister, there are no other special assistants and no other executive assistants. There are only Adrienne and Brenda who are the two minister's political staff in her department.

* (14:50)

Ms. Allan: That is correct.

Mr. Schuler: Can the minister tell us, does she have a communications person assigned to her as well?

Ms. Allan: Excuse me. I have a correction. We have a person in our office that is assigned to the Workers Compensation Board, Nancy Hilliard, and I apologize to the member. He would have to ask his last question again so that I make sure I get it.

Mr. Schuler: First, I will deal with Nancy Hilliard. When was she appointed?

Ms. Allan: That is information we will have to get for the member.

Mr. Schuler: Just to that, there were two pieces of information the minister was going to get for us on Friday. Is that something that her department will just send to us in writing or how would I get that information?

Ms. Allan: It will all be ready by tomorrow so it is yours. We can get it to you however you would like it.

Mr. Schuler: If it could just be sent to my office, seeing as I suspect we will be done with the Estimates sometime this afternoon, so that could be done.

With the appointment of Nancy Hilliard, she is a political appointment, I take it.

Ms. Allan: She was appointed by Order-in-Council.

Mr. Schuler: What is her salary?

Ms. Allan: We will definitely get that information for the member.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to just touch on the Status of Women section of the Estimates. I was a little disheartened to learn that the Status of Women is now going to be put under the section of Labour. I guess I just have some questions for the minister responsible, as to the decision on putting the department, or the directorate, under the Department of Labour and if she would share on the background of that and the decision for that.

Ms. Allan: I just wanted to let you know that we are waiting for the staff person to join us from the Status of Women. In the meantime I will answer the question, if that is okay. When I became minister, I also assumed the responsibilities as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. We had a look at the department and thought that seeing as the Department of Multiculturalism, there is the same kind of relationship and it is part of the department, even though I am responsible for Multiculturalism we talked about the Women's Directorate being part of the department. We were looking for synergies, so we decided that it would be nice to add the Women's Directorate to the Department of Labour.

Mrs. Rowat: I guess the red flag that I see by assuming the Status of Women's directorate into the ministerial Department of Labour is, should the minister be a male at some point in the future and be responsible for the Department of Labour, would he then also be responsible for the Status of Women?

Ms. Allan: Actually, last year I went to an FPT meeting on ministers responsible for the Status of Women and it was hosted in Alberta by the minister responsible. The minister in Alberta is a male and I think it is interesting, but one of the things I do want you to know is that NDP governments in Manitoba have a tradition of having women as ministers of Labour, so that is probably a bridge we will cross some day. Maybe not.

Mrs. Rowat: As a woman and as a sitting member of the Legislature, I take great pride in being a representative for the women's groups and for being a voice for them at the table. I guess I am just a little bit confused as to the commitment or the interest in having a portfolio or a directorate that has done such great work over the past years and has become such a great network to the women's groups and to women

in general, that this is not a very progressive way to look at women's issues.

Again, I think it is a step backwards, so I just want to share that comment and take on record from the minister that she would like to see how this works, but I have some great concerns about where this is going and what the messaging might be to the women's groups out there, so I appreciate that comment.

Going to the Estimates book, I just wanted to check on the budgetary column on the Women's Advisory Council and ask if there could be some indication of dollars, of why there seems to be a reduction of \$8,000 in the directorate's budget lines.

Ms. Allan: The reduction was accomplished mainly by reducing the number of annual reports to be printed, decreasing the chairperson's per diem costs and decreasing the costs associated with council's six mandated meetings by holding two teleconferences.

Mrs. Rowat: Could the minister share with me where these six meetings would be held and what these meetings would entail? What would be the agenda and the outcomes?

Ms. Allan: The advisory council is legislated that they have to have meetings six times a year. These meetings are traditionally held in Winnipeg, although we do have a new, very active chairperson, Crystal Laborero, who is the first Aboriginal woman who was appointed to the Women's Advisory Council.

I know that they are probably going to be going through a strategic planning process and looking at their mandate and looking at how they are fulfilling that mandate, so I know that one of the issues that they are going to be focussing on at their meeting shortly is a strategic planning session.

Mrs. Rowat: I would, again, with the reductions, it seems that there is going to be a major reduction in services in the area of communication and resources available to women's groups and women's organizations that rely on the expertise and support of the directorate. I am very concerned with the reduction in meetings, the reduction in annual reports which provide the strategic plans of the directorate. You had indicated that there will be strategic planning meetings as being part of the mandate. Could you indicate to me a little bit more about that process and how that will be fulfilled?

* (15:00)

Ms. Allan: It is actually something that the chair just brought to my attention recently and she ran it by me as a concept. We have monthly meetings and she updates me on the council's activities. She just kind of mentioned it to me at the last meeting that we had in regard to that session, so I do not have any more details at this particular moment.

Mrs. Rowat: It is the Women's Advisory Council that will receive a reduction of \$8,000. The Women's Directorate will also be receiving a reduction in budgetary dollars as well. Could she share more about that line on the expenditures?

Ms. Allan: There will be one less newsletter and a half-time staff here.

Mrs. Rowat: Could you tell me who that staffperson will be, or will that eliminate a staff out of the office, or will that just be reducing somebody?

Ms. Allan: It was a vacant position.

Mrs. Rowat: With the Women's Directorate and the Women's Advisory Council now coming under the Department of Labour, will there be expenses in bringing letterhead and the offices together? What type of expenses does she foresee?

Ms. Allan: I just want to make it very clear that the Women's Advisory Council is an arm's-length agency. So I just wanted to make that distinction between the Women's Directorate and the Women's Advisory Council.

With the Women's Directorate, when I became minister, they were actually looking at a move, physical move and we had a look at it. They decided to move into the Norquay Building and there is actually a cost savings of, I believe, \$54,000. Sorry, excuse me, I have my numbers wrong: \$46,000.

Mrs. Rowat: In 2002 the Manitoba Council of Women was acting as a representative for the Minister of Justice and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women on a very serious matter regarding Dakota Tipi First Nations. I just wanted to know what the status of that is, because I do realize that under last Estimates there were some new developments and the case was ongoing. I want to know if there are any updates on that.

Ms. Allan: Apparently the women were successful in getting the bingo and the gaming operation shut down.

Mrs. Rowat: Over the past few months specifically, but over the past several years, women in housing have been a topic that has been at the forefront.

Based on stats that I have here one in five Canadian women live in poverty; 25 percent of women with disabilities live in poverty compared to 18 percent of men; 42.7 percent of Aboriginal women live in poverty compared to 35.1 percent of Aboriginal men; and more than half of senior women who live alone are poor.

Based on these statistics I wanted to know what this minister will be doing in working with the directorate, based on the reduction in visibility they will have, how this minister feels this government will be able to address these very serious poverty issues.

Ms. Allan: The Affordable Housing Initiative is approximately a \$50-million, five-year joint venture between the federal and the provincial governments, developed to increase the supply of affordable housing available in Winnipeg.

In Winnipeg the AHI forms part of the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. The City is providing an additional \$17.5 million toward Winnipeg-based programs. That programming is expected to create up to 2500 affordable housing units in Manitoba over the next five years.

The Women's Directorate is working with the Department of Family Services and Housing to make sure that women in the community are aware of these programs.

Mrs. Rowat: What specific role is the Women's Directorate going to have with that department and that mandate?

Ms. Allan: They are facilitating direct meetings with women's organizations in the community to make sure that they better understand the program and what the program details are in regard to the options available to them.

Mrs. Rowat: For clarification, meaning the Women's Directorate will be co-ordinating those meetings?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mrs. Rowat: Regarding to the issue of safety and housing, earlier in the year we had brought up a series of questions in the House regarding safety for seniors and safety for women in Manitoba Housing. I want to know if this minister has been working with her staff and the directorate to ensure that safety concerns such as fencing, lighting, security cameras, sexual harassment from landlords, children's safety and exposure to violence have all been considered and met with to develop some policy in those areas.

Ms. Allan: The Women's Directorate actually in their work with the Department of Family Services and Housing raised that very issue in regard to safety and security, in regard to the Affordable Housing Initiative. So that is one thing that they have asked to be taken into consideration as projects are developed here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Rowat: I was wondering if the minister has some statistical information that she would be able to share on non-traditional female fields of education or careers that individuals may be pursuing, like engineering, medicine and trades.

Ms. Allan: We actually just made an announcement about a changing workplace culture program. If you would like, I can get that information to you. We actually made that announcement in about February or March. It was actually a mail out that we did in regard to changing workplace culture around trades, technology and science. So we will definitely get that information to you.

We also have a scholarship program in the Women's Directorate that focuses on young students. It is called Training for Tomorrow. It is a very interesting program, as well. It is 50 one-thousand-dollar scholarships to encourage young people to go into non-traditional trades.

Mrs. Rowat: How long has this scholarship been available?

Ms. Allan: Seven years.

Mrs. Rowat: And percentage-wise, I guess, population, urban and rural, is there a breakdown that you could provide on access to that?

Ms. Allan: The scholarships are awarded on a pro rata basis, and so the Assiniboine Community

College and Keewatin Community College, they get a portion of the scholarships.

* (15:10)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Just a couple of quick questions in regard to the civil service. I would ask the minister in terms of what would be normal procedure for someone to get a civil service job.

Ms. Allan: I am not the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, so I would suggest he might want to ask that question of, I believe it is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). Having said that, if you want, I can get the information for you.

Mr. Lamoureux: No, that is fine. The reason why I had asked is that, when you have vacancies within your office or offices of the Department of Labour or Immigration, what would be the normal procedure to getting those positions filled, or if you were creating positions, how would they go about being filled?

Ms. Allan: Typically they would be bulletined and there would be a competition.

Mr. Lamoureux: I did not quite catch all the remarks the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) was asking about Mr. Luna, and is Mr. Luna today a civil servant of the province?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Luna is on a term position.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would that be a civil service job on a term position?

Ms. Allan: It is a temporary position.

Mr. Lamoureux: I take it that means, then, that Mr. Luna would be a temporary civil servant. Would he be contributing into the civil service plans?

Ms. Allan: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: For example, if Mr. Luna received that job, would it have been tendered at all, or posted, just exactly what the minister said would happen if, in fact, there was an opening?

Ms. Allan: It is not usual for short-term temporary positions to be, and I do not believe the word is "tendered," I believe "bulletined" is the word.

Mr. Lamoureux: My apologies, I meant bulletined. So in this case, because it was short-term, it was felt

that the minister could appoint whomever into that particular position, or who decided to make that appointment then?

Ms. Allan: That appointment was made before I was the minister.

Mr. Lamoureux: Who, then, would have made the appointment?

Ms. Allan: I would just like to thank Theresa Harvey, who was with us from the Women's Directorate. We now have joining us today the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Department of Immigration and Multiculturalism, Mr. Gerry Clement.

He was hired in a term position in the Multiculturalism Secretariat in July 2003, and the minister at the time was the minister who is presently now the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Lamoureux: Is that typical practice then for term positions that ministers then can appoint directly into the civil service?

Ms. Allan: It was not the minister that hired him. He was hired by the Multiculturalism branch.

Mr. Lamoureux: So then the department can go outside of what would have been procedures in terms of hiring to replace or to give civil service jobs? I am trying to derive how it is that this person would have been chosen for this job. Maybe the minister could help me out in terms of explaining how it is he would have acquired the job.

Ms. Allan: They do happen. That does happen from time to time when the positions are short-term and are required for a short period of time on a specific project.

Mr. Lamoureux: How frequently do these sorts of things happen?

Ms. Allan: Not very frequently.

Mr. Lamoureux: The fact that Mr. Luna was the executive assistant to Becky Barrett had nothing to do with him being hired at all? Period?

Ms. Allan: He was hired because of his background in multiculturalism as demonstrated by his involve-

ment in the Philippine community and the broader multicultural community in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, there are hundreds of individuals who have that sort of background that Mr. Luna, no doubt, would be able to offer. My question was did Becky Barrett have anything to do with his hiring within that department.

Ms. Allan: I do not know. I was not the minister at the time, but I will certainly look into it and get that information to you.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would the minister find it appropriate for an appointment into the civil service from ministers or MLAs as a staffperson direct, if there is no history of that individual working in the civil service? Is that, in her opinion, appropriate?

Ms. Allan: Well, sometimes these kinds of situations occur when you have an individual that has a specific skill set and you have a particular short-term project, and sometimes those situations occur.

Mr. Lamoureux: What is the minister saying about career civil servants, individuals that put in their heart and soul and taking a great deal of pride that they are civil servants, it does not matter which political party happens to hold the reins of power in the province?

Do they not have the right to be able to put in an application and attempt to fill those more senior jobs as opposed to the government of the day choosing, "I want this person, I want that person," and saying that they have abilities?

Would she not agree that those lifetime career civil servants should have been given the opportunity?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Ms. Allan: Well, civil servants that have tenure and seniority in the civil service do not often apply for short-term temporary positions.

Mr. Lamoureux: Just to be clear on this point, this particular position was never advertised or bulletined. Correct?

Ms. Allan: No, that is correct, but what I am trying to get the MLA for Inkster to understand is long-time

civil service employees would not want to give up their seniority and their position for a term short-term contract. They just would not do it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Having said that, the only thing that seems to put Mr. Luna ahead of others would have been the fact that he happened to work for Becky Barrett. There are many people within the Filipino community alone who have many, and I would suggest, possibly even more attributes than Mr. Luna. The government chose not to bulletin this and I question as to why it is. I will look forward to getting a more detailed response from the minister as to actually how it came about.

* (15:20)

The other quick question I had was in regard to, I heard a name referenced of Nancy Hilliard, who now works within the government. Can the minister indicate to me if that is in fact the case and what relationship that person would have with Rob Hilliard?

Ms. Allan: She is not related to Mr. Hilliard if you count the fact that she is his ex-wife for many years, so you can figure that one out.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I will pause at that note and hand the floor over until there is maybe another opportunity, as I heard the name and wanted to make the enquiry. Sometimes you cannot necessarily trust what is happening within government.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to go back to the issue of the forced unionization of the floodway, and just for the departmental employees, I would like to deal a little bit more with the floodway, the forced unionization which clearly falls within the purview of this minister, and one more time there are a couple of questions I had on The Pension Freedom Act and then I would like to head toward Immigration, Fire Commissioner's office and then start looking at wrapping up within the Estimates, so by 5:30 we should have it wrapped up. It is just so that the minister knows where we are planning on going with this.

The minister has indicated that her department had very little involvement in the forced unionization of the floodway. My question to the minister is, was that also the case under the previous two ministers? What I am asking is, at some point in time, was the

entire file handed over to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton)?

Ms. Allan: It is my understanding that the department was not involved.

Mr. Schuler: Again, I guess it just comes out of that the committee finds it amazing that the Department of Labour would not have been involved. I touched on this on Friday.

Can the minister tell us, at any point in time, were there discussions between her or her department and the Heavy Construction Association?

Ms. Allan: Yes, I have had a meeting with Chris Lorenc, the head of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association. I am trying to think of when that meeting was off the top of my head, January? We never discussed this issue.

Mr. Schuler: Perhaps the reason why it was not raised with the minister is the minister's government had not sandbagged the heavy construction industry at that point in time with this issue. So it can hardly blame somebody for not raising it with the minister when they did not know that this was coming.

Can the minister tell us where the genesis of this idea came from? We have discussed that. Clearly, the former minister, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), would have been involved in this. The minister indicated at one point in time during Question Period that there had been a presentation by a labour organization. Can she identify for us who it was that brought this forward to government?

Ms. Allan: I am just wondering if the Labour critic has had the opportunity to attend the lead minister, who is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton). I am wondering if he has had an opportunity to attend his Estimates, because he seems to have a lot of questions about this. I said over and over and over again, on Friday morning we spent an hour and a half of our time on this issue. I made it very, very clear I was not the lead minister, I did not have involvement in this issue. I am just wondering if he is going to go to the Water Stewardship Minister's Estimates and ask him some questions, seeing as he is the lead minister.

Mr. Schuler: Well, I am sure the minister has seen the critic roles, as appointed by the Leader of the

Opposition (Mr. Murray). My critic role is Labour and Immigration. Again I want to ask the minister why would the minister and her department, the Minister of Labour, be cut out of the loop entirely on such an important issue, on such an important project.

Why would the expertise sitting around the minister within her department not have been accessed? Why is the department not even consulted with when such an important issue comes forward?

Again, it can be taken as kindly advice. Perhaps the government should have listened to some of the talent and the seasoned individuals within the department and would have mitigated a lot of the mess that we have in front of us today.

How is it that the government would have chosen to cut the Department of Labour out of such a fundamental issue in Manitoba? Was it pure naiveté that somehow the Premier (Mr. Doer) did not think this could become an issue, that somehow this would have snuck in under the radar screen? How is it that a department of nearly \$30 million is so completely cut out of the loop? That is my responsibility as the Labour critic.

There are other departments. The Minister of Water Stewardship has been tasked with building the floodway. But when a labour issue comes up that is supposed to be in the purview of the Minister of Labour, who he or she might be, because in the department are seasoned individuals who know how to deal with these issues who should help to take the blood pressure down, should help to bring the temperature down when these issues come forward, instead the department sat and let this issue escalate and escalate and escalate. It is giving us a bad reputation across the country. It is a bad reputation for the province.

The minister, it is incredulous, sits and says, "I had nothing to do with this." Why not? Why would the department not have been involved?

Ms. Allan: I am going to go very slowly now. We have a floodway authority that is the arm's-length agency that is overseeing the project on behalf of the federal government and the provincial government. It is not my role of Minister of Labour to be involved. Mr. Fox-Decent was hired as a facilitator to work with the stakeholders to look at an agreement.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wonder if the Minister of Labour could indicate if she agrees with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), who said that the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues.

Ms. Allan: There is a process in place, and we are waiting for the report. We have every confidence that Mr. Fox-Decent will work with the stakeholders to give us a report that we will be able to work with.

Mr. Murray: I appreciate, I think the record would show, and we acknowledge, that Mr. Fox-Decent, which is a whole other issue which I would like to come to, the question as to why he had to be put in place, but that is another issue. I will come back to that.

* (15:30)

This is not about process or about Mr. Fox-Decent. This is really about a minister of the Crown or the provincial Crown, that being the Minister of Labour, and the issue that is specifically in front of Manitobans, where one of her colleagues who shares the Cabinet table made a specific reference. Again, I go back to what was said and that was said by the Minister of Water Stewardship, who said very clearly that the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues.

I understand that Mr. Fox-Decent is involved, so I do not need that part of the history lesson. I am really looking for a sense from this Minister of Labour, if that minister would agree with her other colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship, specifically that the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Fox-Decent has been working with the parties and will report soon. I would not want to prejudge anything that is in that report.

Mr. Murray: I think that is sound judgment on the Minister of Labour, not prejudging anything that is in the report. However, this question is not about the report. This question is about a belief, as she as the Minister of Labour is responsible for the working people of Manitoba. Her counterpart, a Cabinet colleague, said very clearly that the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues.

As the Minister of Labour, I would ask this minister what is her stance with respect to the comment that was made very clearly by her colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), saying that there is no choice but to force floodway workers to pay for union dues? I am interested in the Minister of Labour's response to her colleague's comments.

Ms. Allan: My previous statement stands.

Mr. Murray: With respect, Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering the question. I understand the issue about Mr. Fox-Decent. We have had those debates in the Legislative Chamber. Let me come at it maybe from a different perspective.

I personally do not believe with the statement made by a member of this Legislative Assembly that says the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues. I do not believe that. I will go on record as saying I do not believe that. I do not support that. I think the minister that said that is wrong.

I am now going to ask the Minister of Labour what she personally believes as the Minister of Labour representing the Doer government. What is her belief on forced unionization on workers on the floodway?

Ms. Allan: Well, once again, Mr. Chair, I think it is important that we let Mr. Fox-Decent do his work with the stakeholders and wait for the report. I certainly would not want to prejudge the outcome.

Mr. Murray: You know, with the inability of the minister to answer the question, I think it says very clearly why Mr. Fox-Decent was brought into this process. There does not seem to be any sense of understanding of the issue or probably the detriment of some of the comments that have come out of the Doer government regarding the floodway.

What is interesting is that the Minister of Water Stewardship has very clearly said that there is no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues. He did not say anything about, we want to make sure that we will see what the report says, if you do not want to jeopardize what Mr. Fox-Decent says. He took a very specific opinion and a decision and now we find that the Minister of Labour, who clearly is responsible for the working men and

women of Manitoba, either is under sort of a—I want to be careful how I choose my words here.

The minister is either not able to speak because perhaps the Premier's office has said, whatever you do, do not answer this question. Or the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) is saying, I hope you agree with my statement about forced unionization. The Minister of Labour is really, in my opinion, with all due respect to the Minister of Labour, is abdicating her responsibility as the minister responsible for men and women in the province of Manitoba—working men and women.

I think you have to be, as the Labour Minister I think it is important to stand up and be counted for. When the member or the Minister of Water Stewardship said very clearly, had a very clear opinion on this, the Minister of Labour has two options: either she agrees with the Minister of Water Stewardship, in which case she is in favour of forcing workers on the floodway to pay union dues, in favour with that colleague, or she is opposed to it. I am very happy to go on record. I have no difficulty taking a position as to where I stand on this issue. I think it is very important and let people in Manitoba know that I am opposed to forcing anybody to pay union dues.

So I would ask the Minister of Labour, in her capacity as one who stands in front of Manitobans to represent working men and women of Manitoba: What is her position with forced unionization of those workers on the floodway?

Ms. Allan: Well, project labour agreements have been used in different jurisdictions all across Canada. They have been used on different infrastructure projects in Manitoba under different governments and we are looking forward to getting the report.

Mr. Murray: I would say that this is very, very clear why the Doer government has had to call in Mr. Fox-Decent. They have botched this issue quite severely, and they are unable to take one opinion or another opinion or to have any opinion on what I think is a very, very serious issue in the province of Manitoba.

I think if there was any indication that the Province of Manitoba was trying to attract and send a signal that this province was open for business, that we were interested in bringing entrepreneurs into the province of Manitoba, the first nail in the coffin was

brought in through Bill 44; not this current Minister of Labour but under the previous Minister of Labour who brought in a bill that basically said that workers have no right to vote whether they want to be members of the union or not.

They are basically, sign up a certain number of cards, whether that is through intimidation or whatever it may be and all of a sudden, you know, whammo, you wake up in the morning and you are a member of a union.

The second nail in that coffin is that, when the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) says very clearly that as far as working on the floodway expansion, if you are going to be working on that floodway expansion, the Province has no choice but to force floodway workers to pay union dues.

I think by the absence of the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) taking a strong position one way or the other—I have said that I am opposed to it—if the Minister of Labour does not answer the question, one has to just assume that she is in favour of it.

We see again another nail in the coffin to businesses out there who are looking to expand in Manitoba, because if she were against forced unionization on the floodway, she would clearly explain that to the people in the Chamber here and go on record as saying absolutely she is not in favour of forcing anybody to pay union dues. But we do not hear that from the Minister of Labour. I think the only conclusion we can draw from that is that, unfortunately, she supports her colleague the Minister of Water Stewardship, that she is in favour of forced unionization.

I think that is unfortunate, because I think it is undemocratic and it is anti-worker in the process. Certainly I have no problem going on record as saying that I oppose those sorts of things. I think workers have the right to decide for themselves if they want to pay union dues, if they want to be a member of the union, and nobody should force them.

I think it is unfortunate that the Doer government is sending out that signal. I think it is unfortunate the Minister of Labour will not refute a very anti-democratic position by simply saying, "I am opposed to that."

* (15:40)

I think if people want to join a union, that is their right. If people do not want to join a union, that is also their right. Understanding that the floodway is being built with taxpayers' dollars, the taxpayers respect and deserve to know that this will be built at the lowest cost to taxpayers. I think it is unfortunate that the Minister of Labour will not take a position on this.

The question I would ask to the Minister of Labour is, knowing that the Minister of Water Stewardship has said something in terms of forced unionization, the fact that the Premier has come out and basically said that is not exactly what he meant, even though the Minister of Water Stewardship is on record as saying it, and on that basis they have had to bring in a mediator because they are unable to make a decision and work with the stakeholders, I would ask if the \$30-million budget that the Minister of Labour's department has—I believe it is \$30 million, just shy of \$30 million—when we have \$30 million in a department, between the Minister of Water Stewardship who oversees the expansion of the floodway, and the Minister of Labour who is responsible for the labour component, why is it that with that sort of budget they are unable to make the right decisions and had to bring in an outside mediator?

Ms. Allan: On Friday morning in Estimates the Labour critic went on for quite some time about the \$30 million that is attached to my department. There is excellent work that goes on in my department. I just want to remind the member opposite that in December, when we brought in Bill 4, compassionate care leave, the members opposite did not support that legislation. That was legislation that harmonized with the federal legislation around compassionate care and provided job retention for people who take maternity leave and parental leave. There is lots of excellent work being done in my department around labour legislation.

Mr. Murray: I am always interested when we get a history lesson on these issues. I would ask the Minister of Labour very directly, if we were to bring in a private members' bill that would ensure that no forced unionization was taking place on the floodway, would she support that bill?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Chairman, the Estimates process is a very important process. It is always interesting to get hypothetical questions. I just want to remind

everyone that Wally Fox-Decent has been working with the parties, will report soon, and we certainly look forward to his report.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is a pleasure to put a few questions on the record to the minister here this afternoon. I do want to continue on with the line of questioning that the official Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) was pursuing, because I think it is an important line of questioning, not just for us here in the Chamber, but certainly for all Manitobans across our province who are watching closely what is happening on this particular file and watching what is happening with their taxpayer dollars.

I do want the minister to realize that Friday of last week I was in Estimates with the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford). The Minister of Advanced Education, within her own Estimates line-by-line, her own appropriations, does have a line of expenditures for floodway training. I thought that was interesting. It appears in the Minister of Advanced Education's Estimates books and certainly it is something that I think appropriately falls under the department in terms of any training that might happen under the floodway initiative.

But, when I asked the Minister of Advanced Education regarding that particular appropriation, her response was somewhat different than the Minister of Labour's (Ms. Allan) in that while the Minister of Advanced Education certainly did reference the Wally Fox-Decent report that we were all waiting for and hoping that it does not come out under the cover of darkness of a federal election; hoping that it comes out prior to that. But the Minister of Advanced Education's response was in relation to a question I asked regarding discussions that were ongoing in terms of the training.

She said, "Well, again, I refer to the Wally Fox-Decent report. Apparently the discussions that were taking place in my department have temporarily abated whilst we await the Wally Fox-Decent report."

So the minister at least had the credibility, I think, to admit that there were discussions taking place within her department about the nature of the training, about the nature of the things that would be happening on the floodway report. But she did state for the record that once the Wally Fox-Decent report was brought forward, that those discussions stopped.

I would say respectfully that that is an appropriate answer for the minister to give. Certainly she recognizes that her department was one that was going to be involved with the expansion of the floodway on a training component side and made recognition of that, and said that her department was preparing for the eventuality of the building of the floodway, which members on this side support, and those preparations, I think, were prudent. It was also prudent of course that once the report was initiated, that those discussions would stop.

So I wonder if the Minister of Labour, unlike her colleague the Minister of Advanced Education, who at least was making preparations in terms of the work and the discussions that would take place on the floodway from her department's perspective, is the Minister of Labour saying there have never been any discussions in her department about the work of the floodway and what it would mean to their particular department?

Ms. Allan: I am sorry, could you just, I was listening to 95 percent of that. My apologies, I just missed the final—what I think might have been the question.

Mr. Goertzen: It certainly was all worth listening to, not just the 5 percent that she missed. It was probably the highlight of it, but I will give it to you in a synopsis then.

The Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) clearly said that her department had had discussions regarding their role in the expansion of the floodway, whether those discussions ceased once the request for the report from Mr. Fox-Decent came forth. So I am asking the minister whether or not any discussions had ever taken place in her department regarding the floodway; and if they stopped once the report came forward, certainly that is one thing.

Ms. Allan: I am pleased that the Minister of Advanced Education answered the question in that manner because of course she should. She has a line item in her Estimates that has to do with training for the floodway, and of course she would answer the question that way. There is no line item in my budget that directly relates to the floodway. So, if there is something that you want to discuss in regard to my Estimates, directly relating to the floodway, I would be more than delighted to answer it. But there is not.

Mr. Goertzen: In point of fact, the appropriation of Advanced Education, it does not appear as a line

item, a cost item under the Department of Advanced Education. What does appear is a note essentially that discussions will be taking place or that there will be a role to be played for Advanced Education in training those workers on the floodway. So there is not a cost appropriation, from my understanding, in regard to the Estimates of Advanced Education. It is simply a recognition, and I think a valid recognition, that there will be a role for Advanced Education to play in the building of the floodway.

Further to that recognition, the minister, I think, very credibly stated that, yes, discussions had been taking place prior to the request for the report, but those discussions had been stopped because the nature of the report might in fact impact the nature of the training that would take place.

I wonder if the minister could answer the question whether or not any officials in her department, whether or not any officials in her office, was there anybody in the Department of Labour who was involved in discussions leading up to the announcement about the floodway expansion?

Ms. Allan: The Department of Labour does not have a direct role.

Mr. Goertzen: So the minister indicates that there was no direct role. Can the minister indicate whether there are any discussions that took place with any of the officials in her office or within her department, directly or indirectly, about the floodway project, or was her particular department just persona non grata, for whatever reason, on this file?

*(15:50)

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Chair, I think it is important for the member across the way to understand that there is a floodway authority that is managing the project and that is who has been managing this project from the very beginning. The provincial minister, the lead minister responsible, is the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and I am not aware of any conversations that my officials have been involved in.

Mr. Schuler: So is the minister suggesting that her department is going to abdicate all of their responsibilities when it comes to the floodway?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Fox-Decent has been working with the parties and we are waiting for that report, and it

would be totally inappropriate for me to intervene or contravene any discussions in regard to those discussions. We are waiting for that report.

Mr. Schuler: So let us get this clear. Any injury at the floodway, any infraction of health codes or safety codes or any other code that might happen at the floodway, the Department of Labour has no jurisdiction over the floodway because the minister has just said it is clearly a jurisdiction of the Minister of Water Stewardship. That it is the floodway authority that is going to oversee it so that the Department of Labour has nothing to do with the floodway. That it is entirely on its own, way out somewhere, it is its own project and there need no safety codes be applied, nothing, because the minister has walked away from it entirely. Is that what she is saying?

Ms. Allan: No, that is not what I am saying. I am saying that when the construction project starts that there will be a training component to the project that will be negotiated. There will be a safety component that will be negotiated and, obviously, once all of those components are in place with the agreement, the legislation and my department will apply.

Mr. Goertzen: So, when the minister recognizes the training component, I am assuming that she is referring to that training component that falls under Advanced Education, and if she is not, then she can correct me. On the safety component, have any discussions taken place on the safety component for workers on the floodway?

Ms. Allan: There are legislative requirements that are in place that the project will have to meet.

Mr. Goertzen: When the minister was appointed into her position of Minister of Labour, did she receive a briefing on the status of the floodway expansion project?

Ms. Allan: No.

Mr. Goertzen: I am assuming then that she did not even bother to request a briefing for the floodway expansion project.

Ms. Allan: The lead minister is the Minister of Water Stewardship.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, certainly I understand that, but it seems that other ministers who were not the lead

ministers, the Advanced Education Minister, at least had some curiosity about the particular project. Is she the only minister whose department had some relation to the floodway project who did not have that same sense of curiosity?

Ms. Allan: Well, I can only comment in regard to my department.

Mr. Schuler: So the minister is appointed because she has some political acumen. She is supposed to come to the Cabinet table, bring with her some expertise on politics. In the meantime, she has let down her Premier (Mr. Doer), let down her Cabinet, let down the working men and women of this province.

She does not stand up for them at Cabinet, does not bring to the table the expertise that she has within her department, almost \$30 million for her department, and does not even ask for a briefing, does not even care to find out what is going on with the whole forced unionization of the floodway, could not care less what takes place, cannot even tell this committee what might potentially apply and not apply with Workplace Health and Safety.

She has no idea what is going on with the whole forced unionization, has washed her hands of the entire project, or more to the fact, has been totally removed from the file by her Cabinet and her colleagues. The question to the minister is, when will she start taking an interest in the floodway and find out what exactly is going on with forced unionization and where can her department be of assistance.

Ms. Allan: Well, we expect that Mr. Fox-Decent will be giving us the report soon and I look forward to us receiving it.

Mr. Schuler: So I take it then the minister is under the impression she is on the distribution list.

Ms. Allan: Well, the lead minister will be the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton). I imagine that he will receive the report, and I am sure that I will be able to get a meeting with the said minister.

Mr. Schuler: My, that is strange by half that the Minister of Labour is going to wait for another minister to get a report on such an important labour issue, that the minister's own staff, a department of

almost \$30 million is so frozen out of the entire process that the report would not be handed to the deputy minister and the staff in the department to have a look at it and give some seasoned advice. The minister is fine with that?

Ms. Allan: Well, we have a respect for the process and we will wait for the report.

Mr. Schuler: The minister has shown nothing but disdain for the process, nothing but disrespect for the process. At no point in time has this Minister of Labour stood up for the working men and women of the province, has completely either been frozen out by her Premier and her Cabinet, has shown no interest in the entire file.

Now, she tells us she is not even on the distribution list, yet she talks about this great authority, that somehow she is in the loop with the Professor Fox-Decent report. She is not even going to see it. If she would like to see the report, she might have to have a meeting, she will request a meeting with the minister to discuss an issue that actually is her responsibility.

It just keeps getting worse. We thought we hit bottom on Friday. Again, I ask has she not indicated to the Minister of Water Stewardship that she would be willing to put at the disposal of that minister a Department of Labour that is used to dealing with these issues? Has she not at least offered that much?

Ms. Allan: I think we hit bottom on Friday morning in Estimates when I found out that a member of the opposition had brought a piece of pension legislation to this House and asked what the pension promise is. That is when we hit rock bottom in this Legislature, in this Chamber, on Friday morning. The pension promise is the basic fundamental principle that all pensions in this country are based on, and that is when we hit rock bottom.

Mr. Schuler: I will not even get into the minister's flimflam. I mean, I know the minister is trying to deflect her incompetence by bringing up other issues. The fact that we ask ministers to define what they are talking about is a time-tested tradition in this House, and I know she is new to all this. Unfortunately, so new that she has been cut out of the whole process.

I would like to focus the minister back on to the whole issue of the forced unionization of the

floodway. In that, throughout the process, we found out right from day one her department and the minister were not involved throughout the whole process, not even the appointment of Professor Fox-Decent. Now we find out at the end the minister, again, is simply walking away from her responsibilities. And, yes, that is a low point for the working men and women of this province. That is an incredible low point.

I would like to ask the minister has she given the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) the opportunity to access the seasoned staff within her department to give advice on this issue.

Ms. Allan: Well, we are waiting for Mr. Fox-Decent's report; we are looking forward to it because we are going to get on with building the floodway.

* (16:00)

Mr. Schuler: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) asked the minister on numerous occasions where she stood on this issue. Again, even on just fundamental questions, because it gets down to where the government is trying to go with the entire floodway project and, frankly, any other project that might be forthcoming. It is trying to understand, is this a minister who is going to take one side or the other and, again, the minister would not answer, as she has refused to do from day one from her appointment on.

I would like to ask the minister, again, and I will make it very, very clear: Where does she stand on the forced unionization of the floodway? As the minister who is tasked with this responsibility, where does she stand with this issue?

Ms. Allan: Project labour agreements have been used all across this country by different governments and have been used in Manitoba on different infrastructure projects. They have worked out very, very well. They have been able to bring projects in on time and on budget, and we are waiting for Mr. Fox-Decent's report.

Mr. Schuler: This is where a lot of concern comes in. The minister references a report of which she will not be a party to. The minister is starting to speak in the third person; that is how far she has distanced herself from this whole process.

I will conclude with this issue by asking the minister has she been given any indication, or is she so out of the loop that she would not know that either, when we can expect the Fox-Decent report to be presented.

Ms. Allan: Well, I was on the telephone last week with Mr. Fox-Decent because of the Workers Compensation Board hearings that were occurring, and Mr. Fox-Decent did have some personal issues with his health. I actually spoke with him on Friday, and he says he is feeling much better and I am sure it will be coming shortly.

Mr. Schuler: If I could ask the minister if we could move to the Labour Board—I do not know if the minister wants to bring the staff down for that.

Ms. Allan: We actually heard from the critic just a few minutes ago and he said that he had some other questions on pensions. We have the Superintendent of Pensions with us. I am wondering if he would like to ask those questions now so that we do not have people running back and forth.

Mr. Schuler: That is fine. I will do that. The committee had asked on Friday in regard to an issue that the Premier (Mr. Doer) had raised with Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain. The minister was going to look into it and get back to the committee. Is the minister prepared to indicate to the committee what that example had to do with?

Ms. Allan: I just indicated that about a half an hour ago, that that information will be available by tomorrow.

Mr. Schuler: Yeah, I thought maybe the minister had it ready at this point in time and she could have just let us know, because again it is something that has been referenced and is out there. I think it is important to know in what context that the British model, or the Margaret Thatcher model, as the Premier seems to be quoting, what that has to do with this particular issue.

I would like to ask the minister also, her department has obviously looked into the Saskatchewan model. Is there any indication from the Saskatchewan model one way or another what impact that might have had?

Ms. Allan: They only passed their legislation in the middle of 2002, so we do not have any evidence

early on from that. But I just was wondering, we had a discussion on Friday morning, some other information that the member wanted, and we made a commitment, the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law, to touch base with them and ask them if it would be okay to give the MLA for Springfield their report that they tabled with the Pension Commission. I know the MLA really likes to mail bills out and get public feedback. I am wondering if he was going to mail his bill to the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law and get their feedback.

Mr. Chairperson: Are we exchanging roles?

Mr. Schuler: I have to tell the minister that, unfortunately, she will probably never understand opposition because probably after the next election she will be defeated and would not have this opportunity. But I again would like to ask, if they gave approval, could we have that submission tabled to the committee.

Ms. Allan: We phoned them and left a voice mail and we are waiting for them to get back to us. So maybe I will just send over Bill 212 to them and see what they think of your bill in the meantime.

Mr. Schuler: That would be very kind of the minister and most appreciated. Probably more important for the committee would be that the bill go to a proper committee of the House and we allow Manitobans to come forward and give their viewpoints on where this legislation should be going in the province, particularly the men and women who are most affected. I know it is important to get the vested interest groups, the paid lobbyists, their opinions are important, but more importantly we want to get Manitobans, and I think the Chamber of Commerce would be in total agreement. There is nothing better than getting an individual case, an individual business coming forward and making a presentation. It just carries a lot of weight when an individual Manitoban comes forward rather than a group. It just fine tunes it.

I then would suggest to the minister, seeing as she has no further information, unless anybody else on the committee has some questions, I would defer.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess, quickly, and the minister might have commented on it earlier: Do you have any sort of strategic time frame in terms of when you

anticipate receiving or providing the legislation regarding pension reform?

Mr. Allan: I said very clearly Friday morning in Estimates, Mr. Chair, that we needed to do the due-diligence on this bill because The Pensions Benefit Act has not been broadly reviewed in almost 20 years, so we want it to stand the test of time. I actually have meetings set up. I had an excellent meeting with the Manitoba Society of Seniors in April and the Credit Union Central had a meeting last Tuesday, actually, with my deputy minister, so we will continue to consult and make sure that we have the right balance between the desire for greater flexibility and make sure that we are in accordance with the pension promise that guarantees an income for life.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, it is interesting, the contrast of this particular minister and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) who gets an idea, flashes out a press release and then we get legislation. Then we have this minister and the ministers before her that would talk. We have been talking now for a number of years. It has taken a great deal of consultation. Is it because the government has not consulted in the last three years? Why is it taking so long? Does she not recognize that Manitobans want to see reform of the pension act? How do you justify five years later and she cannot even say, expect it this fall or expect it in 2005? Tell us when we can at the very least expect to see the legislation or do we have to wait another four years before we see the legislation?

* (16:10)

Ms. Allan: I said very clearly in Estimates on Friday morning that the Premier (Mr. Doer) had made a commitment to bring the legislation in, in the fall, and I said very clearly that if we could do the due-diligence on this bill and have all of the information, that we would try and meet that commitment, but we are not going to write this legislation on the back of an envelope.

Mr. Lamoureux: That is very good. The minister in her previous answer did not say fall. Now we do have some progress. She acknowledges that the Premier said this fall. Would the minister acknowledge that if the Premier of the province says that we will be having something in the fall time, that there is an obligation on this minister to make sure that we do have something for fall?

Ms. Allan: I answered the question when the MLA for Inkster asked me on Friday morning and I am going to answer it exactly the same way. I know that the MLA asked questions about unlocking in regard to terminally ill and hardship and we need to have the CAPSA ruling that is focussing strictly on the unlocking around those two particular provisions, so absolutely, we are going to try and make that commitment, but we are going to move forward in a sure-footed way. We are going to have all the information. This legislation is going to stand the test of time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Did the Premier misspeak himself when he said, then, that we would have the legislation in the fall time? Was he wrong and maybe premature in saying that?

Ms. Allan: No, I think that what happens is that sometimes you have time frames. Originally, we thought that the CAPSA ruling might come down in the spring and now we found that it may not be as soon as we thought. So sometimes other pieces of information that you need change and so we will work diligently to get it up in the fall if we can.

Mr. Lamoureux: Okay. So the Premier made a mistake in his statement. The next question would be is this minister prepared to commit by the end of 2005 that we will have the legislation.

Ms. Allan: I have already answered that question.

Mr. Schuler: At this time, the committee is ready for Immigration. I think that was next on the list.

Ms. Allan: Well, you said Labour Board. Then I said, well, you want to do pensions. So what do you want to do?

Mr. Schuler: Again, the issue is that, because we are in the Chamber, it is a little bit more difficult. The minister has to call departmental staff down. So that is why the juggling act. Labour Board is fine.

Ms. Allan: So, okay, let us maybe roll this out. Can we have agreement that we are done with pension issues so that the Superintendent of Pensions could resume her official duties at her office, and that we will do the Manitoba Labour Board and then we will do Immigration. I believe you also wanted to do the Office of the Fire Commissioner. Did I hear that?

Mr. Schuler: And if it is fine with the minister, we will do Immigration and Culture at the same time—Multiculturalism at the same time, if that is fine.

Ms. Allan: The person that will be joining us from the Manitoba Labour Board is Janet Duff. The registrar, I apologize.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, I would like to thank the Manitoba Labour Board. I know they have been inundated with a lot of issues. Certainly it is not the most relaxed place to be.

My question is can the Labour Board tell us how many referrals they have had, or claims they have had, or individuals or groups come before them in the last fiscal year.

Ms. Allan: While we are looking for that information, I just have some other information that the Labour critic asked for earlier. So I was wondering if I could give it to you now.

Karen Kennedy started with the Employment Standards Branch on February 10, 2003, as a term employee and was converted to permanent on November 10, 2003. Nancy Hilliard terminated employment as a civil servant as of December 13, 2003. Salary was \$1,719.70 bi-weekly and was an employee of Culture. We will just confirm that if there is any other information that you asked while you were asking those questions, we will make sure we get it to you.

There were 480 cases under The Labour Relations Act.

Mr. Schuler: Is that up from last year, or down from last year?

Ms. Allan: It is very close to the same.

Mr. Schuler: In the Estimates of Expenditure for '03-04, I noticed that under Professional/Technical there is a substantial reduction from last year. Yet in Employee Benefits there is a substantial increase. Can the minister tell us why?

Ms. Allan: Could you repeat the question, please? We were shuffling papers.

Mr. Schuler: In the Estimates of Expenditure, for instance, under Professional/Technical, the FTEs do

not change, yet there is a substantial reduction in the amount being budgeted. I answered my second question, so I will just leave it at the first question.

* (16:20)

Ms. Allan: I guess the way I read it is that there is a modest increase in the Professional/Technical from 2003-2004 to 2004-2005, the eight staff people, 516.6; 478.8, or are we looking at different lines? I think there is a problem, because I have a purple book and you have a blue book. So I am thinking you have the wrong—oh, the previous year's.

Mr. Schuler: Actually, the minister is absolutely correct. We are speaking off of two different pages. I always keep my books from year to year, because to compare actuals to budget is probably one of the most convoluted things one could ever do, so I always compare Estimates to Estimates.

In the year of 2003-2004, I will take the member to Professional/Technical. In 2002-2003, the same eight people cost \$475,000; 2003-2004, the same eight people were budgeted, and again this is budgeted, at \$388,000; and in 2004-2005, the same eight people are budgeted at \$516,000. I hasten to add that even the 2002-2003, I actually need the 2002-2003 book, because what is initially printed as an estimate is always revised when the next book is printed, which is so against any business practice I have ever been in, but I guess government does things differently. It just seems to be very, very strange. We go from 475 to 388 to 516. Can the minister tell us why we are having this wild fluctuation for the same eight people?

Ms. Allan: Well, there was an appointment of a full-time vice-chair, so it increased costs in that technical line on the budget, but if you look down to board member fees you will notice a reduction of \$23,000. In the 2003-2004 it says 172.0 and then in 2004-2005 it says 149.7, you will see a reduction.

Mr. Schuler: Again, that does not make sense because you have eight people and each time the number fluctuates. So did somebody get laid off and someone else hired at a substantially greater salary? Did somebody quit and then the job was reclassified?

Ms. Allan: Well, a full-time person was put into the professional-technical, the full-time vice-chair, and

he was reclassified when he was reflected in the eight FTEs.

Mr. Schuler: So there must have been a vacant FTE?

Ms. Allan: He was appointed in July 2003, and now that he has been appointed as a full-time vice-chair his salary is reflected in these Estimates.

Mr. Schuler: Basically, what I am getting at is there was an empty position for quite a while, of which there was a request asked for and more monies were appropriated. If the minister were to look at 2003-2004 Estimates, those eight positions were supposed to be \$388,800.

If you take the 2004-2005 book, the actual amount spent, or the estimate was revised, rather, because why in government would we ever compare actuals to budget. Anyway it was revised to \$478,000, an extra \$90,000, the same eight positions which the minister says the position was not really filled. Now we are asking for the same eight positions, \$516,600. Yet those same eight positions, the original budget in 2003-2004 was \$388,000.

We have this whopper of an increase. I mean, everything else is basically in line. If you look at the 2003-2004 Estimates, employee benefits, administrative support was \$324,000, and this year it is only up at \$345,000. It is not a big stretch. So you know there are some increases.

But to go from 388, what I call the '03-04 wish list, and compare to what the wish is for, it is \$516,000. Yet the minister has indicated there is no change in the FTEs, and the person did not even come in until July. There is a lot of money being played with over the years. I tell the minister, that really does make the committee uneasy. We go from 388, initial estimate. Then the final estimate is 478. Now you are asking for 516. Something does not look right there. Perhaps the department could explain.

* (16:30)

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, you know what, we will have a look at this, and we will, if you want a better explanation, because maybe we are just not explaining it properly, we could explain it more fully, but we will get that information to the member.

Mr. Schuler: Okay. I usually take this opportunity to share my frustration with the minister that I find it incredible that we in government vote on a set of Estimates, and the minister is going to tell me we have done this forever, and she is absolutely right. But that still does not make it right, that in government we can vote on the set of Estimates, and by the time the next Estimates come, we can actually print a different set of Estimates, which if this had anything to do with trading on a stock exchange we would all end up in jail for having done that. It is just one of those things in government. I faced it at the school board and it was just as frustrating then as it is now.

I will stop my complaining. It is just one of those things I find bizarre about government. It just makes my task as opposition critic almost impossible to try to compare what was estimate and what was actually spent. I will leave it at that. Unless there are members of the committee who have a question of the Labour Board, I think we would then be prepared to move on to Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there a need for recess?

Ms. Allan: I am just wondering if we could just have a three-minute recess while Mr. Clement is coming down.

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

The committee recessed at 4:32 p.m.

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The committee resumed at 4:34 p.m.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to welcome the minister's department to the Chamber. Of course, immigration we have mentioned somewhat is a very, very important part of what the minister does. The agreement between the federal government and the province, which was something that was started under the Filmon government, I think the Doer government recognized the importance of it and certainly has worked on the file and has continued to push it. It is important that Manitoba not be left behind. Clearly, the big centres try to elbow their way in and take the bulk of the immigrants. I think it is important that Manitoba and other provinces also see new Canadians coming and take on responsibilities and roles in helping to build our communities and make them better.

I was wondering if the minister could tell this House, how is the government managing with its 10 000 immigrant commitment. Is that a goal that is achievable? Is it something that we will see? Is it something that we will surpass?

Basically, I am giving the minister an opportunity to get us a good news story, I am giving her a real soft lob here. Perhaps she call tell this committee on how things are going in the Department of Immigration.

Ms. Allan: I appreciate the member's comments about the Provincial Nominee Program, started under the previous government, and the fact that we have taken over the program under the course of our mandate but I really want to give recognition to the team of people that work in this program and particularly pay recognition to Gerry Clement. He is our guy and he is awesome, and we have a really incredible team of people that work over in our Immigration and Multiculturalism Branch who are really, really terrific.

In the year 2003, we saw 40% increase of provincial nominees come to Manitoba. There was a total of 6500 applicants, total immigration, and I believe it was 3200 of those were through the Provincial Nominee Program. As you know we just did a redesign of the Provincial Nominee Program. It was nice to have the MLA for Inkster with us and I am sorry you were not able to be with us but the redesign is really quite exciting because it provides us with the opportunity to have five priority streams and connect newcomers directly to labour-market demands. We will be able to put those people through the queue much faster. We will be able to process applications, we believe, in two to three months. Over the first quarter of this year we have seen another 38% increase. So we feel that we are really on track in regard to our 10 000.

Mr. Schuler: Again, I know the minister has a bill before the House, the Manitoba Immigration Council, and clearly the problem is retention. Perhaps the minister could take a little bit of time and her department would have the numbers, starting with the year 2000 what have been the immigration numbers coming in through the immigrant sponsor program. Do we have the retention numbers for those individuals?

Ms. Allan: Well, our retention numbers, actually, are really quite good. In the year 2001, there was a

survey done and it showed that our retention figures were about 93 percent.

Also just two Fridays ago we were actually in Winkler and Morden. We met with the stakeholders in the community who have really worked hard on the immigration program in that area. They actually had a statistic in regard to retention that was somewhere, I believe, around 82 percent, 85 and 90 percent.

* (16:40)

I think it is a real credit to the settlement services that we have in place and the partnership agreements that we have with some of the communities. It is difficult. It is a chicken-and-egg thing. You do not want to develop the resources before they get here, but once you get here, you want to have them right away. Sometimes that does not happen, but I think we have really had a responsive situation from a lot of the communities that we work with.

Mr. Lamoureux: I do have a number of questions. I will try to keep them short and relatively concise. Prior to that, I did want to also extend my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Clement in the office. I know at times I can be somewhat impatient in trying to get something out of the office and even possibly maybe frustrate the odd employee, civil servant at times.

I must say that I like to think that it is done not necessarily intentionally but I am very anxious in wanting to do what I can in terms of dealing with immigrants, because I just see so much potential, so much opportunity.

I am still waiting for copies of the kit, but whoever was involved in drafting the kit did a spectacular job. I was quite impressed compared to the one that we were using previously. I think this one makes a whole lot more sense. It is a lot more consumer-friendly. I suspect it will even assist us in getting more applications going through the process.

I just wanted to extend my appreciation to the civil servants involved in redesigning the kit and putting up with at times some of the frustration that I have had in terms of trying to get applications through.

Having said that, I do have some specific questions for the minister. Let us start off by, is there a specific list that the Province has indicating here

are the types of jobs that we recognize? I know before, we would have a blue sheet. I did not see any other sheet as a part of the kit that was provided to me.

Ms. Allan: Well, now it is lime green. It is a restricted occupations list, because where there are strict licensing requirements or there is already available labour here, we want to make sure that we are not bringing them in and disappointing them when they get here. So we now have a restricted occupations list.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would not mind to get a copy of that particular list, even if it is a photocopy, until other documents are ready. It would be appreciated. Is there a list that would go beyond that? I will give an example. There are plenty of high turnover jobs. Do we have a listing of what sort of other jobs would not appear on that list but still would be eligible through the Provincial Nominee Program?

Ms. Allan: We do not list every single occupation. I appreciated the comments the MLA for Inkster made in regard to the excellent job that the staff did in regard to the redesign of the Provincial Nominee Program.

One of the priority streams that we developed was the Strategic Recruitment Initiative. This particular initiative is on the basis of a letter of invitation. It is where we would see specific targeted situations where we might see a labour market shortage or a labour market opportunity and we would want to be able to move on that if we thought that it would assist our economy. So we built that one flexible stream into our new priority streams.

Mr. Lamoureux: Does the department maintain any sort of listing of principal applicants and the type of work that they are in? For example, can you say in 2003 we had 300 people come in under this category of work, 100 under this? Is any sort of record kept in regard to that?

Ms. Allan: We actually have two databases. We have a database that relates to the Provincial Nominee Program and then we have the federal database of those who have actually arrived; they can cross-reference those two databases.

Mr. Lamoureux: If it is something that is doable, I know I, myself, would welcome the opportunity I

think that we need to get a sense of what that is. I would suggest that there would be some value to the department, and if the department does acquire those numbers, I would definitely be interested in seeing that.

Is the minister familiar with a proposal at the federal level in regard to a once-in-a-lifetime immigration bill that was being proposed in Ottawa?

Ms. Allan: I am familiar with it in regard to I know it was a private members' bill. It was sponsored, I believe, by Libby Davis in Vancouver, Judy Wasylycia-Leis and Pat Martin, and my understanding is that about three weeks ago it was defeated in the House of Commons.

Mr. Lamoureux: In regard to the principle of that particular bill, would this minister be interested in looking at how we might be able to incorporate that into a provincial certificate?

Ms. Allan: Our program is an economic program, it is not a family sponsorship program, and they are two very different things.

Mr. Lamoureux: Based on immigration policy, sometimes you get some provinces that want to go one direction, other provinces that want to go another direction. Obviously, we want to go a direction where we see more immigrations coming to the province.

Would the minister be prepared to entertain having certificates issued based on a once-in-a-lifetime principle for a nominee's certificate?

Ms. Allan: There is a bilateral agreement with the federal government and that bilateral agreement is negotiated between the federal government and the provincial government. That is something that would have to be negotiated with the federal government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would this government have been in favour of beginning any sort of negotiations to that effect?

Ms. Allan: In our redesign of the Provincial Nominee Program, one of the criteria that we based a lot of weight on is family support. So that is woven into our priority streams; so we do value that.

Mr. Lamoureux: I just think the next step would be adopting the principle of this whole once in a

lifetime. And if the Province of Manitoba can do this, would she be interested in pursuing that with the federal government?

Ms. Allan: On family reunification, it falls strictly within the federal government's jurisdiction, because you cannot have different policies from one jurisdiction to another. It is unfortunate that the sponsorship bill was defeated. It was defeated by the member's colleagues in the House of Commons, if he is that passionate about it.

Mr. Lamoureux: The question is: Would this government support negotiations with Ottawa to develop a program that would allow for a once in a lifetime? Would the minister actually support that?

Ms. Allan: Family reunification is a federal program.

Mr. Lamoureux: Immigration was a federal matter until we were involved in negotiations which ultimately led to the PNP program. The question is would she be in favour, would this government be in favour of doing likewise, but instead of the PNP program, come up with some other form of a certification that would allow Manitobans to have that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity?

* (16:50)

Ms. Allan: Well, we would certainly be interested in entering into discussions with the federal government around once-in-a-lifetime sponsorship in family reunification.

Mr. Lamoureux: Has the department had any discussions at all with any members of Parliament in regard to the once-in-a-lifetime bill to date or any Ottawa officials within the Department of Immigration regarding that bill?

Ms. Allan: No, there were no particular discussions with the federal government in regard to the particular bill that the member was talking about, but there have been other discussions with the federal government in regard to the amount of money that is required to sponsor families under the Family Reunification Program, particularly because Winnipeg is a smaller centre and there have been those kinds of discussions with them.

Mr. Lamoureux: The other day I had raised the issue in terms of apprenticeship programming,

suggesting that there are many individuals that come from abroad and they have incredible credentials, but once they arrive in the province, there seem to be barriers that are in place that make it very difficult for those credentials to be recognized. I know over the years I have had many discussions with individuals. One that comes to mind is Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, who has indicated that it would be wonderful to see a provincial initiative in terms of an apprenticeship program for individuals in order to assist them in getting their foreign credentials recognized. Does this particular minister support the need to develop an apprenticeship program at the provincial level in order to support immigrants that are not getting their credentials recognized?

Ms. Allan: Well, Doctor Pagtakhan issued a press release in I believe about March. He hinted at establishing a fund to support individuals that are taking courses or preparing for exams to meet licensing requirements. It has emerged now that it has changed into funding a study to determine whether or not such a fund would be helpful. So I just wanted to clarify what the member had put on the record previously in the House when he was asking a question about this particular issue. In Manitoba, trade certification can be achieved. There is an actual brochure. It is called *Access to Trades in Manitoba*, and we will endeavour to get that information to the MLA so that he knows what we are doing in regard to recognizing apprenticeship trades in Manitoba around certification.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would the minister advocate for the need for having an apprenticeship program that would assist immigrants in getting their credentials acknowledged in the province?

Ms. Allan: Well, qualifications recognition is very, very important. I just have to say that Manitoba is well ahead of any other jurisdiction in Canada in regard to a qualification recognition strategy. It is one of the tools that we use to recognize newcomers and their education and their experience and do GAAP training when they come to Manitoba.

We actually have a qualifications recognition document, and I do not know if the member has had an opportunity to read that document or not. But we are also in the process of having another workshop with stakeholders and licensing bodies, so that we can keep the whole issue of qualifications

recognition on the front burner in Manitoba and continue to be the lead in Canada.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I would suggest to the minister that if you want to have the lead, it is one thing to say you have the lead, the minister is not able to prove that we have the lead. This is the answer that we received in Question Period. It is quite a specific question, and that is, does the minister see the benefits of her advocating, if not implementing, an apprenticeship program that would allow for immigrants to get their credentials recognized in the field in which they have trained. Does she see the benefits of that sort of an apprenticeship program, and if so, is she prepared to advocate for it?

Ms. Allan: Yes, of course, I am. We have to work with the licensing bodies to make it happen. I just want to remind the member that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has a program for pharmacists. We have a program for engineers, and we have a program for general medical practitioners. Three weeks ago, I spoke at the Council for School Leadership and we have a teaching program in development, Mr. Chair. So I just want the MLA to know that we are working on this.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, that is really encouraging. I like what the minister is saying, that she is prepared to see an apprenticeship program be put into place in the province of Manitoba. I think that it is wonderful.

My next questions would be in regard to professionals and trades. Does the ministry have any sort of a listing of areas in which she would like to see credentials being recognized, or a potential program that would recognize what sort of professions, what sort of trades? In her mind or at the table with the civil servants, can they give us an accurate sense? I could say whether it is lawyers, or accountants, or nurses or doctors, there are professions, engineers, electricians, is there a list where she would acknowledge these are the type of professions and trades that we want to do what we can in terms of providing an apprenticeship program for immigrants?

Ms. Allan: No, we do not sit down and generate a list, and put particular occupations at the top of the list. What we do is we really link our program to

labour market demand, and we work with the licensing bodies and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Lamoureux: The apprenticeship program, which the minister indicated that she would be prepared to advocate for and possibly seek to get put in to place, how soon then would she feel that something of that nature could be done?

Ms. Allan: I do not have a time line.

Mr. Lamoureux: It is a really important issue, as I am sure the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan) would acknowledge, as there are a lot of people that have a vested interest. Could we maybe get some sort of a ballpark, like three years from now, a month from now? Is it on her short-term priority list to get it put into place?

Ms. Allan: I just listed our programs and I just want to remind the member that our qualifications recognition strategy is way ahead of any other jurisdiction in Canada. In the fall, we are having another stakeholder meeting to get everybody back together so that we can keep this strategy moving, and we can keep working with the regulating bodies in the education institutions.

I just want to remind the member that 70 percent of the provincial nominees that come to Canada come to Manitoba and there is a reason for it. It is because we have an excellent record in regard to retention. We have an excellent record in regard to settlement services and in regard to getting people into jobs.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I have several questions, but, first of all, I want to thank the minister and Gerry Clement for coming out to the Morden-Winkler area several weeks ago. We had a good time and I think it gave them an opportunity to see, again, the work that has been done in our area, the best constituency in the province of Manitoba. However, we will leave that for another day.

As the MLA for Springfield has indicated, this program was started back in 1996 when we were in office. I am glad to see that the minister has continued to work on the project of getting more immigration into the province of Manitoba. I, too, want to thank Gerry for the work that he has done in assisting us in this, and there have been thousands of immigrants who have come to the southern Manitoba area, and so it is good to see.

*(17:00)

The question that I have is one of those who have professional qualities and, of course, are trying to get their profession recognized within the province of Manitoba. I will give you one example, and I think I have given this to you before, but I would just like to know, as a follow-up, what is taking place with the different organizations.

The one that I will give as the example, and, again, I could give a number, is a young lady who came from Germany. She is a dental hygienist and has all the qualifications. In fact, I sat down with her and we went through the certificates, the diplomas that she had from Germany, which I would say, from the information that I was given, surpassed those that were required within Manitoba. Her issue is that, at this point, she is not able to challenge the exam, that would be the one that, of course, those who are in that profession would need within Manitoba.

That is a concern. It is not that she is at all concerned about the fact that she needs to challenge the exam, but the information that she is getting is that she needs to go back to school and redo everything. I would share that concern with her. I do not think that is fair, and I am just wondering if the minister could update me as to what is taking place in a case like this, but also in other areas where they are being challenged with the professional bodies, not allowing them to challenge the exams.

Ms. Allan: I agree with the MLA because this is our biggest challenge. There is absolutely no question, and it is not easy, particularly because many of these people that come to Manitoba come from other countries. The educational facilities are quite different than our educational facilities here, and there are even difficulties with just inter-jurisdictional issues from province to province. Nobody really has this sorted out yet.

We will continue to work on our qualifications recognition strategy. We are very proud of the work that has been done by the department in regard to keeping this on the front burner. We will continue to work with the regulating bodies and the licensing bodies. In regard to this particular person, if you would like to talk to anyone at all in the branch, we would have a program staffperson that would be more than happy to talk to you about that individual's case.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you. I appreciate that answer. I know that it is not the department that is being negligent in this. It is the fact that the professional bodies, of course, are trying to protect, or that is what they claim they are doing.

Maybe the best thing that we could do is, if we would have a competitive tax regime within our province then our own people would not be leaving and we would be able to retain them. As much as I am pleased that we are having new immigrants coming in and filling these positions, we have our own people who could also be part of this, to fill these jobs. They are leaving the province for, I guess, what they would call greener pastures, but that is another issue.

The other one I have, and I know that it has been over a period of years where we have had doctors coming in from overseas and, in our case, from South Africa. I will give you again a case in point which has just come up, and where I am dealing with the minister, not the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) but the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) on this one, but it is very much under the purview of this minister where there has been an agreement that has been reached, I believe, with the professional body that within a period of five years the doctors, in order to be able to get their licence, need to challenge the medical examination.

There is an apparent, I would say, misunderstanding. I am not sure on whose part it is, but right now it appears as though it is consecutive years. Yet this doctor that I am talking about and referring to did leave the province for two years and then came back, and now he is finding out that there is an understanding, that it needs to be that the moment that he came to Canada rather, that is where that period of five years started, even though he was absent for two years. So it looks now that, unless he can get this resolved within the next month or two, he may have to either leave the country or he will not be able to practise within the province of Manitoba.

I think that possibly Mr. Clement is familiar with this case, but I am just wondering if any work has been done in that area.

Ms. Allan: Well, unfortunately, Mr. Clement is familiar with that particular situation, and it has to do with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Unfortunately, we have no jurisdiction over that

particular issue. If you would like to meet with Mr. Clement to discuss it, but it is not something we have jurisdiction over.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): I would like to ask the minister, in regard to the overall business friendly status within the Department of Immigration and the nominee program: Is there opportunity for communities, let us say, to contact the department in regard to providing information on skill deficit areas? We have spoken of medical deficits in some of our communities or whether it be those with electrician skills, those with carpentry skills, whatever. If there is an identified deficit within a particular community, can the community call the Immigration Department and see at the very least whether there are any individuals in the queue that would have these skill sets? I believe the minister sees where I am going with this insofar as it is a marrying the needs of communities with the Immigration Department.

Ms. Allan: Well, absolutely you are always welcome to call the department. I know that you represent a rural riding, and we are very fortunate in Manitoba—and I know Mr. Clement will correct me if I am wrong—in that I believe 30 percent of our provincial nominees go outside of Winnipeg. So we have an excellent working relationship with community organizations in rural Manitoba. If there is, you know, at any time that you think you would a proposal or an opportunity where we could work with your community, we would be more than delighted to do that.

Mr. Faurschou: So my understanding from the minister's response is that if city hall or the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie could be in contact with your department, saying that we have identified a skill shortage here in the area of, let us say, agronomy, then one could be in contact with the department, if there are some persons with agronomy in their background or skill set who would try and marry the individuals seeking to immigrate with communities that are in need.

Ms. Allan: That is how we prefer to work with communities, to have a broad range of stakeholders at the table that we can work with in regard to how we can provide labour market demands.

Mr. Schuler: As we seem to be fighting the clock right now, I would like to thank Gerry Clement for

all his work and his efforts on behalf of this particular program. It is clearly one of those star programs of Manitoba, and we appreciate his efforts.

If it is fine with the committee, we would like to move on to Multiculturalism and then Fire Commissioner's office and then move to passing the Estimates on. So if the minister would call.

* (17:10)

Again, this is an area that is near and dear to my heart, having been involved in the multicultural community for many years and, in fact, even having the opportunity to be on the MIC board and being chair of the MIC, of course, that being the Manitoba Intercultural Council, not the Manitoba Immigration Council.

I got to work with great people: Joanne Lewandosky-Kuzia, of course; working for us at that time on the board was Sam Koshy, sat with Wade Kojo Williams, and the list goes on and on, and O.T. Anderson. As I said, I had a great time. I certainly appreciated working with organizations like MMRC, Manitoba Multicultural Resources Centre—Louisa Loeb was the chair at that time; Folk Arts Council, and the list went on and on and on.

Multiculturalism has had, I think, a real beneficial effect to Manitoba. I noticed that there is a slight decline in the Estimates of Multiculturalism. Where is the government in regard to multiculturalism? Does the minister see a shift being made more toward immigration, or is there still a commitment in the area of multiculturalism by this government?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Chair, \$50,000 for the Manitoba Immigration Council was in the wrong appropriation, so it has been moved back into the Immigration branch, and \$25,000 has been added to Multiculturalism for MEAAC.

Mr. Schuler: Before I have the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) or one of the other members of the committee ask a couple of questions, I do want to point out to the committee that the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), unfortunately, cannot be here to question the minister in regard to Multiculturalism. The Member for Morris is the official critic for the area. She right now is in Estimates in another room dealing with Culture,

Heritage and Citizenship and, unfortunately, has not been able to clone herself and be in two places at once. However, if she does have questions, I am sure the minister would be more agreeable to either meet with her or perhaps it can be done through Concurrence.

I did want to let the committee know that the Member for Morris did want to extend her regrets. She is in another committee and simply cannot be in two places at once. So I pass it on.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I want to share an idea with the minister and see what she thinks about it. It is kind of a personal thing. Thousands of people come to the provincial Legislature every year. I have thought, you have the Rotunda and below the Rotunda there is the Pool of the Black Star. If you drive around in Winnipeg, and I suspect even in other areas of the province, you see these huge murals on the sides of buildings.

The question I had for her is in regard to recognition of Manitoba's multiculturalism in history would the minister see benefits in terms of using the Pool of the Black Star, that round wall in terms of some sort of a contest to get some of our artists to come forward and in essence do a pictorial of Manitoba's rich history with a very strong multicultural flavour? What does the minister think of that particular idea? I would be interested in knowing.

Ms. Allan: It has actually been done in the past. It was done two years ago. There was a poster contest, and there was a pictorial display. It was actually very exciting, and maybe we will have another look at it.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess I was not quite as specific or I could have been a little bit clearer, I guess, in my example. I mean, permanently paint the walls, so it becomes a permanent mural. Again, with emphasis, we have so many people and we should be proud—a living history, as the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) points out—I just think it would be a very nice thing to see. I know in the past at the Legislature at Christmastime we have the multicultural tree, which happens to be above the Pool of the Black Star.

An Honourable Member: You mean a Christmas tree. The Premier said we could call it a Christmas tree.

An Honourable Member: Stay out of that one.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am being advised to stay away from it, but the point is there was some sort of a multicultural tree above the Pool of the Black Star.

What I am talking about is a mural, and I am sure she is familiar with this, that would become permanent. The idea of having pictures, periodically, is nice, but I, for one, would welcome the opportunity to see some sort of a permanent thing, given the thousands of people that go through this building.

Ms. Allan: Well, actually, I just had a meeting recently with the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), and we are actually working on something that we hope to be able to announce in the future that would be permanent on the grounds of the Legislature and that would recognize the contributions of our ethnocultural communities.

Mr. Schuler: Again, we would like to thank the department for its work on the multiculturalism file. I happen to be one of those who believe multiculturalism is very important. You do not know where you are going if you do not have any idea where you have come from. I think it is important for us to remember where we have come from, and multiculturalism has added an awful lot to this province. It has been positive, and it has added just a great flavour to Manitoba.

If the minister is fine, the committee would like the Office of the Fire Commissioner to come forward and proceed.

Ms. Allan: I would like to welcome Chris Jones, the Deputy Fire Commissioner.

Mr. Schuler: I would like to welcome Chris. I could be corrected, but I think this is his first time at committee. Welcome.

I want to touch on one issue very briefly—and I know we have a new minister and a new head of the department—and that is the Esso tank farm. It has been an issue that I have raised over the years, and I want to confirm that there is a proper joint services agreement between the Esso tank farm and I believe it was the Winnipeg International Airport, I cannot remember anymore. I want to confirm that that is in place. The last minister had endeavoured to get me a

copy of the agreement, and the minister was moved and I never got a copy of it.

* (17:20)

Ms. Allan: There is an agreement in place, and there is a fire plan. If you do not mind, I will just read you some of the details. The site is monitored 24 hours, seven days per week; a full environmentally sound storm drainage system for disposal of hydrocarbons is operating on the site. The facility has its own fire water system, with three pumps capable of feeding the site with water for firefighting or cooling of tanks. There is a 250 horsepower diesel-powered pump on site in case of electrical power failure to supply water if required. There are adequate fire hydrants and fire extinguishers on site with a regular inspection program in place. The emergency response plan at the facility is an efficient working document which clearly outlines all parties' roles and responsibilities.

Mr. Schuler: Is it possible to get a copy of that agreement?

Ms. Allan: We will go to the company and request their permission to provide that to you, and if they agree, most certainly we would.

Mr. Schuler: Again, I appreciate it. The minister is probably not aware there was an issue where a lot of gasoline had been dumped and they had not, in fact, called the fire department. It is always a concern. It is a public safety issue, and as long as there is a joint services agreement—the minister mentions all the pumps and all the water; however, you do need foam. It is foam that you fight the fire with, not water. The water is basically there just to keep the other tanks cool.

Again, I will raise this for as long as I am the Member for Springfield, to just ensure that tank farm has access to foam, should something happen. Of course, we would hope that nothing does happen.

I have one other question, and that has to do with page 73, Income Statement, Office of the Fire Commissioner. In last year's Estimates '03-04, it showed a deficit for 2004, and this year it shows a surplus. It showed a deficit for 2005, and this year shows a surplus. The deficits are substantially less. Can the department tell us why? Then I think we should move on to passing the Estimates.

Ms. Allan: Well, the first issue is there was a vacancy management issue. There were some issues that we held vacant. The positions just are not filled so that the staff salaries that would be attached to those positions are not there anymore. There was an increase in the levy, which increased revenue. Sorry, there was increased revenue because of the levy; sorry, I worded that wrong. Wawanesa Insurance would be really excited if they thought I was increasing the levy.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Resolution 11.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,257,700 for Labour and Immigration, Labour Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,309,600 for Labour and Immigration, Immigration and Multiculturalism, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 11.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$877,400 for Labour and Immigration, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

The next one will be the minister's salary, so we will request politely the staff to leave the Chamber, please.

Resolution 11.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$694,400 for Labour and Immigration, Executive, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2005.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Labour and Immigration.

The next set of Estimates which will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Department.

Does the committee wish to recess or call it 5:30?

Some Honourable Members: 5:30 p.m.

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

So ordered. It will be 5:30 p.m. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 17, 2004

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